

VA delays electronic health record implementation date due to COVID-19 surge in Ohio

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WASHINGTON — Effective Jan. 14, the Department of Veterans Affairs is delaying the scheduled deployment of its new electronic health record effort at the VA Central Ohio Healthcare System in response to a surge in COVID-19 cases affecting the workforce and community.

In consultation with leaders at the Ohio facility and VA senior leaders, the department shifted implementation of the new EHR system to April 30 from the previously scheduled date of March 5.

“Our primary mission is to serve Veterans,” said Dr. Terry Adirim, program executive director of the Electronic Health Record Modernization Integration Office, who manages the daily operations of VA’s EHR effort. “As we see the pandemic surge in the Columbus community, we need to support the medical professionals while they focus their attention on meeting the health care needs of their patients. EHR deployment activities must be weighed against community health and can be resumed when it is appropriate to do so.”

VA data shows, as of Jan. 13, the VA Central Ohio Healthcare System is currently experiencing a COVID-19 positivity rate of 34.9% across its 15-county service area, with Franklin County experiencing a 153% increase in COVID-19 cases over the past 14 days. A significant number of the workforce at the facility (approximately 209 employees) are “unable to work,” doubling the number of employees reporting this status the previous week and one of the largest changes in this status across all VA medical facilities nationwide. Adding an EHR deployment during this pandemic surge would risk significant impact to health care operations at the facility and the ability of staff to adequately serve Veterans.

VA officials are continuously reviewing the conditions at upcoming implementation sites to ensure local conditions allow for a safe deployment.

The new EHR will replace VA’s current Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture and will link with the Department of Defense’s health records to create a lifetime of seamless care for service members and Veterans. For more information about the overall effort visit [EHR Modernization](#).