

VA Pledge to Women Veterans on Women's Equality Day

WASHINGTON (Aug. 26, 2009) - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki pledged today on Women's Equality Day that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will work to ensure the nation upholds its obligation to meet the needs of our Veterans - including women Veterans.

"Our Veterans deserve the very best care. Anything less is unacceptable," Secretary Shinseki said. "If we are to transform VA into a 21st century organization, we need to continually improve our services to women Veterans."

Although VA has long provided equal benefits to women Veterans, the Department has embarked on new initiatives to meet their unique needs. These initiatives include:

- * Comprehensive primary care and specialized medical care at every VA medical center;
- * Enhanced mental health care specifically for women Veterans;
- * Staffing every VA medical center with a women Veterans program manager;
- * Creating a mini-residency on women's health for primary care physicians;
- * Supporting a multifaceted research program on women's health;
- * Improving communication and outreach to women Veterans; and

* Continuing the operation of organizations such as VA's Center for Women Veterans and the Women Veterans Health Strategic Healthcare Group.

"During this observance we should remember the special contributions and sacrifices of the 200,000 women currently serving in the armed forces and 1.8 million who are Veterans," Assistant Secretary L. Tammy Duckworth said.

Women Veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the Veteran population. They comprise 7.5 percent of the total Veteran population and nearly 5.5 percent of all Veterans who use VA health care services.

VA estimates women Veterans will constitute 10 percent of the Veteran population by 2020 and 9.5 percent of VA patients.

For more information about VA programs and services for women Veterans, please visit: www.va.gov/womenvet/ <<http://www1.va.gov/womenvet/>> and

www.publichealth.va.gov/womenshealth