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**ADP BULLETIN**

Title Referral and Tracking of Federal Veterans Administration (VA) Eligible Veterans Entering the California Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Treatment System		Issue Date: 9-30-04 Expiration Date:	Issue No. 04-16
Deputy Director Approval (signed by) <i>MICHAEL S. CUNNINGHAM</i> Program Services Division	Function: <input type="checkbox"/> Information Management <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Assurance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Service Delivery <input type="checkbox"/> Fiscal <input type="checkbox"/> Administration	Supersedes Bulletin/ADP Letter No.	

PURPOSE

This bulletin is designed to: (1) inform counties and providers about the array and availability of alcohol and other (AOD) treatment services offered through the federal Veteran's Administration (VA); (2) encourage counties and providers to refer eligible veterans to the federal VA for AOD treatment services when available and as appropriate; and (3) encourage counties to begin screening clients for veteran status at admission to treatment and begin tracking veterans served through the California Alcohol and Drug Data System (CADDs).

DISCUSSION**Availability of AOD Services in the Federal VA**

In California the federal VA system is split into two Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISN) that roughly correspond to Northern (VISN 21) and Southern (VISN 22) California. Within each VISN there are five main facilities as well as a number of satellite facilities offering AOD treatment services. Each of the main facilities in each VISN corresponds to a "catchment area," which is the VA's mechanism for determining the number of patients in a given geographical area (GAO Report 44).

The federal VA offers AOD treatment services in California through the aforementioned main and satellite facilities. The AOD treatment services potentially available to eligible veterans may include:

- Residential treatment
- Outpatient
- Intensive Outpatient
- Inpatient (hospital)

- Recreation therapy
- Vocational rehabilitation
- Residence assistance for homeless veterans
- Dual diagnosis treatment
- Case management

Under the Drug Medi-Cal (DMC) program, there are five AOD treatment modes available to DMC beneficiaries: outpatient drug-free, narcotic treatment, perinatal residential (pregnant/postpartum women only), naltrexone, and daycare rehabilitative. Hence, DMC-eligible veterans could benefit from referral to the federal VA because there are services available through the VA that are not offered under DMC. **However, it should be noted that these services may not be readily and equally available to all veterans in California.** There are several potential barriers to AOD service delivery in the federal VA system of care, which include: geography, capacity, accessibility, and eligibility.

Enrollment in Health Care Services through the Federal VA

Enrollment in federal VA health care services is based on the:

- Veteran's status in a priority group (1 through 8, see Exhibit 2)
- Eligibility for specialized programs
- Catchment area in which the veteran resides
- Veteran's placement on VA's waiting lists

Federal VA prioritization for admission to AOD services differs from that of DMC. Therefore, it is possible that some veterans could be placed on a waiting list if referred to the VA. The length of time a veteran referred to the VA may have to wait to receive AOD services would depend on the catchment area the veteran is referred to (i.e., does s/he reside there or not), the VA priority group they are in, and the services they need. In order to ensure veterans referred to the VA receive prompt services, counties and providers must work with VA providers to facilitate streamlined AOD service delivery.

Screening and Referral of Eligible Veterans to the Federal VA

The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) reported in *"Remodeling" the Drug Medi-Cal Program*, February 11, 2004, that in some counties veterans are being referred to the federal VA for AOD treatment services. In addition, the LAO notes that counties and providers are required to screen individuals for Medi-Cal or CalWORKs but not for veteran status. As a result of the LAO's findings, ADP is encouraging counties to screen veterans for VA eligibility and, when appropriate and as VA services are available, refer eligible veterans to the federal VA.

As previously mentioned, the federal VA offers some AOD treatment services that may not be available under DMC. Therefore, ADP encourages counties and providers to

refer DMC-eligible veterans to the federal VA for AOD treatment services when available and as appropriate. In addition, ADP encourages counties and providers to refer all VA-eligible veterans rather than limit referral to DMC-eligible veterans.

Due to the potential barriers to services offered through the federal VA identified earlier, it may be necessary for counties and providers to coordinate with the VA hospital in the veteran's home catchment area. One reason coordination between ADP-funded providers and VA hospitals may be necessary is to ensure veterans referred to the federal VA receive prompt treatment services. Another reason coordination may be necessary is to ensure veterans referred are able to receive services in California; some veterans may only qualify for services in VA hospitals in Hawaii or Nevada. This is due to the large geographical area VISN 21 and VISN 22 cover. Refer to Exhibit 1 for a directory of VA AOD service facilities in California.

Tracking Veterans in CADDs

The findings of the LAO, discussed in "*Remodeling the Drug Medi-Cal Program*," suggest a significant number of veterans are receiving services through DMC as well as other county-operated AOD treatment programs. As a result of these findings, counties and providers are encouraged to begin collecting data via CADDs on veterans served within 30 days of the date of this bulletin in order to determine the number of veterans being served through the State's AOD system.

Data may be collected on veterans receiving AOD treatment services in ADP-funded programs using the coded remarks section of CADDs. The box in the coded remarks section assigned for this purpose is Box 10, which has been designated to indicate whether the individual served is a veteran. If the individual served is a veteran, enter "1" in Box 10 of the coded remarks section, if the individual served is not a veteran, enter "2" in Box 10 of the coded remarks section.

ADP is also exploring the possibility of including this data element in the Drug and Alcohol Treatment Access Report (DATAR) Provider Waiting List Record (WLR). Further information will be provided regarding data collection on veterans through the DATAR WLR to providers and counties.

REFERENCES

1. "Remodeling" the Drug Medi-Cal Program, located at www.lao.ca.gov
2. Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents: 2004 Edition, located at www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/Fedben.pdf
3. VA Health Care: More Veterans are Being Served but More Oversight is Needed

4. The Department of Veterans Affairs Substance Abuse Treatment System:
Results of the 2000 Drug and Alcohol Program Survey

BACKGROUND

In “*Remodeling the Drug Medi-Cal Program*,” released February 11, 2004, the California Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) reported on the availability of AOD treatment services via the federal VA. The LAO suggested, in its report, that the State could be screening individuals for federal VA eligibility and referring them, when available and as appropriate, to the federal VA to receive AOD treatment services.

Specifically, the LAO recommends referring eligible veterans to the federal VA to “preserve limited [State] resources for treatment services.” As a result of the findings and recommendations of the LAO pertaining to veterans, discussed in “*Remodeling the Drug Medi-Cal Program*,” ADP conducted an analysis of the federal VA AOD treatment services system in California.

QUESTIONS/MAINTENANCE

For questions regarding this bulletin, please contact Rob Maus, Supervisor, Program and Fiscal Policy Branch, at (916) 323-1074, or via e-mail at rmaus@adp.state.ca.us.

EXHIBITS

- 1) Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISN) 21 and 22: A Directory of Federal Veterans Administration (VA) Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Facilities in California
- 2) Federal Veterans Administration (VA): Health Care Benefits Enrollment.

DISTRIBUTION

The Honorable Robert Pacheco, California State Assembly
Dan Carson, Legislative Analyst’s Office
County Alcohol and Drug Program Administrators
Strategic Local Government Services, LLC
Director’s Advisory Council