

Nurse Practitioners Care for Our Veterans

“The employment of providers such as NPs has contributed to the addition of more specialty practitioners and clinics within the Veterans Health Administration system to facilitate access and quality care to patients with diverse healthcare needs, especially in primary health care.”ⁱ

Veterans need greater access to primary care and mental health services. Senate Bill 25 would enact Full Practice Authority, allowing Nurse Practitioners (NPs) to expand access to care for veterans.

The status quo is failing our veterans

- The shortage of primary care providers already impacts veterans – particularly in underserved rural and urban areas. Over half of all NPs are educated to provide primary care.
- Some military service members, veterans and their families may be unable to seek care for PTSD, and TBI and post-combat depression because they live too far away from military or veterans’ health care facilities. While nurses have always cared for our nation’s veterans, advanced practice nurses are now being trained in new, evidence based strategies and treatments for PTSD and TBI.ⁱⁱ
- Pennsylvania ranks 10th in the nation for Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) –and 7th for Mental Health Care shortage areas.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Veterans Health Administration already grants Full Practice Authority to Nurse Practitioners

- The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) allows NPs to practice on their own license without a collaborative agreement. Over 5,500 NPs employed by VHA, who always provided a full range of services to our veterans, now practice to the full extent of their education and training.
- **“Advanced practice registered nurses are valuable members of VA’s health care system. Amending this regulation increases our capacity to provide timely, efficient, effective and safe primary care, aids VA in making the most efficient use of APRN staff capabilities, and provides a degree of much needed experience to alleviate the current access challenges that are affecting VA.” - Dr. David J. Shulkin^{iv}**

Veterans are confident in and satisfied with the care they receive from Nurse Practitioners

- **Veterans survey results: “Veteran patients are more satisfied with care by NPs than with Physicians and PAs. Therefore, the VHA should employ more NPs.”^v**
- **Veterans survey results: “Some of the interpersonal skills that NPs possess, including health education, personalized care, counseling, and attentiveness to patients’ concerns, should be incorporated into PA and physician education to improve health outcome, patients’ expectation, and satisfaction.”^{vi}**

Nurse practitioners serve veterans in rural communities

- The majority of veterans in the US seek care outside of the VA system; they typically visit clinics and hospitals in their own community.^{vii} This presents a major challenge for veterans in rural areas. Nurse practitioners are twice as likely as physicians to serve rural communities, and NPs in states with Full Practice Authority are more likely to practice in rural areas compared to states – like PA – without it.

Senate Bill 25: Full Practice Authority removes arbitrary barriers to health care, reduces costs and will improve the availability of care for our veterans.

^{i, v, vi} Journal of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, “Veterans’ perceptions of care by nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and physicians: A comparison from satisfaction surveys,” May 2010

ⁱⁱⁱ Health Resources and Services Administration Data Warehouse, “Shortage Areas,” April 2015.

^{iv} The American Nurse, “Leading the way for APRN practice in the VHA,” March 2014

^{vii} US Department of Veterans Affairs, “VA Grants Full Practice Authority to Advance Practice Registered Nurses,” Dec. 16, 2016