

November 2002

**CARES TALKING POINTS**  
**With Emphasis on Planning Initiative Announcement**

- ?? CARES is a nine-step process with extensive oversight throughout. Currently, VA is in step three, the announcement of market area Planning Initiatives.
- ?? Basically, “Planning Initiatives” are the gaps, with both the positive and negative differences, between current supply and future demand (through 2022).
- ?? Now that the Planning Initiatives have been identified, approximately three per market area, the Networks will put together draft Market Plans on how they will meet these “gaps.” During the next three months, Networks will solicit veteran and stakeholder input.
- ?? The success of CARES is dependent upon the level of support it receives from veterans and stakeholders.
- ?? Completing CARES will not be simple. With over 4,700 buildings and 18,000 acres of land, repositioning VA’s infrastructure to make sure it is most efficiently utilized is a major task.
- ?? As VA enters the process of making choices for CARES in communities across the country, it is important to remember the broad outcomes it seeks – more care, to more veterans, in more places where veterans need the services most. The health care needs of our nation’s veterans are too important to expect anything less.
- ?? VA’s health care system has been shifting from a hospital-based system to one that is community-based.
- ?? Veterans’ health care needs are changing, the way medical care is delivered is changing, and the veteran population is shifting.
- ?? The majority of VA medical care is provided in outpatient clinics.
- ?? VA needed a new planning process to address the future health care needs of veterans efficiently and effectively.
- ?? Hospital beds do not equate with quality or quantity of medical care.
- ?? VA should not keep unneeded beds open at the expense of access and quality.
- ?? VA must make the most efficient use of its resources.

- ?? Buildings that are no longer suitable for the delivery of modern health care cost VA money. These funds could be used to provide quality care to more veterans closer to where they live.
- ?? Through CARES, VA is examining where its facilities are located, where veterans are projected to be living in the next 20 years, and what their health needs will be. VA then will match its services and locations with those needs.
- ?? CARES will help VA to use its resources more effectively and efficiently by making better use of existing space and realigning resources to better meet the needs of veterans.
- ?? The goal of CARES is to enhance inpatient and outpatient care, as well as special programs, like spinal cord injury and blind rehabilitation, and long-term care.
- ?? Any savings that result from the CARES process will stay in the Network where the money is saved to improve veterans' health care.
- ?? CARES will enable VA to continue to bring VA's health care system into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.