



# Veteran Community Care Appointments and Getting Care

Under the VA MISSION Act, it is easier for eligible Veterans to find a community provider in VA's network, make an appointment, and receive timely, high-quality care.

After a Veteran is determined to need treatment and found eligible for community care, he or she will generally have the option of choosing to receive care from a VA medical facility or community provider.

## Finding a Community Provider

A VA staff member will discuss with an eligible Veteran who chooses to receive community care his or her preferences for getting care. For example, a Veteran may want to find a community provider that can see them sooner and is located near his or her home.

Based on the discussion between the Veteran and their care team, the Veteran will be able to select a community provider in VA's network or VA can select one if he or she has no preference. VA and in-network community providers can be found using Facility Locator, available from the following web address:

<https://www.va.gov/find-locations/>.

The community provider selected must be in VA's network. If there is a specific community provider the Veteran would like to see that is not in VA's network, VA may be able to add the provider to its network. However, this may take some time, and not all providers may want to be part of VA's network. To see if it would be possible to add the provider to VA's network, a VA staff member will work with the Veteran to find out more information about the specific community provider and determine next steps.

In addition, a VA staff member will work with the Veteran to find other options in the following situations:

- A community provider is not accessible to the Veteran.
- A community provider cannot be found that meets the Veteran's health care needs.
- The Veteran's preferred community provider is no longer part of VA's network.
- An in-network community provider becomes unavailable.

Once a community provider is found and selected, an appointment can be scheduled.

**Important:** Before scheduling an appointment, Veterans should confirm with a VA staff member that they are eligible for and authorized to receive community care.

## Referrals

VA will send a referral to the Veteran and to the selected community provider. VA will also send any pertinent medical documentation to the community provider to ensure proper care coordination.

The VA referral is important because it authorizes the Veteran to receive care from the community provider. Without the referral, VA has not authorized and cannot pay for the care in most circumstances.

Once a referral is sent to the Veteran and the selected community provider, an appointment can be scheduled.

## Scheduling Appointments

Veterans have several options when it comes to scheduling an appointment with a community provider. Depending on the type of care a Veteran needs, a VA staff member will work with the Veteran to determine which options are available.

- **Veteran Directly Schedules Appointment** – After a community care consult has been approved and a referral is sent to the selected provider, Veterans can directly contact a community provider in VA's network to schedule an appointment. The Veteran provides the appointment information to a VA staff member as soon as possible in order to ensure tracking and continuity of care.



- **Veteran Uses VA Online Scheduling to Schedule Appointment** – Veterans may be able to request an appointment online using VA Online Scheduling for routine exams for Primary Care, Nutrition, Podiatry, Optometry, Audiology and Hearing Aid Support. VA Online Scheduling is accessible through MyHealthVet (<https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/keeping-up-with-your-va-appointments>).
- **VA Staff Member Schedules Appointment** – Veterans can provide their appointment preferences (such as the specific provider, location, date, and time of day) to a VA staff member. Based on the Veteran's preferences and the community provider's availability, a VA staff member will work to schedule the appointment.
- **VA Third Party Administrator (TPA)** – In some cases for specific VA medical facilities, Veterans can provide their appointment preferences (such as the specific provider, location, date, and time of day) to a TPA. Based on the Veteran's preferences and the community provider's availability, the TPA will work to schedule the appointment.

## Getting Care

When the Veteran arrives for the appointment, the community provider should have the appointment, VA referral, and pertinent medical documentation on file and be ready to see the Veteran.

**Important:** If the Veteran needs a follow-up appointment, the community provider must ensure VA has authorized additional care before scheduling a follow-up appointment. The community provider should check the VA referral to verify if additional care is authorized. If this cannot be determined, the community provider should contact the local VA medical facility that authorized the care to determine next steps.

## Prescription Medication

VA will pay for or fill prescriptions written by community providers. For prescription medication longer than a 14-day supply, the prescription must be submitted to VA to be filled.

**Note:** As applicable, VA copayments apply for medication prescribed by a community provider.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Q1. Are travel costs to a community provider paid for by VA?

Veterans may be eligible for travel cost reimbursement through VA's beneficiary travel program, which provides Veteran reimbursement for travel costs to the closest provider. Veterans can contact their local VA medical facility to learn about this benefit.

### Q2. How do Veterans schedule appointments or receive care using the VA's new urgent care benefit?

The urgent care benefit does not require an appointment to be scheduled in advance. Eligible Veterans may go to a provider in VA's contracted network and receive care without an authorization from VA.