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## Press Release

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### **State ensures veteran Pioneer Home resident health, prescription benefits**

*Veterans in Pioneer Homes continue to receive Veterans Affairs prescription benefits*

(Anchorage, AK) — The Alaska Pioneer Homes today announced new safety protocols for its administration of medications from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, and refunds to veterans who were unable to use their medication benefits in recent months. The medication protocols were developed in cooperation with the Veterans Affairs, Northwest Region.

While the protocols were developed, veteran residents who need to have Home staff administer their medications were asked to use the Pioneer Homes pharmacy. In the Anchorage Home, 12 veteran residents who normally received free medication from Veterans Affairs got the medications from the Pioneer Homes and were billed.

The amount they have paid the Pioneer Homes for medications will be credited to their accounts.

Staff at the Homes requested the policy review to streamline the Pioneer Homes' administration of Veterans Affairs medications to reduce the risk of error, however small.

The desire to improve the system resulted from differences in the agencies' packaging and pharmaceutical manufacturers.

"Our residents and their families count on us to provide safe, professional care management," said David Cote, director of the Alaska Pioneer Homes. "We are always exploring ways to improve the quality of our care."

The Pioneer Homes pharmacy puts pills into personalized blister packages for each resident, which helps ensure residents get the correct medication and dose; Veterans Affairs mails bottles of medications to the Homes.

The two agencies use different manufacturers, so generic versions of the same medication might look different, while two different medications might look the same.

New administration protocols retain existing safety requirements, such as nurses alone administering medication that is not in blister packs, and add formal pathways to ensure nurses receive instructions for medication administration from Veterans Affairs.

Officials explored a number of ways to streamline the two systems, including having the Pioneer Homes repackage the Veterans Affairs medications. However, there was an unexpected number of barriers to meshing the two systems.

There are 468 residents, including 115 veterans, in the six Pioneer Homes. There are Homes in Fairbanks, Sitka, Ketchikan, Anchorage, Juneau and Palmer. In 2004, the Palmer Home became a Veterans & Pioneers Home, in partnership with Veterans Affairs. The Pioneer Homes are part of the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.

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