

QUICK FACTS ABOUT YOUR VETERANS *CHOICE CARD*

VISIT WWW.VA.GOV/OPA/CHOICEACT/ FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Before your Veterans Choice Card can be used, you must first meet the following test of eligibility for *Choice Card* benefits. If, after following Step 1 of the test you are not eligible for benefits, just hold on to your Card - you do not need to call us.

TO FIND OUT IF YOU'RE ELIGIBLE:

STEP 1

PERSONALLY ASSESS YOUR ELIGIBILITY FOR *CHOICE CARD* BENEFITS.

Before you call us, ask yourself these four simple questions:

- 1) Have you been told by your local VA medical facility that you will need to wait more than 30 days from your preferred date or the date medically determined by your physician? **OR**
- 2) Is your current residence more than 40 miles from the closest VA health care facility? **OR**
- 3) Do you need to travel by plane or boat to the VA medical facility closest to your home? **OR**
- 4) Does a geographic challenge, such as extensive distances around water or other geologic formations, such as mountains, present a significant travel hardship?

STEP 2

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may be eligible to use your *Choice Card*. **VERIFY YOUR ELIGIBILITY by calling 866-606-8198.**

When you call us, please be prepared to provide us with any other health insurance coverage you have, such as employer or union-provided health plans, so we can assess coverage responsibilities.

IMPORTANT: If you do not receive approval, you may be responsible for some or all of the costs of the non-VA treatment you receive.

NOT ELIGIBLE RIGHT NOW? NO NEED TO DO ANYTHING! JUST KEEP YOUR CARD!

If you are not eligible to use the *Choice Card* right now, **keep your card in a safe and convenient location.** There is no need to call us.

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

**THANK YOU FOR
YOUR SERVICE TO
OUR COUNTRY!**

A MESSAGE FROM THE SECRETARY

An Open Letter to America's Veterans

At the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), we have one of the most noble and inspiring missions in Government. I accepted this job and joined this mission to better serve you—our Veterans—and improve the delivery of the care and benefits you have earned. It is our privilege to serve you, and I have made clear that as we move forward as a Department, we will judge the success of all our efforts against a single metric—the outcomes we provide for Veterans.

The Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA), enacted less than 3-months ago, goes a long way toward enabling VA to meet the demand for Veterans health care in the short-term. VA has put considerable focus and attention on ensuring the law is implemented seamlessly, without confusion, and without creating hardships for Veterans. This legislation provides authorities, funding, and other tools to better serve Veterans in the short-term. We are appreciative of this temporary measure to improve access while we build capacity within the VA system to better serve those who rely on us for health care.

From June 1 to September 30, 2014, VA completed more than 19 million Veteran appointments in our facilities and made nearly 1.1 million authorizations for Veterans to receive care in the private sector and other non-VA health facilities—a 46.6-percent increase over the same period in 2013. This was all done under existing programs prior to the passage of VACAA, and sets the stage for strengthening existing partnerships between VA and the private sector. We have much we can share with one another to the benefit of Veterans.

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 your existing VA health care or any other VA benefit you may be receiving. We will begin implementing this benefit on November 5, as required by law. A call center is now operational to answer your questions and verify your 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 you 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.

We are continuing to work with our partners—Congress, Veterans Service Organizations, and others—to get the information about this health program out to Veterans in as many ways as possible. Please visit our Web site at www.va.gov/opa/choiceact where we have provided helpful information on Choice Program eligibility. We will work with our partners to keep you informed as we improve our delivery of high-quality, timely care.

Thank you for your service and sacrifice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert A. McDonald". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Robert A. McDonald

Nov. 4, 2014