1. As part of Veterans Health Administration’s (VHA’s) ongoing efforts to ensure timely access to care for Veterans, this notice establishes system-wide requirements for absences of Hybrid Title 38 health care providers that cause cancellation of patient activities. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care providers who are employed in Hybrid Title 38 positions are responsible for ensuring proper coordination with appropriate management officials for the continued care for their patients during periods of planned absence.

2. To avoid excess wait time for care, cancellation of patient care activities that involve a scheduled patient appointment must be avoided whenever possible. Cancellation of scheduled patient appointments should only occur after all alternatives, such as seeing another provider or a nurse, have been exhausted. To ensure continuity of care, a health care provider must submit to their leave-approving official a request to cancel patient care activities at least 45 days in advance of requesting to cancel patient care.

3. The leave-approving official is responsible for reviewing the request(s), considering all appropriate circumstances and making a decision regarding the request(s) pursuant to any procedures set forth in any collective bargaining agreements (CBA) and within a timeframe established by any CBAs or Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) policy. If a health care provider submits a request for a cancellation of patient care activities less than 45 days in advance, the request must be forwarded by the leave-approving official to the VA medical facility Chief of Staff through the Assistant Chief of Staff and Service Line Manager. The VA medical facility Chief of Staff is responsible for reviewing the request, considering all appropriate circumstances and making a decision regarding the request(s) pursuant to any procedures set forth in any CBA or VISN policy and within the timeframe established by appropriate CBAs or VISN policy.

4. VISN and VA medical facility leadership are responsible for establishing appropriate procedures, implementing these procedures and communicating them to VA medical facility health care providers to execute the requirements for leave requests and requests for cancellation of patient care activities as outlined above.

5. All inquiries concerning this action should be addressed to Dr. Susan Kirsh, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Access to Care (10NG), by email at Susan.Kirsh@va.gov.

6. This VHA notice will be archived as of August 31, 2021.
BY DIRECTION OF THE OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH:

/s/ Renee Oshinski
Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations