

## NCHV eNewsletter

November 2014



### Coalition Call: NCHV Launches Blog

New blog will highlight local change

NCHV is proud to announce the launch of our new blog, [Coalition Call](#). The blog will allow us to share news and events from NCHV member agencies, with commentary on individual contributions to ending veteran homelessness. If you have news of progress in your community that you'd like us to highlight, please send a short description, with photos to [info@nchv.org](mailto:info@nchv.org).

Be sure to [like us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#)!

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### VA Implements Second Phase of Choice Card Program

Cards sent to veterans waiting more than 30 days for care

Washington, DC – VA has announced that it began mailing Veterans Choice Cards on Nov. 17 to veterans currently waiting more than 30-days from their preferred date or the date that is medically determined by their physician for an appointment at a VA facility.

**Be sure veterans in your programs have a current address that is not a PO Box on file with VA!**

“VA continues to focus on implementation of this new temporary benefit so that veterans receive the timely quality care they need in a way that reduces confusion and inefficiencies,” said Secretary Robert A. McDonald, who penned an [open letter](#) to veterans announcing the implementation of the Choice Card program.

The Choice Program is a new, temporary benefit that allows some veterans to receive health care in their communities rather than waiting for a VA appointment or traveling to a VA facility. The first round of cards along with a letter explaining the program was issued on Nov. 5 to veterans who are eligible based on their place of residence. VA is now engaging in the next phase of its rollout –eligibility explanation letters are being sent to veterans waiting more than 30 days from their preferred date to be seen or considered medically necessary by their physician.

To improve service delivery, VA has prioritized efforts to accelerate veterans off of wait lists and into clinics through the Accelerated Care Initiative begun over the summer. Through this initiative, VA medical centers have increased access to care inside and outside of VA, added more clinic hours and work days, deployed mobile medical units and shared their best practices from VA's high-performing facilities throughout the organization.

## Significant improvements have resulted nationally:

- Scheduling more than 1.2 million more appointments in the past four months than in the same period last year. In total, VA medical centers have scheduled over 19 million veteran appointments from June to Oct. 1, 2014;
- Reducing the national new patient Primary Care wait time by 18 percent;
- Completing 98 percent of appointments within 30 days of the veterans' preferred date, or the date determined to be medically necessary by a physician;
- Authorizing 1.1 million non-VA care authorizations, a 47-percent increase over the same period last year; and
- Increasing the amount of time providers could deliver care to veterans by increasing the amount of clinic hours in primary and specialty care and through adding weekend and evening clinics at our medical centers.

VA is America's largest integrated health care system with over 1,700 sites of care, serving approximately 9 million veterans enrolled in health care services. The Choice Program is part of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (VACAA), enacted nearly three months ago, to enable VA to meet the demand for veterans' health care in the short-term.

For more information about the Choice Program, call 1-866-606-8198 or visit <http://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/>.

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## First Lady Honors Women Veterans at Career Development Forum

### Highlights new partnerships and resources to help veterans find employment

On Nov. 10, First Lady Michelle Obama joined more than 200 active duty, retired military, veteran, and reservist women at the Women Veterans Career Development Forum. The career forum, focused on transitioning to civilian life, follows a White House [roundtable](#) discussion led by the First Lady which was featured in the November 2014 Redbook issue's cover story.

The day-long career-readiness forum, held at Arlington National Cemetery, included discussion with private and public-sector employers; hands-on workshops covering topics from financial literacy to resume writing; insights on entrepreneurship from Bobbi Brown, founder and CEO of Bobbi Brown Cosmetics; and a career fashion workshop sponsored by Ann Taylor.

To support veterans in their transition to meaningful employment, the First Lady announced two significant public-private partnerships with LinkedIn and Coursera that will help military members find and land the jobs they want:

- [LinkedIn](#) will now provide the ability for veterans to import their LinkedIn profiles directly into the Veteran Employment Center and is providing free services and tools, such as training materials and access to a one-year free Job Seeker Subscription.
- [Coursera](#), an online educational platform, is offering all U.S. veterans one free certificate in hundreds of in-demand courses. Additionally, Coursera and the Department of Veterans Affairs are teaming up to open 20 learning hubs across the country.

The First Lady also highlighted the [Veterans Employment Center](#), a new website that's changing the way veterans can find jobs in the public and private sectors with more than a million job postings.

"It's a one-stop shop for you to build on your profile, create a resume, find a list of job openings that suit the skills you've learned in the military. And already there are more than a million job postings, and it features hundreds of employers that have committed to hiring our veterans. And on top of all that, this website also allows you to view all of your other earned benefits, things like career counseling, the GI Bill."

"You might have your ups and downs," the First Lady said in closing, "but I want you to know that this whole country believes in you, and we've got your backs. So we're going to keep rallying this country to serve you as well as you've served us."

For more resources for both employers and job seekers, [click here](#). Additional employment resources for veterans are available through the [American Job Centers](#) and [My Next Move for Veterans](#).

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## Administration Takes Stock of Veteran Homelessness Progress, Path Forward

### Veterans Day brings focus of officials

The week of Veterans Day, ending veteran homelessness came into focus with several Administration officials addressing the topic, including the President.

HUD Secretary Julian Castro penned an op-ed piece titled "[Push to End Veteran Homelessness will Continue](#)," featured in the San Antonio Express News. Castro highlighted the Mayor's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness – an initiative that focuses on cities and towns bringing the effective strategies of [Opening Doors](#) to their community – and making ending veteran homelessness a priority on the local level. Castro also wrote, "the president has requested an additional \$75 million for HUD-VASH in his fiscal year 2015 Budget, which we believe will end homelessness among veterans by the end of next year. And I assure you that we'll keep working until the job is done."

Laura Green-Zeilinger, Executive Director of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), wrote a post for the USICH Blog, "[As a Grateful Nation, We Must End Homelessness among Veterans](#)." Zeilinger also spoke of the Mayor's Challenge, and highlighted the Department of Veterans Affairs' 25 Cities Initiative – an effort to channel resources and collaboration to the 25 cities with the greatest need. VA asserts that if we can end veteran homelessness in those 25 cities, we can end veteran homelessness in the rest of the nation.

President Obama touched on ending veteran homelessness in his [Nov. 7 briefing](#) prior to a Cabinet meeting. He spoke of efforts to improve VA wait times, and "also building on successes that have been taking place over the last several years – reducing homelessness, for example. With our HUD Secretaries Donovan and now Castro, we've reduced veterans homelessness by 30 percent. And a lot of that's not by virtue of new legislation, it's just by us focusing more on these problems and managing them better, and continually listening to the American people to see how we can be more helpful."

This collaboration and cooperation at the Federal level is driving the unprecedented resources to end veteran homelessness, and it is imperative that we ensure the same level of teamwork and the same commitment is present at the local level.

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## Funding Opportunities

**The John and Susan Dewan Foundation** makes grants and gives assistance to organizations that provide direct service to people in poverty. Projects that transform lives and help the poor to help themselves are the primary focus. Faith-based organizations are a special interest for the Foundation's grant making, and they only fund organizations serving Chicago and the surrounding area. Letters of inquiry are accepted throughout the year. For more information, [click here](#).

**The Kessler Foundation** focuses on increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities through its [Signature Employment](#) and [Community Employment](#) grantmaking programs which fund local and national programs aimed at increasing the percentage of Americans with disabilities in the workforce. Application deadlines vary depending on the program applied for, but deadlines are typically in the beginning of the new year.

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This eNewsletter is funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. For the latest news, resources and grant information, visit our website at [www.nchv.org](http://www.nchv.org).

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