

VA adjusts electronic health record rollout schedule to assure continued success

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To allow additional time to prepare for implementation, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently updated the deployment schedule of its new electronic health record (EHR) system.

The Boise VA Medical Center, originally scheduled to go live June 25, and moved to July 23, has been postponed. At this time, VA has not set a new EHR launch date for that facility.

Deployment of the EHR at VA Puget Sound Health Care System in Seattle, Washington, will shift to March 2023, from August 2022 and the VA Portland Health Care System in Portland, Oregon, will move to April 2023, from November 2022.

“We are still improving our ability to scale to larger sites,” said Dr. Terry Adirim, program executive director of VA’s Electronic Health Record Modernization Integration Office, which manages the effort. “We are taking the extra time to incorporate lessons learned from earlier sites and to offer more at-the-elbow support and training for employees who will be using the new system.”

The extended calendar will also give EHR vendor Oracle Cerner time to put system enhancements in place and to make improvements to the software, which will further ensure its stability, Adirim said.

The decision to adjust the schedule addressed concerns from Congress about the rollout process and factored in results of VA’s own strategic review. The revised timeline was created with direct input from Veterans Health Administration stakeholders, to include senior leaders and users of the system at sites scheduled to go live.

Earlier adjustments to the EHR deployment schedule included moving rollouts to 2023, from 2022, for larger facilities in Anchorage, Alaska; Dayton and Cincinnati, Ohio; and three sites in Michigan — Battle Creek, Saginaw and Ann Arbor. “Mini deployments” of program elements and system improvements will continue during the six-month period between the July 2022 launch in Boise and before the first rollout in Ann Arbor, Michigan, as well as at sites preparing for later launches and those already using the new EHR.

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