

VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

Veterans Service Organization Communicators Meeting

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Office of Patient Advocacy (OPA) Briefing Agenda

- OPA's Purpose and Mission
- Overview of OPA
- OPA's Major Initiatives
- Patient Advocacy Throughout VHA
- VHA Patient Rights & Responsibilities
- Engagement with Patient Advocates
- Complaint Resolution
- Overview of VHA Clinical Appeals
- Questions



OPA Purpose and Mission

Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Patient Advocacy (OPA) was established on June 12, 2017, as required by the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA), Public Law 114-198 to ensure VHA developed and deployed a Patient Advocacy Program that that promotes an inclusive care environment and a positive patient experience for Veterans and their family members ***across all categories of racial or ethnic group, gender/gender identity/gender expression, age, geographic location, religion, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, cognitive, sensory or physical disability, military era, mental health diagnosis, and disability status.***



OPA's Mission

Deliver Veteran-centered advocacy services to honor, advance, and influence the provision of health care to America's Veterans



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VHA Office of Patient Advocacy's Role



Implement responsibilities outlined in legislation



Develop patient advocacy policy



Deploy VHA's complaint management approach



Provide patient advocacy training with reporting



Modernize the Patient Advocate Tracking System (PATS) technology



Inform Senior Leadership of Veteran complaint national data trends



Conduct site visits to ensure alignment with OPA policy

OPA's Key Strategic Drivers



PEOPLE: Increase the trust of our Veterans by providing world class *customer service* through the achievement of Veteran Centered Complaint Resolution holistic approach



PROCESS: Systemically analyze trends and evaluate opportunities to improve processes and provide guidance on the journey towards high reliability



TECHNOLOGY: Modernize and maximize systems to provide integrated, accurate, aggregate, and trended patient complaint data to leadership at all levels



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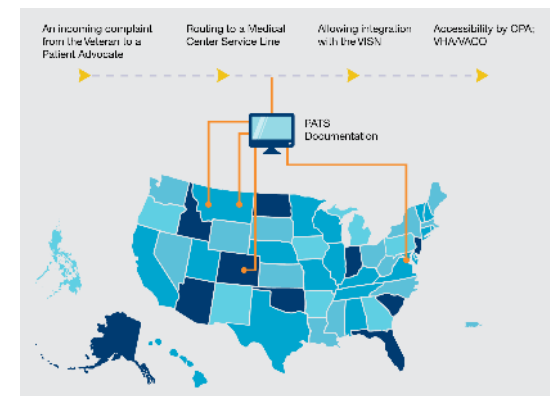


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Major OPA Initiatives

Patient Advocate Tracking System (PATS)

- Web-based application that supports Patient Advocates and VHA staff in tracking and trending Veteran complaints in **one centralized repository**
- VHA's **real-time** complaint management system of record
- Increase transparency of information, efficiency in resolution activities, and communication with Veterans and staff
- Provides the mechanism for tracking, trending, and analyzing Veteran complaint-related data
- Eliminates redundant data entry through system integrations
- Integrates with other VA systems ([Ask VA](#))

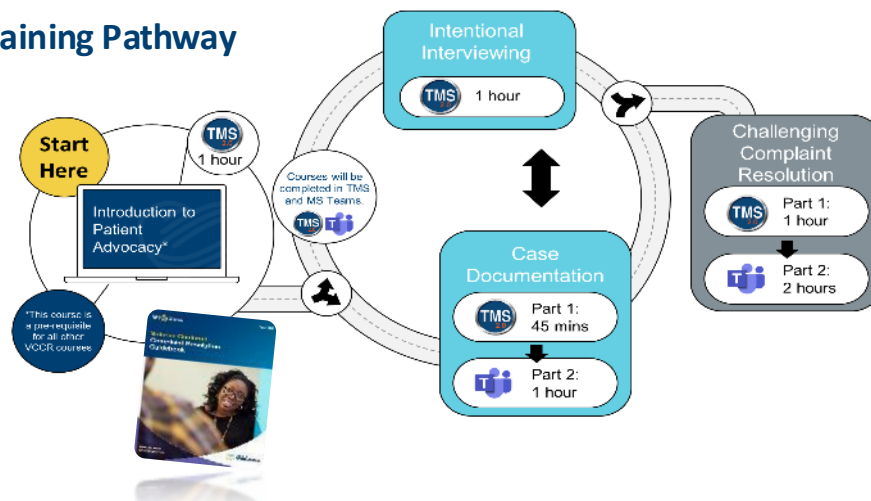


Major OPA Initiatives

Veteran Centered Complaint Resolution (VCCR)

- VHA's **standardized holistic approach** to connect with our Veterans to receive, identify, resolve, document, and communicate the resolution outcome of all complaints and inquiries
- Alignments with CARA and VHA Directive 1003.04, VHA Patient Advocacy
- **Required** for employees who hold Patient Advocacy positions throughout the agency

The VCCR Training Pathway



Patient Advocacy Throughout VHA

OPA provides overall program policy, guidance, job-related resources and trainings, OPA *does not* directly supervise the PAs in the field

- Most PAs are located at the VA Medical Center
 - Some larger community-based outpatient clinics have dedicated PAs on site
- There are approximately 600 PAs across VHA
- PAs report to and are supervised by a member of the local VAMC Executive Leadership team
- Veteran Integrated Service Network (VISN) Patient Advocate Coordinators (PACs) support standardization, training, and planning across facilities within their geographic region
- PAs collaborate with Service Line Liaisons or Service Line Advocates to resolve Veteran complaints at the point of service
- **The goal is to resolve complaints at the lowest level, ensuring Veteran satisfaction as *Patient Advocacy is Everyone's Responsibility***



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VHA Patient Rights and Responsibilities

VHA is pleased Veterans have chosen us to provide their health care and as part of our service to our Veterans, we are committed to improving health care quality. The following are a few key focus areas:

Veterans have a right to:

- **Nondiscrimination and Respect**
 - Be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect as an individual
 - We will seek to honor cultural and personal values, beliefs, and preferences.
- **Health Information and Privacy**
 - Privacy will be protected
 - Health records will be kept confidential
- **Partnering in Care**
 - Express preferences concerning future medical care in an advance directive
 - Veterans, and any person(s) they choose, will be involved in all decisions about their care
- **Additional Rights and Responsibilities of Community Living Center Residents**

Veterans are responsible for:

- **Communicating concerns or complaints** to your care team or Patient Advocate
- Following their treatment plan and they can also agree to or refuse any treatment
 - Refusing a treatment will not affect rights to future care but Veterans take responsibility for the impact this decision may have on their health
 - If Veterans believe they cannot follow the treatment plan, they have a responsibility to tell their provider or treatment team
- Paying the portion of any costs associated with care

Public links for reference: <https://www.va.gov/health/rights/patientrights.asp>
<https://www.va.gov/health/patientadvocate/>



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Engaging with Patient Advocates

OPA appreciates and respects VSO's and your mission of supporting our Veterans. Some of the ways you can best support Veterans and partner with Patient Advocates (PA) are by:

- Informing the Veteran that they have Patient Rights and Responsibilities, and their local PA can provide education and communicate time frames for resolution
- Getting to know the VAMC Patient Advocates who can best support complaint resolution for the Veterans you are assisting
 - Who is the VAMC Patient Advocate(s)?
 - Where is the PA office located?
 - How and when can they be contacted?
- Asking the local VAMC Patient Advocate about additional services and or programs that may be available to meet the specific needs of the Veteran you are assisting
 - For example, exploring if and how My HealthVet might be an option for direct communication with the Veteran's providers
 - Key points of contact for local specialized programs such as: Women's Veterans Program Managers, Visually Impaired Services Team (VIST), VA Homeless Coordinator

Building key relationships to best support the unique needs of specialized Veteran populations are important to advocating for and improving care



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What's Important for Veterans to Know?

1. Seek resolution at the Point of Service
2. Contact the Local Patient Advocate
3. Veterans have a right to an appeal or higher level review

Encourage Veterans to:

- Advocate for themselves by speaking up
- Ask for a supervisor, service level advocate or patient advocate if their concern is not addressed
- Share specific details with date, time, location and/or staff or Veterans involved
- Be patient and allow time for thorough research for resolution

Ask Veterans to avoid:

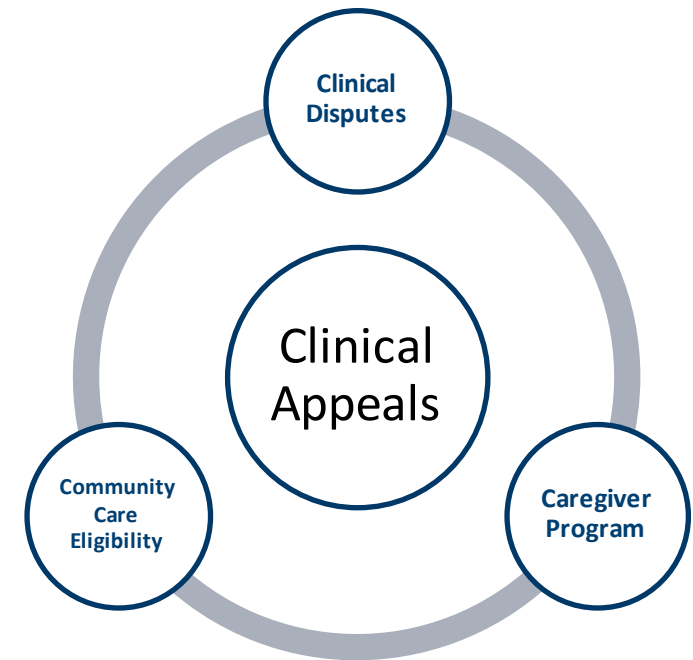
- Not speaking up
- Leaving to 'fix it later'
- Waiting and letting frustrations 'build up'
- Waiting as some reviews or appeals are time sensitive
- Contacting multiple advocacy groups or POCs within a short period of time as this will slow the resolution process



VHA Clinical Appeals

VHA Patient Advocates (PA) are not clinicians and do not render any decisions related to clinical appeals, however they do serve as the point of contact to ‘intake’ or initiate the clinical appeal process

- What is a Clinical Dispute?
 - A disagreement between a patient and VA provider/decision maker regarding a medical determination or decision
- What is a Clinical Appeal?
 - A written request for higher review of one or more medical determinations
- What is a Medical Determination?
 - A medical/clinical determination by an appropriate VA health care professional where the care is needed to promote, preserve or restore the health of an individual and is in accordance with generally accepted standards of medical practice
 - Eligibility for community care under the Veterans Community Care Program (VCCP) (see 38 U.S.C. 1703(f))
 - Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregiver (PCAFC) (see 38 U.S.C. 1720G)



Patient Advocate Experience

Patient Advocate Testimonial Videos on the Passion and Privilege of Serving Veterans

The series was developed to showcase the talent, dedication, and connect the Patient Advocacy workforce as a listening ear and resource for Veterans and their family members

- Below are links and highlights of the videos currently posted on the VHA YouTube channel:
 - [Cristal Diaz Deleon](#) became a Patient Advocate to help Veterans experiencing homelessness with their journey as they transition
 - [Jeanette Long](#) wakes up every day feeling blessed to have the chance to help someone, help a Veteran, help a family member
 - [Johnnie Taylor](#) encourages staff to take the challenge and become a Patient Advocate
 - [Lori Clemmons](#) reminds us that the Veteran is at the center, but we should not forget about the family
 - [Melinda Johnson](#) became a Patient Advocate to pay it forward after experiencing heartfelt support and assistance during the health care journey of her husband

[Patient advocates care about you and your health care - Vantage Point](#): Outlines and describes the functions of a VHA Patient Advocate to educate and connect Veterans with an advocate for assistance



Questions



Contact should be initiated at the local VA Medical Center Patient Advocate Office

