

VA Health Care on Native Lands – Questions and Answers

During the Feb. 22 webinar, we didn't have time to cover all questions during the Q&A period. Our presenter, Shawndin Tracy, Native American Services Outreach Coordinator in the Northern Arizona VA Health Care System, has graciously provided the answers below to address the remaining questions.

If you haven't already seen the webinar, [find the recording from Feb. 22](#) on the LTSS webinar archive at CMS.gov.

Northern Arizona VA Collaborations

- **How often does the VA/IHS/THP meet?**

Northern AZ VA Health Care System (NAVAHCS) and partnered IHS/THP facilities (CEO, Business Office, key staff, etc.) strive to meet on a quarterly basis to discuss updates on clinic operations, reimbursements, concerns, Q/A at the collaborative IHS/THP sites.

- **How long did it take you to negotiate the reimbursement agreement?**

National – it took at least 3 years as we needed to continuously meet with tribal councils, IHS, THP, NAVAHCS Leadership, congressional leaders.

Local – on average 1 year.

- **Is there any Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) programs in these areas?**

Yes, but the closest HBPC program that NAVAHCS has is based out of the Flagstaff Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), Flagstaff, AZ. Their program provides services within a 60-mile radius from the CBOC. We hope to expand this outreach service to Navajo and Hopi land in the near future since these areas fall under NAVAHCS coverage area.

- **Will this include any Tribal members from the White Mountain Apache Tribe in Whiteriver, AZ?**

This area falls under the Phoenix VA Health Care System's coverage area. For more information, regarding a VA/IHS-THP partnership for this area, please contact the VA's Office of Tribal Government Relations Specialist, LoRae "HoMana" Pawiki at (928) 776-5306 or LoRae.Pawiki@va.gov

Also, the nearest VA medical facility for this tribe would be the Show VA Clinic or the Payson VA Clinic, which are both under Phoenix.

- **Can Veterans receive their VA prescription at the Tribal 340B Pharmacy where there is no copay?**

Yes. Under the Agreement, AI/AN Eligible Veterans do not pay a co-pay for eligible services or pharmaceuticals provided at the VA-IHS/THP facility.

However, if a specific medication is not on formulary at a VA-IHS/THP partnered pharmacy, then the medication would need to be dispensed from the VA pharmacy (mail delivery), where there may or may not be a copay depending on the Veteran's health benefits package.

Building Collaboration in Other Areas

- **What components of these collaboration efforts can be replicated in non-tribal areas?**

Certainly Telemental health are in negotiation with non-tribal facilities due to the increasing diagnoses of mental health ailments among our Armed Forces and Veterans.

- **Who would be the best person to contact to set up a meeting to improve our partnership or collaboration to improve care to Vets?**

For Indian Country, depending on where you're located, it's best to contact the nearest VA Office of Tribal Government Relations Specialist at (202) 461-7400 or visit website

<https://www.va.gov/TRIBALGOVERNMENT/contact.asp>

- **Do VA and IHS coordinate to facilitate access to specialty care for Veterans living in rural/remote areas?**

Yes. These VA-IHS/THP partnerships' main goal is to provide VA health care closer to home. Usually the VA provider will first consider availability of the specialty service to be done at the partnered IHS/THP facility, if there are openings, the VA provider will order the consult there. If there is no space, the VA provider will then order the consult with the NAVAHCS at the main facility or contracted out to a non-VA health care specialty service. Services must be provided to the Veteran within 30 days.

Other Questions

- **Must prior authorization be obtained from the VA to have labs, radiology draw at an IHS facility?**

Yes. NAVAHCS and its IHS/THP partnership sites all have an Agreement in place that states that if the VA provider orders ancillary services (i.e. lab, radiology, audiology) at the IHS/THP partnered site, then NAVAHCS must generate a prior authorization for them so they may file a claim for reimbursement of services rendered at their facility.

- **What are the largest barriers for eligibility for Native Veterans to access VA health care services?**

Veterans can be rejected or ineligible for the following reasons: discharged under Other Than Honorable, Bad Conduct, or Dishonorable conditions; did not serve in an Active Duty capacity; did not meet minimum service requirements (24 consecutive months) if enlisted after 9/7/1980; will never be eligible without upgrade or specialty authority; or income surpasses income thresholds necessary for enrollment.

- **What is the difference between "VA Medical Benefit" and "Northern AZ VA Healthcare?" What's the eligibility criteria?**

Across VHA, we use the term VA Health Care Benefits, which should mean the same as "VA Medical Benefit." This includes a comprehensive medical benefits package for the Veteran, where Veterans are placed in an enrollment priority group (Priority Group 1-8). This is all decided upon by VA enrollment and eligibility after reviewing the Veterans VA FORM 10-10EZ (VA health benefits application). Each Veteran has a unique comprehensive medical benefits package—they are not all the same.

“Northern AZ VA Healthcare” refers to the Prescott, AZ’s VA medical center called the Northern AZ VA Health Care System. NAVAHCS is currently serving approximately 27,000 AZ Veterans with primary and secondary health care services, mental health, long term care, and residential rehabilitation services.

VA’s eligibility criteria for health care will take a while to explain, so I’ll just refer you all to the online address for more detailed information <https://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/veterans.asp>

For More Information

Eligibility

A Veteran can apply online at [va.gov/healthbenefits](https://www.va.gov/healthbenefits)

For VA eligibility help over the phone, call 877-222-VETS (8387).

You can learn more on VA’s page [Easy Ways to Apply for Enrollment](https://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/) (at <https://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/>).

Crisis Help

Health care workers can contact the Veterans Crisis Line if a Veteran is in crisis.

- Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1.
- Online chat and text at <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>

VA Long-Term Care Information

VA Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Centers: <https://www.va.gov/grecc/>

VA Geriatrics and Extended Care: <https://www.va.gov/geriatrics/guide/longtermcare/>

VA Office of Tribal Government Relations

Phone: 202-461-7400

Email: tribalgovernmentconsultation@va.gov

Find your regional tribal relations specialist:
<https://www.va.gov/TRIBALGOVERNMENT/contact.asp>