



CARES COMMUNIQUÉ

SEPTEMBER 2003

VISIT THE CARES WEBSITES

NATIONAL: www.va.gov/CARES

NETWORK 2: www.va.gov/visns/visn02/cares

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kathleen Hider

Network Communications Officer

Rochester VA Outpatient Clinic
465 Westfall Road, Rochester, NY 14620

Phone: (585) 241-2037

Kathleen.Hider@med.va.gov

Draft National CARES Plan Released

As part of our continuing efforts to keep you informed about the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES), the VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York is providing the following updates to our stakeholders and employees.

CARES is the VA's proactive response to meet the future health care needs of veterans in the 21st century. The CARES process is data driven and looks at veteran demographics - where veterans are living, their age, income, gaps and duplication of services being provided at VAs, and access points to care. Reviewing unused space and investing in additional capital is also part of the data being reviewed. The CARES process addresses the fact that VA spends one million dollars per day maintaining buildings that are outdated and under utilized.

Draft National CARES Plan

The Draft National CARES Plan was released to the CARES Commission Tuesday, August 5. There is a 90-day review period, which includes public hearings being held in each Network on the Draft Plan. The Plan can be viewed on the CARES web site.

Possible Impact on the Canandaigua VA Medical Center

The plan calls for realigning inpatient services at the Canandaigua VA Medical Center and opening a new comprehensive, super-sized community based outpatient clinic, staffed by VA employees that in addition to primary care, could include a Day Treatment Center, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) treatment services, and Incentive Therapy programs. Existing inpatient beds would be realigned with community partnerships or contracted for veterans residing in the Finger Lakes Region. Contrary to what you may be hearing, no veteran will be moved to the Bath or Batavia VAs for nursing home care if that care is available within the community. The Canandaigua VA has set the standard for a positive and successful partnership with F. F. Thompson Hospital that could be replicated with other community providers. Currently, the Canandaigua VA contracts with F. F. Thompson Hospital for emergency and inpatient medical care.

For veterans living in the Finger Lakes Region, transitioning the health care delivery model at the Canandaigua VA to a community based outpatient clinic and saving approximately \$23 million in overhead costs would allow the VA to redirect those monies to providing direct patient care (doctors, nurses, diagnostic testing) and provide veterans in the Finger Lakes Region:

- Better access to primary care and mental health outpatient clinics
- Additional specialty care clinics not currently available
- 10% increase in long term care beds
- Nursing home beds would increase from 127 - 150
- Domiciliary 40 stay at 40
- Residential rehab 23 stay at 23
- Psychiatry beds would increase from 58 to 60

Any additional financial savings would be redirected throughout the Network including establishing a 30-bed spinal cord injury unit at the Syracuse VA.



CARES will positively improve veteran access to VA health care in the Finger Lakes Region and enhance the services and programs currently being provided by the Canandaigua VA Medical Center.

Batavia VA Proposal Not Included

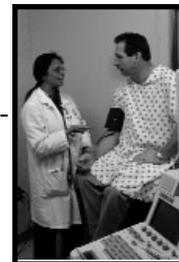
The plan to change the mission of the Batavia VA was not accepted by the VA Under Secretary for Health.

In May, the Under Secretary for Health asked fifteen of the 22 Networks, including Network 2, to explore the option of consolidating a two-division facility into a single inpatient campus while preserving the current number of nursing home beds and inpatient long-term mental health beds, as well as considering converting several smaller inpatient facilities to outpatient care facilities, going from a 24 hour, seven day a week operation to an eight hour, five day per week operation.

Network 2 was asked to consider changing the mission of the Batavia Division of the VA Western New York VA Healthcare System to an outpatient clinic and relocat-

ing the long-term care beds to the Buffalo or Canandaigua VA Medical Centers.

In addition to considering the change in the Batavia Division, Network 2 also submitted to VA Central Office (VACO) data and information on potential savings if the Canandaigua VA Medical Center's outpatient workload were re-allocated to a new comprehensive community based outpatient clinic and the long-term care beds were realigned to the communities the patient resided in. The Canandaigua option was accepted by VACO as the viable option and included in the DRAFT National CARES Plan. Networks were directed not to release this information until VACO completed its review.



Change is Constant

Change is never easy but it is the one thing we can be sure of. Under the Clinton Administration and Dr. Kenneth Kizer, Under Secretary for Health, the Albany, Bath, Batavia, Buffalo, Canandaigua and Syracuse VAs were part of the transformation of VA health care from an inpatient, hospital-based delivery system to outpatient services and community based access to care. That restructuring positively impacted Network 2 and enabled us to:



- Open 28 new community based outpatient clinics
- Go from treating 75,000 veterans to over 140,000 veterans
- Become the national leader for VA in customer service for access to care, provider wait times, coordination of care and overall quality
- Achieve clinic-waiting times superior to or as good as the best health systems nationally
- Less than 14 days for primary care at our facilities and community based outpatient clinics
- Less than 15 days for all specialty clinics
- Over 90% of our clinics see patients within 15 minutes
- Receive national recognition for our quality of health care - Under Secretary for Health Veterans Health Administration First Quality Achievement Award, Kizer Quality Award and Carey Award.

Health care delivery continues to change at a rapid pace due to advancements made in medicine and research. The global environment also continues to change and impact our daily lives. If the VA healthcare system is to remain viable and meet the needs of the veteran in the 21st century, we will need to change and adapt the way we provide health care in this rapidly changing environment.

Date Set for CARES Commission Hearing

The CARES Commission Hearing date for our Network is set for:

Friday, September 19
Noon - 4:00 p.m.
Marx Hotel, Syracuse, New York

Although the Hearing is open to the public, **space is limited and on a first come, first serve basis.**

Similar to a formal Congressional Hearing, **testimony will only be given by members of the panel.**

Other **attendees will not be allowed to speak** at the Hearing
 but other formal methods of making comments will be available.

This Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) Communiqué is published by Network Communications for the employees and stakeholders of the VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York.

CARES COMMUNIQUÉ (continued)



The CARES Commission's Role

The CARES Commission is an independent commission that is responsible for making recommendations to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the Under Secretary for Health's Draft National CARES Plan. In making its recommendations, the Commission will consider written comments from all stakeholders and hold public hearings to gather input from organizational representatives.

Please remember, if you plan to attend the Hearing, only members of the Panel can provide testimony. The audience will be able to provide written comments during the Hearing.

How Speakers Were Selected to Present at the CARES Hearing

The CARES Commission and the Network worked together to identify potential speakers for the CARES panels. There will be five panels representing key stakeholder groups, including: employee organizations, academic affiliates, state and local officials, collaboration relationships (such as DoD, VBA, or NCA) and other groups such as historical societies with an interest in VA property.

For veteran service organizations (VSO) witnesses, the Commission contacted the VSO national offices and asked for names. From the names submitted, the Commission selected witnesses to invite and speak.

Only Members of the Panels Can Provide Comments on the Draft National CARES Plan

Each of the five members on each of the key stakeholder panel groups will be able to provide up to five minutes of comments. Other individuals who attend the CARES Hearing will be able to provide their comments up to 10 calendar days after the hearing. VA staff will also be available to take comments from attendees at the hearing and e-mail their comments directly to the CARES Commission members.

In the meantime, **employees and stakeholders are encouraged to provide their comments as soon as possible** by using one of the following methods:

- Fax comments to: (202) 501-2196
- Email the Commission at: CARESCommission@mail.va.gov
- Go to the Commission Web site at: www.carescommission.va.gov
- Write to:

CARES Commission Comments
Richard E. Larson, Executive Director
Department of Veterans Affairs (00CARES)
810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20420

- Questions should be directed to the Public Affairs Officer at your nearest VA Medical Center.

After the CARES Commission completes its hearings and review, the Commission is scheduled to make its final recommendation to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on November 30, 2003. The Secretary will then either accept or reject the DRAFT National CARES Plan.

If the CARES Commission ultimately recommends the Draft National CARES Plan to the Secretary and it includes closing inpatient capacity at the Canandaigua VAMC and re-allocating outpatient workload to a new community based outpatient clinic, Network 2 will do everything possible to make this transition as smooth and seamless as possible for our employees and patients. A Finger Lakes Advisory Board will be established made up of Network leaders, veteran service organizations, labor, employees, and community representatives to oversee the transition.



From World War I to the Iraqi conflict - the VA will continue to care for America's veterans. ☆