

HOSPITAL CARE AND MEDICAL SERVICES IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive recertifies VHA Handbook 1601F.05, Hospital Care and Medical Services in Foreign Countries, dated April 1, 2016, and updates information regarding Veteran health care benefits received in foreign countries under the Foreign Medical Program (FMP).

2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES: This directive has been revised as follows:

a. Adds responsibilities to the Under Secretary for Health; Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Community Care; Office of Community Care (OCC) Executive Directors who include the Executive Director, Business Operations and Administration and the Executive Director, Delivery Operations; Director OCC Policy; and FMP Program Manager to account for the full chain of responsibility and organizational changes (see paragraph 5).

b. Adds clarification regarding registration in FMP, including a link for the required Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) FMP registration form (see paragraph 7).

c. Adds authorities governing claims submissions, a link to the required VA form (FMP claim cover sheet) and mailing addresses for submitting claims (see paragraph 8).

d. Adds the link for the FMP Operational Policy Manual (see paragraph 5.e.).

3. RELATED ISSUES: VHA Directive 1521, Outpatient Health Care for United States Veterans Residing in or Visiting the Philippines at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Clinic in Manila, dated February 5, 2018.

4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The VHA Office of Community Care (13) is responsible for the content of this directive. Questions may be addressed to VHA13CommunityCareAction@va.gov.

5. RESCISSION: VHA Handbook 1601F.05, Hospital Care and Medical Services in Foreign Countries, dated April 1, 2016, is rescinded.

6. RECERTIFICATION: This VHA directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of October 2026. This VHA directive will continue to serve as national VHA policy until it is recertified or rescinded.

October 19, 2021

VHA DIRECTIVE 1601F.05

**BY DIRECTION OF THE OFFICE OF
THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH:**

/s/ Julianne Flynn, MD
Acting Assistant Under Secretary for Health
for Community Care

NOTE: All references herein to VA and VHA documents incorporate by reference subsequent VA and VHA documents on the same or similar subject matter.

DISTRIBUTION: Emailed to the VHA Publication Distribution List on October 21, 2021.

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HOSPITAL CARE AND MEDICAL SERVICES IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive states standards regarding Veterans' health care benefits received in foreign countries under the Foreign Medical Program (FMP). **AUTHORITY:** 38 U.S.C. §§ 1724, 7301(b); 38 C.F.R. § 17.35.

2. BACKGROUND

The only Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facility in a foreign country is the Manila Outpatient Clinic in the Philippines. Veterans living or traveling in foreign countries, including the Philippines, who are unable to access a VA medical facility may be reimbursed through FMP for eligible care received from foreign medical providers. For information regarding the delivery of outpatient health care services through the Manila Outpatient Clinic, refer to 38 C.F.R. § 17.35 and VHA Directive 1521, Outpatient Health Care for U.S. Veterans Residing in or Visiting the Philippines at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Clinic in Manila, dated February 5, 2018.

3. DEFINITIONS

a. **Foreign Country.** For the purposes of this directive and consistent with 38 U.S.C. § 101, a foreign country is any place other than each of the several States, territories and possessions of the United States, the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. ***NOTE:*** *VA cannot reimburse the cost of any treatment services provided in countries to which the U.S. Department of Treasury prohibits issuance of treasury checks or in which the U.S. Secretary of State prohibits travel.*

b. **Foreign Medical Program.** For purposes of this directive, FMP is a VA health care benefits program for Veterans who are residing or traveling abroad and have VA-rated, service-connected disabilities. FMP assumes payment responsibility for U.S. Veterans only for a VA-rated service-connected disability, or any disability associated with and held to be aggravating a VA-rated, service-connected disability, or to a Veteran participating in a rehabilitation program under 38 U.S.C. chapter 31. FMP is VHA's program to provide care for service-connected Veterans in foreign countries, to include the Philippines.

c. **Foreign Medical Provider.** For purposes of this directive, a foreign medical provider is a non-VA provider of medical services (including providers of medical supplies, durable medical equipment or medications) in a covered foreign country, who is licensed by the foreign country to provide such care.

d. **Service-Connected Disability.** For purposes of this directive and consistent with 38 U.S.C. § 101, a service-connected disability is a condition rated by VA as 0-100% compensable due to having been incurred or aggravated in line of duty in the active military, naval or air service.

4. POLICY

It is VHA policy that while traveling or residing outside the U.S., eligible Veterans have access to all aspects of FMP, including the Veteran's registration process, verification of eligibility, authorization of medical benefits, and the reimbursement of claims for covered medical services.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health is responsible for ensuring overall VHA compliance with this directive.

b. **Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Community Care.** The Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Community Care is responsible for supporting the Office of Community Care (OCC) with oversight and implementation of this directive.

c. **Executive Director, Business Operations and Administration.** The Executive Director, OCC Business Operations and Administration is responsible for oversight of responsibilities under this directive to be implemented by the Director, OCC Policy.

d. **Executive Director, Delivery Operations.** The Executive Director, OCC Delivery Operations is responsible for:

(1) Maintaining oversight of programmatic management of FMP.

(2) Establishing centralized reporting requirements to be completed by the FMP Program Manager, as needed.

(3) Providing liaison support to Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Community Care, VA Central Office staff and other Federal agencies.

e. **Director, OCC Policy.** The Director, OCC Policy is responsible for maintaining the FMP Operational Policy Manual consistent with applicable public laws, statutes, regulations and established program requirements. **NOTE:** *The FMP Operational Policy Manual, detailing OCC implementation of FMP statutes and regulations, benefits and payment methodologies, is available at:*

https://www.vha.cc.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/554400000001036.

f. **Program Manager, Foreign Medical Program.** The FMP Program Manager is responsible for:

(1) Managing FMP, which includes oversight for activities such as planning, organizing, directing, budgeting, coordinating, evaluating and improving administrative operations.

(2) Maintaining and implementing internal controls to ensure processing of Veteran registration, authorization of benefits and reimbursement of claims consistent with applicable public laws, statutes, regulations and established program requirements.

(3) Fulfilling centralized reporting requirements for the Executive Director, OCC Delivery Operations, which includes reports such as audit findings and timeliness of claims processing.

6. ELIGIBILITY

Under FMP (see 38 C.F.R. § 17.35) VA may furnish hospital care and outpatient services to any Veteran outside of the United States, without regard to the Veteran's citizenship:

a. If necessary for treatment of a service-connected disability or any disability associated with and held to be aggravating a service-connected disability; or

b. If the care and services are furnished to a Veteran participating in a rehabilitation program under 38 U.S.C. chapter 31, who requires care for the reasons enumerated in 38 C.F.R. § 17.47(i)(2).

7. REGISTRATION

a. VA recommends that Veterans register in FMP before moving or traveling abroad. While registration before receiving services from a foreign medical provider is not required, registration must be completed before any claims for reimbursement may be paid. **NOTE:** *Registration is not a preauthorization of care; FMP does not preauthorize care.*

b. To register for FMP, the Veteran must submit a completed VA Form 10-7959f-1 (Foreign Medical Program Registration Form), available at: <https://www.va.gov/find-forms/>.

c. The completed registration form may be submitted by mail or fax to:

Mail: VHA Office of Community Care
P.O. Box 469061
Denver, CO 80246-9061

Fax: 1-303-331-7803

8. CLAIM SUBMISSION

a. Claims for payment or reimbursement are governed by 38 C.F.R. §§ 17.123-17.127 and 17.129-17.132.

b. All claims must include VA Form 10-7959F-2 (FMP Claim Coversheet), available at: <https://www.va.gov/find-forms/>.

c. Veterans who are in a VA vocational rehabilitation program and submitting an FMP claim for treatment of a non-service-connected disability must submit a referral for this care signed by their VA vocational rehabilitation program case manager.

d. For hospital care and outpatient services provided in Canada to Veterans who are Canadian residents, the phone number for inquiries is 888-996-2242, and claims may be mailed to:

Veterans Affairs Canada, Foreign Countries Operations Unit
PO Box 6000
Matane, QC Canada G4W OE4

e. For hospital care and outpatient services provided in all other foreign countries and services provided in Canada to non-Canadian residents, the phone number for inquiries is 877-345-8179, and claims may be mailed to:

Office of Community Care, Foreign Medical Program
P.O. Box 469061
Denver, CO 80246-9061

9. TRAINING

There are no formal training requirements associated with this directive.

10. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

All records regardless of format (e.g., paper, electronic, electronic systems) created by this directive must be managed as required by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) approved records schedules found in VHA Records Control Schedule 10-1. Questions regarding any aspect of records management should be addressed to the appropriate Records Officer.

11. REFERENCES

a. 38 U.S.C. §§ 101, 1724, 7301(b), chapter 31.

b. 38 C.F.R. §§ 17.123-17.127, 17.129-17.132, 17.35, 17.47(i)(2).

c. VHA Directive 1521, Outpatient Health Care for United States Veterans Residing in or Visiting the Philippines at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Clinic in Manila, dated February 5, 2018.

d. Foreign Medical Program Operational Policy Manual:

https://www.vha.cc.va.gov/system/templates/selfservice/va_ssnew/help/customer/locale/en-US/portal/55440000001036.