



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Dorn VA Medical Center
6439 Garners Ferry Road
Columbia, SC 29209**

In Reply Refer To: 544/00

November 29, 2017

Catherine McNicoll, Esq.
Director of Legal and Legislative Affairs
State of South Carolina
Office of the Lieutenant Governor
Post Office Box 141
Columbia, SC 29202

Dear Ms. McNicoll:

I want to thank you for your letter dated November 28, 2017 regarding the WJB Dorn VA Medical Center's Veteran Directed Home and Community Based Services Program (VD-HCBS) and our plan for transitioning these services to alternative programs with skilled oversight.

Each of the concerns you raise are addressed below:

1. Is it your intent to allow the Veterans to use their respective Rainy Day Funds, as stated in your FAQ sheet? If so, do you expect PPL and the Lieutenant Governor's Office of Aging (LGOA) to maintain the infrastructure for administering the Program while Rainy Day Funds are utilized?

Ideally Veterans with sufficient Rainy Day Funds available would be able to utilize up to one month of funds, minus \$100, per national VA guidelines. However, upon receipt of the Rainy Day Funds report (three weeks after requesting it from the LGOA), the account balance amounts were concerning due to totaling nearly \$500K, whereas the maximum allowable total if guidelines were followed should not exceed approximately \$125K. Ultimately, the high Rainy Day Funds balances illustrate that all of the care initially determined to be appropriate and needed for these Veterans was not received, leading to significant concerns regarding the assessment process and funding estimate accuracy.

The mechanism/infrastructure to administer these funds, if available, will require further discussion between all parties.

2. As many Veterans and their families have contacted the LGOA with questions regarding services, is it the intent of Dorn VA to provide comprehensive services to the enrolled Veterans, so they are able to stay

in their homes, recognizing that the Program provides consumer direction and greater service hours than the standard VA offerings?

All VD-HBCS Veterans have been assessed utilizing the nationally accepted Minnesota Case Mix Index Tool to determine appropriate Non Institutional Care and other available VA and community services. The VDC program does not always provide greater service hours than other VA offerings, and in fact approximately 17% of VDC Veterans will actually receive an increase in the number of service hours provided, along with 14% of patients stating that they did not need this service.

3. Is Dorn VA ready and able to provide the enrolled Veterans alternative and comparable services as of December 1, 2017?

As stated above, all VD-HBCS Veterans have been assessed utilizing the nationally accepted Minnesota Case Mix Index Tool to determine appropriate Non Institutional Care and other available VA and community services, and coordination of these services has been confirmed by each vendor to ensure a seamless transition to alternative and comparable services by December 1, 2017. This has been communicated on multiple occasions to the LGOA, along with congressional staffers who have also communicated this to the LGOA on a regular basis.

4. Please provide a central referral person/contact number for Dorn VA so that questions may be directed to the appropriate person by the LGOA and/or AAA Care Coordinators.

Melinda Hudson, RN, Geriatrics and Extended Care (803) 587-3490 or

Lamar Alexander, Program Analyst, Geriatrics and Extended Care (803)776-4000 ext. 5106 or 6842 (These are the same contact numbers provided in the letter sent to all VDC Veterans)

5. Enumerate any other considerations the LGOA needs to be aware of, so as to provide the best information and services possible to our Veterans during this holiday season.

The LGOA should direct Veterans and/or their families to the VA staff listed in response number 4 above. With the transition of VDC Veterans to other skilled VA services there should be no need to communicate with Veterans beyond November 30, 2017.

The WJB Dorn VA Medical Center has a highly engaged team in place to actively address any concerns and to work with Veterans and their families to identify available VA and community resources. Additionally, re-assessments are available if the condition or needs of Veterans changes.

Communication with the LGOA regarding potential changes to this program has been ongoing, and was also discussed in our face-face meeting on October 20, 2017 with Ms. Rivers and Ms. Wolf. Additionally, the letter sent to the Veterans was reviewed, and it was communicated that the VD-HCBS program will be dissolved effective November 30, 2017. Dorn VAMC clinically staff have contacted all of the Veterans and have arranged for services to begin starting December 1, 2017.

Providing the quality care and services that our Veterans require and deserve is a primary consideration in all actions and decisions at the WJB Dorn VA Medical Center. We value the positive relationship developed with the LGOA over the years and look forward to continued partnerships in serving our Veterans in the future.

Sincerely,

David L. Omura, DPT, MHA, MS
Medical Center Director

