



VA OpenNotes for Mental Health Clinicians

Orienting Veterans to Reading Their Mental Health Notes

Having proactive, constructive conversations about clinical notes, including orienting your patients to reading their mental health notes online, is one way to practice patient-centered care. Consider the following four steps to orient your patients to reading their mental health notes using VA Blue Button.

Step 1: Discuss the availability of progress notes through VA Blue Button

- Inform patients that their health information, including notes from 2013, is available online through VA Blue Button on My HealtheVet.

Step 2: Describe progress notes, their various purposes, and what patients can expect

- Describe what to expect in notes (e.g. medical terminology), the many audiences of notes, and that notes serve many purposes (e.g. billing, legal).
- Explain that certain details are required in notes and that not everything you discuss will be documented
- Describe your typical approach to note writing.

Step 3: Discuss ways patients can incorporate notes into their recovery

- Discuss ways patients can use their notes (e.g. to view their progress over time; remember their treatment plans or other information discussed during appointments).
- Encourage patients to consider their state of mind and their environment before reading their notes.

Step 4: Provide opportunities for patients to discuss notes or ask questions

- Encourage patients to bring up questions or concerns.
- Periodically ask patients if they have read their notes and/or if they have any questions they would like to address.
- Consider reading notes together with the patient during an appointment.