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VA Launches Childcare Pilot
Program Allows Veteran Caregivers to Visit Health Care Providers

WASHINGTON – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced the launch of three free, drop-in childcare service centers at three VA medical centers to an audience of more than 700 women Veterans attending the Fifth National Summit on Women Veterans’ Issues July 15-17 at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill. VA Puget Sound Health Care System will provide childcare at the American Lake Division in 2012.

“We know that many Veterans, particularly women Veterans, are the primary care takers of young children,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “We want these Veterans to have the opportunity to access the high-quality health care that VA offers, and we believe that these childcare centers will make it easier for Veteran caregivers to visit VA.”

“I am very pleased to see that VA Puget Sound was selected as one of the three pilot sites for this very important program”, said David A. Elizalde, Director, VA Puget Sound Health Care System. “Childcare services are essential to our young Veteran families trying to juggle work and home life issues.”

The pilot centers are part of VA’s continuing effort to improve access to health care for eligible Veterans, particularly the growing number of women Veterans. In the next year, VA plans to launch childcare centers at VA facilities in the following locations:

- Northport, NY: 30 child capacity, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., ages 6 weeks to 12 years
- Buffalo, NY: 6 to 10 child capacity, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., ages 6 weeks to 12 years
- Tacoma, WA: Varying capacity, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., ages 6 weeks to 10 years
All the pilot childcare centers will be operated onsite by licensed childcare providers. Drop-in services are offered free to Veterans visiting VA who are eligible for VA care.

In a survey, VA found that nearly a third of Veterans were interested in childcare services and more than 10 percent had to cancel or reschedule VA appointments due to lack of childcare.

Congress authorized VA to create the childcare pilot under the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 (PL 111-163), a comprehensive package of services that includes training, mental health services, and access to medical care for the caregivers of Veterans with special needs. Childcare is a service that Veterans have requested and the pilot program will benefit both men and women Veterans.

Development of the pilot program was facilitated by the Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group, which strives to make positive changes in the provision of care for all women Veterans.

“While the number of women Veterans continues to grow, they use VA for health care proportionately less than male Veterans,” said Patricia Hayes, Chief Consultant of the VA’s Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group. “We hope that by offering safe, secure childcare while the Veteran attends a doctor’s appointment or therapy session, we will enable more women Veterans to take advantage of the VA benefits to which they are entitled.”

Women Veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the Veteran population. Of the 22.7 million living Veterans, more than 1.8 million are women. They comprise nearly 8 percent of the total Veteran population and 6 percent of all Veterans who use VA health care services.

VA estimates women Veterans will constitute 10 percent of the Veteran population by 2020 and 9.5 percent of VA patients.

For more information about VA programs and services for women Veterans, please visit: www.va.gov/womenvet and www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth.

For further questions the pilot site at American Lake starting in 2012, please call the VA Puget Sound Office of Public Affairs at (206) 764-2435.