

## **VETERANS CHOICE PROGRAM (VCP) & THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY CARE FACT SHEET**

### **What is the Veterans Choice Program?**

On August 7, 2014, the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA) was signed into law. Part of this law included the creation of the Veterans Choice Program (VCP). The VCP allows Veterans who are already enrolled in VA health care to receive health care in their community, while still having access to their regular VA health care. The current program allows Veterans who have to wait more than 30 days or travel over 40 miles for an appointment. A new law, which was enacted on April 19, 2017, made several changes to the VCP. It removed the August 7, 2017 expiration date, made VA the primary coordinator of benefits, and aligned VCP with traditional community care programs.

### **Impact of the Veterans Choice Program and Community Care**

VCP is an important cornerstone of community care and VA's mission to ensure that Veterans receive the highest quality health care available, designed around best medical practices, and receive access to care in the community when they need it. Over 1.6 million Veterans have received care from VCP since it was introduced, and more Veterans are utilizing community care and VCP than ever before.

- More than 3 million authorizations have been issued under VCP since its inception.
- VA has completed more than 8.7 million appointments through VCP.
- Over 1.6 million unique Veterans have used VCP since the program's inception.
- VCP contractors are embedded on site in over 70 locations facilitating closer collaboration with VA staff.
- The Choice Provider Network has expanded to more than 433,000 providers, a 147 percent growth since program inception.

### **The Future of Community Care**

VA is excited about the passing of the VCP extension law and the immediate impact it will have on the VCP. While we are happy about the recent legislative changes, we know that more needs to be done. VA cannot streamline care and improve the VCP without help from Congress. The law is a bridge to allow us time to partner with Congress and all of our stakeholders to create one community care program that is simple to administer, easy to understand, and meets the needs of Veterans and their families, community providers, and VA staff. Even though the recent law removed the expiration date for the VCP, VA anticipates that the funding for the program will be expended by the end of calendar year 2017, if not sooner.

The future community care program is part of a bold transformation by VHA Office of Community Care and will require legislation that must include:

- Flexibility for Veterans to get care closer to home by reevaluating the multiple layers of eligibility criteria, including living 40 miles away from a VA primary care physician or waiting more than 30 days
- A high-performing network of community care providers, which has DoD, other federal, and academic affiliate partners as the foundation, and reimburses for care using contemporary payment models



The future of community care means Veterans will have:

- More options to access care and improved access to community care
- The option to choose to manage their own care or work with a navigator to coordinate their care

