

Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA) The Choice Program and the Choice Card

Governor's Working Group on Veterans, Service Members, and Their Families

VACAA – The Choice Program / Choice Card

Fast Facts Overview

Background:

- Major element of Public Law 113-146, passed Aug. 7, 2014
- **Funded at \$10 billion**
- **Temporary 3-year program to bridge gap while VA expands capacity, access**
- 9 million enrolled Veterans to receive a Choice Card
- **Program to be run by a contracted Third Party Administrator (TPA)**
- **Health Net Federal Services named as TPA in VISN 6**
- Program rolled-out Nov. 5, 2014
- VA published an interim final rule on April 24, 2015 that changed the way VA measures distance for purposes of determining eligibility. VA now considers the distance a Veteran must drive to the nearest VA medical facility rather than the straight line distance to such a facility.

Choice Card Production / Distribution

- Third Party Administrator distributed Choice Cards in phases to eligible Veterans
Instruction letter was sent with the card to explain the Choice Program and how Veterans can access care using the Choice card .

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Choice Card Temporary Program

Name: <Veteran First Name Veteran Last Name>

Member ID: <Veteran EDIPI>

Date of Issuance: <Date Card Generated>

Call 1-xxx-xxx-xxxx for information or to make an appointment

This card does not provide pre-approval. Veterans may be liable for the cost of care that is not pre-approved.

Veteran's Choice Program Information

(for Veterans and Providers):

<http://www.va.gov/xxxxxxxxxx>

This card is for qualifying medical care outside the Department of Veterans Affairs. Please call 1-xxx-xxx-xxxx to ensure that treatment has been authorized.

Providers submit claims to:

XXXXXXXXXX

PO Box XXX

XXXXX XX, XXXXX

Veterans Choice Program – 40+ Miles

- Health Net is provided list of eligible Veterans that reside more than 40 miles from VA facility
 - Distance is calculated by address in VistA and takes into account driving distance (change effective 4/24/15)
 - This list is updated monthly
- **Veteran is notified of their eligibility through direct mailing**
- Veteran can then choose to contact Health Net and coordinate ALL care
- **Medical care is pre-authorized by VA and paid with funding authorized by PL 113-136.**
- VA **will** own the Electronic Health Record (EHR) – even if the Veteran is never seen in a VA facility
- Choice provider submits claim, Explanation of Benefits (EOB) (if applicable) and clinical documentation to Health Net

Veterans Choice Program – 40+ Miles (continued)

- Health Net processes payment to Choice Provider
 - Payment is at PC3 contract rate, Medicare rate or other specific rates identified in regulation when Medicare rates do not exist
 - Health Net submits claim, EOB and clinical document to VA (CBOPC) for payment
 - Claim is processed in FBCS by CBOPC staff
 - Clinical documentation is uploaded into CPRS by NVCC staff
- Consolidated Patient Account Centers (CPAC) staff will determine VA copayment and bill Veteran appropriately
- CPAC staff will reconcile OHI cost shares/co-pays

Veteran Choice Program – 30+ Days

- **Veteran appointment waiting time clock starts ticking based on “clinically indicated date” (CID) or provider determined return to clinic date.**
 - **If no clinically indicated date has been made, then the patient preferred date is used**
- If we KNOW that community wait is longer than VA wait, staff will tell the Veteran, who can then make an informed decision about where and when he/she wants to receive care
- **VA will use Veteran Care List (VCL) to identify those Veterans waiting 30+ days – adding patient to the VCL is the authorization for care**
 - Ex: If Veteran is offered an appointment and can't be seen within 30 days of CID or preferred date, Veteran is offered Choice Program and can make a decision to keep existing VA appointment or seek care through Choice Program

Veteran Choice Program – 30+ Days (continued)

- When Veteran is added to VCL, VA Choice Consult is created
- **Veteran is made aware that they are eligible to use Choice Program and provided the 1-866-606-8198 number for Health Net**
- **VCL list data is transmitted to Health Net daily**
- Choice Consult is transmitted to Health Net through DOMA portal
- Veteran contacts Health Net for information and/or use of Choice Program
- If Veteran decides NOT to use Choice for this episode of care
 - Health Net notifies VAMC
 - Non-VA Community Care (NVCC) staff complete consult notating Veterans choice to keep appointment
 - NVCC staff remove Veteran from VCL list
- If Veteran selects to use Choice Program
 - Health Net gathers OHI information
 - Health Net uses consult to determine what services are to be scheduled
 - Health Net provides Veteran with list of approved Choice providers

Veteran Choice Program – 30+ Days (continued)

- **Health Net schedules appointment for Veteran** with selected provider
 - If SC Veteran, Health Net contacts CBO for SC/NSC determination
- Health Net provides appointment information to VAMC
 - NVCC staff cancel existing appointment, remove from VCL list
 - NVCC staff enter into FBCS and update consult/appointment information
- Veteran is seen by Choice Provider
- **Choice provider submits claim**, Explanation of Benefits (EOB) (if applicable) and clinical documentation **to Health Net**
- **Health Net processes payment to Choice Provider**, payment is at PC3 contract rate, Medicare rate or other specific rates identified in regulation when Medicare rates do not exist
- Health Net submits claim, EOB and clinical document to VA (CBOPC) for payment
 - Claim is processed in FBCS by CBOPC staff
 - Clinical documentation is uploaded into CPRS by NVCC staff who complete consult
- Consolidated Patient Account Centers (CPAC) **staff will determine VA copayment and bill Veteran appropriately**
- CPAC will reconcile OHI cost shares/co-pays

Third Party Administrator (TPA) Health Net

- **VA pays no more than Medicare rate**
 - Can negotiate higher rates in highly rural areas (less than 7 people/mile)
- **Providers are either part of the Health Net network or have a Choice Provider Agreement in place which meets the requirements of the Choice Act**
- will schedule Veterans community appointment OR send back to VA
- Health Net is responsible to provide clinical documentation to VA
- Health Net notifies VA if/when community appointment scheduled
- Health Net will Coordinate other health insurance (OHI) information with provider and is responsible to provide Explanation of Benefit (EOB) to VA

Third Party Administrator (continued)

- Health Net will provide list of approved providers to Veteran to choose from
 - If desired provider is not on list – TPA will coordinate getting agreement with provider
 - If provider refuses agreement they are not available for the Choice Program
- Health Net will schedule appointment with selected provider
 - Health Net sends through portal appointment information to primary facility
 - NVCC office will enter into FBCS in preparation of receipt of claim
- If Veteran is Service Connected
 - Health Net will contact CBO to obtain SC/NSC determination
 - If for NSC condition AND Veteran has insurance Health Net will notify provider they must bill OHI first

General Matters

- Pharmacy and Prosthetics benefit: utilizing current in-house process (same as other non-VA medical care prescriptions. Urgent/emergent medications prescribed by a Choice provider will be filled in the community. Long term medications will be filled by VA. If prosthetics are prescribed as part of the medical care provided under the Choice program, VA will pay for these items as well).
- VA copayment will be billed after appointment
- VAMC staff have access to the Veterans Choice Viewer. The VC Viewer is a Veteran Eligibility data base that provides up to date information to staff and Veterans regarding eligibility to participate in the Veterans Choice Program.

Key Issues – Copayments and Secondary Payers

VA Copayments

- Regulation eliminates VA copayment at time of service and allows it to be charged to the Veteran **after care provided** and coordination of benefits processed for those Veterans who are co-payment required.

Other Health Insurance (OHI) Cost Shares/Copayments/Deductibles

- **Requires Veterans with OHI to provide info to VA if selecting Choice Program**
- Declining to provide OHI results in loss of this benefit
- OHI cost shares will be due by the Veteran to the provider or the OHI
 - VA does not have authority to interfere with health plan requirements
- **May shift up front costs to Veterans with OHI**
- VA can only pay up to the Medicare rate minus the cost of care provided
 - **If the total of the cost of care plus the cost shares exceed the Medicare rate, Veteran may be left owing some portion of cost share**
- Care for service connection or those without OHI will not incur additional expense
- Education will be critical in ensuring Veterans are not surprised

Fast Facts

- Temporary Program that will run for 3 years or until the \$10 Billion dollars in appropriated funding runs out.
- Key Choice Drivers – Veteran lives > 40 miles from a VA Facility; Veteran will wait > 30 days for a VA appointment beyond either the physician return to clinic date or the Veterans' preferred treatment date.
- Medical Care provided under the Choice Program must be pre-authorized by VA.
- Pharmacy and Prosthetics are covered under the Choice Program
- Toll Free Number for Veterans to call is 1-866-606-8198

Choice Program Resources and Information:

- The Choice Program does not impact your existing VA health care or any other VA benefit.
- If you are satisfied with your wait time at a VA facility and wish to continue waiting for VA care, there is nothing that you need to do at this time
- Every VA Medical Center has dedicated VA Choice Champions who will work with you to answer any questions that you might have.
- VA has established an external web site for the Choice Program which can be found <http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/>

Your Best Questions / Our Best Answers

