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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Newly enrolled Veterans have three options for primary care services at VA Loma Linda Healthcare System

LOMA LINDA, Calif. — VA Loma Linda Healthcare System is temporarily pausing new enrollments to community-based outpatient clinics and expanding telehealth and community care options for eligible Veterans, effective June 1.

The community-based VA clinics located in Rancho Cucamonga, Corona, Murietta, Victorville, and Palm Desert managed by STGI have reached peak enrollment capacity.

In an effort to mitigate full provider schedules in community-based outpatient clinics and ensure Veterans receive timely care, eligible Veterans will be offered several care options, including referrals to the Community Care network for up to six months.

"The good news is, we're full. The bad news is, we're full," said Dr. Vernon Sechriest, VA Loma Linda Healthcare System chief of staff. "Based on the current staffing levels and provider scheduling requirements, we are operating at maximum capacity in the Community Based Outpatient Clinics; however, we're looking at multiple ways to expand our access and ensure that Veterans can get their care at VA clinics."

Veterans that would like to be assigned to a community VA clinic or CBOC may not be able to do so immediately but can choose the Ambulatory Care Center in Redlands, telehealth, or a referral for care through a VA Community Care network provider up to six months.

According to Sechriest, the enrollment pause is projected to last about six months while STGi, the CBOC management company, works to recruit and hire more healthcare providers. VA Loma Linda's clinical management team is actively partnering with the STGi team to ensure the hiring and onboarding processes are streamlined and improve community access.

This means that Veterans living near a CBOC will need to select care at the ACC, utilize telehealth options, or receive a referral for up to six months at a VA community care network provider.

"The situation is fluid, and we will actively enroll Veterans in their preferred community VA Clinic as space becomes available. The wait may be shorter for some clinics based on factors at the individual clinics," said Sechriest.

Community-based outpatient clinics provide common primary care services and allow Veterans to obtain access closer to home.

"We know Veterans want to get care close to where they live, and our CBOCs provide that option. At this juncture, we're exploring multiple options with the contractor to improve access at the CBOCs, said Joan McKenzie-Hobbs, VA Loma Linda Healthcare System acting assistant director. "We appreciate their patience and cooperation while navigating this situation and believe that access will continue to improve over the next six months."

Veterans can expect a thorough description of options at enrollment and will be notified when space becomes available at their preferred clinic.

Under the VA MISSION Act of 2018, VA medical facilities work to ensure Veterans have better access and greater choice in health care at VA or a community provider.

"Our mission is to ensure our Veterans have access to the care they need. We want them to choose VA; however, sometimes, we temporarily need to adjust processes to make sure that happens. We are committed to ensuring our Veteran population receives safe, quality care." Mr. Karandeep Sraon, Medical Center Director, said.