

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

## Spotlight: The Veterans Choice Program (VCP)

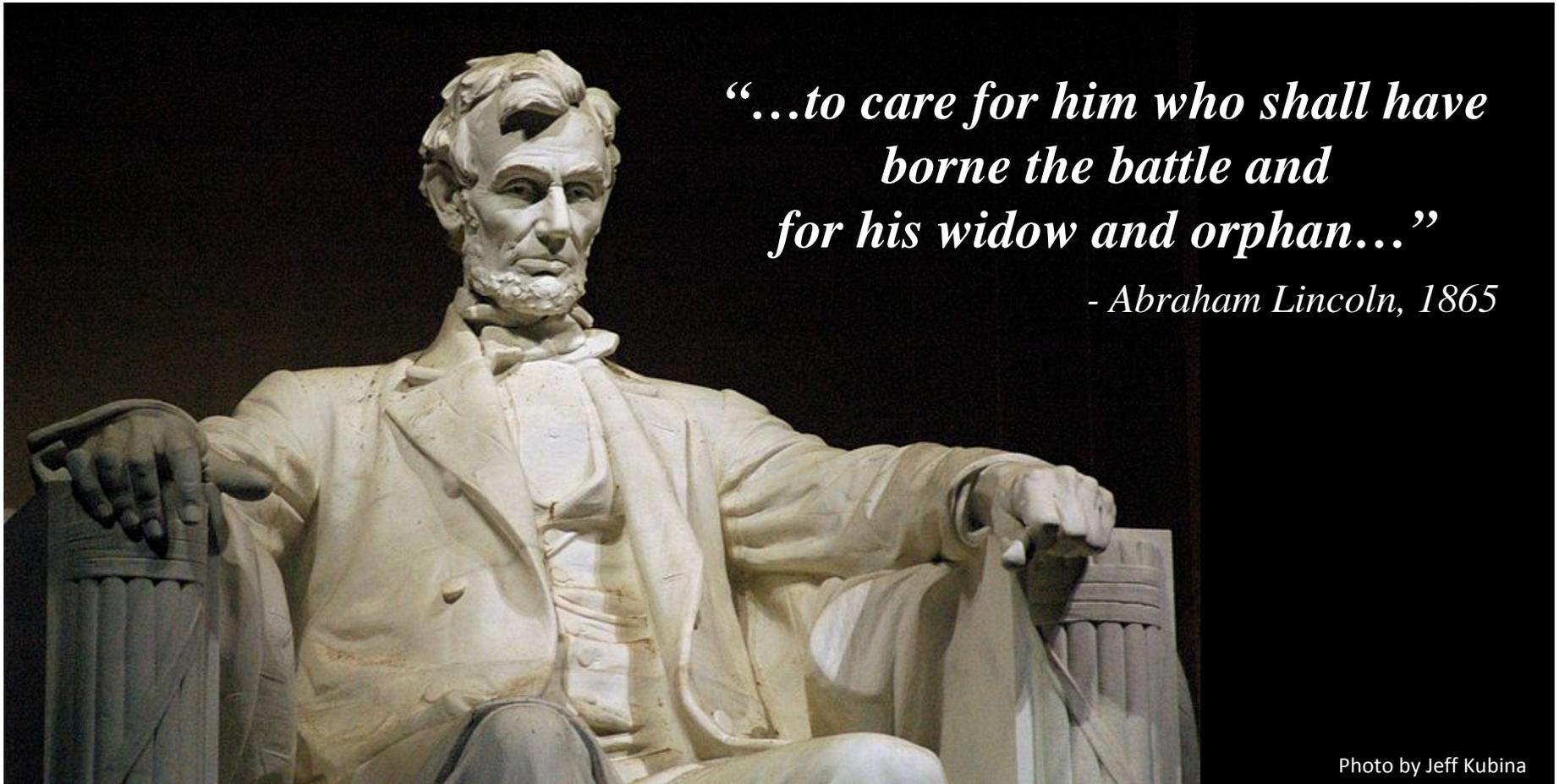
CA SORH / CA PCA WEBCAST

June 11, 2015

# Today's Presentation

- Introduction to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) with Emphasis on Veterans Health Administration (VHA)
- Overview of Veterans Choice Program (VCP)
- Role of the VCP Contractor/Third Party Administrators (TPAs) and Requirements for VCP Provider Participation
- Questions and Answers

# Mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs



*“...to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and orphan...”*

*- Abraham Lincoln, 1865*

Photo by Jeff Kubina

# What is the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)?

- Established in 1930
- Elevated to Cabinet level in 1989
- Federal government's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest department after the Department of Defense
- Three components:
  - Veterans Health Administration (VHA)
  - Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)
  - National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

# Department of Veterans Affairs Goals

- **Goal 1: Empower Veterans to Improve their Well-Being**
  - Giving Veterans more information and choices for health care
- **Goal 2: Enhance and Develop Trusted Partnerships**
  - Creating relationships between VA and community partners to provide care for Veterans
- **Goal 3: Manage and Improve VA Operations to Deliver Seamless and Integrated Support**
  - Improving the coordination of care between VA and community providers

# Veterans Health Administration “Footprint”



144 Hospitals

14 Health Care Centers

754 Community Based  
Outpatient Clinics

135 Community Living  
Centers

108 Residential Rehabilitation Programs

264 Other Outpatient Service Sites (single service  
clinics, dialysis centers, mobile medical units, etc.)



# Veterans Choice Program

- VA officially launched the Veterans Choice Program on November 5, 2014; This was in accordance with the timeframe established under Public Law 113-146 signed by President Obama on August 7, 2014
- In order to improve VA's ability to deliver high-quality health care to Veterans, section 101 of the Choice Act allows VA to expand the availability of hospital care and medical services for eligible Veterans through agreements with eligible community providers

# Veterans Choice Program: Provisions

- VA to furnish hospital care and medical services to "*eligible*" Veterans through agreements with eligible entities or other laws administered by the Secretary; Agreements include contracts, provider agreements and intergovernmental agreements
- \$10 billion for a "Veterans Choice Fund" to pay for community care authorized under the Veterans Choice Program
- Authority sunsets in three years or when Veterans Choice Fund is exhausted
- Pre-existing programs and initiatives were unchanged

# Veterans Choice Program: Choice Card Use Eligibility

- “*Eligible*” Veterans are 1) enrolled with VA for health care as of 8/1/14 (including those who have not yet been seen); or 2) “combat” Veterans within the five year enrollment window and:
  - are unable to secure an appointment within 30 days of the date that an appointment is deemed clinically appropriate by a VA health care provider, or the date a Veteran prefers to be seen, or
  - reside more than 40 miles driving distance from the VA medical facility closest to the Veteran’s residence, or
  - reside in a state or U.S. territory without a VA medical facility that provides hospital care, emergency services, or surgical care, or
  - reside in a location, other than the Philippines, that is 40 miles or less from a VA medical facility but is required to travel by air, boat, ferry or has undue burden reaching the closest VA medical facility

# Veterans Choice Program: Definition of "VA Medical Facility"

- For purposes of the Veterans Choice Program, a VA "medical facility" is defined as:
  - a VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC); excludes mobile clinics
  - a VA health care center
  - a VA hospital

Note: VA operates other outpatient service sites, community living centers, and rehabilitation facilities, but these sites are excluded from VCP driving distance calculations



# Veterans Choice Program: Implementation

- VA signed contracts with Health Net and TriWest to serve as contracted Third Party Administrators (TPAs) and help VA administer the Veterans Choice Program (VCP)
- TPAs initially managed Choice Card distribution and now manage call centers, VCP authorizations, VCP appointments, provider relations, reporting and provider payment
- In accordance with VA policy, April 25, 2015, in the Federal Register, Veterans who must drive more than 40 miles to a "VA medical facility" will now be eligible for the VCP
  - This provision replaces the previous straight line 40 mile distance calculation
  - VA notified these Veterans of their eligibility

# TPA Geographic Assignments

## PC3/Choice Regions

Health Net Point of Contact: Jim Jones  
571-227-6545  
james.a.jones@healthnet.com



Region 6 - TriWest

Region 5A - TriWest

**PC3/Choice Contractor Coverage**  
**Health Net Federal Services**  
(Regions 1, 2, and 4)

**TriWest Healthcare Alliance**  
(Regions 3, 5A, 5B, and 6)

Tri-West Point of Contact: Hal Blair  
(O) 864-468-5520 (C) 907-301-4129  
hblair@triwest.com

Region 5B - TriWest

Region 4 - Health Net

Region 1 - Health Net

Region 2 - Health Net

Region 3 - TriWest

# Veterans Choice Program Card

## TPA provided:

- Instructional letter for how to use card
- Phased distribution
  - **Nov 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>**: Cards were mailed to Veterans who live more than 40 miles from VA facility
  - **Nov 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>**: Cards were mailed to Veterans who are waiting for an appointment more than 30 days from their preferred or clinically indicated date

**VA**  U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

**Veterans Choice Card  
Temporary Program**

**Name:** JOHN SAMPLE  
**Member ID:** 1234567890  
**Date of Issuance:** November 2014

Call 1-866-606-8198 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.*

ICIM 1223 1223VA-VA--- M0 D0 V0 1818  
\*0\* 20141029T15:03:000000001000300021100  
8 Env [1] 3 of 2 Camer [1] [Del]



Front of Veterans Choice Card

0830  
ICIM 1223VA-VA--- M0 D0 V0 1818  
\*0\* 20141029T15:03:000000001000300021100  
3 of 2 Camer [1] [Del]

**Veterans Choice Program Information  
(for Veterans and Providers):**  
<http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/>

This card is for qualifying medical care outside the Department of Veterans Affairs. Please call 1-866-606-8198 to ensure that treatment has been authorized.

Providers submit Claims to:  
WPS - VACAA  
PO Box 981646  
El Paso, TX 79998-1646

Back of Veterans Choice Card

# Contract TPA Areas of Responsibility

- How to Become a Choice Provider
- How Veterans Access Care
- How to Submit a Choice Claim

## CA FQHC Data

- 44 separate FQHC organizations are currently contracted (PC3 or Choice) with TriWest.
- Those 44 organizations represent 727 unique providers.
- Those 44 organizations are located in 1655 locations around the state.

## \*CA Organizations Contracted with TriWest

Anderson Valley Health Center	GOLDEN VALLEY HLTH CTRS	NORTH COUNTY HLTHSVS SAN MARCOS
ASIAN AMERICANS FOR COMM INVOLVEMENT	HI DESERT MED CTR	NORTHEASTERN HLTHCTR
BIG VALLEY MEDICAL CENTER	HI DESERT MED CTRRADIOLOGY DEPT	Omni Family Health
CAMARENA HLTH	HILL COUNTRY COMM	PEACH TREE CLNC INC
CENTRO MEDICO EL CAJON	IMPERIAL BEACH COMM CLNC	POINT REYES MED CLINIC
CHICO FAMILY HLTHCTR	Karuk Community Health Clinic	REDWOOD COAST MEDSVCS INC
CLINICA SIERRA VISTA	LOGAN HEIGHTS FAMILY HLTH CTR	Redwoods Rural Health Center Inc
Clinicas Del Camino Real	Long Valley Health Center	SAN JOAQUIN GENERAL HOSP
COMM HLTH CTR	McCloud Healthcare Clinic Inc	SANTA PAULA HOSP
Community Health Center	Mendocino Coast Clinic Inc	STANISLAUS BEHAVIORAL HLTH CTR
COMPREHENSIVE COMM HLTH CTRS INC	MENDOCINO COMM HLTH CLINIC INC	TOIYABE INDIAN HEALTH PROJECT INC
DESERT AIDS PROJECT	Mendocino Community Health Clinic	UNIVERSITY COMM HLTH CTR
EL DORADO COUNTY	MOUNTAIN HLTH ANDCOMM SVS INC	VISTA COMMUNITY CLNC
FAMILY HEALTHCARENETWORK	MOUNTAIN VALLEYS HEALTH CENTERS	West Shore Clinic
FRIENDS OF FAMILYHLTH CTR	NATIVIDAD MED CTR	Willow Creek Family Health Center

**\*45 Organizations are listed here ... one is both Choice and PC3**

# Becoming a VA Community Provider (PC3)

- Patient-Centered Community Care (PC3) is a contracted provider vehicle with the VA where providers are automatically eligible to participate as a VCP provider
- To become a PC3 provider, establish a contract with either TriWest or Health Net:
  - Requires credentialing process
  - Reimbursement rates are negotiable and must be agreed to by both parties
  - Rates are normally a Medicare discount
- Additionally, to become a PC3 provider or a VCP provider (next slide), you must also:
  - Not be on the CMS exclusionary list
  - Must be in compliance with federal and state regulatory requirements
  - Must have licensure
  - Must submit medical records of service(s) provided to the TPA for inclusion in the Veteran's VA electronic record, and for payment

# Becoming a Veterans Choice Program Provider

- Providers interested only in VCP
  - Must accept Medicare rates and meet all Medicare Conditions of Participation and Conditions for Coverage (required by Department of Health and Human Services)
  - Services, facilities and providers must be in compliance with applicable federal and state regulatory requirements
  - Must have a full, current, unrestricted license in the state where the service(s) are delivered and must have same or similar credentials as required by VA staff

# Becoming A Veterans Choice Program Provider (Continued)

- TriWest Contact Information:
  - Provider Services Contracting: 1-866-284-3743
  - Email: [TriWestDirectContracting@triwest.com](mailto:TriWestDirectContracting@triwest.com)
  - Website: <https://joinournetwork.triwest.com/>
  - Point of Contact: Hal Blair, Deputy Program Manager, TriWest Healthcare Alliance, [hblair@triwest.com](mailto:hblair@triwest.com)

# Accessing Veterans Choice Program Care (General)

- Care in VCP program is coordinated by the Veteran calling the TPA at the number on the Veterans Choice Card
- There are actions community providers can take to both help Veterans exercise their respective Choice options and to market their services to Veterans with Choice cards
- Health care through the VCP is authorized in individual 60-day episode
- Medical documentation return:
  - 30-day requirement for both in and out patient Choice care
  - New cancer diagnosis must be reported within 48 hours + Others

# Accessing Veterans Choice Program (30-Day Waitlist)

- 30 day waitlist Veteran process:
  - The TPA will check to ensure the Veteran is on the VA waitlist
  - The TPA will contact the VA of record and obtain the Veteran's medical records for this episode of care
  - The TPA will identify a community provider (either PC3 or VCP with a finalized signed contract or agreement)
  - The TPA will forward a packet of documentation to the provider
  - The provider will complete the episode of care and return medical documentation, along with a claim, to the TPA
  - The TPA will pay the provider and submit a claim and medical documentation to the VA

# Accessing Veterans Choice Program (40 Mile)

- 40-mile Veteran Process is based upon driving distance from home address to nearest VA medical facility:
  - Veteran contacts the TPA
  - TPA addresses medical necessity; if established, appointing will occur
  - Provider sees patient, submits medical documentation along with a claim, and is reimbursed by TPA
  - TPA submits medical documentation and claim to VA
  - Note: Process for Veterans residing in “resident eligible” locations (Hawaii, Alaska, most of New Hampshire, Guam, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Vermont) is the same as the 40-mile process

# Accessing Veterans Choice Program Secondary Authorizations and Pharmacy (*Continued*)

- Secondary authorization requests (SARs) beyond initial 60 days or for care not included in initial authorization are submitted to and authorized by TPA, not VA
- Pharmacy
  - An initial 14-day supply of medication that is an **urgent/emergent needed incident to an** episode of care can be filled by community provider or local pharmacies
  - That initial 14-day supply, must be initially paid for by the Veteran, but can be reimbursed by VA
  - All other prescriptions must be filled by VA, typically dispensed through the mail order pharmacy, but can be in person if Veteran desires

# Veterans Choice Program Claims Payment

- Submit claims to:

## **TriWest**

WPS – VACAA

P.O. Box 981646

El Paso, TX 79998-1641

Call: 855-722-2838

- Provider notified by TPA if Other Health Insurance (OHI) is to be billed as primary; TPA pays secondarily for VA
- OHI will not include Federal Insurance such as Medicare, Medicaid or Tricare
- If commercial OHI is present, provider should follow the copayment and/or deductible requirements of the OHI carrier; No VA copayment will be collected at the site of care, that will be handled later by the VA

## Additional Resource Information

- Tom Grahek, Chief, Non-VA Purchased Care, Chief Business Office, VHA, Email: [Tom.Grahek@va.gov](mailto:Tom.Grahek@va.gov) or Tel: (804) 878-2754
- General email inquiry box: [CBOPCNVCSOPC3CORS@va.gov](mailto:CBOPCNVCSOPC3CORS@va.gov) (questions specific to the performance or use of the PC3/Veteran Choice Program contract)
- General overview on the Veterans Choice Program:  
[http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/factsheets\\_and\\_details.asp](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/factsheets_and_details.asp)
- "How to Become a Veterans Choice Program and/or Patient-Centered Community Provider" fact sheet:  
[http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/documents/FactSheets/VACAA\\_Provider\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_Choice\\_Program\\_508c\\_Internet.pdf](http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/documents/FactSheets/VACAA_Provider_Fact_Sheet_Choice_Program_508c_Internet.pdf)

# Thank You! Veterans Choice Program Presenter

## Contact Information

- **Gina Capra**, Director, Office of Rural Health, VHA, [Gina.Capra@VA.gov](mailto:Gina.Capra@VA.gov) or (202) 632-8615
- **Tommy Driskill**, Executive Assistant (EA) to Director, VA Pacific Islands Health Care System and EA to Director, Office of Rural Health, VHA, [Thomas.Driskill@va.gov](mailto:Thomas.Driskill@va.gov) or (808) 499-9917
- **Hal Blair**, Deputy Program Manager, TriWest Healthcare Alliance, [hblair@triwest.com](mailto:hblair@triwest.com) or (907) 301-4129

Veterans Choice Program:

• **QUESTIONS???**