

PROJECT HERO

Project HERO is a pilot program that helps Veterans get the care they need when it's not available at their local Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical center. While Veterans can still research and see non-VA doctors with a Fee care authorization, Project HERO removes the guesswork by contracting with Humana Veterans Healthcare Services (HVHS) and Delta Dental Federal Services (Delta Dental) to provide Veterans with pre-screened networks of health and dental providers who meet VA standards for quality care.

Through Project HERO, Humana Veterans Healthcare Services and Delta Dental provide:

- Credentialed, quality providers
- Return of clinical information to VA for continuity of care
- Monitoring and reporting of access to care, appointment timeliness, patient safety and satisfaction
- Appointment-setting services with local medical and dental providers
- Patient advocate services
- Timely payment of provider invoices

AVAILABILITY

Project HERO is currently available to Veterans in four VA health care networks:

- **Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 8: VA Sunshine Health Care Network**
Southern Georgia and most of Florida. Does not include Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- **VISN 16: South Central VA Health Care Network**
Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and portions of the states of Texas, Missouri, Alabama, and Northwest Florida.
- **VISN 20: Northwest Network**
Washington State, Oregon, most of the state of Idaho and one county each in Montana and California. Does not include Alaska.
- **VISN 23: VA Midwest Health Care Network**
Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and portions of Northern Kansas, Missouri, Western Illinois, Western Wisconsin and Eastern Wyoming.

HOW VETERANS PARTICIPATE

Eligible Veterans enroll in the VA health care system. When specific medical expertise or technology isn't available at the VA medical center (VAMC), the VAMC Fee office gives each eligible Veteran a Project HERO authorization. HVHS or Delta Dental contacts the Veteran directly to make an appointment. After the appointment, HVHS and/or Delta Dental providers send the patient records and invoices directly to HVHS or Delta Dental. HVHS and Delta Dental then send the patient records and claims data to VA.

TOP 5 BENEFITS OF PROJECT HERO

1. **Veterans get the care they need** – When Veterans need care that's not available at their local VA medical center, they don't have to search for doctors and dentists. Project HERO supplements VA care with credentialed quality medical and dental providers to quickly meet their needs.
2. **It's easy** – VA sends a copy of the Project HERO authorization to HVHS and Delta Dental. HVHS and Delta Dental then contact Veterans directly to schedule appointments with local medical and dental providers.
3. **It's fast** – HVHS is committed to contacting Veterans for appointments within five days, and both HVHS and Delta Dental arrange for Veterans to see specialists within 30 days. Veterans also wait less than 20 minutes to see the doctor or dentist once they've checked in for their appointments.

4. **With records returned to VA** – Veterans have peace of mind knowing their medical and dental records are returned to VA so their doctors and dentists can provide more informed, continuous care over time.
5. **At competitive rates** – Veterans can trust VA is using resources wisely while maintaining high quality care. With Project HERO, HVHS and Delta Dental offer consistent, competitive pricing and they send invoices directly to VA for payment.

OBJECTIVES

The ultimate goal of Project HERO is to ensure that all health care delivered by VA, either through VA providers or community partners, is of comparable quality and consistency for Veterans.

Project HERO objectives:

- Provide as much care for Veterans within the VA as possible
- Efficiently refer Veterans to high-quality community-based care as needed
- Improve the exchange of information between VA and community providers
- Increase Veteran health care satisfaction
- Foster high quality health care and patient safety
- Sustain partnerships with university Affiliates
- Secure accountable evaluation of results

OVERSIGHT AND PARTICIPATION

The Project HERO Governing Board, comprised of leaders from VA, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and participating VISNs, reports on Project HERO activities, and approves changes in terms, quantities, or conditions of the Project HERO contracts.

The Project HERO Program Management Office regularly tracks and monitors quality, safety, vendor performance, cost and other data for quality Veteran care. The Program Management Office shares its findings with internal and external stakeholders including the Project HERO Governing Board, directors of participating Project HERO VISNs, senior VA and VHA leadership, Veteran service organizations, Academic Affiliates and labor unions.

VA continues to meet with Veteran services organizations, Academic Affiliates, industry, and other federal agencies about Project HERO. These partnerships bring fresh ideas and leading-edge strategies, tools, and capabilities to help VA meet Project HERO's objectives. Together, VA and its partners collaborate to provide quality care for all Veterans.

PROJECT HERO HISTORY

In November 2005, VA developed Project HERO in response to House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations Conference Report 109-305, which directed VA to focus on cost-effective purchasing of care and to develop a competitive award with at least three objective-oriented demonstrations (pilot programs) to encourage collaboration with industry and academia.

In January 2008, VA awarded a contract to HVHS for medical/surgical, mental health, diagnostics, and dialysis. VA awarded a contract to Delta Dental for dental care. All Project HERO contracted provider networks and care facilities are required to meet VA quality standards.

MORE INFORMATION

- VA Project HERO: <http://www.va.gov/hac/hero>, vhacoprojecthero@va.gov, 303.370.7755
- Humana Veterans Healthcare Services: <http://www.humana-veterans.com/>, 1.866.458.6630
- Delta Dental: <http://www.projectherodental.org>, 1.866.737.6543
- Learn more in the VA Fact Sheet, Medical Care section at <http://www1.va.gov/opa/fact/vafacts.asp>