



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Veterans Health Administration
Washington DC 20420

April 27, 2001

CARES Stakeholder Communication Bulletin #2001-18

CARES: The right care, at the right place, at the right time

CURRENT NEWS

On Thursday, April 26th, the Deputy Under Secretary for Health, Frances M. Murphy, briefed the Executive Directors, Veterans Service Organizations in Washington, D.C. Dr. Murphy discussed the CARES process and the data findings to date, and outlined opportunities for veterans to provide input on the CARES process.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES IN MAY

During May, the Headquarters and VISN Clinical Work Groups will apply the absolute criteria to the draft options presented by the CARES contractor.

NOTE: The May 2-4 meeting to apply the absolute criteria will be rescheduled to allow more time for the options to be developed for presentation.

Absolute criteria are benchmarks or standards that must be met for any option to be considered. It is a pass/fail standard. The three absolute criteria include (1) analyses of health care needs and requirements, (2) clinical programs, and (3) safety and environment considerations. For example, options must provide for a full array of special disability care, a safe and healthy environment for patients, visitors and staff, and an appropriate mix of inpatient and outpatient care. If an option does not pass the absolute criteria it will receive no further consideration.

The Headquarters Clinical Work Group is responsible for deciding which draft options pass the absolute criteria threshold with advice from the VISN Clinical Work Group. The Headquarters Work Group is composed of five staff from Headquarters, including the Chief of the National Spinal Cord Injury Program, the Deputy Director of Research and Development, and the Chief of the Office of Policy and Planning. The group also includes Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff from medical centers outside VISN 12, as well as the Headquarters Chief of Ophthalmology.

The VISN Clinical Work Group is comprised of 13 members. The Chiefs of Staff from each of VISN 12's medical centers are members of the work group. The group also includes an Associate Director/Nurse Executive, a Clinical Manager and a Quality Management Officer. Additionally, there is one VA surgeon and one Chief Medical Officer from other VISNs participating.

The absolute criteria will be applied with facilitation by the CARES contractor, Booz·Allen and Hamilton, to the six original options from the earlier Chicago Options study, as well as several new draft options developed during the CARES study using the standards set by VA.

Following the compilation of the information from the work groups, it will be decided which options will be considered further and subsequently scored using the discriminating criteria. Draft options that pass the absolute criteria will be made public. Discriminating criteria, with associated sub-criteria, are weighted to reflect the relative importance of each criterion. The absolute and discriminating criteria provide a methodology to assess each CARES option against a standard set of measurable and objective criteria.

Two of the discriminating criteria are veteran preference and impact on employees. In order to understand how the draft options may affect these two groups, and to provide input to the discriminatory criteria, Booz·Allen will conduct focus groups for both employees and veterans at each medical center.

Earlier, telephone surveys were conducted with many veterans following procedures approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). These veterans, who were randomly selected by the contractor, will form the pool of individuals who will be asked to participate in the veterans focus groups. Employees will be randomly selected by Booz·Allen from the employee rolls at each facility. Employee focus groups will be held throughout the day to include input from employees on different shifts.

Focus group protocol necessitates that each group be small. Although the focus groups will be limited in number, all interested persons are encouraged to provide input. They can do this by contacting VA using the information later in this bulletin.

WHAT IS CARES?

CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) is about providing veterans the right care, at the right place, at the right time. 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.

WHO IS CONDUCTING CARES?

To ensure objectivity in this analysis, VA has hired outside health care consultants. Two companies are involved in the study. Actuarial 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. Booz-Allen & Hamilton will be using this data, incorporating information from stakeholders, analyzing current operations during their visits to the facilities and develop options to meet the future needs of veterans. The consultant will be applying a standard set of pre-approved criteria to various options.

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

Input into the CARES process will continue to be collected from both internal and external stakeholders. To date, we have received valuable information from our stakeholders during the facility visits that occurred during January. Additionally, we have received e-mails and letters from interested persons and groups about the CARES study. This input will be very valuable in developing the health care service delivery options.

Input into the CARES process will be considered throughout the process.
Send comments or questions via mail, or e-mail.

Mail: CARES Comments
VISN 12 Office (10N12)
P.O. Box 5000, Building 18
Hines, IL 60141-5000

E-mail: CARES.mailbox@med.va.gov

All of the comments will be forwarded to the contractors for their use during the development of the options.

Comments have been coming in. While individual comments cannot be acknowledged and answered individually, comments will be forwarded to the contractor for use in the development of the options and later to the National CARES Project Team (NCPT) for their use in the evaluation of the options.

HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION ON CARES?

There will continue to be regular bulletins about CARES with updated information. It is expected that these bulletins will be sent out weekly. The CARES web site will also be updated periodically. There are now two web sites that individuals may use. For VA employees and any others who have access to the VA Intranet, there is a link on the VISN 12 Home Page for CARES. In addition, VA's Internet web site has been established at the following address - www.va.gov/CARES

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Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) Comment Form
VISN 12 CARES STUDY

Areas of Interest: _____

Comments (Please add additional pages if needed):

While all comments are taken into consideration, comments cannot be acknowledged and answered individually.

Name (please print): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail address: _____ Date: _____

Mail comments to: CARES Comments
VISN 12 Office (10N12)
P.O. Box 5000, Building 18
Hines, IL 60141-5000

E-mail comments to: CARES.Mailbox@med.va.gov

Washington Website: <http://www.va.gov/CARES>