

VA Centers To Study Extending Telemedicine To Rural Veterans

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Three Veterans Rural Health Resource Centers, scheduled to open Oct. 1, will study how to extend telemedicine services to veterans living in rural areas, Government Health IT reports.

The centers, which will serve as satellite offices for the Department of Veterans Affairs' Office of Rural Health, will be located at the:

- Iowa City VA Medical Center;
- Salt Lake City VA Medical Center; and
- White River Junction VA Medical Center in Vermont.

Patricia Vandenberg, assistant deputy undersecretary of veterans affairs, said the purpose of the centers "is to conduct policy studies and analyses of data and to develop pilot projects to potentiate and enhance access" to existing telehealth and telemedicine services.

She added that the centers also are designed to be "repositories of information and facilitators of information exchange within the Veterans Health Administration nationwide, as well as with other government agencies such as [HHS] and the Indian Health Service, and with nongovernmental entities."

The VA plans to collect and share findings from the centers' studies through a Web site. Vandenberg did not rule out the possibility of eventually using other IT to capture and study data from the centers (Buxbaum, Government Health IT, 8/29).