



**Department of  
Veterans Affairs**

Office of Public Affairs  
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420  
(202) 273-6000  
[www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 20, 2006

## **VA Inpatient Services to Continue at Big Spring, Texas**

WASHINGTON – Veterans in the Big Spring, Texas, area will continue to have convenient, local access to care for their inpatient needs and the mental health services offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, announced today.

"There will be no change in access to the world-class health care west Texas veterans have always received from VA at Big Spring," Nicholson said. "I'm pleased to announce that a thorough review of this facility and its role serving veterans has been completed, and all services offered will remain available."

Nicholson was represented at today's announcement about Big Spring by VA's top physician, Dr. Jonathan B. Perlin, VA Under Secretary for Health. Also taking part were Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison, chair of the subcommittee on military construction and veterans affairs of the Senate Appropriations Committee and member of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee, and Rep. Randy Neugebauer of the 19<sup>th</sup> District.

Nicholson's decision ends a year-long review that involved a local advisory panel as part of the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) program, a VA initiative to modernize facilities by matching projected demand for health services with programs and facilities.

"I thank the veterans, community leaders and citizens from around Big Spring who participated in this important process," Nicholson said. "The work of the local advisory panel was crucial in ensuring that we conduct a thorough review to maintain efficient, world-class care for veterans."

- More -



*Commemorating 75 Years of Service*

As a result of its review, VA has also determined it will look at ways to expand inpatient care and residential mental health services.

While ending the CARES study, VA is asking its regional officials to develop detailed plans for expanding mental health services. Options will include adding a 35-bed domiciliary unit, possibly in conjunction with an expansion of 18 psychiatry beds.

The facility currently operates both inpatient beds and long-term care beds, which will continue. It serves an area that includes 360,000 veterans in the New Mexico and west Texas market. The campus covers 31 acres and contains 13 buildings, which were constructed in the 1950s and have undergone multiple renovations.

With buildings averaging more than 50 years old, VA embarked on CARES in 2001 to reduce surplus space and examine programs while modernizing facilities and services in its system of 154 hospitals and approximately 850 outpatient clinics. Dozens of public hearings and commission meetings around the country resulted in a blueprint for the next 20 years aimed at providing greater access to quality health care closer to where most veterans live.

For some communities, including Big Spring, more analysis was required to make a final CARES decision due to complex issues or concerns that had not been fully addressed. Local advisory panels were formed to provide VA additional input and, through competitive bidding, a contractor was engaged to complete business plan studies and recommendations.

For some study sites, Stage 2 conclusions have not yet been completed and VA expects additional announcements on narrowing options at other locations later this year.

Additional information about the process and the decisions announced today will be available at [www.va.gov/cares](http://www.va.gov/cares).

# # #

