

Informed Consent for Clinical Treatments and Procedures in VHA Veterans at the Center of Treatment Planning

VHA is committed to ensuring that all Veterans receive care that aligns with their values, goals, and preferences. Therefore, VHA health care teams have an ethical obligation to engage Veterans in shared decision-making about recommended treatments and procedures.

Informed consent processes respect patient autonomy by empowering Veterans to be participants in decisions about their care and by ensuring that Veterans can voluntarily consent to treatments and procedures.

WHO CAN OBTAIN INFORMED CONSENT?

Per [VHA policy](#) and [regulation](#), VA practitioners who are trained and authorized to perform the procedure or provide the treatment in question are responsible for engaging the Veteran in the informed consent process. Health care team members can assist with aspects of the informed consent process such as providing patient education.

WHAT IS THE INFORMED CONSENT DISCUSSION?

During the informed consent discussion, practitioners help Veterans understand the risks, benefits, and alternatives to recommended treatments and procedures, and how the treatment plan aligns with the Veteran's goals of care. The specific information provided and level of detail discussed varies depending on the nature of the treatment or procedure and the needs of the Veteran. The practitioner ensures that the Veteran has the opportunity to ask questions and that they have the information they need to make an informed, voluntary choice about their care.

HOW IS INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENTED?

Informed consent for all treatments and procedures is documented in the Veteran's electronic health record. Obtaining the Veteran's and practitioner's signatures on a consent form is only required for treatments and procedures that meet at least one of the following criteria established in [VHA policy](#) and [regulation](#):

1. Require the use of sedation.
2. Require anesthesia or narcotic analgesia.
3. Are considered to produce significant discomfort to the patient.
4. Have a significant risk of complication or morbidity.
5. Require injections of any substance into a joint space or body cavity.

WHAT ABOUT VETERANS WHO LACK DECISION-MAKING CAPACITY?

VHA aims to honor and respect all Veterans, even when they cannot communicate for themselves or when there is nobody who can communicate on their behalf. When Veterans lack decision-making capacity, surrogates make health care decisions that align with the Veteran's values and goals. For Veterans who do not have a surrogate, [VHA policy](#) establishes processes that ensure a person-centered approach to treatment planning.

Podcast for Veterans:
[Informed Consent Empowers
Veterans](#)



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
National Center for Ethics in Health Care

For more information visit
<https://www.ethics.va.gov/policy.asp>

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