



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration  
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System

**NEWS RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System surpasses 32,000 telehealth encounters in 2020**

*VA Video Connect visits increase over 1000% nationwide during COVID-19 pandemic*

PITTSBURGH – VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) has conducted more than 32,000 telehealth encounters for over 16,000 veterans throughout western Pennsylvania and parts of Ohio and West Virginia so far this fiscal year. VA Video Connect (VVC), launched three years ago this July, alone accounts for over 14,000 of the telehealth encounters, an 829% increase compared to the same time last year.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently announced video telehealth appointments to veterans' homes [increased over 1000%](#) between February and May as veterans increasingly chose virtual care through VA Video Connect during the COVID-19 pandemic.

VVC allows veterans and their caregivers to meet virtually with their VA care teams on any computer, tablet or mobile device with an internet connection. As in-person interactions decreased in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, VVC supported veterans' abilities to continue care and remain safely at home. Usage of video-to-home services has been increasing since mid-March, with peak usage reaching over 29,000 appointments per day nationally.

VAPHS' Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACTs) and mental health (MH) professionals also deliver telehealth services to veterans in their own homes or in non-VA settings. Between fiscal year 2019 and fiscal year 2020, VAPHS has seen significant increases in veterans using many of its telehealth specialties such as clinical pharmacy, home-based primary care, audiology, occupational therapy and orthopedic care. Other telehealth milestones for the fiscal year so far at VAPHS include:

- Over 11,000 Clinical Video Telehealth encounters
- Over 5,000 Veterans served through Store and Forward telehealth
- Over 1,000 Veterans served through Home Telehealth

“At VA Pittsburgh, we are proud to be one of many VA medical centers across the nation maintaining access to high-quality health care for our veterans during these challenging times,” said VAPHS Director Donald Koenig. “As we near the three-year anniversary of the launch of VA Video Connect, telehealth is becoming increasingly more popular and we remain committed to ensuring veterans have access to care where and when they need it.”

In addition to increased access to care through telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic, VA Pittsburgh has completed over 35,000 telephone visits with Veterans since March, including a jump from over 3,000 in March to over 10,000 in April.

VA is also taking strides to bridge the digital divide for veterans who lack the technology or broadband internet connectivity required to participate in VA telehealth services. At the national level, [VA is working with strategic partners](#), through the [VA Secretary's Center of Strategic Partnerships](#), to increase access to the technology that veterans need to connect with their VA health care team virtually.

Read more about [VA Video Connect](#). For information about VA's telehealth services visit [connectedcare.va.gov](https://connectedcare.va.gov).

To schedule an interview with a veteran patient who has used telehealth at VAPHS or with a VAPHS telehealth program specialist, contact Hope Nelson at 412-822-3528 or [VAPHSMediaRelations@va.gov](mailto:VAPHSMediaRelations@va.gov).

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#### **About VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System**

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System is one of the largest and most progressive VA health care systems in the nation. More than 3,700 employees serve nearly 80,000 veterans every year, providing a range of services from complex transplant medicine to routine primary care. It is a leader in virtual care delivery through telehealth technology; a center of research and learning with more than 300 active research projects and \$30 million in funding; and a provider of state-of-the-art health care training to some 600 residents and students annually.

VA Pittsburgh provides veterans' health care services at its medical centers in Oakland and O'Hara Township and its outpatient clinics in Beaver, Fayette, Washington and Westmoreland counties in Pennsylvania and Belmont County in Ohio.

Veterans can call 412-822-2040 to check their eligibility and enrollment. Stay connected and up to date on the latest VA Pittsburgh news and events at [pittsburgh.va.gov](https://pittsburgh.va.gov), [@VAPHS](#) on Facebook and [@VAPittsburgh](#) on Twitter.