



# Federal Health Matters

## VA Obesity Initiative “MOVE”s Online

May 12 marked the nationwide launch of the VA's Managing Obesity/Overweight for Veterans Everywhere (MOVE) campaign, a program that seeks to reduce obesity and its related health risks in veterans. A key component of this launch is an interactive, online health questionnaire, which uses information on health status, nutrition, and exercise provided by the veteran to create a personalized health report.

Part of the HealthierUS Veterans initiative sponsored by the VA and the HHS, MOVE is the first and only comprehensive program by a federal agency to address obesity. Following pilot testing at 17 sites, MOVE is now mandated at all VA health care facilities—unless they have an alternative weight management program in place. The multitiered approach used in MOVE was developed based on evidence from recent medical literature, including a 1998 review by the NIH and clinical guidelines by the United States Preventive Services Task Force, which support a combination of screening, periodic monitoring, and counseling.

The first step in the MOVE program is completion of the computerized questionnaire, called the MOVE!23, which is available at VA health care facilities and on the program's web site ([www.move.va.gov](http://www.move.va.gov)). This survey assesses such factors as age, weight and family histories, current eating and exercise patterns, cultural and ethnic factors, and concurrent physical and mental health conditions. Based on the veteran's responses, the computer generates an individualized patient report, which makes suggestions and refers the veteran to handouts on rel-

evant topics, and a staff report, which contains a brief summary and guidance for treating and counseling the veteran. Both reports can be imported into the VA computerized medical record. Although the MOVE program is designed for veterans being treated within the VHA, others may access the questionnaire and handouts through the MOVE web site.

The MOVE model uses five treatment levels. The first consists of the MOVE!23 assessment with follow-up and periodic monitoring of the veter-

program offers a toolkit of resources, including reference manuals, discipline specific pocket guides, and modules for group sessions.

The VA's National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention will continuously appraise MOVE's outcomes by gathering input from providers and patients. Any new findings will be evaluated closely and incorporated into the program by an executive committee, which includes non-VA weight experts. According to VA officials, such scrutinized evaluation of the program

*MOVE is the first and only comprehensive program by a federal agency to address obesity.*

an's progress by the primary care provider. The second level adds group or individual counseling to the first level interventions. For veterans who don't achieve their weight loss goals with these two levels, providers may consider levels three through five, which offer increasingly invasive modalities, as appropriate and available: level three, pharmacologic treatment; level four, brief admission to an inpatient or residential weight loss treatment program; and level five, bariatric surgery. The MOVE model also includes referral of veterans with comorbid or complicating conditions—such as poorly controlled diabetes, heart disease, or clinically significant depression—to appropriate specialists for evaluation and treatment. To assist providers in implementing the MOVE initiative, the

puts the VA at the forefront of a public health campaign for the nationwide epidemics of overweight and obesity, which they hope will expand beyond the VA to other federally funded programs. ●