

VA Launches Childcare Pilot

Program Provides Eligible Veterans Childcare While Visiting Health Care Providers

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the launch of free, drop-in childcare service centers at three VA medical centers to an audience of more than 700 participants attending the Fifth National Summit on Women Veterans' Issues July 15-17 at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill.

“We know that many Veterans, particularly women Veterans, are the primary care takers of young children,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “We want these Veterans to have the opportunity to access the high-quality health care that VA offers, and we believe that these childcare centers will make it easier for Veteran caregivers to visit VA.”

The pilot centers are part of VA's continuing effort to improve access to health care for eligible Veterans, particularly the growing number of women Veterans. Congress established this childcare initiative as part of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 which was signed by the President in May 2010. The three sites and childcare details include:

- Northport, NY: 30 child capacity, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., ages 6 weeks to 12 years
- Tacoma, WA: Varying capacity, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., ages 6 weeks to 10 years
- Buffalo, NY: 6 to 10 child capacity, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., ages 6 weeks to 12 years

All the pilot childcare centers will be operated onsite by licensed childcare providers. Drop-in services are offered free to Veterans who are eligible for VA care and visiting a facility for an appointment.

In a survey, VA found that nearly a third of Veterans were interested in childcare services and more than 10 percent had to cancel or reschedule VA appointments due to lack of childcare.

This pilot program will benefit both men and women Veterans. Development of the pilot program was facilitated by the Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group, which strives to make positive changes in the provision of care for all women Veterans.

“While the number of women Veterans continues to grow, they use VA for health care proportionately less than male Veterans,” said Patricia Hayes, Chief Consultant of the VA's Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group. “We hope that by offering safe, secure childcare while the

Veteran attends a doctor's appointment or therapy session, we will enable more women Veterans to take advantage of the VA benefits to which they are entitled.”

Women Veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the Veteran population. Of the 22.7 million living Veterans, more than 1.8 million are women. They comprise nearly 8 percent of the total Veteran population and 6 percent of all Veterans who use VA health care services.

VA estimates women Veterans will constitute 10 percent of the Veteran population by 2020 and 9.5 percent of VA patients.

For more information about VA programs and services for women Veterans, please visit: www.va.gov/womenvet and www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth.