

Rural Telehealth

Provider shortages, long distances to health care facilities, and limited transportation options often keep rural Veterans from obtaining timely, quality care.

To overcome these access challenges, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Rural Health (ORH) uses telehealth technology to help the nearly 3 million rural Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system access clinical services from their home or nearby medical facilities. In FY 2022, ORH:



Enabled telehealth care for nearly 600,000 rural Veterans



Funded more than 25 virtual programs



Dedicated \$176 million to telehealth programs

As the largest provider of telehealth services in the country, VA is leading the nation in telemedicine advancement. In FY 2022, more than a third of Veterans who received care from VA did so via telehealth.

Expanding Telehealth Access

Telehealth technology helps VA improve rural Veterans' health and well-being by connecting rural communities with qualified clinicians. VA continues to work to expand telehealth access through the 'Anywhere to Anywhere' initiative, a federal rule that allows VA doctors, nurses, and other health care providers to administer care to Veterans using telehealth technology regardless of where they live.

As part of its commitment to this initiative, ORH works closely with the Office of Connected Care, which oversees the three modalities of telehealth to provide rural Veterans with care regardless of their location.



These three modalities help improve convenience for rural Veterans by providing access to care from their homes or local communities:

- ▶ **Synchronous, Real-time or Clinical Video Telehealth** connects patients and clinicians in real time via a communications link. Rural Veterans at home or at local VA community based outpatient clinics interact with VA primary care physicians or specialists through a secure video platform.
- ▶ **Asynchronous, or Store-and-Forward Telehealth** enables providers to electronically send images, sounds, and videos to be evaluated by experts thousands of miles away. It does not require the simultaneous presence of both parties. More than 319,800 Veterans – 40% of whom live in rural areas – used asynchronous store and forward telehealth in FY 2018.¹
- ▶ **Remote Patient Monitoring** allows clinicians and case managers to use simple technology to remotely monitor health data from rural Veterans' homes. This is ideal for Veterans with chronic health problems that need continual monitoring, are complex in nature, and where traveling to treatment is inconvenient. In FY 2018, more than 136,700 Veterans were enrolled in remote patient monitoring, 36% of which were rural Veterans.²

1 <https://connectedcare.va.gov/whats-new/technology/va-telehealth-used-more-22-million-veterans>

2 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Connected Care, VA Telehealth Used by More than 2.2 Million Veterans, September 2022

ORH-Funded Telehealth Programs

- ▶ Advanced Comprehensive Diabetes Care
- ▶ Clinical Resource Hubs
- ▶ Clinical Video Telehealth to Provide Comprehensive Care to Rural Veterans with Multiple Sclerosis
- ▶ Community Clergy Training to Support Rural Veterans' Mental Health
- ▶ Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Centers (GRECC) Connect
- ▶ Geriatric Scholars
- ▶ Home-Based Cardiac Rehabilitation
- ▶ National Telecritical Care (TCC) Program
- ▶ Sleep Telemedicine
- ▶ Technology-based Eye Care Services
- ▶ Teleaudiology
- ▶ Teledermatology
- ▶ Telehealth Collaborative Care for Rural Veterans with HIV Infection
- ▶ Telephone Lifestyle Coaching
- ▶ Telerehabilitation
- ▶ VA Video Connect CVT Patient Tablet Program

The Office of Rural Health (ORH) works to see that America's Veterans thrive in rural communities. To support the health and well-being of rural Veterans, ORH and its Veterans Rural Health Resource Centers establish and disseminate initiatives that increase access to care for the 2.7 million rural Veterans enrolled in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' health care system. Key focus areas include programs that address workforce shortages, transportation, primary care, mental health, telehealth, and specialty care.