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# News Release

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For Immediate Release

## **VA Black Hills Health Care System Awarded Accreditation**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Black Hills Health Care System earned full accreditation from the Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP) on December 14, 2009.

AAHRPP is a non-profit organization that works with organizations that conduct human research to raise the level of protection for research participants. AAHRPP accredits organizations that can demonstrate they provide participant safeguards that surpass the threshold of state and federal requirements. The accreditation program utilizes a voluntary, peer-driven educational model. For organizations interested in learning more about accreditation, visit <http://www.aahrpp.org/>.

Through the rigorous accreditation process, organizations must demonstrate that they have built extensive safeguards into every level of their research operation and that they adhere to the highest standards for research. AAHRPP's standards exceed federal regulations by requiring organizations to address conflict of interest, to provide community outreach and education and to apply the same stringent protections to all research involving human participants. (Under federal regulations, such protections are mandated only for federally sponsored or regulated research.) The accreditation process typically results in system-wide improvements that enhance protections for research participants and promote high-quality research.

Accreditation is available to organizations worldwide that conduct biomedical, behavioral or social sciences research involving human participants. Decisions on accreditation are announced quarterly, and accreditation is valid for three years.

Stacy Sondreal, Administrative Officer for Research at VA Black Hills Health Care System said, "The Black Hills Health Care System has embraced research as one of its core missions and since 2005, has engaged in over thirty important biomedical and behavioral research programs, including six major sponsored clinical studies. Efforts to engage in community partnerships have led to

collaborations with community organizations in the hopes of providing advancements and improvements in care and treatments to the Veterans we serve and the scientific community overall”.

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