



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Washington DC 20420

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UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S INFORMATION LETTER

**GUIDELINES FOR VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (VHA) FACILITIES
PROVIDING SELF-MEDICATION PROGRAMS TO ELIGIBLE VETERANS IN
BLIND REHABILITATION CENTERS**

1. This information letter provides guidelines for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) and medical centers with responsibility for providing self-medication programs (SMPs) to eligible veterans in Blind Rehabilitation Centers.

2. **Background**

a. Blind Rehabilitation Centers are regionally-based VA inpatient rehabilitation training programs and a component of a continuum of care which includes the veteran's home and the local VA facility.

b. SMPs are structured programs for patients to learn and practice skills for the self-management of their prescribed medications.

c. For veterans enrolled in Blind Rehabilitation Centers, self-medication programs teach patients to assume responsibility for requesting refills, storage, identification, and administration of their prescribed medication(s). In order to facilitate the application of skills acquired in the training program to the home setting, the goal of medication therapy is to maintain the same type of medication (e.g., manufacturer, tablet size or shape, vial size, etc.).

3. **Guidance**

a. Prior to each patient's entry into the Blind Rehabilitation Center's SMP, a provider with prescriptive authority, and/or another qualified staff, needs to consider a patient assessment to ensure the patient is capable of appropriately participating.

b. Many veterans are co-managed patients and therefore receive medications from non-VA pharmacy sources. For this reason, veterans admitted to the Blind Rehabilitation Center's SMP may be asked to bring in all their currently prescribed and over-the-counter medications, preferably in their original containers, for use while enrolled in the Blind Rehabilitation Program. *NOTE: Facilities may choose to instruct veterans admitted to this program to bring in*

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their controlled substance medication for use while enrolled (see VHA Handbook 1108.3, Self-Medication Program (SMP), for policy governing accountability of controlled substances).

c. The supply of medication(s) to be brought by the veteran needs to be enough to cover the time period for which the veteran is enrolled in the program. The average length of stay for each individual Blind Rehabilitation Program can be used as the basis for determining the number of days' supply of medication that the veteran needs to provide.

d. Consideration needs to be given to having Pharmacy Service examine all medications brought by the patient prior to the administration of any medication. This examination would validate that the medications are the stated drug dosage and are suitable for administration (refer to medical facility policy for all other prescribing requirements).

4. Inquiries. For further information on the pharmacy aspects of these guidelines, contact Louis Cobuzzi in Pharmacy Benefits Management Strategic Health Group (SHG) (119) at (202) 273-7003. For information on the Blind Rehabilitation Center aspects of the guidelines, contact Lucille Beck in Rehabilitation SHG (117) at (202) 273-8578.

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