

**CRITERIA FOR AUTHORIZED ABSENCE, PASSES, AND CAMPUS PRIVILEGES
FOR RESIDENTS IN VA COMMUNITY LIVING CENTERS**

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive provides policy regarding Resident Absences and passes from Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Community Living Centers (CLC).
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:** This new directive provides national policy for granting authorized absences, passes, and campus privileges for Veterans admitted to VA Community Living Centers (CLC) for short stay or for long stay services.
- 3. RELATED ISSUES:** VHA Handbook 1142.02.
- 4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Geriatrics and Extended Care (10P4G) Services in the Office of Patient Care Services (10P4) is responsible for the contents of this directive. Questions may be referred to Director, VHA Community Living Centers, at (202) 461-6750.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** None.
- 6. RECERTIFICATIONS:** This VHA directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of June 2022. This VHA directive will continue to serve as national VHA policy until it is recertified or rescinded.

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Acting Under Secretary for Health

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CRITERIA FOR AUTHORIZED ABSENCE, PASSES, AND CAMPUS PRIVILEGES FOR RESIDENTS IN VA COMMUNITY LIVING CENTERS

1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive provides Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy regarding authorized absences, passes, and campus privileges for Veterans admitted to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Community Living Centers (CLC). **AUTHORITY:** Title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 1710, 7301(b).

2. BACKGROUND

a. The ultimate goal of CLC programs and services is to assist Veterans to achieve the highest practicable level of well-being. Achieving this goal requires clearly understood and documented reasons for admission to and discharge from the CLC. In addition, each resident must have either a defined discharge destination to prepare the Veteran for living in an appropriate community setting or a plan for long stay continuing care in the CLC. (See VHA Handbook 1142.02 Admission Criteria, Service Codes and Discharge Criteria Department of Veterans Affairs Community Living Centers).

b. CLCs provide a dynamic array of short stay and long stay services. Short stay services are rendered for 90 days or less and discharge to a least restrictive setting once goals of care are met. Long stay services are rendered for 91 days or more.

c. The CLC provides services for Veterans who require skilled nursing care, medical interventions and interdisciplinary services to assure progress in care, and the well-being or comfort and peace at end of life 24 hours per day, 7 days a week.

d. Therefore, absences from the CLC can only be justified if there is a provider order and adequate documentation in the care plan that the absence, pass, or campus privilege is beneficial to the Veteran for therapeutic purposes, to test the Veteran's ability to manage in home and community based settings, or to provide short visits with family on an occasional basis, provided that it is safe for the Veteran to be away from the CLC for short and defined periods of time under the direct supervision of reliable family or significant others. If a Veteran desires and the CLC grants frequent daily passes or extended authorized absences to Veterans, the CLC must evaluate whether the Veteran should receive care in a less restrictive community setting.

3. POLICY

It is VHA policy that all authorized absences and passes for Veterans in VA CLCs are carefully assessed. For short stay residents, there will be no routine authorized absences or overnight passes unless it is determined that a short trial in a community based setting is therapeutically desirable to determine ability to function in the new setting or the Veteran needs to be absent from the facility on a pass to conduct personal business or for another documented specific purpose. For long stay residents authorized absences will be limited to a maximum of 15 days per calendar year. **NOTE:** *The guidelines in this policy are not to be substituted for clinical judgement. Published limits on authorized absence, passes or campus privileges may be extended with appropriate*

justification and documentation in the resident's medical record by the interdisciplinary team.

4. DEFINITIONS

- a. **Authorized absences.** Authorized absences are absences from the CLC for therapeutic reasons for greater than 24 hours.
- b. **Campus privileges.** Campus privileges are permissions to leave the CLC but are while remaining on the designated VA campus. Campus privileges do not authorize the Veteran to leave the VA campus.
- c. **Passes.** Passes are formal permissions to leave the CLC and VA campus for less than 24 hours, including one overnight.
- d. **Short Stay Residents.** Short stay residents are Veterans admitted to VA CLC for 90 days or less.
- e. **Long Stay Residents.** Long stay residents are Veterans admitted to VA CLCs for 91 days or more.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

The CLC Medical Director is responsible for:

- a. Ensuring that all CLC admissions are categorized into short-stay services or long-stay services and identify reason for admission to the CLC, have an estimated length of stay and a discharge destination documented in the admission record. All authorized absences, passes, and campus privileges will have accompanying provider orders and documentation specifying details as outlined in the attached appendix as well as the therapeutic indication documented in individualized care plans.
- b. Ensuring that authorized absences and passes are not offered to Veterans admitted to the CLC for short stay services unless therapeutically indicated or necessary for personal business and authorized absences will be limited to 3 days in the course of the short stay admission.
- c. Ensuring that authorized absences or passes for Veterans admitted to the CLC for long stay services will be limited to 15 days per calendar year.
- d. Ensuring that all authorized absences and passes be restricted and allowed only upon clear and careful evaluation of the Veteran's ability to function safely when unattended by CLC staff.
- e. Ensuring that the number of days for authorized absence or pass is determined by the interdisciplinary treatment team in collaboration with the Veteran and the Veteran's family.

**GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORIZED ABSENCE, PASS, CAMPUS PRIVILEGES FOR
VETERANS IN VA COMMUNITY LIVING CENTERS**

1. **Short Stay Residents.** Veterans admitted to VA CLCs for short stay services receive aggressive interventions that should not be interrupted by leave or pass from the facility. Therefore, Veterans admitted into VA CLCs for short stay services will not be offered authorized absence or passes from the CLC unless a stay of limited duration in a home and community based setting (not longer than 3 consecutive days) is indicated in order to assess the Veteran's ability to function in the new setting or a planned outing to conduct personal business is needed. Authorized Absence should be limited to no more than a weekend or maximum of 3 days during the course of the short stay. Prior to the authorized absence or pass, the Veteran will be evaluated for ability to function safely and independently. The condition of the Veteran on return to the CLC as well as outcomes of pass goals must be assessed and documented.

2. **Long Stay Residents.** Veterans admitted to VA CLCs for long stay services may benefit from short visits or occasional passes with family or significant others provided the CLC documents the rationale for the visit, capacity of the Veteran and family or significant other to manage the Veteran in the non-CLC setting, and provides the Veteran with the equipment, medications, and other resources necessary for continued care of the Veteran outside the CLC.

3. **Documentation Requirements.** A provider order stating the duration and approximate time for the Veteran to leave and return to the CLC.

a. Provider and care plan documentation of the rationale for the authorized absence, pass, or campus privileges

b. For Authorized Absences and passes, clear written instructions are provided to the Veteran and family or care giver about return expectations; emergency contacts; medication and treatment instructions, equipment or other resources to manage the Veteran safely.

c. Actions the CLC will take if the Veteran does not return to the CLC as agreed upon and if the Veteran cannot be reached in a reasonable amount of time.

d. The name or names, and contact information, of the accompanying family members or other significant person who will participate in the care and or supervision of the Veteran while on authorized absence or on pass.

e. If the Veteran is cognitively intact, evidence that the Veteran demonstrates ability to function independently or with a designated level of supervision.

f. If the Veteran is able to depart the CLC unaccompanied, evidence that the Veteran has demonstrated ability to self-administer prescribed medications and treatments or a

support system is set up to assist the Veteran with such while on authorized absence or pass.

g. If the Veteran is accompanied by a family member or responsible care giver during authorized absence or pass, that these parties demonstrate ability to supervise and or provide medication or treatment support and know who to contact in case of emergency.

h. For campus privileges that the Veteran can ambulate, use a wheelchair, walker or other adaptive equipment safety; has demonstrated responsible behavior while using oxygen and adaptive equipment; and adheres to the agreement about return to the CLC timely.

4. **Oxygen, medications, and adaptive equipment.**

a. Oxygen (O₂).

(1) It is critical that if a resident on Oxygen receives permission for an authorized absence or overnight pass, they have sufficient O₂ capacity, have an Oxygen concentrator or some way of assuring O₂ supply for the duration of the absence or pass and know who to reach in case of emergency or a problem with the O₂ supply or system.

(2) Veteran or responsible care giver can demonstrate safe and appropriate Oxygen use.

(3) Veteran and responsible care giver are instructed on smoking restrictions while on Oxygen. This includes the Veteran not smoking while Oxygen is in use, nor any family, friends, visitors in the vicinity.

b. Medications:

(1) Veteran and/or responsible care giver demonstrate ability to manage medications while on authorized absence or pass.

(2) Veteran has sufficient medications for the duration of the absence or pass.

(3) Veteran and/or responsible care giver know what to do, who to contact in case of missing or lost medications or in the case of an emergency.

c. Adaptive equipment:

(1) When a resident requires the use of any adaptive equipment, it is necessary that the equipment is checked to be in proper working condition and that the Veteran and care giver knows who to reach in case of malfunction.

(2) The resident and/or care giver must demonstrate safe and proper use of adaptive equipment.