



VETERAN HEALTH NEWS

VA SAN DIEGO HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

April 2020

Message from the Director



We care about your health and want you to stay safe during this time. Please continue to stay home, social distance when you go out and wash your hands. We urge you to follow all recommendations by the CDC and San Diego County Public Health authority. Listen and follow their guidelines and together, we can help minimize the impact of COVID-19 to our community.

Over the last month, we've been preparing our hospital for the expected surge of COVID-19 patients. We have reduced non-urgent procedures and appointments and are configuring staffing to support our current mission. We are working hard to make sure we have adequate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and ventilators. Meanwhile, we are continuing to provide care via video health care, including primary care and mental health appointments.

If you have questions regarding your care during this time, including setting up virtual care, please call our patient call center at (858) 552-7475 or contact your provider through My HealtheVet. Also, for urgent procedures or appointments, please call ahead at the number above to see if we can meet your needs through virtual care first.

Dr. Robert M. Smith
Director, VA San Diego Healthcare System

Keeping it Clean with New Bathroom Rating System



VASDHS is using data to help make our restrooms cleaner. Patient restrooms are now installed with feedback system buttons as seen in the picture. Touch green for happy, yellow for ok, and red for poor. The hospital keeps track of each response and uses it to assess the quality of each bathroom and respond appropriately to make sure our quality reflects the kind of service you deserve.

Tip of the Month: Beneficiary Travel



Veterans with the qualifications below are eligible to receive reimbursement for your travel to your medical appointments:

- Veterans with disabilities rated 30% or more service-connected (SC): travel reimbursed for all appointments
- Veterans with disabilities rated less than 30%: travel reimbursed for care relating to their specific Service-Connected condition(s)
- Veterans receiving Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) pension benefits: travel for care of any condition.

Claims for travel reimbursement must be filed in accordance with the following guidelines:

Application (VA Form 10-3542 -Veteran/Beneficiary Claim for Reimbursement of Travel Expenses) must be filed within 30 calendar days after completion of travel for service/treatment.

Attach supporting documentation from the service provider/facility that includes the following information to properly validate and process claim for reimbursement:

- i. The date(s) of visit within 30 calendar days
- ii. Provider/Treatment facility address
- iii. Proof of appointment attendance and completion (i.e. return to work/school notice, written explanation from provider/facility as proof of appointment).

If you're eligible for beneficiary travel reimbursement for VA medical appointments, does that still apply if the VA schedules you for an appointment in the community?

Yes, the VA has the authority to pay for transportation of Beneficiary Travel eligible Veterans to a community-based health care appointment when the care is being paid for by VA.

To learn more please

visit: https://www.sandiego.va.gov/services/Veterans_Transportation.asp

You can also contact VASDHS Beneficiary Travel Department at (858) 642-3381 or My HealthVet Secure Messaging @ SD Beneficiary Travel BT

Million Veteran Program



Considering the recent changes with COVID-19, the Million Veteran Program (MVP) has stopped in person enrollments for the next 30 days. If you would like to participate in MVP or learn more about the program, Veterans are encouraged to enroll online at MVP.va.gov. The San Diego MVP team will assess the safety of face to face enrollments and will tentatively update Veterans on April 17, 2020. Alternatively, please call the Information Center at 866-441-6075 for enrollment updates on this facility or visit MVP Online at mvp.va.gov.

Online Scheduling Update

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, VASDHS has temporarily disabled the self-scheduling function of VA Online Appointment Scheduling (VAOS) feature found on [My HealtheVet](#).

You can still access the application and use it to view, cancel, or request appointments, but you will not be able to directly schedule an appointment with your provider. This is a temporary action directly related to the COVID-19 outbreak and has been applied nationwide.

We also wanted to share that we are expecting a significant redesign in both the appearance and function of this application expected by May 2020. Once we can restore full function to the VAOS application, you should notice a few important changes:

- The redesigned homepage incorporates a newer look and feel that is more in line with VA.gov
- The appointment list is color-coded based on the status of appointments:
 - Green – confirmed appointments.
 - Yellow – appointment requested by you but not processed yet.
 - Red- cancelled appointments.
- Appointment address is now listed and you'll have the ability to get directions to your facility.
- Community Care appointments will be obviously marked as Community Care appointments and will list facility address as well.
- Veterans can join VA Video Connect appointments directly through VAOS.
- Veterans will have the option on most screens to provide feedback on the application.

For more information regarding VA Online Scheduling, please visit: <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-online-scheduling>

My HealtheVet Upgrades



Due to COVID-19 restrictions, VASDHS has temporarily halted face-to-face [My HealtheVet](#) account upgrades. We still highly encourage patients to upgrade their MHV accounts to Premium using one of VA's sign-on partners such as DS Logon Premium Account or ID.me.

With My HealtheVet, you can stay connected to your health care teams via Secure Messaging and continue to manage your health care using other features available on the website. What's more, by upgrading your My

HealthVet account, you can take advantage of VA's other online health care tools, which can be found in the [VA App Store](#).

To upgrade your account online, use a DS Logon Premium or ID.me account, and follow these steps:

1. From the **My HealthVet login page**, log in to your Advanced My HealthVet account using a **Sign-in-Partner**
2. Select the **Upgrade Now** button
3. **Check the certification box** to verify you are the owner of the My HealthVet account
4. Select **Continue**
5. Check the **Accept My HealthVet Terms & Conditions** box
6. Select **Continue**
7. After selecting Continue, your My HealthVet Advanced account will upgrade to a Premium account.

Five things About Voluntary Service You Should Know



Many supportive tasks around our facilities are the responsibility of volunteers. Every day during the work week, they play a vital role in making sure patients have a pleasant experience while at our facilities. Here's five interesting facts about VA San Diego's Voluntary Service Department.

- The biggest age group for volunteers range from 18 to 24
- In fiscal year 2019, we had a total of 768 volunteers
- In total, volunteers worked 73,592 hours for fiscal year 2019
- Fiscal year 2019 total donations, including donation from Summer Sport Clinic, was \$1,158,518.12
- Top 3 positions we are recruiting for are Drivers, Wayfinder, and Volunteer for the New Chula vista Clinic

National Volunteer Recognition Week is April 19 – 25 and VA San Diego Health Care System is always looking for more. To learn more, please call (858) 552-8585 x7819

VA San Diego COVID-19 Resource Guide

Times can be challenging for Veteran families right now and we'd like to help. Please check out this [collection](#) of resources to help families who are having difficulties.

Get Instant Updates Through GovDelivery



Get all the latest in VA San Diego feature stories, newsletters and information by registering with our GovDelivery service. To participate, go to our internet homepage and enter your email in the box “Connect with VA San Diego Healthcare System.”

Research Opportunities

Help us advance the science of health care by volunteering for a human subject research project at VA San Diego Healthcare System. More information can be found [here](#).

Calendar

Passover begins: April 8

Good Friday: April 10

Easter: April 12

Passover Ends: April 16

Earth Day: April 22

Ramadan begins: April 23

**Comments and suggestions about our newsletter? Send them to
Christopher.menzie@va.gov**

Please Take Our Patient Satisfaction Surveys

We need feedback on your health care experience to continue improving the high-quality care and customer service we provide. We send our patient satisfaction surveys via mail and email on a regular basis and if you receive one, please take a moment to complete it. We are listening and want to improve – if you have a good or bad experience, we want to hear from you. We want you to Choose VA!

About VA San Diego Healthcare System



The VA San Diego Healthcare System (VASDHS) provides a wide range of inpatient and outpatient services at the medical center in La Jolla; and at six community clinics located in Chula Vista, Escondido, Imperial Valley, Mission Valley, Oceanside, Sorrento Valley and at the Rio Clinic. We

provide medical, surgical, mental health, geriatric, spinal cord injury and advanced rehabilitation services. VASDHS has 296 authorized hospital beds including skilled nursing beds and operates several regional referral programs including cardiovascular surgery and spinal cord injury care.

We are affiliated with the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and provide training for 1,399 medical interns, residents and fellows as well as 676 other health profession trainees in areas such as nursing, pharmacy, dental and dietetics. VASDHS has one of the largest research programs in the VA nationally with a budget of \$44.3 million, >211 principal investigators and 676 projects.

Number of Veterans who received care from

VASDHS in FY 2019: 86,138

*Number of Veterans in San Diego County:238,352

*Number of Veterans in Imperial Valley:6,069

Total Veterans living in SD & Imperial Valley Counties:244,421

**from VetPro, 9/30/2019*

Important Phone Numbers:

VASDHS Main Line: (858) 552-8585

VASDHS Patient Call Center

(Appointments/Questions): ... (858) 552-7475

Health Benefits & Enrollment: (858) 552-7523

Billing (Copays, etc.): (866) 802-6381

Community Care Authorization Line: (858) 623-1879

Billing (Community Care):.... (858) 657-1313

Billing (TriWest):(855) 722-2838

Request your Records: (858) 642-3661

Suicide Prevention: ... (800) 273-8255, press 1

VA Secretary Wilkie's Priorities:

- Customer Service
- Implementing the MISSION Act
- Electronic Health Record
- Transforming our Business Systems