

## Reminder: VA Choice First Program Starts with Your Provider

Recently a [Peoria newspaper](#) ran a story about OSF Healthcare announcing its participation in the VA Choice Provider Program. The news report also stated that, “For local veterans, the announcement means receiving certain types of medical care will be less likely to require traveling to a Department of Veterans Affairs facility, or have to wait for an appointment at a clinic serving populations over a wide region.”

**Please note** that nothing in the VA Choice First program has changed. Veterans can utilize the Choice First if the care is not available within the VA. [This requires a VA provider to enter a consult to set up care with a community provider.](#)

- ▶ Veterans must use the Choice Program contracted administrator’s Network of Providers
- ▶ Veterans qualify if they are waiting greater than 30 days from the clinically indicated date (date provider states Veteran needs to be seen) for a scheduled VA appointment (*Veteran must call the Choice Program at 866-606-8198*)
  - Veteran keeps scheduled VA appointment unless Veteran contacts the Choice Program to request care in the community.
  - If Veteran utilizes the Choice Program and receives an appointment with a community provider, VA staff is notified and VA appointment is cancelled.
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The 40 mile rule and your eligibility for Choice:

Current residence is more than 40 miles (driving distance from a VA facility (not necessarily where the care is being received) (*Veteran must call the Choice Program at 866-606-8198*))

- There is no consult that is required from the VA
- Veteran can utilize the Choice Program at any time
- Veteran can still receive care at the VA

For Veterans using this program this **does not** impact your existing VA health care or any other VA benefit. Veterans must work with the VA in accessing VA Choice Provider services.