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News Release

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VA Announces Changes to Improve Delivery of Specialty Rehabilitation and Prosthetic Services

WASHINGTON — With a commitment to ensure Veterans receive quicker access to specialty rehabilitation services and equipment, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently implemented a rapid response team to expand staffing and training, increase communication directly with Veterans and improve processes to reduce and eliminate the backlog of pending requests for prosthetic items and services.

To improve Veterans' access to specialty rehabilitation services, enrolled patients at VA medical centers can now schedule appointments directly with amputation care and wheelchair clinics, without having to first see a primary care provider.

This means Veterans will not have to make an extra appointment and travel to a VA facility for a referral. Direct scheduling is currently available at 137 VA facilities for amputation care and at 124 VA facilities for wheelchair clinics.

Additionally, same-day access for orthotist/prosthetist clinical services is available at 141 VA facilities.

"The dedication and support of the multidisciplinary team of VA employees who are implementing these improvements demonstrate their commitment to do the right thing for our Veterans," said Robert Wilkie, Acting Secretary of Veterans Affairs. "We are focused on implementing the best solutions to modernize how we deliver rehabilitation and prosthetic services across all VA medical centers — ensuring Veterans nationwide are receiving timely and integrated health care and support."

As the largest and most comprehensive provider of prosthetic devices and sensory aids in the country, [VA Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service](#) currently averages 638,000 new requests monthly across its health-care system for such items. The service provides a full range of equipment and services to Veterans, including artificial limbs and bracing, wheeled mobility and seating systems, sensory-neural aids (e.g., hearing aids, eyeglasses), implants and devices surgically placed in the Veteran (e.g., hips and pacemakers), and home respiratory care.

VA is working to ensure Veterans are receiving their medical items, equipment and supplies sooner. Since June 2017, the total number of requests for prosthetic items pending for more than 30 days has been reduced by 72 percent.

As VA continues to look for modern, simple ways to improve care for America's Veterans, additional process improvements for prosthetic and specialty rehabilitation services will be fully implemented at all VA medical centers in 2018.

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