



Fond du Lac County

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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Veterans to be able to obtain medical care locally?

On Thursday, June 6th, the long-awaited Mission Act, designed to provide better access to local medical services, paid for by the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, will become a reality. That is in theory anyway. The VA has had a year to put this plan into place and roll it out. Unfortunately, there has been so much misinformation out there, the chances of a smooth roll-out are questionable. Every veteran enrolled in VA Healthcare should have received a brochure in the mail from the VA within the past few weeks. Please read the entire brochure. It contains a lot of useful information. Here are some of the highlights.

The intent of the bill is, for those who fall into certain eligibility criteria, a veteran could be seen by a local non-VA provider when it was in the best interest of both the veteran and the VA. There are six eligibility criteria, of which two don't apply to veterans in Fond du Lac County. A member of our office attended a town hall meeting at the Madison VA Medical Center on May 30th and the first takeaway is that NO, you cannot just go to any medical clinic you want any time and tell them to bill the VA. Because each medical organization or clinic must be an "in-network" provider, the VA still must preauthorize any care at a non-VA medical facility. In most cases, at least in the beginning, the VA will most likely also schedule those appointments for you.

Copayments are another issue. First, if the medical facility you are going to, especially urgent care, tells you that you owe them a copay, that is a sign they are not going to bill VA at all. The facilities are not to charge any copays. That will be handled by the VA. The VA does have a copayment schedule set up for urgent care. If you are normally exempt from the VA for copays, then you will be able to see an urgent care clinic three times without incurring a copay in a year's time. After that, it will be \$30 each visit. For those who generally pay copays at the VA, you will incur a \$30 copay from the VA on your first visit.

Veterans will not receive a "Mission Act" card like they did with the old Choice Program. This is intentional. Too many veterans tried to use that as an insurance card and that was not the purpose and in many cases caused the veteran to receive bills they thought would be paid for by VA. The goal of the brochures and media releases is to reduce some of the misconceptions of the new Mission Act and hopefully will reduce the number of bills veterans receive from out of network providers thinking the VA would pay the bill. If any veteran has further questions, please call the Veteran Service Office at 920-929-3117, 929-3157, or 929-3120 and we would gladly answer any questions they might have. We have been in contact several times a week with VA representatives who will answer any questions we throw at them.