

VA Community Care update for Veterans, family members and caregivers

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St. Cloud VA Healthcare System Update

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ST. CLOUD VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM ANNOUNCEMENT



News & Announcements

VA Community Care update for Veterans, family members and caregivers

COVID-19 and Expired/Expiring Community Care Authorizations

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many community providers have been unable to provide services to Veterans under VA community care authorizations. In order to complete care ordered by VA, all current referrals and associated episodes of care authorized under the Patient Centered Community Care contract (PC3, administered by TriWest) were extended until September 30, 2020, as long as the episode of care meets the Veteran's needs without requiring more visits than authorized.

Many community providers were or are closed due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. If you are experiencing an interruption in care due to expired or expiring authorizations and have a current referral please contact the St. Cloud VA Community Care Department at 320-252-1670 Ext. 6401 (or press option 2, then press option 7), 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays. If you need a new or updated referral please contact your primary care provider.

Additionally, several significant changes to the VA Care in the Community program are planned in June.

Emergency visit notification call center now available

In an emergency, Veterans should call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department. Veterans do not need to check with VA before calling for an ambulance or going to an

emergency room. An important part of determining eligibility for VA payment for community emergency care visits is prompt notification of VA within three days of the visit. To help this process, starting June 8, 2020, VA has established a single national location, the Community Care Centralized Call Center, to accept reports of Veteran visits to an emergency department. VA is asking that all community hospitals and/or community providers notify the Call Center when a Veteran visits an emergency department. Community hospitals and providers can report emergency visits to VA either by email at: VHAEmergencyNotification@va.gov or by phone at 1-844-72HRVHA or (844-724-7842). Please print and keep the attached reference card available so you or your family members can assist community hospitals in reporting this information.

“Grandfathered” eligibility for Choice Act 40-mile distance criterion expires

Under the VA Mission Act of 2018, several eligibility criteria were established to qualify Veterans for care in the community. One criterion was distance eligibility as provided in the previous Veterans Choice Program. Veterans eligible under the 40-mile criterion on June 5, 2018 and who continued to reside at the same location were “grandfathered” into eligibility for VA MISSION Act benefits using the 40-mile distance eligibility standard. This eligibility expires June 6, 2020. This affects a limited number of Veterans, and most may now qualify under the drive time standard established by the VA MISSION Act of 2018.

Urgent Care transitions from Tri-West to Optum

As part of the contractor transition underway in Community Care Network (CCN) Region 2, beginning June 30, 2020, community urgent care benefits will be solely administered by Optum instead of TriWest. While the contractor is changing there is no change to the urgent care benefit or the way Veterans access care. Eligible Veterans can receive care from an in-network community urgent care provider, the provider is part of VA’s contracted network of providers, and services are not excluded under the benefit (excluded services include preventive services and dental services).

Veterans seeking to obtain urgent care from a CCN provider are reminded of the following key points:

- Urgent care visits in community settings must be made to providers in the VA's Community Care Network (CCN).
- To find an urgent care location in VA’s network, **use the VA Facility Locator at <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/>**. The Locator tool also contains driving directions and phone numbers for network providers. Enter your location to find nearby providers and call the location to get hours of operation.
- **Please visit the Locator tool before every visit as network provider lists may change.**

Due to COVID-19, eligible Veterans needing to visit the Urgent Care Center in Bldg. 1 at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center are asked to call first! The Urgent Care Center is open from 8

a.m. to 6 p.m., 365 days a year.

Finally, some important reminders

- Except for emergency care and urgent care benefits, before a Veteran receives care or services from a CCN participating provider, VA must authorize the care and refer the Veteran to a specific community provider.
- Veterans can identify VA and participating community providers through the VA Facility Locator available at: <https://www.va.gov/find-locations/> or through the Optum portal at <https://www.vacommunitycare.com/>.
- Veterans can verify the status of their referral or view claims payment status through the Optum portal available at: <https://www.vacommunitycare.com/>
- Veterans seeking assistance with approved referrals from the Community Care Department at the St. Cloud VA can get help from the following service points:
 - Walk-in service: currently not available due to COVID-19 precautions.
 - Phone service: 320-252-1670 Ext. 6401 (or press option 2, then press option 7), 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays.
- Veterans seeking assistance with Community Care billing can call 877-881-7618. There is no local service point for billing matters.