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The Office of Mental Health Operations and Mental Health Services in VA Central Office are excited to announce the start of the Measurement Based Care in Mental Health Initiative.

What is measurement based care (MBC)?

MBC is the use of patient-reported information, collected in a planned manner as part of routine care, to inform clinical care and shared decision-making and to individualize ongoing treatment.



MBC can use many kinds of data such as lab results or vital signs. The MBC in Mental Health Initiative is focusing on Veteran-reported outcomes related to mental health.

What is the MBC in Mental Health Initiative?

The MBC initiative is a new national effort to establish a standard of care in VA mental health, using MBC principles, that supports Veterans and clinicians in treatment planning and in setting recovery goals.

The program is currently in the first phase of development. A pilot program will be launched soon to learn from MBC efforts that have already been implemented and to inform broader national implementation.

How does MBC work?

- **Collect:** Veterans complete reliable, validated, clinically appropriate measures at regular intervals.
- **Use:** Together, clinicians and Veterans use that information to make decisions about care.
- **Share:** Clinical information is shared with the Veteran and other clinicians involved in the Veteran’s care to facilitate results-driven, personalized treatment.

Why is MBC a VA priority?

Measurement Based Care Works!

- **MBC is effective.** Studies have shown that adding MBC to care as usual results in substantially improved clinical outcomes.
- **MBC can help identify and address a lack of progress in treatment or reduction in previous treatment gains.** Some research indicates that effects are greatest in these cases.
- **MBC facilitates shared decision-making.** MBC informs discussions on progress, goals, and what might need to change in treatment.
- **MBC can help identify symptoms missed in routine assessments.** Evidence suggests that patients respond positively to structured surveys and report symptoms that may be missed by open-ended questioning.

MBC Initiative
announced by
Dr. Shulkin

**“Several changes
and initiatives are
being
announced...they
include establishing a
new standard of care
by using measures of
Veteran reported
symptoms to tailor
mental health
treatments to
individual needs”**

In addition, the principles of MBC align with many VA goals and current high priorities including the promotion of best practices, the development of high performing networks, and putting Veterans first.

What measures will be used? How were these measures identified?

In the initial pilot phase of the initiative, measures will include:

- PTSD Symptom Checklist (PCL-5) for assessment of PTSD.
- Brief Addiction Monitor (BAM-R) for assessment of substance use and risk and recovery factors.
- 9 item Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) for assessment of depression.
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD 7) for assessment of anxiety.
- A global measure of functioning, to be determined soon.

The first four measures were agreed upon by an Interagency Task Force on Military and Veterans.

Will clinicians need to administer all of these measures? How often should they be administered?

While clinicians will be able to select from the set of measures listed above, the full set of measures is not intended to be used for all Veterans at all encounters.

Facilities that volunteer to participate in the pilot projects may be asked to use specific measures at specific intervals for the duration of the pilot. Part of the evaluation of the pilot programs will be to assess the feasibility and utility of implementing a measurement protocol.

For facilities not participating in MBC pilot projects, measure selections for individual encounters are determined locally by clinics and clinicians.

Will MBC be used to evaluate me as a clinician, or my clinic's outcomes?

The intent of the MBC initiative is to improve clinical care and shared decision making. It is not intended to be used for program evaluation or for the evaluation of individual clinicians.

What is the plan for implementation?

MBC is already part of routine care in a number of clinics within VA, including Primary Care Mental Health (PCMHI) programs and evidence-based psychotherapy programs.

Further enhancement of MBC will begin with the implementation of a pilot program before the end of the year. Pilot programs will be conducted in facilities that volunteer to participate and agree to the pilot program protocol, including a program evaluation component. We are still designing the specifics of the pilot projects. Further details will be available soon.

These pilot programs will inform us on what works best for both clinicians and Veterans. Lessons learned from the pilot program will be applied in future phases of the initiative as MBC is disseminated throughout the VA mental health system.

I'm interested in piloting MBC. Is that possible?

The design of the pilot program is currently underway. We will be sharing more details about the program parameters and about how facilities can apply for participation. There are no exclusion criteria for participating in the pilot program. All facilities will be invited to participate in the MBC pilot program.

One focus of the pilot program will be on sites that are already using MBC so that we can learn from their experience and locally-generated solutions to various challenges posed by MBC. However, facilities interested in beginning to implement MBC will also be considered for the pilot program.

For more information, please contact the MBC Information group at MBCInformation@va.gov.