

Scheduling VA Patient Appointments Now Easier With New Software

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From left, RimaAnn Nelson, Veterans Integrated Service Network 10 network director, Pamela Powers, VA acting deputy secretary, and John Windom, executive director of the Office of Electronic Health Record Modernization, arrive at the Chalmers P. Wylie VA Ambulatory Care Center in Columbus, Ohio, on Aug. 25 to tour the facility and receive an update on all Centralized Scheduling Solution (CSS) go-live activities. CSS is an all-in-one software system that provides Veterans with cutting-edge capabilities to book and manage their appointments.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) [launched a new appointment-management system](#) Aug. 21 at the VA Central Ohio Healthcare System, giving Veterans and staff a new tool to request and book medical visits online.

The [Centralized Scheduling Solution \(CSS\)](#) is an all-in-one software system that helps Veterans by providing cutting-edge capabilities to book and manage their appointments. The new solution also adds an extra layer of patient safety by enabling staff to identify Veterans at risk for missing critical health care visits. The solution launch, or “go-live,” continues through Sept. 2 and marks the first time VA schedulers and clinicians are using the system.

“Our rollout of the Centralized Scheduling Solution has been a monumental success,” said John H. Windom, who in his role of executive director oversees VA’s [Office of Electronic Health Record Modernization \(OEHRM\)](#). “This modernized system is already making health care providers’ jobs easier and will lead to better care for our Veterans.”

With VA’s previous system, schedulers would log in to multiple software applications to coordinate timing, equipment and personnel. CSS uses straightforward, color-coded time slots and what OEHRM Chief Medical Officer Dr. Laura Kroupa explained is a [“resource-based” approach to scheduling](#).

“It really brings together the provider, the patient, the nurse, the room — all the resources that are needed to take care of a Veteran — into one place, so that they can all be scheduled at one time,” Kroupa [said in an interview](#). “And that allows the medical centers to really take the best advantage of the time and space that they have ... you can see the entire structure in one view, and bring all those resources together so the Veteran can get their care in a timely way.”

Vivian Hutson, [VA Central Ohio Healthcare System](#) director Vivian Hutson, director of the VA Central Ohio Healthcare System, said she was eager for her facilities to receive the new tool.

“It felt like I was at NASA waiting for a launch,” said Hutson, about the CSS go-live event. “The amount of optimism was off the charts because we were fueled by one mission: how we can serve the Veterans.”

The CSS launch marks a major milestone in VA’s broader overall Electronic Health Record Modernization (EHRM) effort. The department is transitioning from using its existing electronic health record (EHR) system, the software that stores patient information and tracks all aspects of care, to a new one that is interoperable with the Department of Defense and the U.S. Coast Guard. Initial [EHR rollout](#) at VA sites will start in fall 2020.

For more information on CSS and VA’s EHRM program, visit www.ehrm.va.gov.

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