



STATE OF MARYLAND


DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
201 W. Preston Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., Governor – Michael S. Steele, Lt. Governor – S. Anthony McCann, Secretary

MEMORANDUM

To: Health Officers

From: S. Anthony McCann
Secretary 

Date: November 29, 2005

Subject: Veterans Healthcare

Several months ago I talked to you about my continued interest in the healthcare of our veterans and an initiative to raise the level of awareness for veterans' healthcare, especially those returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan.

My objectives:

- To address unmet medical needs of our nation's veterans
- To establish contacts within the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), and when appropriate, generate an agreement for providing services and receiving reimbursement for those services
- To focus attention on the collection of information from veterans in the areas of substance abuse, mental health, epidemiology and disease control programs
- To strengthen public relations between the veterans population and our local health departments

Thank you and your staff for being responsive to our questionnaire and our many telephone conversations with your staff. I am pleased to know that some of you already have programs specifically for veterans, and many of you are already providing services to veterans, i.e., for substance abuse, mental health, and adult day care. I understand that we do not always receive a reimbursement for our services and I would like to know more about such services being provided and the circumstances to try to resolve outstanding concerns with DVA.

The information we have collected indicates that most of the local health departments do not collect data specific to a veteran. Therefore, we cannot identify a veteran and most certainly do not have information on diseases related to veterans. I don't believe it is necessary or efficient for each of you to include specific questions for veterans. However, I am requesting those clinics where we traditionally have a sufficient veteran population coming to us for healthcare to include question(s) that will identify veterans. Since history tells us that veterans sometimes have

Health Officers
November 29, 2005
Page Two

symptoms of a disease but may not be diagnosed for several years after they have served in the military, I believe gathering veteran information today can be very useful in the future.

Most of you are using automated systems that include a series of questions about demographics and fee determination. Therefore, the addition of one or two questions to obtain veteran information should not result in a burden for your operation.

In the area of public relations, during the last six months we have successfully begun a dialogue with the Veteran's Administration Medical Center. I hope that the sharing of information will continue and that in the near future, each of you will have a contact at the DVA. Your staff may contact the enrollment office at 1-800-463-6295 ext. 7317 or you may reach John O'Brien, Social Work Executive, VA Maryland Health Care System, at 410-605-7012 or John.Obrien@med.va.gov

In order to strengthen our public relations, I am requesting that each of you add the following link from the Department of Veterans Affairs Home Page to your home pages, www.va.gov or www.seamlesstransition.va.gov. The Seamless Transition site specifically discusses information benefits and services for our Reservists and the National Guard.

Once again, thanks for joining me to ensure our Maryland Veterans have access to the best possible healthcare.

cc: Dr. Michelle Gourdine
Dr. Diane Matuszak