VFW Releases Initial Report on the Veterans Choice Program

VFW recommendations would improve delivery of health care options for veterans

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WASHINGTON — The Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. will deliver to Congress this week its initial report on the implementation of the new Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Choice Program. The report is based on a survey of more than 2,500 VFW members over the first three months of the Veterans Choice Program, which VA launched on November 5, 2014.

“It is important that veterans have the opportunity to make informed health care decisions that best fit their own individual circumstances,” said VFW National Commander John W. Stroud, who's in Washington along with more than 500 VFW advocates to deliver the report to every member of Congress as part of this week’s VFW National Legislative Conference. “The Veterans Choice Program is an ambitious initiative that is supposed to offer more options to veterans who need it, which is why the VFW has an obligation to keep our pulse on the veterans’ community to ensure the program works.”

The VFW survey identified problems among many veterans who believed they were eligible for the Choice Program due to their geographic distance from a VA facility. For those who have waited 30 or more days for an appointment, the VFW also identified communication and training problems that may have precluded veterans from being properly informed of their non-VA care options.

The VFW is now working closely with VA and the third party administrators responsible for the implementation of the Choice Program.

The VFW’s report includes six specific recommendations to improve the delivery of health care options for veterans, as well as a detailed analysis of participation, wait-time standards,

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
406 W. 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
Office 816.756.3390
Fax 816.968.1157

WASHINGTON OFFICE
200 Maryland Ave., N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002
Office 202.543.2239
Fax 202.543.6719
info@vfw.org
www.vfw.org

Online Version: https://www.vfw.org/media-and-events/latest-releases/archives/2015/3/vfw-releases-initial-report-on-the-veterans-choice-program

geographic eligibility, and non-VA care issues that must be addressed to ensure this important program succeeds in increasing access to health care for America's veterans. Read the VFW report here.

In an ongoing effort to hold the VA accountable for the proper implementation of this program, and to provide direct customer feedback, the VFW has now launched a second Veterans Choice Program survey, which is available via www.vfw.org/VAWatch.

"As the Veterans Choice Program matures, the VFW will continue to issue reports about what is working and how VA and Congress can fix what is not," said Stroud. "This program is intended to be the solution to last year's nationwide crisis in care and confidence. The VFW will not let it fail."