

**National Hospice and Palliative Care
Organization**



December 1, 2005

To all members of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization (NHPCO),

NHPCO maintains an ongoing commitment to supporting the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Hospice and Palliative Care Initiative (VAHPCI) including the formation of Hospice-Veteran Partnerships (HVPs.)

What is an HVP?

Some hospices and palliative care providers form partnerships with VA facilities and programs. These Hospice-Veteran Partnerships (HVPs) work together to improve end-of-life care for veterans. Hospice staff and VA staff provide information to each other, and to patients and families, such as: what services they provide and who is eligible for care, and how to resolve issues related to referral and reimbursement. They provide each other with formal education and resources about their specific knowledge and skills. And they may also provide---jointly---community education programs or speakers to raise the level of awareness of veterans' end-of-life care issues.

Why do we need HVPs?

More than 1,800 veterans die every day in this country, with only a small percentage of those deaths occurring in VA facilities. Every month, 54,000 veterans are dying in the homes and communities in which they live. Many veterans who fought in World War II need end-of-life care now, and the number of older veterans needing such care continues to rise. Many veterans may not know about---or have access to---hospice and palliative care; and many hospices may not know which patients are veterans and what end-of-life issues which are specific to veterans may arise.

What are the Benefits of HVPs?

The various organizations benefit from knowing more about each other's services. VA programs may benefit from hospices' experience with end-of-life care, and hospices may benefit from education about issues which may develop towards the end of life in veterans. And patients, families and communities benefit because the increased knowledge of staff of each provider leads to more appropriate and timely referrals, and better veteran-specific end-of-life needs.

Honoring our nation's veterans includes supporting them throughout their lives, and hospices have the particular privilege of providing care at the end of their lives.

NHPCO encourages all our members to learn more about end-of-life issues for veterans and to either join a HVP in your community, or start one!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Donald Schumacher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

J. Donald Schumacher, PsyD
President & CEO

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date: July 19, 2005

From: Chief Consultant, Geriatrics and Extended Care SHG, Department of Veterans Affairs,
Washington, DC

Subj: National Hospice-Veteran Partnership Program

To: VISN Directors, Facility Directors, Chiefs of Staff and Clinical Managers

The purpose of this memorandum is to remind VISN and facility leadership of an ongoing national strategy to facilitate veterans' access to community hospice services. The National Hospice-Veteran Partnership Program (HVP) is administered by the VA Hospice and Palliative Care program in the Geriatrics and Extended Care Strategic Healthcare Group. Through participation in HVPs, VA facilities provide improved access to community hospice services for veterans, whether paid for by the VA, Medicare/Medicaid or other third party payer, in the following ways:

- Promoting continuity of care across settings for seriously ill and dying veterans;
- Addressing local cultural and procedural barriers and misperceptions to promote improved collaboration between VA facilities and community hospices; and
- Identifying and honoring the preferences of veterans who want to be cared for at home in the last phase of their lives.

VISN Accelerated Administrative and Clinical Training (AACT) team members, Geriatrics and Extended Care staff and state hospice and palliative care organizations are working together with community organizations and agencies to form HVPs for VA facilities across the country. The hospice point of contact at each facility will be the initial VA focal point for establishing HVPs and collaborating with community hospices.

In recognition of VA's efforts to honor veteran's preferences and expand access to non-institutional care, Geriatrics and Extended Care SHG would appreciate your support of HVP activities by giving the hospice points of contact/designees encouragement and time to work with the AACT teams and community hospices, to strengthen community partnerships.

Attached is a Hospice-Veteran Partnership Fact Sheet that provides additional information about this important and exciting national program.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Scott T. Shreve, DO, Director, Hospice and Palliative Care at (717) 228 -5946 or Scott.Shreve@med.va.gov.

(signed by)

James F. Burris, M.D.

