

VFW: VA Health Care Trending in Right Direction

Seventh ‘Our Care’ survey reveals pulse of veterans

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WASHINGTON – The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States this week released the results of its latest nationwide survey on the Department of Veterans Affairs health care system from the veterans’ point-of-view. Now in its seventh edition, the VFW created “Our Care” in the aftermath of the nationwide crisis in access to care and confidence that enveloped the VA in 2014, and the ensuing legislative corrective actions that followed. More than 6,900 veterans participated in the latest edition, bringing the total number of “Our Care” respondents to more than 33,000 veterans from every state, territory, and the District of Columbia.

“The VFW prides itself on having the ability to take the pulse of veterans, especially in evaluating what works at the VA and what doesn’t,” said VFW National Commander William J. “Doc” Schmitz, of Corning, N.Y. “Veterans turn to VA for high-quality, individualized care, but there is always room for improvement, especially in the areas of access to quality care inside VA medical facilities and outside in the communities,” he explained. “That’s why such surveys are so important, because the only way to improve any service is to routinely take the pulse of the customers the VA exists to serve.”

This year’s “Our Care” survey included care experience questions from past surveys, as well as logic-based questions on innovations unique to the recently passed *MISSION Act*, which improved upon its predecessor *Choice Act* in areas like community care consolidation as well as introducing a new urgent care benefit. Not surprising is that most veterans who use the VA also have other care options, such as that provided through private insurance, Medicare or Tricare. Still, very noticeable was 74 percent of respondents reported seeing improvements at their local VA, compared to 64 percent in 2018, and 91 percent of respondents recommend VA care to other veterans compared to 80 percent last year. Also positive was learning that veterans who were offered community care still prefer to receive their care from the VA, that veterans who use community care facilities are reporting fewer billing problems, and that veterans have a positive opinion of the new urgent care benefit.

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VA health care is trending in the right direction, but the VFW wants the VA to continue the momentum. “Veterans tell us that they view VA care as an earned benefit designed for their unique needs,” said the VFW national commander. “The innovations over the past year may have expanded non-VA care options, but the response has been more veterans enrolling in the VA for more care – and choosing to receive that care through VA, not an outside provider,” he said. “Community care has always had a role in caring for our nation’s wounded, ill and injured veterans, but its purpose is to augment, not replace, the continuity and continuum of care that only the VA can provide. And with our seventh report, our nation’s veterans agree.”

[Click here to read the “Our Care 2019” report.](#)