

# VETERANS UPDATE

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## MISSION ACT LAUNCHES JUNE 6



The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs launches its new, improved care in the community program June 6, implementing parts of the VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act of 2018 — known as the MISSION Act — which replaces the Veterans Choice Program.

The MISSION Act will provide Veterans with more options for their health care. They will be able to work with their VA health care team to see if they are eligible to receive community care, but will also be able to choose to have VA provide their care.

Veterans will be eligible to choose care in the community if they meet any of the following six eligibility criteria:

1. Needs a service not available at any VA medical facility
2. Lives in a U.S. state or territory without a full-service VA medical facility
3. Qualified under the Veterans Choice Act “grandfather” provisions regarding distance to a VA

4. VA cannot furnish care in a manner that complies with access standards.
5. The Veteran’s referring clinician agrees that it is in the best medical interest of the Veteran to get care in the community
6. VA has determined that a VA medical service line is not providing care in a manner that complies with VA’s standards for quality

While the access standards are still being finalized, the proposed guidelines are:

- More than 30-minute average drive time to access VA primary care, mental health and non-institutional extended care services — Average drive times are calculated by VA using geo-mapping software
- More than 60-minute average drive time for access to VA specialty care
- Wait time for a VA appointment of more than 20 days for primary care, mental health care and noninstitutional extended care

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**June 6, 9 a.m.—2 p.m., Education Fair**, 5th floor classrooms of the main hospital. Featuring representatives from more than 15 regional schools. Veterans and staff — all are welcome!

**Aug. 7, 5 – 6:30 p.m., VAMC and VBA RO Joint Veteran Town Hall**, 5th floor auditorium, main hospital. Ask questions and get answers about your health care and benefits.

services

- Wait time of more than 28 days for a VA specialty care appointment
- In addition to the new care in the community program, the MISSION Act will also:
- Strengthen VA’s ability to recruit and retain clinicians
  - Authorize “Anywhere to Anywhere” telehealth provision across state lines
  - Establish a new urgent-care benefit that eligible Veterans can access in the community

To help employees prepare for transition to the MISSION Act, the Providence VA Medical Center has dedicated the month of May to MISSION Act readiness and training, along with VA medical facilities across the country.

“We are committed to providing Veterans with the care they have earned — where and when they need it,” said Dr. Susan MacKenzie, director of the Providence VAMC.

## WOMEN VETERANS: STRONGER TOGETHER



The Stronger Together Hope Bracelet, which was funded by a VA Spark-Seed-Spread innovation grant to help reduce suicide risk among women Veterans. The bracelet has the Veterans Crisis Line number engraved inside, so it is always right at hand. (Photo courtesy of Snaps To It)

Julie Mitchell, a Coast Guard Veteran, started Snaps-To-It in 2015, because she needed a business that gave her the flexibility her disability required. The company has grown steadily since, providing customizable jewelry through independent consultants across the country.

The Women Veterans Program manager at the Providence VA Medical Center, Tonya Maselli-McConnell, was working on a project to help reduce suicide risk among women Veterans.

Mitchell and McConnell came together and collaborated on the project, which was funded by a VA Spark-Seed-Spread innovation grant, resulting in the Stronger Together Hope Bracelet. McConnell put together the grant proposal with Chis Giblin, a TeleHealth nurse who is part of the Providence VAMC women's health team, and Mitchell designed the bracelets.

"Julie custom designed the bracelet, which has the Veterans Crisis Line number engraved inside, so it is always right at hand," said McConnell. "Stronger Together is engraved

there, as well, as a reminder that the Veteran is not alone – there is always help they can reach out for at any time."

Veterans in crisis – or their loved ones – can call the Veterans Crisis Line at 800-273-8255 and press 1 to reach qualified responders 24/7. They can also chat at [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net).

In addition to the Veterans Crisis Line number, the bracelet set has a custom-designed magnetic flag snap featuring the word "Hope," which is removable and could be swapped out for a snap with a military service emblem or something else, depending on the outfit or the event the Veteran is attending. The stainless steel band can be adjusted to fit.

As part of the grant project, the Women Veterans Program at the Providence VAMC has a supply of the bracelets that will be provided to women Veterans during outreach efforts in the community. Interested people can also visit <https://www.snapstoit.com/productdetail/VET101>.

The bracelets were unveiled during an event celebrating women Veterans at the Providence VAMC



### Providence VA Medical Center

830 Chalkstone Ave  
Providence, RI 02908  
401-273-7100

Veteran's Crisis Line:  
800-273-8255 press 1

Patient Call Center (PCC):  
401-457-3336

Office of Community Care:  
401-273-7100 ext. 3015

Website:  
[www.providence.va.gov](http://www.providence.va.gov)

Facebook:  
[facebook.com/  
VAProvidence](https://facebook.com/VAProvidence)

Twitter:  
[twitter.com/VAProvidence](https://twitter.com/VAProvidence)

March 22. Mitchell was the featured speaker at the event, during which she discussed the challenges of starting a small business as a disabled woman Veteran.

"This project is very close to my heart, as I've experienced firsthand the help that the caring people of the Veterans Crisis Line provide," said Mitchell. "It made a dramatic difference for me."