



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# News Release

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### National 'Access Stand Down' Successful

*Stand Down is Part of VA Commitment to Reduce Patient Wait Times*

WASHINGTON – As part of a large-scale and immediate effort to assess the urgent health care needs of Veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs conducted a second “Access Stand Down” February 27. That countrywide, one-day event resulted in VA reviewing the records of more than 80,000 Veterans to get those waiting for urgent care off wait lists. Newly released results of the Access Stand Down show that 93 percent of Veterans waiting for urgent care have been contacted, with many receiving earlier appointments.

“VA’s ability to meet the primary and urgent health care needs of our Veterans is a priority for us, and why we established MyVA, which focuses all that we do around our Veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert McDonald. “The Access Stand Down is just another way we are changing VA’s culture, processes and capabilities to put the needs, expectations and interests of Veterans and their families first.”

In determining priority of need for the stand down, VA broke down the urgent care requests into four categories:

- **Important and Acute**, clinical concerns with highest impact on patient outcome and more time-sensitive such as cardiology;
- **Important and Chronic**, services that address primarily long-term problems with medium risk and time sensitivity such as primary care or audiology;
- **Routine**, clinical activities judged to have low relative risk and time sensitivity or focusing on non-medical matters such as genomic medicine or telephone case management; and
- **Support Services**, which contribute to Veteran well-being such as nutrition and dietetics.

“We know that in order to best serve Veterans, we should be prioritizing those who need care most urgently,” said Dr. David Shulkin, VA Under Secretary for Health, who continues to see patients. “That was the focus of this Access Stand Down: to look at the patients who needed our help the most and were waiting too long. As a result of this nationwide effort with that attention to urgency in mind, I’m proud that our physicians, nurses, other health care professionals and administrative support personnel all came together on a Saturday to work to find earlier appointments for 93 percent of our Veterans with urgent-care needs.”

### INCREASING ACCESS TO CARE

- We are making lasting improvements in access to VA care expanding capacity by focusing on staffing, space, productivity and VA Community Care.
- Staffing in the Veteran Health Administration is up more than 14,100 net — to include over 1,400 more physicians and 4,100 more nurses.
- We’ve activated over 3.9 million square feet in the past two years.
- We’ve increased authorizations for care in the community 46 percent in the past two years.
- Clinic production is up 10 percent as measured by the same productivity standard used by many private-sector healthcare systems. This increase translates into roughly 20 million additional hours of care for Veterans.
- As we improve access to care, more and more Veterans are choosing VA care — for the quality, for the convenience, or for the cost-savings so even though we’re completing millions more appointments, we continue to have more work to do.
- This past weekend, VA facilities across the nation completed a second Access Stand Down to connect with Veterans that have urgent health care needs, address their needs and reduce the number of Veterans waiting greater than 30-days for urgent care. This event also aimed to improve our employee experience by streamlining access to care processes.

For more information about the Access Stand Down along with images from the daylong event, visit [www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/26195/2nd-national-access-stand-down-reinforces/](http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/26195/2nd-national-access-stand-down-reinforces/).

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