Telehealth

INFO SHEET

VHA | OFFICE OF RURAL HEALTH

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 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 fiscal year (FY) 2019, ORH:

Enabled telehealth care for more than 760,337 rural Veterans

Funded more than 30 virtual programs

Dedicated $164 million to telehealth programs

As the largest provider of telehealth services in the country, VA is leading the nation in telemedicine advancement. In FY 2018, 13% of Veterans who received care from VA did so via telehealth[1].

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 new 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 to 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[1].

ORH-Funded Telehealth Enterprise-Wide Initiatives

- *Clinical Resource Hubs*
- *Clinical Video Telehealth to Provide Comprehensive Care to Rural Veterans with Multiple Sclerosis*
- *Genomic Counseling Services for Rural Facilities*
- *Military Sexual Trauma Web Based Therapy*
- *National Telestroke Program*
- *Home-Based Cardiac Rehabilitation*
- *Rural Veterans Telerehabilitation Initiative*
- *Sleep Telemedicine*
- *Technology-based Eye Care Services*
- *Teleaudiology*
- *Teledermatology*
- *Telehealth Collaborative Care for Rural Veterans with HIV Infection*
- *Telehealth Equipment Modernization*
- *Tele-Intensive Care Units*
- *Telephone Lifestyle Coaching*
- *Telerehabilitation*
- *VA Video Connect CVT Patient Tablet Program*
- *VA-ECHO Expansion in Specialty Care*
- *VA-Extension for Community Health Outcomes (ECHO) Transgender Program*
- *Vets Prevail Web Based Behavioral Support*

[1] U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Connected Care, Telehealth Fact Sheet, January 2019
https://connectedcare.va.gov/sites/default/files/OT_va-telehealth-factsheet-2019-01.pdf

Office of Rural Health

Congress established the Veterans Health Administration Office of Rural Health (ORH) in 2006 (38 USC § 7308) to conduct research, innovate new health care solutions, and disseminate best practices system-wide to benefit the nearly five million Veterans who reside in rural communities. The mandate also requires ORH to develop, refine and promulgate policies, best practices, lessons learned, and innovative and successful programs. Learn more at **www.ruralhealth.va.gov**.