

Office of Health Equity Veterans Health Administration Department of Veterans Affairs



VHA'S EXPANSION OF WOMEN AND GENDER-DIVERSE REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE SERVICES

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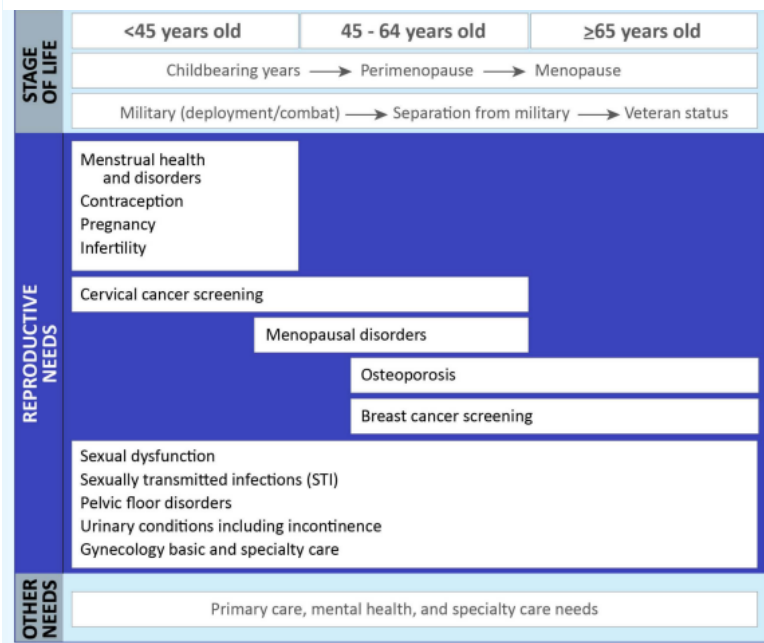
INTRODUCTION

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) serves a Veteran population that is increasingly diverse. Equitable access to high-quality care for all Veterans is a core value of the VA healthcare mission. The Office of Health Equity (OHE) champions the elimination of health disparities and achieving health equity for all Veterans, including expanding reproductive health care services for women and gender-diverse Veterans.

GENDER DIVERSE CARE

There were nearly 870,000 women and gender-diverse Veterans who enrolled in care at VHA medical facilities in fiscal year 2021. Therefore, it is important that VHA expands access to reproductive health care across the life span. For example, over 120,000 women/gender-diverse Veterans are at risk for an unintended pregnancy, which has been linked to several adverse health outcomes, including intimate partner violence, preterm birth, and infant mortality.

Reproductive Health and Related Needs of Women Veterans Across their Life Span



To better meet the needs of Veterans, VHA and the Office of Women's Health have improved access to and quality of routine reproductive health care services and implemented new programs to eliminate any interruption of care that can occur when a Veteran may seek reproductive health care outside of VHA. Novel and innovative VHA interventions have shown that VHA can become a leader in providing reproductive health care services, such as providing contraception.

From: *State of Reproductive Health in Women Veterans – VA Reproductive Health Diagnoses and Organization of Care*



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VHA WINNING INNOVATION: CONTRACEPTION ON DEMAND

Oral contraceptive pills are one of the most commonly used methods of contraception among women Veterans. Using contraceptive consistently the most effective way to prevent unwanted pregnancy. Having trouble accessing

oral contraceptives and delays in refilling prescriptions are two barriers to using oral contraceptives consistently. An innovation titled, *Contraception on Demand (COD)*, aimed to address these barriers. COD, a joint project between the Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion (CHERP)/VA Pittsburgh and VA Puget Sound, was selected as one of VHA's 10 Promising Practices in 2022. This innovation expands Veterans' access to contraceptives by allowing VHA pharmacists to dispense a year's supply of hormonal contraception (such as birth control pills, patches, and rings), to women/gender-diverse Veterans.

Currently, Veterans who are interested in contraceptives need to speak with their primary care providers to obtain a prescription or needing to refill a prescription every 3 months. It is estimated that by expanding access to oral contraceptives from 3 months to 12 months could prevent 583 unintended pregnancies in women Veterans each year.

Contraception on Demand has been successfully implemented at the Pittsburgh and Seattle VA Medical Centers and is in the process of being implemented across VISN 8 in Florida, which includes VA medical centers in Orlando, Tampa, Miami, and West Palm Beach. VISN 8 has one of the fastest growing women/gender-diverse Veteran populations; approximately 35,000 Veterans could benefit from Contraception on Demand.

For more information on Contraception on Demand and other VHA innovations, visit the [Diffusion Marketplace](#) website.

For more information about the Office of Health Equity visit: <https://www.va.gov/healthequity/>



References

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