



VA HEALTH CARE Defining **EXCELLENCE** in the 21st Century

Veteran Connection

VA Portland Health Care System Newsletter



Keeping the **PROMISE** Advancing Excellence

VA Portland Health Care System

3710 SW U.S. Veterans Hospital Rd.
Portland, OR 97239
503-220-8262 | 800-949-1004

Produced by the VAPORHCS Public Affairs Office

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS ??
Please email us at...
VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov

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For all the [VAPORHCS Events and Classes](#)—got to the VAPORHCS Web page...

<http://www.portland.va.gov/calendar.asp>

10 November 2014

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Welcome from the Director



Joanne M. Krumberger
Director, VA Portland Health Care System

Greetings and Happy Veterans Day!

We celebrate the service, sacrifice and enduring achievements of almost 22 million living Americans who served our nation in uniform—at home and abroad—during times of both war and peace. On the 11th day of the 11th month, as we have in so many years past, Americans will reflect on our way of life and pay tribute to the men and women who made it all possible.

In countless ceremonies repeated across the country, Americans will pause to honor those who earned the title of ‘Veteran’—men and

women who gave of themselves what no one day of tribute can ever truly honor, and what no words of appreciation can fully acknowledge.

Everyday is Veterans Day for our more than 4,000 employees who proudly provide dedicated care and service to Veterans. We remain committed to our sacred and noble mission to “care for him who has borne the battle, and his widow and his orphan.” We will continue to be Veteran driven and provide quality care in the ways our Veterans need and want to be served.

As always, thank you again for your continued support to our Veterans and the VA Portland Health Care System.

May God bless our Veterans and our great country.

Sincerely,

Joanne M. Krumberger

VAPORHCS Veterans Town Hall - Dec. 9 in Vancouver and Bend and Salem CBOCs by video teleconference

When: Tues., December 9, 2014 at 5:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Where: VAPORHCS Vancouver Campus, Columbia Room at and at the Bend and Salem CBOCs via video teleconference.

Who: Veterans, family members & caregivers

Why: Share information, answer questions and address concerns.

If you have any questions, please contact the Public Affairs Office at VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov or 503-402-2975

Veteran & Family Advisory Council is being formed

Please let us know if you are interested

A new Veteran & Family Advisory Council is currently being formed. The VFAC will consist of 12-18 non-staff Veterans and family members of Veterans who meet monthly and serve as advisors to the VAPORHCS leadership team. Applications of interested Veterans will be available later this month and will include an interview process to ensure we have appropriate representation of the Veterans served at VAPORHCS.

If interested, contact Valdez Bravo at (503)220-8262 ext. 53082 or valdez.bravo@va.gov.



The Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA) rollout

November 5th was the implementation date of the VACAA by the VA as required by law.

VA has signed contracts with two private health care companies to help VA administer the Veterans Choice Program (Choice Program) under VACAA. The Choice Program is a new, temporary benefit allowing some Veterans to receive health care in their communities rather than waiting for a VA appointment or traveling to a VA facility. It does not impact Veterans existing VA health care or any other VA benefit they may be receiving. A call center is now operational to answer questions and verify eligibility for this program.

As part of this new program, we are issuing a Veterans Choice Card to every Veteran who is potentially eligible for the new, temporary health benefit. The Choice Card allows Veterans to elect to receive care outside of VA when they qualify for the new program based on the distance of their residence from a VA care

facility, or when wait times for VA health care exceed the standards established in law. The Choice Card does not replace the identification card already use to access other VA benefits; please do not throw away that identification card.

The Choice Card will be issued in three phases. The first group of Choice Cards along with a letter explaining eligibility for this program is currently being sent to Veterans who may live more than 40 miles from a VA facility. The next group of Choice Cards and letters will be sent shortly thereafter to those Veterans who are currently waiting for an appointment longer than 30-days from their preferred date or the date determined to be medically necessary by their physician.

The final group of Choice Cards and letters will be sent between December 2014 and January 2015 to the remainder of all Veterans enrolled for VA health care who may be eligible for the Choice Program in the future.

VACAA resources

For detailed information about the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act here are some great resources...

- www.va.gov/opa/choiceact
- **VA Choice Card Program**

Hotline at (866) 606-8198

Determining VACAA eligibility to receive care

- Veterans must call to verify eligibility and receive approval before receiving non-VA care.
- Veterans should call (866) 606-8198 to verify their eligibility.
- Here is a [link](#) on the VACAA Web site to see if YOU are eligible—just follow the prompts.

VACAA Program eligibility information for Veterans

Under the law, to qualify for the new health program, 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. All eligible Veterans must generally also meet either a timeliness or a distance criteria. Those criteria fall into the following four categories:

- 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.
- The Veteran's current residence is more than 40 miles from the closest VA health care facility.
- 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.
- 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.

What Veterans need to do to use the VACAA Program within VAPORHCS

Specific processes are still being developed over the next few days for Veterans who are served in the VAPORHCS catchment area. But eligible Veterans as described will be contacted by TriWest Health Care Alliance—who is the contracted organization for the VAPORHCS area. Eligible Veterans will be asked by TriWest as to what care option they would like and initiate the process. More details will be provided in the coming days.