



**VA**

U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# **The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine: Dimensions of Access to Care**

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# Objectives

- Provide overview of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA)
- Share the history of VHA Access to Care
  - Review Care in the Community
- Overview VA Strategic Access Management Roundtable

# Department of Veterans Affairs

2020

VHA – Veterans  
Health  
Administration

## Healthcare

Care Delivery



Education



Research



Emergency Response



## Benefits

Eligibility-Based Compensation



Employment Support



Life Insurance Coverage



Housing Assistance



Spouse and  
Dependent Support



## Memorial

Burials and Cemetery Maintenance



# Four Missions

To honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

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<b>Care Delivery</b>	Develop, maintain, and operate a national health care delivery system for eligible Veterans.
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<b>Education</b>	Administer a program of education and training for health care personnel.
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<b>Research</b>	Conduct health care research benefitting Veterans and public
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 <b>Emergency Response</b>	Provide contingency support for DOD, HHS and private sector during times of war or national emergency
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# VA Customer Base

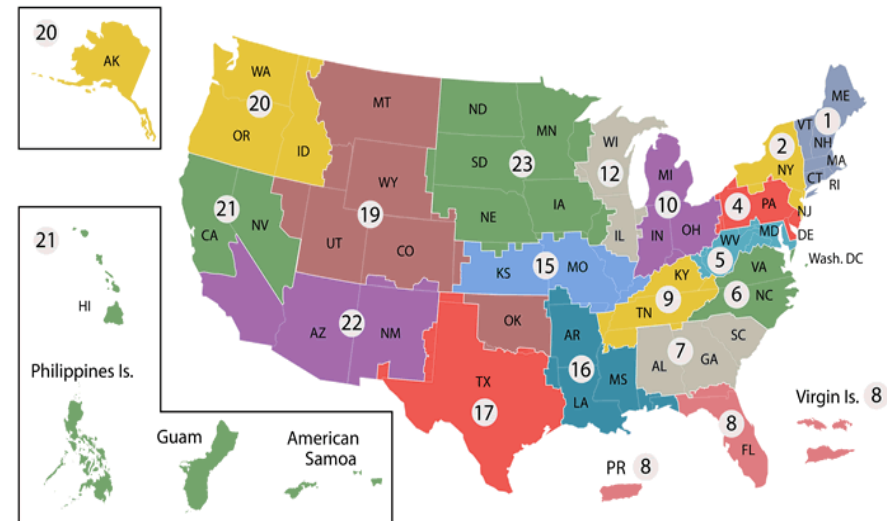
## US Veterans

- More than 9 M Veterans enrolled in Veterans Health Administration
- 1 in 12 Veterans is female
- Spouses, survivors, and dependents may also receive VA benefits

## Unique Characteristics

- Approximately 5.2M Veterans (25%) are located in rural areas
- Older than non-Veteran with median age 64 vs 44 for non Veterans
- Unique health care needs
  - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
  - Traumatic Brain Injuries
  - Chronic Pain
  - High rates of Complex chronic illnesses

Veterans Health Administration  
**Veterans Health Administration**



# VHA: One of the Largest Healthcare Systems in the U.S.

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18 Veterans Integrated Service Networks

160 VA Medical Centers

1,062 outpatient sites

850k providers in network

95k nurses (CRNA, RN, LPN, & NA)

59.9  
Million Completed  
yearly  
appointments

2x as many  
hospitals as  
DoD  
counterpart

# 2019 Access Data Focus

Wait times

Same day appointments

Urgent referral to specialist

Time sensitive appointments

Consumer Assessment of  
Healthcare Providers and Systems

Veteran trust

# Further Efforts to Support Access



# VEText

**VEText**



VA text messaging software that:

- Enables Veterans to cancel their appointments
- Alerts Veterans when earlier appointment slots (open slot management) become available

## **VEText**

- ❖ Active VA Sites: 161
- ❖ Veterans Enrolled: 6,880,953
- ❖ Messages sent: 183,336,411
- ❖ Cancelled appointments using VEText: 2,988,578
- ❖ Veterans who have opted out: 6.08%

## **Open Slot Management**

- ❖ Active VA Sites: 138
- ❖ Identified Open Slots: 263,533
- ❖ Rescheduled Appointments: 33,135
- ❖ Est. Time (hours) saved in manual rescheduling: 2,761.3
- ❖ Percent Rescheduled Appointments/Open Available Slots: 14.01%

# Same Day Services

- Same-Day Services in Primary Care and Mental Health for Veterans who require care right away
- Current Status
  - Established a refresher training for staff involved in the coordination and delivery of same-day services
    - More than 97% of all staff trained
  - Collaborating for Measurement
  - Partnering with VA's Veterans Experience Office to obtain Veteran feedback
  - Partnering with NQF and Atlas to obtain measurement recommendations and framework in Primary Care and Mental Health

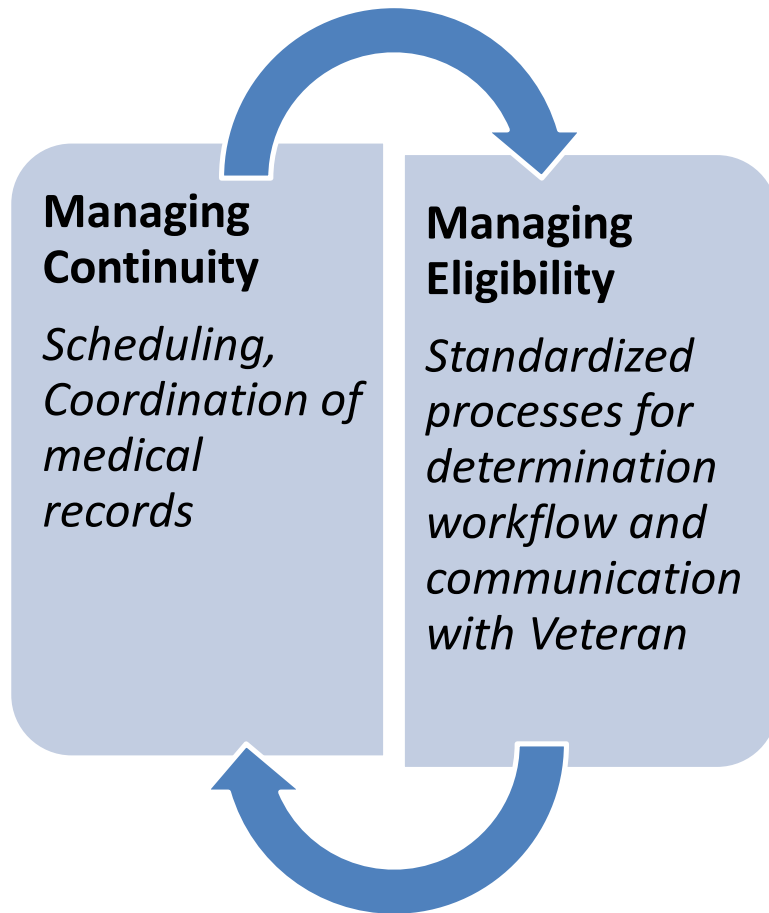
# Access Priorities – Where We're Headed

- Provide Veterans and caregivers with useful, relevant information via <http://acesstocare.va.gov>
- Cerner EHR
- Support Veterans in Underserved Communities
  - MISSION 401
  - Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations (ATLAS)

# Referral Coordination

- Initiative that seeks to inform Veterans about their full range of care options
  - Including the benefits of the VA healthcare system options as they decide whether to receive Specialty and Primary Care within VA or in the community
  - Schedule care quickly
- Referral Coordination Teams:
  - Interdisciplinary referral coordination team, including both clinical and administrative teammates
  - Provide medically appropriate care options (Face to face, telehealth, Community Care, etc.)
  - Empower Veterans to identify care that works best for them

# MISSION Act of 2018– Balancing VHA and Community Care



- As of June 2019, Veterans are eligible to receive care in the community if facilities are unable to meet access criteria:
  - Primary Care and Mental Health
    - Wait times  $\leq 20$  days
    - Drive times  $\leq 30$  minutes
  - Specialty Care
    - Wait times  $\leq 28$  days
    - Drive times  $\leq 60$  minutes
  - Other: Specific Services, Quality Standards

# Factors Impacting Access to Community Providers

- Longer wait times in the community depending on market
- Lack of transparency of care and services due to Other Health Insurance
- Emergency Care coverage
- Urgent Care benefit
- Provider competency requirements

# **VHA Roundtable Event: January 23, 2020**

# Access Roundtable

## GOAL



Gain information and perspectives about conceptualizing and assessing 'access' from a diverse group of non-VA health care leaders



## SCOPE

Primary Care  
Mental Health  
Specialty Care



## Members

Included participants from across the healthcare industry:

- Kaiser Permanente, National Quality Forum (NQF), New York Health & Hospitals, Press Ganey, Walmart, CVS Health, Microsoft, DoD, HRSA, AHRQ and more



“The outcome of this roundtable affirms that access to care should be defined by more than wait times, including especially how patients feel about the timeliness of their care.”



# Roundtable Highlights

## **1. Emphasis on patient and patient's beliefs and feelings regarding care should be top priority**

- Trust, empathy, coordination, and communication
- Need to determine how to capture this
- Solving the problem and communicating the steps to solve it

## **2. Need to look at other measures (beyond wait times)**

- Continuity of care
- E-consults
- Virtual Care
- Same Day Services
- Quality/patient experience
- Acute care conditions (i.e., abnormal Pap smear)

## **3. Shift wait time focus to wait times for acute care and time sensitive conditions**

## **4. Currently no clear definition of "access"**