Office of Connected Care Background

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) continues to look for new ways to improve services for Veterans and engage them in their own health care. As part of this effort, there has been an increased focus on developing virtual technology to improve access for Veterans and to provide health care beyond traditional doctor’s office visits. To further enhance the Veteran experience, VA Telehealth Services and the Connected Health Office merged to create the Office of Connected Care in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016. Since coming together the two offices together, the Office of Connected Care continues to enable VA to deliver on its promise to provide personalized, proactive, patient-driven health care. Specifically, the Office of Connected Care focuses on:

- increasing access to continuous, coordinated VA health care services;
- enhancing the workflow, impact and efficiency through technology for VA staff; and
- supporting Veterans’ participation in their health care.

For more than 15 years, VA Telehealth Services has been a pioneer in digital health care. In FY 2016 alone, VA Telehealth Services provided more than 2.17 million telehealth episodes of care to more than 702,000 patients—up to 12 percent of Veterans receiving VA health care. Within the Connected Health portfolio, which comprises My HealtheVet, the VHA Innovation Program and VA Mobile, there is similar longevity and reach within the Veteran population. For example, My HealtheVet has been in existence for more than 14 years and boasts 3.8 million registered users. In addition, the VA Mobile and the VHA Innovation Program have been on the cutting edge, delivering new and innovative technologies and services to both Veterans and VA staff members.
**VA Telehealth Services**

VA Telehealth Services uses telehealth technologies, health informatics, and disease management to expand Veterans’ access to VA quality care, helping ensure Veterans get the right care, in the right place, at the right time. VA Telehealth Services enable Veterans to access VA care at the time and place more convenient for the Veteran. VA employs telehealth two different ways—1) Synchronous Real-Time Telehealth, providing real-time videoconferencing between VA care team and their patients, increasingly from the Veteran’s home or mobile device; and 2) Asynchronous or Store-and-Forward Telehealth, for remote monitoring of patients at home with chronic conditions, or allowing clinicians to capture and share images, sounds, or data with other specialists for help in diagnosis and delivery of care.

**My HealthVet**

My HealthVet (myhealth.va.gov) is VA’s online personal health record. It is designed for Veterans, Servicemembers and their dependents to better understand and manage their health care. Veterans can perform tasks such as recording their diet, exercise and health history; sending a message to their VA care team; refilling VA medications; tracking VA appointments and reviewing notes from their last clinic visit.

**VHA Innovation Program**

The VHA Innovation Program hosts annual competitions to encourage VA employees and industry professionals to submit ideas to enhance VHA care and services to Veterans. The ideas are selected for their focus on quality, safety, efficiency and transparency and effectiveness of the solution. If chosen, innovators pilot their ideas to an initial clinical demonstration area to test their approach and methods.

**VA Mobile**

VA Mobile develops health apps for Veterans and VA care teams that increase access, communication and coordination of care for Veterans. The apps provide users with increased opportunities to be active participants in their health care and lead healthier lives. Web and mobile apps for VA care teams are designed to transform the way clinicians and patients interact, and ultimately to improve the health of Veterans by leveraging the power of mobile technology. VA’s apps are now available from the VA App Store: mobile.va.gov/appstore.

For more information, visit connectedcare.va.gov or contact the VHA 10P8 Connected Care Communications at vha10p8communications@va.gov.