Accelerating Access to Care

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), through an initiative launched in May 2014, has accelerated access to care for Veterans across the country, both in VA facilities and in their communities.

From June 1, 2014, to September 30, 2014, VA completed **19M appointments** for Veterans.

- Approximately 1.2M more completed VA health care appointments from June 2014 through September 2014, compared to same period in 2013

Since May, 2014, facilities across the country have held **extended clinic hours** in the evenings and on weekends.

- Over 500,000 appointments were scheduled and completed during extended hours from May 15, 2014, to September 15, 2014. Over 100,000 of those appointments scheduled and completed occurred on a Saturday.

VA medical centers utilized Patient-Centered Community Care (PC3) contracts to purchase **non-VA medical care** for Veterans in their communities. These contracts were expanded in August 2014 to add primary care to the services available to Veterans through this program.

- VA made nearly 1.1M authorizations for Veterans to receive care in the private sector and other non-VA health facilities—a 46.6 percent increase over the same period in 2013 (May 15, 2014 – September 30, 2014)

VA reached out to all Veterans waiting for care to get them **off of wait lists** and into clinics for medical appointments.

- In total, VHA reached more than 311,000 Veterans nationwide – including patients new to VA care or new to a particular clinic in a facility, those who were scheduled for an appointment more than 30 days out, or on the Electronic Wait List (EWL).

VA has **cut wait times** and completed appointments in a timely manner

- The national new patient wait time for Primary Care at VA decreased 18 percent (May 15 – October 1, 2014).
- VA has decreased the number of Veterans on the EWL by nearly 35,000 (61 percent) since May 15, 2014.
- VA has decreased the number of Veterans on the New Enrollee Appointment Request list by more than 61,000 since May 15, 2014.

- Ninety-eight percent of appointments at VA facilities have been completed within 30 days from the Veterans' preferred date, or the date determined medically necessary by their physician (June to September 30, 2014)

VA has **increased recruiting and hiring** across the country
- During the second half of 2014, there has been a net increase of 1,578 more nurses, 726 additional support and scheduling staff, and 594 physicians.

VA has **increased transparency** related to access
- At the direction of then Acting Secretary Gibson, starting in July 2014, VA has posted regular updates to the patient access data at: http://www.va.gov/health/access-audit.asp. These data updates enhanced transparency and provided information to Veterans and the public on Veterans access to quality health care.
- VA has also recently posted an updated version of the facility performance measures for quality and efficiency.

Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS) Access Improvements:
- VA reached out to more than 4,000 Veterans in Phoenix to coordinate the acceleration of their care, including all Veterans in Phoenix identified as being on unofficial lists or the facility EWL.
- In addition to 26 medical professionals assigned to the Phoenix VAHCS from the Interim Staffing Program, PVAHCS has increased their staffing by 294 employees since June 1, 2014.
- In addition, the amount of time new patients were waiting to be seen at Primary Care clinics decreased by 37 percent (May 15, 2014, to October 1, 2014).
- From May 15, 2014, to August 30, 2014, PVAHCS completed more than 197,000 Veteran appointments.
- There was a 79.63 percent increase in non-VA care authorizations made by the Phoenix VAHCS over same period in FY13 (May 15, 2013, to September 30, 2013).