



Dear Members of NACHC's Veterans Interest Group—

August 1, 2022

We hope your summer is going well! We look forward to seeing many of you at our in-person Veterans Interest Group Meeting on August 28, 5-6pm CT at the Chicago Hyatt Regency, Plaza B as part of the NACHC Community Health Institute (CHI) Conference, <https://www.nachc.org/conferences/chi/>

Our NACHC team is sending this update about recent developments informing NACHC's work with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)/ Veterans Health Administration (VHA):

- **Senate Appointment of the VA Under Secretary for Health (USH)** —On Thursday, July 21, the Senate confirmed Dr. Shereef Elnahal as the VA's senior leader responsible for Veterans health issues. This Senate action closes what has been a 5-year gap in having a permanent appointee in this position. VA Press Release - <https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5810>

- **Innovation at the VHA**--Consistent with most health care systems, the VHA is committed to supporting a culture that recognizes and encourages innovation.
 - **VETSmile dental access pilot program** - NACHC has been working successfully with one part of the VHA's innovation infrastructure, the Center for Care and Payment Innovation, on standing up the **VETSmile** pilot project, now in ten health centers in VHA's targeted pilot markets. <https://www.innovation.va.gov/careandpayment/VETSmile/VETSmile.html>

 - **Innovation Ecosystem** - Another part of this infrastructure is the VHA's Innovation Ecosystem. To learn more, check out a recent interview with Dr Ryan Vega on the podcast/video "Conversations on Health Care," hosted by health center colleagues at CHC Inc (CT). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bwzoNw-i7ml>

- **Congressional Items of Note**—
 - 1) **Annual VA Funding Appropriation**—It was included in the first "mini-bus" based by the House; Senate action will not occur until after Congress' August recess.
 - 2) **Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission**—Mandated by the MISSION Act of 2018, this Commission's purpose is to make recommendations regarding modernization and realignment of VHA facilities. Bi-partisan opposition in both the House and Senate is preventing the Commission from addressing its legislative mandate.
 - 3) **The PACT Act**—This legislation is designed to expand benefits and care for toxic-exposed Veterans and service members. Key House and Senate committees are making progress on this piece of legislation, which if enacted, could provide health centers and PCAs with opportunities to be part of its implementation.

Please reach to Dick Bohrer (dbohrer@nachc.com) or me (gcapra@nachc.com) if you have questions, ideas or need additional information. Please stay safe and keep up the great work you are doing!!

Sincerely,
Gina Capra
Senior Vice President, Training and Technical Assistance - NACHC