

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Washington DC 20420

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CARES Stakeholder Communication Bulletin #2000-01

WHAT IS CARES?

Simply stated, CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) is about providing veterans the right service, at the right time, at the right place. It is about providing appropriate access and service for those who currently use VA's health care system, and for those who will use it in the future. The program will assess veterans' health care needs across the country, identify delivery options to meet those needs in the future, and guide the realignment and allocation of capital assets to support the delivery of health care services. Through CARES, VA will optimize care delivery in terms of both quality and access.

WHY IS VA IMPLEMENTING CARES?

By objective standards, veterans' health care ranks high in terms of quality. In VISN 12, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), awarded facilities outstanding scores, so why change? The answer is: *to keep it that way.*

Times change. Technology has pushed the medical field beyond what most people would have imagined 50 years ago. VA intends to keep pace with those changes to provide veterans not just with adequate care, but with high quality care. Once CARES initiatives are completed, veteran satisfaction will increase as a result of better access, more efficient programs and support services. VA is committed that all savings generated through CARES will be reinvested in veterans' health care. Measurable, consistent evaluation will enable VA to make decisions that impact veterans' care far into the future. Information and communication among all stakeholders, internal and external, about the CARES process will be frequent, open and a priority.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THE CARES PROCESS?

- Evaluation of veteran's health care needs in 2001, to include projections for 2010 and 2020
- Facility visits to gather information
- Development of service delivery options to meet veterans' health care needs

- Evaluation of the service delivery options based on whether the options address veterans' needs and preferences
- Secretary of Veterans Affairs' approval to implement the best option based on quality, access and cost

This process will be applied to health care delivery in every VA health care network in the country. In 2001, VA expects to begin CARES initiatives in Networks 1, 3, 4, 10, 11, 12, 21, and 22.

WHO IS CONDUCTING CARES?

To ensure objectivity in this analysis, VA has hired outside health care consultants. Two companies are involved in the study. Consultants are conducting a study of factors such as demand for VA health care services, demographics, and other data to project what services will be needed and where. They will then use this data, incorporate information from stakeholders, analyze current operations and facilities and develop options to meet the future needs of veterans. The consultant will be applying a standard set of preapproved criteria to various options.

WHAT IS THE SCHEDULE FOR CARES IN VISN 12?

- January: Data collection and facility site visits
- (January 8th thru 23rd tentative dates)
- February: Initial option development (tentative)
- March: Apply criteria (tentative)

Future communication bulletins will provide specific information on the schedule and activities.

WHAT OPPORTUNITY IS THERE FOR PEOPLE AND GROUPS TO HAVE A SAY IN CARES?

During the study, input will be gathered in many different ways, including meetings with stakeholders during the contractor visits to facilities.

HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ON CARES?

Instructions on how to obtain additional information on CARES will be provided in the near future.