



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
(202) 273-6000
www.va.gov

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 7, 2004

VA Announces Changes for New York Health Care Facilities

WASHINGTON – A study to consolidate services at the Manhattan and Brooklyn medical centers, a new spinal cord injury center in Syracuse and transferring some inpatient care from Canandaigua to Syracuse and Buffalo are part of a comprehensive plan by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to modernize its nationwide health care facilities.

"These changes will provide greater access to care for veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Anthony J. Principi. "By strengthening our network of outpatient clinics, we will bring a greater quality of care closer to where most of New York's veterans live."

About 272,000 of New York's 1.25 million veterans were treated last year in VA's health care facilities, up from 252,000 in 2000. In 2003, VA spent \$3 billion in New York, an increase from \$2.6 billion three years before.

Secretary Principi noted that about 80 percent of the health care provided by VA is outpatient care. He said the plan would allow the department to provide more of the outpatient care veterans want and use, while building upon VA's expertise in providing highly specialized inpatient care.

The changes are part of a comprehensive plan called CARES, short for "Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services." The secretary's CARES report can be viewed in its entirety on VA's Web site at <http://www.va.gov/CARES>.

Briefly, the secretary announced the following for New York:

- Study the feasibility of consolidating services at the Manhattan and Brooklyn VA medical centers into a tertiary medical center with strategically

- More -

New York CARES 2/2/2/2

located multi-specialty clinics and community outpatient clinics to bring primary, mental health and specialty care services closer to where veterans live;

- Transfer acute inpatient psychiatric beds from Canandaigua to Syracuse and Buffalo, but retain outpatient care, nursing home, domiciliary care in Canandaigua.

- Complete a master plan to coordinate realignments at Canandaigua by the end of 2004. The master plan will include construction of a new multi-specialty clinic and new nursing home complex, to accommodate nursing home, domiciliary, residential rehabilitation, hospice and gero-psychiatric services;

- Transfer nursing home and inpatient psychiatry from the Montrose campus of the Hudson Valley Healthcare System to the Castle Point campus. Retain outpatient services and domiciliary-based rehabilitation programs at Montrose. This transfer will improve care by collocating psychiatry beds and nursing home beds at Castle Point with other inpatient care. A master plan to ensure effective uses for both campuses and to provide for continuity of care as services are transitioned will be developed by the end of 2004;

- Develop plans for a new nursing home at the Castle Point campus. Plans will incorporate the upcoming VA long-term care and mental health strategic plans;

- Continue to provide outpatient, domiciliary and residential rehabilitation services at Montrose;

- Pursue enhanced use lease opportunities for vacant and underused space at the Montrose campus;

- Construct new outpatient, nursing home and domiciliary care facilities at VA's St. Albans campus. VA will develop a master plan for the campus that will consider enhanced use leasing and disposal of property;

- Build a new spinal cord injury center at the Syracuse VAMC;

- More -

New York CARES 3/3/3

- Transfer the spinal cord injury (SCI) long-term care beds from Castle Point to the Bronx VA medical center;
- Work closely with stakeholders to identify alternative uses for excess property in New York state; and
- Explore developing a national cemetery at the Castle Point and Montrose campuses.

CARES is a plan to modernize and improve VA's health care system. Among the elements of the Secretary's CARES decision are more than 150 new community based outpatient clinics, potential creation of four new - and expansion of five existing - spinal cord injury centers, two new blind rehabilitation centers, and expansions throughout VA's healthcare system that will enhance veterans' access to VA care.

In July 1999, a General Accounting Office study found that VA was diverting a million dollars a day – or \$3.6 billion during a decade – from veterans' health care to maintenance on unneeded or unused facilities. The average age of VA's more than 4,900 buildings is more than 50 years, and the need to reduce vacant space and unneeded buildings has been the focus of several reports by the General Accounting Office.

At the Canandaigua VA Medical Center, there is a total of 665,000 square feet of space, 118,000 of which is currently vacant. The Montrose Campus of the VA Hudson Valley Healthcare System has approximately 900,000 square feet, nearly 292,000 of which is vacant. The Manhattan Campus of the VA New York Harbor Healthcare System has a total of nearly 1.2 million square feet, 36,000 of which is vacant. The Brooklyn Campus has 969,000 square feet, 27,000 of which is vacant.

This approach to facility's management means the dollars once wasted on old and vacant buildings can be used to enhance services in the communities where health care is provided.

- More -

New York CARES 4/4/4

"CARES modernizes VA's 74-year old health care system," said Principi. "I want to emphasize that no veteran will lose health care as a result of CARES, nor will there be any gaps in their health care services."

The CARES plan was reviewed by an independent commission, which received more than 212,000 comments and held 81 site visits to VA and Department of Defense medical facilities, and State Veterans Homes, 38 public hearings and 10 formal meetings. The commission submitted its recommendations to Secretary Principi in mid-February.

#

People wishing to receive e-mail from VA with the latest news releases and updated fact sheets can subscribe at the following Internet address:

http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/opalist_listserv.cfm