



## United States Naval Hospital Okinawa DHA Space-A Care Policy Update March 8, 2023



The Department of Defense, the Military Health System, and the Defense Health Agency are fully committed to taking care of the personnel who support the mission of the United States Forces in Japan and the Indo-Pacific mission. The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, the HON Gilbert Cisneros, and the acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs at that time, Ms. Seileen Mullen, held five separate town hall meetings on both mainland Japan and Okinawa in late January and early February and clearly heard the issues and concerns of those stationed in Japan.

On March 3rd, 2023, the Director of the Defense Health Agency, LTG Telita Crosland, issued guidance to each military medical treatment facility (MTF) Director in Japan to maximize and optimize space available (space-a) care. MTF Directors were given specific guidance to provide safe, quality space available care within the scope of their MTF's capabilities while maintaining access to care standards for DoD beneficiaries. Each Director has the authority to assess their resources and clinical capability to tailor support to their installation. Space-available care may be offered for non-acute conditions, and the process of making space-a appointments, including when they become available, will be managed at the local MTF level. The memorandum supersedes the Defense Health Agency Region Indo-Pacific Administrative Instruction 6025.02, signed on December 22nd, 2022.

The Department is continuing its analysis of the healthcare challenges confronting the Total Force in Japan to ensure these concerns are addressed.

What does this mean for our community in Okinawa?

Starting on March 13th, 2023, the hospital and branch clinics will be open to all personnel on a space-available basis and where capacity exists. This means that patients are no longer required to call at a specific time to get an appointment and can book appointments in the future. All specialty care is available where capacity exists.

The precedence of care is still the same; active-duty service members and their families have priority. All other patients will be seen on a space-available basis, while efforts will be made to maximize space-available access.

Even before the space-a change in December 2022, services like mental health, obstetrics, and physical therapy were at capacity and were closed to space-a. Conditions have not changed, and these services will continue to be limited to TRICARE Prime patients. This is not new and is how the hospitals operated in the past to meet the mission.

In conclusion, USNHO will make every effort to see as many Space-A patients as possible. If you already have good reliable medical care found in our host nation's system, and it works for you, continue your care there. If you have issues accessing care in the network, we encourage you to share your experience with us so we can help look for solutions. QR CODE:

