



# VA MISSION Act and New Veterans Community Care Program

## Overview

The VA MISSION Act of 2018 consolidates VA's community care programs into a new Veterans Community Care Program that will help to ensure Veterans choose VA by getting them the right care at the right time from the right provider.

Over the next year, VA will need to develop regulations to implement the new law, while also developing policies, training staff, and awarding contracts to furnish care. Veterans and their families, community providers, and VA staff can expect ongoing improvements and regular engagement as VA creates this new Community Care Program.

## New Community Care Program

The new Veterans Community Care Program will be a major advancement that will consolidate VA's community care programs and strengthen VA by merging the Department's tangled web of competing and confusing community care programs, including the Choice Program, into one system that is easier to navigate for Veterans.

This single Program will also greatly reduce the complexity associated with administration of these benefits, making for more efficient use of VA's resources.

To implement this new Program, VA will need to develop regulations. The Act provides VA one year to develop these regulations and to prepare to implement this new authority. This time is critical to ensuring that the transition to the new program is as seamless as possible.

The Act appropriates \$5.2 billion in mandatory funding for the Veterans Choice Program to continue to provide care to Veterans until the new, consolidated Veterans Community Care Program is operational—approximately one year after the enactment of this Act.

Going forward, Veterans and their families can expect continued improvements to be made in how Veterans navigate and receive community care.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### Q1. What are the immediate impacts to Veterans for community care due to the VA MISSION Act?

A1. In the near term, the VA MISSION Act of 2018 appropriates \$5.2 billion in mandatory funding for the Veterans Choice Program to continue to provide care to Veterans until the new, consolidated Veterans Community Care Program is operational—approximately one year after the enactment of this Act.

### Q2. What are the immediate impacts to community providers due to the VA MISSION Act?

A2. There will be no immediate changes for community providers as a result of the VA MISSION Act of 2018. Community providers can expect continuity of operations due to the appropriation of \$5.2 billion in mandatory funding for the Veterans Choice Fund while VA works to implement the new Veterans Community Care Program.

Meanwhile, VA is working hard to ensure a seamless transition for Veterans and community providers when VA's contract with Health Net Federal Services ends on September 30, 2018. At that time, new care authorizations, scheduling, coordination, and payments will take place directly between VA, Veterans, and community providers. VA is actively working with Health Net and other partners on a transition plan.

### Q3. Why will it take so long for VA to implement changes to consolidate its community care programs?

A3. Due to the significant complexity associated with health care delivery, the large size of the VA health care system, along with VA's network of more than half a million community providers, adequate time and consideration is required to properly develop the required regulations and necessary system changes and training for successfully implementing the consolidated community care program. A lesson learned from the implementation of the Veterans Choice Program is that



rushing implementation wasted resources and did not serve Veterans, providers, or VA well.

**Q4. Does the consolidation of community care programs under the law affect VA's community provider networks?**

A4. No. The consolidation of community care programs is different from and independent of the community provider networks through which VA purchases care for Veterans from a community provider. VA purchases care for Veterans from community providers under specific conditions, while VA's community provider networks (i.e. Patient-Centered Community Care (PC3) and Veterans Choice Program (VCP) networks) are the contract vehicles between VA and over half a million community providers through which VA actually purchases care for Veterans. VA's community provider networks are managed by Third Party Administrators (TPAs) who perform certain functions on behalf of VA.