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VA will offer abortion counseling and — in certain cases — abortions to pregnant Veterans and VA beneficiaries

WASHINGTON – Last night, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) submitted to the Federal Register an interim final rule that will allow VA to provide access to abortion counseling and — in certain cases — abortions to pregnant Veterans and VA beneficiaries. Specifically, VA will provide access to abortions when the life or health of the pregnant Veteran would be endangered if the pregnancy were carried to term, or when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest. VA beneficiaries enrolled in CHAMPVA will also have access to this care.

These services will be authorized immediately after the interim final rule is published, and the rule will be available for public comment for 30 days thereafter. Once the rule is published, VA will immediately prepare to provide these services in as many locations as possible. For more information about abortion services at VA, visit [VA.gov/ReproductiveHealth](https://www.va.gov/ReproductiveHealth) and click on “Abortion Services.”

“This is a patient safety decision,” said **Denis McDonough, Secretary of Veterans Affairs**. “Pregnant Veterans and VA beneficiaries deserve to have access to world-class reproductive care when they need it most. That’s what our nation owes them, and that’s what we at VA will deliver.”

“VA will be able to offer abortion counseling and abortions to pregnant Veterans and VA beneficiaries in cases of rape, incest, or when the life or health of the Veteran would be endangered if the pregnancy were carried to term — in accordance with generally accepted standards of medical practice,” said **Dr. Shereef Elnahal, VA’s Under Secretary for Health**. “We came to this decision after listening to VA health care providers and Veterans across the country, who sounded the alarm that abortion restrictions are creating a medical emergency for those we serve. Offering this care will save Veterans’ health and lives, and there is nothing more important than that.”

Access to medically necessary abortion is essential for preserving the life and health of Veterans and VA beneficiaries. Restricting access to abortion care has well-documented adverse health consequences, including increased risk of loss of future fertility, significant morbidity, or death. Veterans are also at greater risk of experiencing pregnancy-related complications due to increased rates of chronic health conditions. Therefore, to protect the life and health of pregnant Veterans and eligible beneficiaries, VA determined that it was necessary to provide access to abortion counseling and — in some cases — abortions.

The determination of whether the “life and health of the pregnant Veteran would be endangered if the pregnancy were carried to term” will be made on a case-by-case basis and will be the result of careful consultation between VA health care providers and the Veterans they serve. In cases of rape or incest, self-reporting from a Veteran or VA beneficiary will constitute sufficient evidence that an act of rape or incest occurred.

VA is taking steps to guarantee Veterans and other VA beneficiaries abortion-related care anywhere in the country. VA employees, when working within the scope of their federal employment, may provide authorized services regardless of state restrictions.

VA will also continue to provide access to a full range of reproductive health services, including fertility services, contraceptives including emergency contraceptives, life-saving treatment related to pregnancy, and much more. For information about all reproductive health services at VA, visit [VA.gov/ReproductiveHealth](https://www.va.gov/ReproductiveHealth).

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