



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Fact Sheet

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.gov

Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 Title I: Choice Program and Health Care Collaboration

On August 7, 2014, President Obama signed into law the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-146) (“VACAA”). Technical revisions to VACAA were made on September 26, 2014, when the President signed into law the Department of Veterans Affairs Expiring Authorities Act of 2014 (Public Law 113-175). The Department of Veterans Affairs’ (VA) goal continues to be to provide timely, high-quality health care for Veterans.

Section 101 of VACAA requires VA to establish a temporary program (“the Choice Program”) to improve Veterans’ access to health care by allowing eligible Veterans to use eligible health care providers outside of the VA system (non-VA care). Sections 102 and 103 of VACAA are also discussed below.

Background

In order to improve VA’s ability to deliver high-quality health care to Veterans, section 101 of the VACAA requires VA to expand the options for eligible Veterans to elect to use non-VA health care for a period of up to three years, based either on the distance a Veteran lives from a VA facility, or if he or she is experiencing wait-times beyond the 30 day standard . This is referred to as the Choice Program. Veterans who meet certain eligibility requirements will be able to elect to receive care from eligible non-VA entities and providers through the Program. VA must enter into agreements with eligible non-VA health care entities and providers for them to participate in 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. VA will provide a Choice Card to all Veterans who were enrolled in the VA health care system as of August 1, 2014, and to recently discharged combat Veterans. Eligibility criteria are discussed in greater detail below.

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 within 5 years of separation. 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 from his/her preferred date or the date medically determined by his/her physician.
- b) The Veteran's current residence is more than 40 miles from the closest VA health care 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 a geographic challenge, such as extensive distances around water or other geologic formations, such as mountains, that presents a significant travel hardship.

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 and primarily responsible for service connected care.

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.

Indian Health Service and Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems

VA will work with the Indian Health Service (IHS) to ensure that certain medical facilities operated by an Indian tribe or tribal organization are aware of the opportunity to negotiate reimbursement agreements with VA. This is in accordance with section 102(a) of VACAA.

VA will enter into contracts or agreements with certain Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems (NHHCS) for reimbursement of direct care services provided to eligible Veterans. This is in accordance with section 103 of VACAA.

QUICK FACTS ABOUT YOUR VETERANS *CHOICE CARD*

VISIT WWW.VA.GOV/OPA/CHOICEACT/ FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Before your Veterans Choice Card can be used, you must first meet the following test of eligibility for *Choice Card* benefits. If, after following Step 1 of the test you are not eligible for benefits, just hold on to your Card - you do not need to call us.

TO FIND OUT IF YOU'RE ELIGIBLE:



PERSONALLY ASSESS YOUR ELIGIBILITY FOR *CHOICE CARD* BENEFITS.

Before you call us, ask yourself these four simple questions:

- 1) 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? **OR**
- 2) Is your current residence more than 40 miles from the closest VA health care facility? **OR**
- 3) Do you need to travel by plane or boat to the VA medical facility closest to your home? **OR**
- 4) Does a geographic challenge, such as extensive distances around water or other geologic formations, such as mountains, present a significant travel hardship?



If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may be eligible to use your *Choice Card*. **VERIFY YOUR ELIGIBILITY by calling 866-606-8198.**

When you call us, please be prepared to provide us with any other health insurance coverage you have, such as employer or union-provided health plans, so we can assess coverage responsibilities.

IMPORTANT: If you do not receive approval, you may be responsible for some or all of the costs of the non-VA treatment you receive.

NOT ELIGIBLE RIGHT NOW? NO NEED TO DO ANYTHING! JUST KEEP YOUR CARD!

If you are not eligible to use the *Choice Card* right now, keep your card in a safe and convenient location. There is no need to call us.

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**THANK YOU FOR
YOUR SERVICE TO
OUR COUNTRY!**