

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Choice Program

Toolkit for Outreach Partners



Current as of June 14, 2015

Partner With Us to Get the Word Out

Here at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), one of our highest priorities is implementing the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA). Enacted in August, 2014, this legislation goes a long way toward enabling VA to meet the demand for Veterans health care in the short-term. VA has put considerable focus and attention on ensuring the law is implemented seamlessly, without confusion, and without creating hardships for Veterans. As required by the law, VA has established the temporary Veterans Choice Program (Choice Program), which allows eligible Veterans to access health care in their community.

We have a common goal: to take care of our Nation's Veterans and improve their access to care. The Department greatly values our ongoing collaboration and partnership, and we know that Veterans look to you as a trusted source of information and guidance. We believe you are uniquely positioned to help us spread the word about the Choice Program. The information and materials in this toolkit will help you more easily share information about the Choice Program to spread understanding about who is eligible and how to participate. They will also help you let potential partners, government officials, and the public know how the Choice Program contributes to the longer-term goal of enhancing Veterans' access to the care and benefits they need and have earned.

The materials in this toolkit show a number of outreach possibilities and offer your organization or office the flexibility to pick and choose pieces that work for your specific communication needs. Each section features useful materials (such as fact sheets, frequently asked questions, and social media content) and tips for actively engaging with VA. We also have included sample communications and templates that you can customize for specific events and combine with any information you create on your own.

Background

On August 7, 2014, President Obama signed into law the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-146) (“VACAA”). The Department of Veterans Affairs’ (VA) goal continues to be to provide timely, high-quality health care for Veterans.

In order to improve VA’s ability to deliver high-quality health care to Veterans, section 101 of VACAA requires VA to implement the Veterans Choice Program to expand the options for eligible Veterans to elect to use non-VA health care for a period of up to three years or until the funds for the Program are expended. Veterans who meet certain eligibility requirements are able to elect to receive care from eligible non-VA entities and providers through the Program. Prior to VACAA being passed, VA had mechanisms in place to purchase non-VA care, which are still available to VA. VACAA will enhance VA’s non-VA care options.

Choice Fund and Choice Program

VACAA includes a \$10 billion fund from which VA must pay for non-VA care furnished as part of the Choice Program.

Eligibility

A Veteran must have been enrolled in VA health care on or before August 1, 2014, or be eligible to enroll as a recently discharged combat Veteran. Additionally, a Veteran must also meet at least one of the following criteria.

- A) The Veteran is told by his/her local VA medical facility that he/she will need to wait more than 30 days for an appointment from the date clinically determined by his/her physician or, if no such date is provided, the Veteran’s preferred date.
- B) The Veteran’s current residence is more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility.
- C) The Veteran resides in a location other than Guam, American Samoa, or the Republic of the Philippines and needs to travel by plane or boat to the VA medical facility closest to his/her home.
- D) The Veteran faces an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to the closest VA medical facility based on geographic challenges, environmental factors, or a medical condition. Staff at the Veteran’s local VA medical facility will work with him/her to determine if he/she is eligible for any of these reasons.
- E) Resides in a State or a United States Territory without a full-service VA medical facility that provides hospital care, emergency services and surgical care having a surgical complexity of standard, and resides more than 20 miles from such a VA facility. NOTE: This criterion applies to Veterans residing in Alaska, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Also note that some Veterans in New Hampshire reside within 20 miles of the White River Junction VAMC.

Cost Sharing

If an eligible Veteran has another health care plan, VA will be secondarily responsible for costs associated with non-service connected care and services furnished to eligible Veterans through the Choice Program. For all service-connected care, VA is the primary payer and the Veteran has no out-of-pocket costs.

Medical Records

When a Veteran receives care from an eligible non-VA health care entity or provider, the entity or provider must submit to VA a copy of any medical record information related to the care and services provided. This information will be included in the Veteran’s medical record maintained by the Department.

Notification of Veterans and Choice Card

The primary means of notifying Veterans of their eligibility under this program was the distribution of a letter with a punch-out card to be used for this program. As of February 1, 2015, VA has mailed out cards to all Veterans enrolled in VA health care – about 8.6 million cards. Approximately 600,000 Veterans were determined to be “immediately eligible” – about 300,000 who reside at least 40 miles from a VA treatment facility, and the balance currently waiting longer than 30 days for care.

On April 24, 2015, VA expanded eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program. The Department of Veterans Affairs announced that, effective immediately, it will determine eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program based on the distance between a Veteran’s place of residence and the nearest VA medical facility using driving distance rather than straight-line distance.

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Veterans Choice Card Temporary Program

Name: JOHN SAMPLE
Member ID: 1234567890
Date of Issuance: November 2014

Call 1-866-606-8198 for information or to make an appointment

This card does not provide pre-approval. Veterans may be liable for the cost of care that is not pre-approved.

(C/M) 1223 1223 VA-VA- (M) (D) (V) 1817
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

01'Grab-and-Go'
Print Materials**02**

'Plug-and-Play' Content

03

Social Media Support

04

Using VA as a Resource

You can download each piece of the toolkit for customization and distribution at

www.va.gov/opa/toolkit

01

'Grab-and-Go' Print Materials

These materials can be printed and shared with Veterans and any other stakeholders. This information can also be repurposed to support any inquiries received via telephone, email, or in-person.

- Veterans Choice Program: 101 For Veterans
- Veterans Choice Program: 101 For Partners
- Veterans Choice Program Flyer
- Pocket-References
- Questions & Answers by Topic
- Fact Sheet on Expansion of Choice Program Eligibility



Veterans Choice Program: 101 For Veterans

The Veterans Choice Program (VCP) is a temporary program to improve Veterans' access to health care by allowing eligible Veterans to use approved health care providers outside of VA. Section 101 of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACCA) required that VA establish the program.

Am I eligible for the program?

You must have been enrolled in VA health care on or before August 1, 2014, or be eligible to enroll as a recently discharged combat Veteran. Additionally, you must also meet at least one of the following criteria:

- You are told by your local VA medical facility that you will need to wait more than 30 days for an appointment from the date clinically determined by your physician, or, if not such date is provided, our preferred date.
- Your residence is more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility.
- You need to travel by plane or boat to the VA medical facility closest to your home.
- You face an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to the closest VA medical facility based on geographic challenges, environmental factors, or a medical condition. Staff at your local VA medical facility will work with you to determine if you are eligible for any of these reasons.
- You reside in a State or a United States Territory without a full-service VA medical facility that provides hospital care, emergency services, and surgical care having a surgical complexity of standard, and reside more than 20 miles from such a VA medical facility. NOTE: This criterion applies to Veterans residing in Alaska, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Also note that some Veterans in New Hampshire reside within 20 miles of White River Junction VAMC.

What do I need to know about getting an appointment through the program?

You **must** call the Choice Program Call Center at **866-606-8198** to verify your eligibility and set up an appointment. Please note that:

- If you do not receive approval for care under the Veterans Choice Program, you may be responsible for some or all of the costs of the non-VA treatment you receive.
- Unfortunately not all providers will be covered by the Veterans Choice Program. If your preferred provider is not available, we will recommend other providers in your area.

What is the Veterans Choice Card?

VA mailed the Choice Card to Veterans. The Choice Card allows you to choose to receive care outside of VA if you qualify for the new program. The Choice Card doesn't replace the identification card you already use to access other VA benefits. If you are satisfied and wish to continue with your current VA care, there is nothing you need to do at this time. You should save your Choice Card in case you would like to use the program in the future. If you did not receive a Choice Card, you do not need your Choice Card to access the Choice Program. If you did not receive a Choice Card, call 866-606-8198 to find out if you are eligible and to make an appointment.

Where can I get more information?

You can call the Choice Program Call Center at 866-606-8198 or visit: www.va.gov/opa/choiceact.

Veterans

Choice Program

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To find out if you are eligible and to make an appointment call:

866-606-8198

For more information visit: www.va.gov/opa/choiceact



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VA



Veterans Choice Program: 101 For Partners

What is the Veterans Choice Program?

The Veterans Choice Program (VCP) is a temporary program to improve Veterans' access to health care by allowing eligible Veterans to use approved health care providers outside of VA. Section 101 of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACCA) required that VA establish the program. In late 2014, VA began mailing all Veterans a Veterans Choice Card. The Choice Card allows Veterans to choose to receive care outside of VA when they qualify for the new program. The Choice Card doesn't replace the identification card Veterans already use to access other VA benefits.

Who is eligible for the program?

A Veteran must have been enrolled in VA health care on or before August 1, 2014, or be eligible to enroll as a recently discharged combat Veteran. Additionally, a Veteran must also meet at least one of the following criteria:

- The Veteran is told by his/her local VA medical facility that he/she will need to wait more than 30 days for an appointment from the date clinically determined by his/her physician or, if no such date is provided, the Veteran's preferred date.
- The Veteran's residence is more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility.
- The Veteran needs to travel by plane or boat to the VA medical facility closest to his/her home.
- The Veteran faces an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to the closest VA medical facility based on geographic challenges, environmental factors, or a medical condition. Staff at the Veteran's local VA medical facility will work with him/her to determine if he/she is eligible for any of these reasons.
- The Veteran resides in a State or a United States Territory without a full-service VA medical facility that provides hospital care, emergency services and surgical care having a surgical complexity of standard, and resides more than 20 miles from such a VA facility. NOTE: This criterion applies to Veterans residing in Alaska, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Also note that some Veterans in New Hampshire reside within 20 miles of White River Junction VAMC.

How can I keep up to date with the latest updates about the Choice Program?

The Choice Act website is the central resource for the latest updates about the program. There you will find the latest press releases, fact sheet, frequently asked questions, among other information. The Choice Act website can be found by visiting, visit www.va.gov/opa/choiceact. Each VA medical facility has a designated "Choice Champion" who has received specific training on the Choice Program and can answer questions.

What should I tell Veterans who have questions about their eligibility?

- Veterans can call the Choice Program Call Center at 866-606-8198 for more information, to verify eligibility, and make an appointment.
- Veterans can also visit www.va.gov/opa/choiceact for more information about the program.

If I have a question about a specific Veteran, what do I do?

Direct the Veteran to call the Choice Program Call Center or to contact the Choice Champion at their local VA medical facility.

VETERANS CHOICE PROGRAM



VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

The Veterans Choice Program provides eligible Veterans the option to receive non-VA health care from approved providers in their communities.

Am I eligible?



Have you been told by your local VA medical facility that they can't schedule your appointment **within 30 days** of the clinically indicated date or if no such date can be determined, your preferred date?



Is your current residence **more than 40 miles** from the closest VA medical facility?



Do you need to travel by air, boat or ferry to the VA medical facility closest to your home?



Do you face an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to the closest VA medical facility based on geographic challenges, environmental factors, or a medical condition? Staff at your local VA medical facility will work with you to determine if you are eligible for any of these reasons.

If you were enrolled in VA Health care on or before Aug 1, 2014 or you are eligible to enroll as a combat Veteran, and answered

“YES”

to any of the questions, you may be eligible!

How do I set up an appointment?

Call:
866-606-8198

1

Gather your information about any other health insurance coverage you may have (e.g., employer, union-based health plans)



2

Call 1-866-606-8198 to make sure you qualify + schedule an appointment. When you call, we will walk you through the following steps:

- You will be asked to enter your ZIP code, and first and last name.
- We will check to make sure you are eligible for this program.
- We will check which of your needs are covered by the VA.
- You will be asked for your address and the name of your preferred non-VA provider. Unfortunately, not all providers will be covered so if your preferred provider is not available, we will recommend other providers in your area.



3

We will then work with you to schedule an appointment.



This hotline is exclusively for making sure you are eligible for the Choice Program and setting up a non-VA care appointment. If you have questions about other aspects of your VA medical care or want to learn more about enrolling in VA health services, please visit www.va.gov/health.



➤ Questions & Answers by Topic

*Please ensure that when a Veteran is in doubt about any of their eligibility or care, they call the Choice Program Call Center at **866-606-8198**.*

➤ Eligibility

How can I confirm if I am eligible for the Choice Program?

To be eligible for the Choice Program, you must have been enrolled in VA health care on or before August 1, 2014, or be qualified to enroll as a recently discharged combat Veteran. Additionally, you must also meet at least one of the following criteria:

- You are told by your local VA medical facility that you will need to wait more than 30 days for an appointment from the date clinically determined by your physician, or, if not such date is provided, our preferred date.
- Your residence is more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA health care facility.
- You need to travel by plane or boat to the VA medical facility closest to your home.
- You face an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to the closest VA medical facility based on geographic challenges, environmental factors, or a medical condition. Staff at your local VA medical facility will work with you to determine you are eligible for any of these reasons.
- You reside in a State or a United States Territory without a full-service VA medical facility that provides hospital care, emergency services, and surgical care having a surgical complexity of standard, and reside more than 20 miles from such a VA medical facility. NOTE: This criterion applies to Veterans residing in Alaska, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Also note that some Veterans in New Hampshire reside within 20 miles of White River Junction VAMC.

What happens once I have been determined as eligible?

If a staff member at your local VA facility determines you are eligible, or you believe you are eligible, and you are interested in using the Program, you should call the Choice Program Call Center at 866-606-8198 to set up an appointment.

One of the eligibility factors is the inability to get an appointment within 30 days. Can you expand on what this means?

If the VA facility is not able to schedule your appointment to occur up to 30 days from your clinically indicated date, you will be eligible to participate in the Choice Program for that particular appointment. If no such clinically indicated date can be determined, you will qualify for the Veterans Choice Program if the VA facility is not able to schedule your appointment to occur up to 30 days from the date you prefer to be seen.

What does clinically indicated date mean?

The clinically indicated date is the date you and your medical provider agree should be the next date you are seen for care. If the VA medical facility is unable to schedule an appointment up to 30 days from that date you may be eligible for the Veterans Choice Program.

➤ Questions & Answers by Topic

Is the 40 mile calculation based on the distance from a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic or the main VA where I am enrolled?

This calculation is based on the driving distance from your permanent residence, or an active temporary address, to the closest VA facility which includes Community-Based Outpatient Clinics and VA Medical Centers.

I have to commute to the nearest VA Medical Center by boat; can you explain the Air, Boat and Ferry eligibility requirements?

If your local VA medical facility eligibility staff determines that you must travel from your residence to the nearest VA medical facility by air, boat, or ferry, they will inform you that you are eligible for the Veterans Choice Program. Once you are informed of your eligibility, call the Choice Program Call Center at 866-606-8198 to make an appointment.

I didn't get my Choice Card, what do I do?

You do not need your Choice Card to access the Choice Program. If you didn't receive a Choice Card, call **866-606-8198** to find out if you are eligible and to make an appointment.

If I do not qualify for the Veterans Choice Program, are there other options I can use to access non-VA health care?

Yes, there are other non-VA care programs you may be able to use. Each program has its own eligibility requirements. Talk to your VA medical provider or visit <http://www.va.gov/purchasedcare/> for more information about these programs.



Can I call my non-VA doctor to make an appointment?

No, please call the Choice Program call center at **866-606-8198** to verify eligibility and make your appointment.

If my appointment is over 30 days or I live more than 40 miles away, can I see my doctor at the VA?

Yes, the Choice Program is an opportunity for Veterans to choose how they would like to receive care. Even if you are eligible for the Program, you may see your doctor at the VA.



My doctor doesn't currently participate in the Choice Program, can he/she join?

Yes. VA is actively seeking to expand its network of community providers. Your doctor can call **866-606-8198** to learn more about the Veterans Choice Program and to become an approved Choice provider. If your preferred provider is not available under the Program, we will recommend other providers in your area. Your doctor can find more information here:

http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/for_providers.asp

- o HealthNet: <https://www.hnfs.com/content/hnfs/home/va/home/provider.html>
- o TriWEST: <https://vapccc.triwest.com/PCCCWeb/index.html#/home>

If I cancel an appointment and then reschedule, how will that change the clinically indicated date?

If you cancel or reschedule, your provider will specify a new clinically indicated date. If the re-scheduled appointment is more than 30 days from that date, then you may be eligible for the Choice Program.

How do I get my prescription filled if I use the Choice Program?

The Choice Program non-VA Provider will issue a prescription to the Veteran with up to a 14 day supply of an urgently or emergently needed National Formulary drug. The Veteran may have the 14 day supply prescription filled at any non-VA pharmacy of his/her choosing and may submit a request for reimbursement to VA. For prescriptions that are not urgent or emergent, please follow standard procedures to fill a prescription at the VA pharmacy.

Can I use the Choice Program and see my doctor at my local VA medical facility?

Yes. The Choice Program is not an "either/or" situation. If you use the Choice Program to receive one type care, you can still continue to receive care at the VA for other types of care. For example, if you qualify for the Choice Program to see a urologist under the 30 day eligibility requirement, you can go see your VA physician for any other type of care.

If I can't get a primary care appointment in 30 days, can I use the Choice Program?

Yes, primary care is covered under the Choice Program.

Is Emergency care covered by the Choice Program?

No, emergency care is not covered under the Choice Program. All care under the Choice Program is required to be preauthorized. VA has other options for you if you require emergency care. Please contact your local VA medical facility for more information.

Do I qualify for the Choice Program for specialty care or elective surgery, such as cataract surgery?

Yes, you can be referred to the Choice Program for any type of care except emergency and long-term care.

I use prosthetics; can I use the Choice Program?

Yes.

As a female Veteran, I require obstetrics and gynecology services, but the nearest VA medical facility doesn't offer this care. Can I go ahead and use the Veterans Choice Program to get an appointment outside the system?

The Choice Program mileage eligibility is based on the distance between your place of residence and the nearest VA health care facility regardless of the type of care available. However, you may be eligible to use the Program if the VA can't schedule your appointment within 30 days of the clinically indicated date, or if no such date can be determined, your preferred date.

Insurance Information

Do I submit my personal insurance information if I qualify for the Choice Program?

Yes, the Veterans Choice Program requires Veterans with other health insurance to provide that information.

Are there any other health insurance plans that are excluded from Choice Program billing?

The only other health insurance excluded from the Choice Program billing process are government health benefits plans, such as Medicaid, Medicare, and TRICARE.

Will copays be collected by the community provider?

VA copays will not be collected at the time of the appointment but will be billed by VA after the appointment, in the same way as receiving care at your local facility. If you are subject to copayments now, you will be subject to the same copayment requirements under the Choice Program. Your copay amount will be determined after the service is received.

Am I responsible for my private insurance deductible if I get care through the Choice Program?

Yes, if you are receiving non-service connected care. Your private health insurance will be the primary payer for non-service connected care and you may be responsible for the health insurance deductibles cost-shares. If you are receiving service connected care, you will not be responsible for your deductible as VA is primarily responsible for service connected care received through the Choice Program.

Can I use the Choice Program if I don't have personal insurance?

Yes. While submission of private health insurance is a requirement of the Choice Program, not having private health insurance does not exclude you from the Program.

Is my private insurance charged for service connected care?

No, under the Choice Program service connected care is covered by the VA.

VA Expands Veterans Choice Program Eligibility

➤ Background

On August 7, 2014, President Obama signed into law the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Choice Act). The Choice Act required VA to implement the Veterans Choice Program through an interim final rule, and on November 5, 2014, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) published an interim final rulemaking. In that rulemaking, VA adopted a straight-line method for determining eligibility for the Program based on the distance between a Veteran's place of residence and the closest VA medical facility.

On April 24, 2015, VA published a second interim final rule that changed the way VA measures distance for purposes of determining eligibility. VA now considers the distance a Veteran must drive to the nearest VA medical facility, rather than the straight-line or geodesic distance to such a facility. This results in an expansion of eligibility for the Choice Program. The expansion became effective immediately on April 24, 2015.

Additionally on April 24, VA changed the mileage calculation for beneficiary travel. The change will ensure consistency in VA's mileage calculations. The beneficiary travel mileage calculation will now be made using the fastest route instead of the shortest route.

➤ Summary

A Veteran who meets threshold eligibility criteria may be eligible for the Choice Program based on the distance from his or her place of residence to the closest VA medical facility. VA previously determined eligibility based on place of residence using a straight-line measure of distance. VA is now using a driving distance measure.

For example: Under the new distance calculation, a Veteran who lives 40 miles or less, measured using a straight-line distance, from the nearest VA medical facility, but who needs to physically drive more than 40 miles to get there would be eligible for the Veterans Choice Program. Under the previous straight-line distance calculation, this Veteran would not have been eligible for the Program unless he or she was required to wait for an appointment longer than 30 days from his or her preferred date or the date determined to be medically necessary by his or her physician.

The expansion in eligibility increases Veterans' access to high quality, timely healthcare. VA looks forward to continued collaboration with Veterans and our partners to ensure the success of the Veterans Choice Program.

Frequently Asked Questions

When is this rule change effective?

The interim final rule was published in the Federal Register on April 24, 2015, and is effective immediately upon publication.

Why is VA changing this criterion now?

The change in criterion to the program will allow more Veterans to access care when and where they want it. VA believes a driving distance calculation is consistent with the law. The Choice Act does not state how distance should be calculated for purposes of determining eligibility based on place of residence. The straight-line measure adopted by the first interim final rule was consistent with language in the legislative history of the Choice Act.

What mapping tool is used to calculate the 40 miles?

VA will use the commercial product that is used by VA's long-established beneficiary travel program. Because different mapping tools use different proprietary programming, the results may vary among products.

Is it still 40 miles from any VA medical facility or is it 40 miles from a VA medical facility that actually provides the care needed?

This Choice Act requires VA to measure the distance from the Veteran's residence to the closest VA medical facility, even if that facility does not provide the care that is needed. Absent a statutory change, VA does not have the flexibility to adopt an alternative approach.

How does VA plan to notify newly eligible Veterans?

All potentially eligible Veterans already received a Veterans Choice Card. VA sent follow-up letters notifying Veterans who are eligible under the revised mileage calculation.

Who can a Veteran call if they have questions about the Veterans Choice Program or do not remember receiving their Veterans Choice Card?

If a Veteran does not remember receiving a Veterans Choice Card or has other questions about the Choice Program, they can call (866) 606-8198.

Where can I get more information about the program?

Please review the VA Choice website at <http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/>



02

'Plug and Play' Content

This content can be used as source material for any traditional communications you develop or outreach events that your organization plans.

- Text for Electronic and Print Publications
- Sample Briefing Slides

Text for Electronic and Print Publications

If your organization has a regular newsletter, you can include information about the Veterans Choice Program. These samples can be customized for specific audiences.

Brief Blurb

You might be eligible for the Veterans Choice Program! The VA launched the Choice Program on November 5, 2014 as part of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA). This new program gives eligible Veterans the option to receive health care from providers in their communities.

To get started, call **1-866-606-8198**. VA will work with you to determine your eligibility, and if you are eligible to ensure you are approved for care in your community and schedule you with a local care provider.

Extended Text

Option for Care: Veterans Choice Program

Have you heard about the Veterans Choice Program? The VA launched the Choice Program on November 5, 2014 as part of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA). This new program gives eligible Veterans the option to receive health care from providers in their communities.

The Department of Veterans Affairs sent all Veterans a Choice Card. If your eligibility for this new program is verified, the Choice Card provides you with flexibility in meeting your health care needs. Please note that the Choice Card does not replace the identification card you already use to access other VA benefits.

You might be eligible for the Choice Program if:

- You are told by your local VA medical facility that you will need to wait more than 30 days for an appointment from the date clinically determined by your physician, or, if not such date is provided, our preferred date.
- Your residence is more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA health care facility.
- You need to travel by plane or boat to the VA medical facility closest to your home.
- You face an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to the closest VA medical facility based on geographic challenges, environmental factors, or a medical condition. Staff at your local VA medical facility will work with you to determine you are eligible for any of these reasons.
- You reside in a State or a United States Territory without a full-service VA medical facility that provides hospital care, emergency services, and surgical care having a surgical complexity of standard, and reside more than 20 miles from such a VA medical facility. NOTE: This criterion applies to Veterans residing in Alaska, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Also note that some Veterans in New Hampshire reside within 20 miles of White River Junction VAMC." Change first sentence to read: "Yes, the Choice Act does provide the ability to pay for Beneficiary Travel, if you would otherwise be eligible for Beneficiary Travel, to the Choice preferred provider.

To find out if you are eligible for the Choice Program and/or to make an appointment, call **1-866-606-8198**. If you are satisfied and wish to continue with your current VA care, there is nothing you need to do at this time. Save your Choice Card in case you would like to use the program in the future.

Sample Briefing Slides

If you are hosting a gathering of Veterans for an informational session and would like to spread the word about the Veterans Choice Program, you can use these slides to get you started.

You can download them at www.va.gov/opa/toolkit



Insert Your Logo Here

Veterans Choice Program

Sample Choice Program 101 Slides



Insert Your Logo Here

Veterans Choice Program Overview

- The Department of Veterans Affairs strives to ensure quality, timely care for all Veterans.
- In an effort to increase Veterans' access to health care, VA implemented the Veterans Choice Program (VCP) – a program that allows eligible Veterans to use approved health care providers outside of the VA network.
- The Veterans Choice Program was implemented as part of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA).








Insert Your Logo Here

Veterans Choice Cards

- VA mailed all Veterans a Veterans Choice Card. The Choice Card allows you to choose to receive care outside of VA if you qualify for the new program.
- The Choice Card does not replace the identification card you already use to access other VA benefits.
- If you are satisfied and wish to continue with your current VA care, there is nothing you need to do at this time. You should save your Choice Card in case you would like to use the program in the future.
- Don't worry if you did not receive or have misplaced your Choice Card. Call 866-606-8198 to find out if you are eligible for the program and to make an appointment.





Insert Your Logo Here

Determining Eligibility

You must have been enrolled in VA health care on or before August 1, 2014, or you are eligible to enroll as a recently discharged combat Veteran. Additionally, you must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- ✓ You are told by your local VA medical facility that you will need to wait more than 30 days for an appointment from the date clinically determined by your physician, or, if not such date is provided, our preferred date.
- ✓ Your home is more than 40 miles driving distance from the closest VA medical facility.
- ✓ You need to travel by plane or boat to the VA medical facility closest to your home.
- ✓ You face an unusual or excessive burden in traveling to the closest VA medical facility based on geographic challenges, environmental factors, or a medical condition. Staff at your local VA medical facility will work with you to determine you are eligible for any of these reasons.
- ✓ You reside in a State or a United States Territory without a full-service VA medical facility that provides hospital care, emergency services, and surgical care having a surgical complexity of standard, and reside more than 20 miles from such a VA medical facility.

NOTE: This criterion applies to Veterans residing in Alaska, Hawaii, New Hampshire, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Also note that some Veterans in New Hampshire reside within 20 miles of White River Junction VAMC.



Insert Your Logo Here

Making an Appointment

If you believe you have met the qualifying criteria and you believe you are eligible to receive this VA benefit:

Call the Choice Program Call Center at
866-606-8198
 to verify your eligibility and set up an appointment.



Reaching Veterans through Social Media

Social media is a high-impact, low-cost option for directly communicating with Veterans. This approach can assist with distribution of information on the Veterans Choice Program to a wide Veteran audience, drive the conversation regarding Choice Program eligibility requirements, and provide a forum for Veterans to ask questions.

- Engaging with the Department of Veterans Affairs
- Sample Facebook Content
- Sample Twitter Content

Engaging with the Department of Veterans Affairs via Social Media

By partnering with the Department of Veterans Affairs on social media efforts, a broader Veteran audience can be reached through the use of hashtags, tags, references, and retweets. Please see below for ways to engage with VA through social media.

Facebook

Veterans Health Administration (VHA) - U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
www.facebook.com/VeteransHealth

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
www.facebook.com/VeteransAffairs

Twitter

@DeptVetAffairs - twitter.com/DeptVetAffairs/
@VeteransHealth - twitter.com/VeteransHealth

Flickr

www.flickr.com/photos/VeteransAffairs/

Google Plus

plus.google.com/+DeptVetAffairs/posts

Instagram

@DeptVetAffairs - <https://instagram.com/deptvetaffairs/>

You Tube

www.youtube.com/user/DeptVetAffairs

Elog

www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/

Most local VA Medical Centers have individual Facebook pages and/or Twitter handles.
To find your local facilities on social media visit:

www.va.gov/opa/socialmedia.asp

Sample Facebook Content



Facebook

- Attention Veterans: You might be eligible to receive health care through the VA's Veterans Choice Program. Visit <http://va.gov/opa/choiceact/> to get the details!
 - Many Veterans will now have the option to receive non-VA health care rather than waiting for a VA appointment or traveling to a VA facility. VA's new Choice Program covers VA Care in the Community for eligible Veterans. Call **866-606-8198** or visit <http://va.gov/opa/choiceact/> to learn more.
- Veterans - Live more than 40 miles from a VA medical facility? You could be eligible to receive non-VA health care in your community through the VA's Veterans Choice Program. Call **866-606-8198** or visit <http://va.gov/opa/choiceact/> to learn more.
- Veterans – Need to travel by plane or boat to the VA medical facility closest to your home? You could be eligible to receive non-VA health care in your community through the VA's Veterans Choice Program. Call **866-606-8198** or visit <http://va.gov/opa/choiceact/> to learn more.
- Veterans – Have you been told by your local VA medical facility that you will need to wait more than 30 days from your preferred date or the date medically determined by your physician for an appointment? You could be eligible to receive non-VA health care in your community through the VA's Veterans Choice Program. Call **866-606-8198** or visit <http://va.gov/opa/choiceact/> to learn more.

Use this for your Facebook graphic



Veterans
Choice Program

The Veterans Choice Program (VCP) is a temporary program to improve Veterans' access to health care by allowing eligible Veterans to use approved health care providers outside of VA.

To find out if you are eligible and to make an appointment call:
866-606-8198

For more information visit: www.va.gov/opa/choiceact

U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



VA

➤ Sample Twitter Content



Twitter

- Have questions about the #Veterans Choice Program? Get the facts by calling **866-606-8198** or visit **<http://va.gov/opa/choiceact/>**
- #Veterans - You may be eligible to access health care in your community through the Veterans Choice Program **<http://va.gov/opa/choiceact/>**
- VA has rolled out the Choice Program as an option for eligible #Veterans to access health care. Learn more: **<http://va.gov/opa/choiceact/>**
- Looking for more information on the #Veterans Choice Program? Call **866-606-8198** for all the news you can use!
- Looking for more information on the #Veterans Choice Program? Visit **<http://va.gov/opa/choiceact/>** for all the news you can use!

04

Using VA as a Resource

- Involving VA in Your Outreach
- Staying Connected and Up-to-Date



➤ Involving VA in Your Outreach

Planning to host town halls, conference calls or webinars?

The Department of Veterans Affairs is happy to provide a Veterans Choice Program expert to share in-depth information about the program.

Looking for ideas on additional areas to distribute flyers, fact sheets, and Q&A's?

VA can help you partner with local places Veterans frequent such as the post office, grocery store, hardware store, etc.

Need additional social media post ideas?

VA can provide you with a 'Fact of the Week' for both Facebook and Twitter to deliver information to Veterans in bite-size form on a consistent basis.

Want the latest facts and figures about the Veterans Choice Program?

VA can provide you with regular updates about the progress of the program and the statistics about the use of the program by Veterans.

To receive any of the above information, please contact

Jill Snyder, VHA Communications
Jill.Snyder@va.gov



➤ Staying Connected & Up-to-Date

To learn more about the Veterans Choice Program, visit:

www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/

To view the Veterans Choice Program introductory video, visit:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9nnsRIX5b8

To determine if a Veteran is eligible, visit:

www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apps/choice/

To find out how to set up a Veteran Choice appointment, visit:

www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/how_to_get_started.asp

To view the most up-to-date Veterans Choice Program Fact Sheets, visit:

www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/factsheets_and_details.asp

To read the entire Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014, visit:

www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-113publ146/pdf/PLAW-113publ146.pdf

To read a summary of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014, visit:

www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/documents/Choice-Act-Summary.pdf

To find out about other aspects of VA medical care or to learn more about enrolling in VA health services, call 1-877-222-VETS or visit:

www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apps/choice/