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Community Care

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Community Care

Veterans may be eligible for care through a provider in their local community depending on their health care needs or circumstances, and if they meet specific eligibility criteria. Even if a Veteran is eligible for community care, they generally still have the option to receive care from a VA medical facility.

In most cases, **Veterans must receive approval from VA** before receiving care from a community provider to avoid being billed for the care. VA staff members generally make all eligibility determinations for community care.

Veteran Community Care: Overview



Process Overview

1. Eligibility ▶

VA confirms a Veteran's eligibility to receive community care.

2. Appointments ▶

Veteran or a VA staff member schedules appointment with a provider in VA's network.

3. Getting Care ▶

Veteran receives care
from a community provider
in the VA's network.

4. Billing

Community provider
sends the claim to a Third
Party Administrator (TPA)
or VA for payment.

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Eligibility






A Veteran's eligibility for community care depends on his/her individual health care needs or circumstances. ***Please note the following about eligibility for community care:***

- Veterans must receive approval from VA prior to obtaining care from a community provider, in most circumstances.
- Veterans must either be enrolled in VA health care or be eligible for VA care without needing to enroll to be eligible for community care.
- Eligibility for community care will continue to be dependent upon a Veteran's individual health care needs or circumstances.
- VA staff members generally make all eligibility determinations.

Veteran Community Care: Eligibility



There are six criteria that can qualify a Veteran to receive community care. Veterans only need to meet **one** of these to be eligible.

1. **Veteran needs a service not available at a VA medical facility** 
2. **Veteran lives in a U.S. state or territory without a full-service VA medical facility** 
3. **Veteran qualifies under the “Grandfather” provision related to distance eligibility for VCP** 
4. **VA cannot provide care within certain designated access standards** 
5. **It is in the Veteran’s best medical interest** 
6. **A VA Service Line Does Not Meet Certain Quality Standards** 

Appointments

Veterans eligible for community care generally have the option of choosing to receive care from a VA medical facility or community provider. For Veterans who choice to receive community care, a VA staff member will discuss with them their preferences for getting care from a community provider.

Finding a Community Provider

Veterans can either choose their preferred community provider or a VA staff member can help select one. The selected community provider must be part of VA's network.

Veteran Community Care: Making Appo...



To find a community provider, please use the VA Facility Locator (<http://www.va.gov/find-locations/>).

If there is a specific community provider a Veteran would like to see that is not in VA's network, VA may be able to add them to its network. In some cases, a VA staff member will work with the Veteran to find other options when:

- A community provider cannot be found that meets the Veteran's health care needs
- A community provider was, but is no longer part of VA's network
- An existing community provider is no longer available

Once a community provider is selected, an appointment can be scheduled based on the Veteran's preferences and the community provider's availability.

Scheduling Appointments

Before scheduling an appointment, it is important for the Veteran to confirm with a VA staff member that they are eligible and authorized for community care.

Once authorized to receive community care, they have several options for scheduling an appointment with a community provider, depending on the type of care they need. A Veteran may be able to:

- Directly schedule an appointment and inform a VA staff member about the appointment
- Use VA Online Scheduling to request an appointment for certain types of routine services
- Have a VA staff member schedule the appointment
- Have VA's Third Party Administrator (TPA) schedule the appointment

VA will send the Veteran and the selected community provider a referral. VA will also send the Veteran's medical documentation to the community provider to ensure proper care coordination between their VA care team and the community provider.

Getting Care

When a Veteran arrives for the appointment, the community provider should have the appointment, VA referral, and medical documentation on file. If a Veteran needs a follow-up appointment, the community provider should check to make sure VA has authorized additional care before scheduling the appointment.

Surgery

Prior to undergoing surgery at a community provider facility, Veterans and their family members may access information about the surgeon performing the surgery. Information required to be available includes the surgeon's education, training, licensure, registration, and certification by the authorizing state and national entity.

Additional details can be found on the Fact Sheet: *Veteran Community Care Access to information Prior to Surgery* (/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/FactSheet_20-39.pdf#)

Prescription Medication

If prescription medication is needed, the prescription should usually be sent to and filled by the nearest VA pharmacy. Veterans can receive short-term prescription medication for a 14-day or fewer supply that can be filled at a non-VA pharmacy. A prescription for more than a 14-day supply must be filled by VA.

Brochure: *Medication Copayments—Fact You Should Know* (/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/brochures/Med_Copay_Brochure.pdf#)

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Quality and Safety Concerns

Veterans can report concerns about the quality or safety of services received during a community care visit or other issues related to community care services through the Patient Advocate at the nearest VA medical center. Refer to the VA Medical Center Directory to find your local Patient Advocate. The fact sheet below has more information about the process for reporting a quality or safety concern with community care.

VA Medical Center Directory (<https://www.va.gov/health/vamc/>)

Fact Sheet: *Reporting Veteran Concerns with Community Care* (/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/FactSheet_20-46.pdf#)

Billing and Payments

After receiving care from a community provider, Veterans may have to pay a copayment for nonservice-connected care, just as the Veteran would if care was received at a VA medical facility. For urgent care, copayments depend on the Veteran's assigned priority group and the number of times the Veteran visits an urgent care provider in a calendar year.

Community providers cannot bill or collect a VA copayment directly from Veterans, including for urgent care. All VA copayments are billed as part of VA's billing process.

VA may also bill insurance companies for care that is nonservice-connected. More information about VA Veteran

copayments and health insurance is available in the links below:

[Copayments \(/COMMUNITYCARE/revenue_ops/copays.asp\)](/COMMUNITYCARE/revenue_ops/copays.asp)

[Health Insurance \(/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/Health_Insurance.asp\)](/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/Health_Insurance.asp)

[Billing and Payments \(/COMMUNITYCARE/revenue_ops/billing.asp\)](/COMMUNITYCARE/revenue_ops/billing.asp)

[Financial Hardship \(/COMMUNITYCARE/revenue_ops/Financial_Hardship.asp\)](/COMMUNITYCARE/revenue_ops/Financial_Hardship.asp)

Help with Billing Issues

VA's Community Care Contact Center can assist Veterans with resolving adverse credit reporting or debt collection actions resulting from authorized VA community care claims. Specially trained call center staff work one-on-one with Veterans to research and resolve collection-specific issues.

Veterans should gather any letters, notices or information regarding debt collection or adverse credit reports related to authorized use of VA community care and call the toll-free number listed below. VA staff will collect the Veteran's information, investigate the issue and follow up with details of the final resolution, and can answer questions. Veterans will receive an adverse credit history letter that accepts or denies responsibility of the issue, as appropriate.

VA Community Care Contact Center: 877-881-7618, Option 1 (8 a.m. – 9 p.m. Eastern Standard Time)

Sunset of Veterans Choice Program (VCP)

Veterans are no longer eligible for community care under specific VCP eligibility criteria due to the expiration of the program. Veterans who were eligible for community care under VCP should speak with their VA care team or a VA staff member at their local VA medical facility about their eligibility for community care.

Resources

General Information

- **Quick Start Guide: *Understanding Community Care*** (<https://www.va.gov/files/2020-11/community-care-quick-start-guide.pdf#>)
Helps you understand the process for receiving care from a community provider.
- **Community Care Customer Service Guide (/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/programs/OCC-Customer-Service-Guide.pdf#)**
Describes what Veterans can expect in each stage of the community care cycle.

- **Fact Sheet: *Community Care Customer Service Guide*** (/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/FactSheet_20-47.pdf#)

A two-page guide that provides a detailed explanation of do's and don'ts, resources, and points of contact to find more information.

- **Information Sheet: *Previous vs. Current State*** (/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/MISSION-Act_Current-Future-State.pdf#)

Provides a simple, one-page overview of the previous and current state of Veteran community care, including changes required under the VA MISSION Act.

Appointments and Getting Care

- **Article: *VA MISSION Act: Answers to top questions about community care appointments*** (<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/68691/va-mission-act-answers-top-questions-community-care-appointments/>)

Top questions received from Veterans about VA referrals and making appointments with a community care provider.

(VAntage Point, 11/25/19)

- **Fact Sheet: *Veterans Community Care—Appointments and Getting Care*** (/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/VA-FS_Getting_Care.pdf#)

Describes how a Veteran can find a community provider, how referrals for community care are made, how appointments can be made, and how care is provided.

- **Fact Sheet: *Veteran Community Care Access to Information Prior to Surgery*** (/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/FactSheet_20-39.pdf#)

Describes how a Veteran can find information about the surgeon performing the medical procedure.

Quality and Safety

- **Fact Sheet: *Reporting Veteran Concerns with Community Care*** (/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/FactSheet_20-46.pdf#)

Information on reporting concerns regarding the quality or safety of services received during a community care visit or other issues related to community services.

Eligibility

- **Article: *New eligibility criteria a major improvement over existing rules*** (<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/58621/new-eligibility-criteria-a-major-improvement-over-existing-rules/>)

Highlights general requirements surrounding community care eligibility and describes the six criteria for eligibility under the VA MISSION Act. (VAntage Point, 04/09/19)

- **Fact Sheet: *Veteran Community Care—Eligibility*** (/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/VA-FS_CC-Eligibility.pdf#)

Describes community care eligibility, examples of how the six criteria will be applied, and FAQs.

Billing and Payments

- **Fact Sheet: *Billing and Payments*** (https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/VA-FS_Billing-and-Payment-MISSION.pdf#)
Describes billing, claims, and payment requirements for community care and FAQs.
- **Fact Sheet: *Adverse Credit Reporting*** ([/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/FactSheet_20-45.pdf#](https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/FactSheet_20-45.pdf#))
Provides information about adverse credit reporting and how Veterans can receive assistance dealing with such issues related to their VA healthcare.

Sunset of Choice Program

- **Fact Sheet: *Sunset of Choice*** ([/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/VA-FS_Sunset-of-Choice.pdf#](https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/VA-FS_Sunset-of-Choice.pdf#))
Describes implications of the end of the Veterans Choice Program and FAQs.

Contacts

For more information, please contact your local VA medical facility (<http://www.va.gov/find-locations/>).

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