

To NACHC's Veterans Interest Group -

Thank you for your continued interest in and dedication to serving Veterans in your communities, during these continued trying times. The sacrifice and service of our Military Veterans serves as an inspiration to us all!

NACHC's Veterans Interest Group is an informal networking and information group intended to share promising practices, policy updates and operational information regarding increased access to care and services for the Veteran populations served in community health centers.

### **Saluting our Veterans - Celebrate Veterans Day 2020**

On November 11<sup>th</sup>, our Country comes together to celebrate our Veterans! NACHC will be posting a statement at [www.nachc.org](http://www.nachc.org) from our President and CEO, Tom Van Coverden, recognizing and honoring the men and women who have been in service defending our nation at home and abroad. Tom's statement affirms the commitment of health centers to serve Veterans as patients, employ Veterans as staff and be led by Veterans who serve on Boards of Directors at health centers across the country. Let us know how you celebrated Veterans!

### **Increasing Numbers of Military Veterans Served at Health Centers - Almost 400,000!**

HRSA/Bureau of Primary Health Care recently released the 2019 Uniform Data System (UDS) report. Again in 2019, health centers across the country reported an increase in the number of Veterans served—just shy of 400,000! While this annual increase of almost 10% is impressive, we continue to believe it understates the number of Veteran patients served. We encourage all health centers to take advantage of technical assistance resources designed to increase accurate identification of Veterans, see:

<https://conferences.nachc.org/nachc/articles/3044/view>.

### **Collaborations with the U.S. Veterans Health Administration (VHA)**

Telehealth—Historically, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has been a leader in implementing telehealth to help Veterans enrolled in the VA Healthcare system access the care needed. In the past, we have shared information with you about the VA's unfunded ATLAS project—an effort to use non-traditional sites, for example Walmart and American Legion, where a Veteran can access their VHA telehealth visit.

- Recently, the House and Senate passed the “Commander John Scott Hannon Veterans Mental Health Care Improvement Act of 2019”. (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/785/text>). A provision in this legislation would provide funding for the VA to launch an ATLAS pilot program. We continue to work with VA staff to sort out how interested health centers could participate in the pilot. While the actual beginning of

the pilot is probably 8-10 months away, we will be reaching out to health centers and PCAs as soon as we have more definitive information about the pilot.

Urgent Care/Community Care Network (CCN)—Over the past year, VHA staff and their third-party administrators (TPAs) have been working to increase site options that enable Veterans to receive urgent care at the right time and place. To that end, the VA recently sent information to Veterans enrolled in VA Health Care about process improvements to make it easier for a Veteran to receive urgent care from an in-network urgent care provider in their community, like a community health center.

- Optum (TPA for VA CCN Regions 1,2,3) and TriWest (TPA for all other VA CCN Regions) are managing efforts to improve access to urgent care services in local communities. Health centers that have the capacity to be an urgent care provider are encouraged to work with their respective Optum or TriWest contacts to make sure they are a recognized/approved in-network CCN provider.
- Please sign up for the Office of Community Care Newsletter from the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). This provides the latest updates for community-based providers who are, or want to enroll, officially as part of the VA's Community Care Network. See the Community Care website at <https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/providers/index.asp>

### **Thank you and Spread the Word**

As you well know, these are challenging times for our country, for many of the people health centers serve, including Veterans, and for health center staff themselves. Challenges are not new to any of us and working together we can preserve, strengthen and grow the health center model of care. We applaud the work you do every day to serve your communities and appreciate that work includes your commitment to do all you can to help Veterans get the care and support that they need.

It is worth repeating—thanks for ALL the work you do!! If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Gina Capra or Dick Bohrer at [trainings@nachc.org](mailto:trainings@nachc.org).

Please share information about the Veterans Interest Group with your friends and colleagues. Check out more on at NACHC's "Supporting Our Veterans" <https://www.nachc.org/health-center-issues/special-populations/veterans/>