

Rural Telehealth

Provider shortages, long distances to health care facilities, and limited transportation options often keep rural Veterans from obtaining timely, quality care.

To overcome these access challenges, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Rural Health (ORH) uses telehealth technology to help the nearly 3 million rural Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system access clinical services from their home or nearby medical facilities. In FY 2023, ORH:



Enabled telehealth care for nearly **685,000** rural Veterans



Funded more than **30** virtual programs



Dedicated **\$185 million** to telehealth programs

As the largest provider of telehealth services in the country, VA is leading the nation in telemedicine advancement. In FY 2023, more than a quarter of Veterans who received care from VA did so via telehealth.

Expanding Telehealth Access

Telehealth technology helps VA improve rural Veterans' health and well-being by connecting rural communities with qualified clinicians. VA continues to work to expand telehealth access through the 'Anywhere to Anywhere' initiative, a federal rule that allows VA doctors, nurses, and other health care providers to administer care to Veterans using telehealth technology regardless of where they live.

As part of its commitment to this initiative, ORH works closely with the Office of Connected Care, which oversees the three modalities of telehealth to provide rural Veterans with care regardless of their location.



These three modalities help improve convenience for rural Veterans by providing access to care from their homes or local communities:

- ▶ **Synchronous, Real-time or Clinical Video Telehealth** connects patients and clinicians in real time via a communications link. Rural Veterans at home or at local VA community based outpatient clinics interact with VA primary care physicians or specialists through a secure video platform.
- ▶ **Asynchronous, or Store-and-Forward Telehealth** enables providers to electronically send images, sounds, and videos to be evaluated by experts thousands of miles away. It does not require the simultaneous presence of both parties. More than 319,800 Veterans – 40% of whom live in rural areas – used asynchronous store and forward telehealth in FY 2018.¹
- ▶ **Remote Patient Monitoring** allows clinicians and case managers to use simple technology to remotely monitor health data from rural Veterans' homes. This is ideal for Veterans who have chronic health problems that need continual monitoring or that are complex in nature. It is also helpful for Veterans with health problems that make traveling to treatment inconvenient. In FY 2023, more than 130,500 Veterans were enrolled in remote patient monitoring, 65% of which were rural Veterans.²

¹ <https://connectedcare.va.gov/whats-new/technology/va-telehealth-used-more-22-million-veterans>

² U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Connected Care, VA Telehealth Used by More than 2.2 Million Veterans, September 2022

ORH-Funded Telehealth Programs

- ▶ Advance Care Planning via Group Visits
- ▶ Advanced Comprehensive Diabetes Care (ACDC)
- ▶ Centralized Anticoagulation Services Hub (CASH)
- ▶ Clinical Pharmacy Specialist Providers
- ▶ Clinical Resource Hubs
- ▶ Geriatric Scholars Program
- ▶ GeroFit
- ▶ Home Based Cardiac Rehabilitation (HBCR)
- ▶ Home Based Pulmonary Rehabilitation (HBPR)
- ▶ Improving Access to Geriatric Care in Rural Areas: GRECC Connect
- ▶ Increasing Access for Rural Veterans by Leveraging Clinical Pharmacist Providers (CPP) to Deliver COPD CARE
- ▶ Multiple Sclerosis Clinical Video Telehealth (MS-CVT) for Neurology Follow-up Care and Tele-rehabilitation into the Home
- ▶ National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO)
- ▶ National Telecritical Care Program
- ▶ National Teleneurology Hub and Spoke Network
- ▶ National Teleneurology Program
- ▶ Oral Telemedicine
- ▶ Personalized Implementation of Virtual Treatments for Rural Veterans: PIVOT-R
- ▶ Pharmacist Providers Improve Access for Rural Veterans with Opioid Use Disorder
- ▶ Rural Access Network for Growth Enhancement
- ▶ Rural Innovation Ecosystem
- ▶ Sleep Telemedicine
- ▶ Technology-based Eye Care Services
- ▶ Teleaudiology
- ▶ Teledermatology
- ▶ Telediabetes
- ▶ Telehealth Collaborative Care for Rural Veterans with HIV Infection (HIV-TCC)
- ▶ Telephone Lifestyle Coaching
- ▶ Telerehabilitation Services
- ▶ VA Video Connect Patient Tablet Program
- ▶ VA-ECHO Expansion in Specialty Care
- ▶ Video Blood Pressure Visits

The Office of Rural Health (ORH) works to see that America's Veterans thrive in rural communities. To support the health and well-being of rural Veterans, ORH and its Veterans Rural Health Resource Centers establish and disseminate initiatives that increase access to care for the 2.7 million rural Veterans enrolled in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' health care system. Key focus areas include programs that address workforce shortages, transportation, primary care, mental health, telehealth, and specialty care.