

Dear Members of NACHC's Veterans Interest Group (VIG) —

July 10, 2023

Greetings since our February Update and March in-person VIG meeting in DC! As we move into the final quarter of Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023, we are buoyed by the fact that there continues to be **bi-partisan support for Veterans and Health Centers!** Your ongoing, external education efforts will continue to be a necessity reminding officials and public policy makers of the importance of the work health centers do, including meeting the unique medical, behavioral, and social needs of Veterans in their communities. We appreciate all you are doing and know that NACHC staff continues to exert time, and effort to support your work. Here are some updates and resources we hope you'll find useful!

US DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA)

- **Congressional Actions Focused on the Veterans Administration (VA):** Relevant House and Senate Committees have made progress on the part of the FFY 2024 budget dealing with the VA. Some highlights of this work include: sufficient funding levels for all parts of the VA, including funds for the Community Care Program; House and Senate language requiring a report to Congress about offering oral health services to Veterans; funds and report language supporting telehealth; increased funding for behavioral health and suicide prevention programs; and Senate language opposing privatization of Veterans health services. Recently, the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee held an oversight hearing on the VA's ability to integrate direct VA services with services Veterans receive from community providers. While the integration of services is still a priority, the Senators and the VA's witnesses acknowledged that this is a work in progress and that significant problems still need to be addressed.
- **PACT Act: ACTION: Discuss PACT screening in your health center!** VA is devoting significant time and effort to getting Veterans to apply for benefits this Act affords, expanding VA healthcare and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange and other toxic substances. With several deadlines quickly approaching for Veterans to be able to take full advantage of this Act, the ***VA is conducting an intensive outreach program to connect with Veterans before September 30, 2023.*** Refer to <https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/> for the VA's patient-focused education page summarizing the PACT-related deadlines and benefits. ***Do what you can to inform Veterans about the benefits the PACT Act provides.***
- **Veterans Telehealth:** Congress is sending a strong message in support of the VA using telehealth to improve Veterans' access to services. For several years, NACHC staff has been in contact with the VA national program office responsible for its Atlas Telehealth Pilot Project. This project attempts to identify community sites where a Veteran can go for a secure and confidential telehealth visit with a VA provider. We continue to believe that some health centers would make ideal community partners and be appropriate Atlas Telehealth sites. For additional information about the ***Atlas Program***, please refer <https://connectedcare.va.gov/partners/atlas> and if, interested, please contact Gina Capra in NACHC's Training and Technical Assistance Division, gcapra@Nachc.org or trainings@nachc.org

SERVING VETERANS - TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

- **“Serving Veterans in Health Centers: A Compendium of Success Stories”** and **“Community Care Network (CCN) Backgrounder and Toolkit”** featured on NACHC’s “Serving Veterans” webpage: <https://www.nachc.org/health-center-issues/special-populations/veterans/> or the Health Center Resource Clearinghouse, www.healthcenterinfo.org SEARCH: VETERANS
- **“A Compendium of Veteran Oral Health Best, Promising and Emerging Practice Approaches”** from the National Network of Oral Health Access, a HRSA-funded National Training and Technical Assistance Partner (NTTAP). <https://www.healthcenterinfo.org/details/?id=5277>
- **“No Wrong Door for Veterans: Veteran Cultural Competency Training for Medical Legal Partnership Teams** from the National Center for Medical Legal Partnership, a HRSA-funded National Training and Technical Assistance Partner (NTTAP). <https://www.healthcenterinfo.org/details/?id=4161>
- **“Learn About the New PACT Health Benefits”** Resource slides from NACHC’s March 28, 2023 national webinar https://rise.articulate.com/share/_8WJU4RvkkcX43ui0GxNdBtwM7sPWoe0#/

UPCOMING EVENTS/ITEMS to NOTE

- 1) **NACHC’s 2023 Community Health Institute (CHI) August 27-29, San Diego, CA**— See the robust educational program. Register in-person or all-virtual <https://www.nachc.org/conferences/chi/>
- 2) **HRSA/BPHC Health Center 2035 Effort** – BPHC is undertaking a future-focused, conceptual development effort to envision the Health Center of 2035. NACHC was delighted to recommend Veterans Health Administration officials (from Community Care and Rural Health) to BPHC, who have since been invited to the Stakeholder/Partners component of the Health Center 2035 effort!
- 3) **We will not be holding a VIG meeting at the August 2023 CHI**, but we are planning for Fall 2023 with an all virtual check-in and then a VIG in-person meeting at the Spring 2024 NACHC Policy and Issues Forum in DC.
 - Our 2023-24 “Serving Veterans” training plan includes a national webinar on **Universal Screening for Veterans Status and Specialty Care Coordination**, in partnership with the Iowa Primary Care Association and Home Base

In lieu of an August meeting, we urge you to reach out with ideas, suggestions for webinars, questions, etc. Have a great and safe Summer!

Sincerely,

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