New VA ID Card is Available

Honorably discharged veterans of all eras can now apply for a new Veterans ID card, officials with the Department of Veterans Affairs said Wednesday, November 29, 2017. To receive the card, veterans must log in to Vets.gov using either the ID.me verification system or a DS log-in. Users will then be able to apply for the hard-copy card by verifying their personal details through the website and by submitting a copy of a valid government-issued ID as well as a shoulders-up photo to the site. Once the application is complete, users can expect to receive their new ID card within 60 days, and users will also be able to receive a digital copy of the card by mid-December.

Holiday Care and Share

It’s been 33 years since VA San Diego Healthcare System (VASDHS) staff started the Care and Share program for needy Veterans. Over the years, donations to the program have gone to Veterans and their families to help their holidays be a little bit merrier. Last year, VASDHS provided meals to over 450 Veterans and their families. This year, we want to continue to spread the joy to as many Veterans as possible. To donate, call (858) 642-1213.

Be There for Veterans this Holiday Season

We can all play a role in preventing suicide, but many organizations don’t know what they can do to support Veterans or Service members within their reach who may be going through a difficult time. A simple act of kindness can help someone feel less alone. Our actions can save lives. We hope you will help raise awareness of suicide prevention within our community by working with us to spread the #BeThere message.
Million Veteran Program

The Million Veteran Program (MVP) is looking for Veterans! MVP is a national research program designed to study how genes affect health and illness with the goal of improving health care for Veterans. MVP aims to be one of the largest studies of genes and health in the United States with an expected enrollment of one million Veterans. To accomplish that, we’re looking for new volunteers who can donate a small amount of blood to help the cause. For more information, please reach out to Ilanit Young at (858) 552-8585 ext. 5566 or (858) 230-9098.

End Harassment Campaign

VA health care is for all Veterans - men and women. Some women Veterans are reluctant to come to a VA medical facility for fear they will be harassed. More than 10% of the Veterans we provide care for at VASDHS are women, and we are committed to providing them a safe and welcoming environment when they visit our medical center and clinics. According to a recent study, one in four women at a VA medical facility primary care appointment reported harassment. Because of this and because we honor women Veterans, VASDHS is participating in the national VA End Harassment Campaign and is sending out information to staff and visitors explaining that harassment will not be tolerated in medical facilities. Harassment includes unwelcome comments or conduct in public spaces and sexual harassment such as catcalling by strangers and verbal slurs.

We encourage any Veteran who feels they have experienced harassment at one of our facilities to report it to our Women Veterans Program Manager, Jennifer Roberts, at (858) 642-3676 or the Women Veterans Call Center at (855) 829-6636. We are asking our staff and visitors if they observe harassing behavior to respectfully ask the harasser to stop. Changing this behavior requires everyone’s help. Please help us make VASDHS a harassment-free facility.

New MyHealtheVet Feature: Appointment Scheduling

VA patients at more than 100 facilities nationwide, including VA San Diego, are now able to schedule or request certain appointments online using their Premium My HealtheVet accounts.

The online scheduling tool allows patients to:
- Directly schedule Primary Care and Optometry appointments
- Request to schedule Primary Care, Optometry and Mental Health appointments
- View or cancel those appointments and requests

By giving patients the option to use their My HealtheVet accounts to access the tool, we’re making online scheduling available to a much larger number of our patients. To use the tool, log in to your Premium My HealtheVet account and click Schedule a VA Appointment on your dashboard.
Hospital Compare: How Does VASDHS Measure Up?

How does VASDHS measure up when compared to San Diego private hospitals (Sharp Memorial, Scripps Memorial, Scripps Mercy, UCSD, Kaiser), national VA and ratings for Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)?

- VASDHS had the lowest mortality rates for patients 30 days after discharge from the hospital (includes mortality for heart attack, heart failure and pneumonia) compared to 4 local facilities listed above, the national VA average and the CMS average.
- The readmission rate for patients 30 days after discharge was better than all 4 local facilities and better than the national VA average and the CMS average for heart failure and pneumonia readmissions.
- VASDHS incidence of surgical complications was better than all 5 of the local facilities and better than the national VA average and the CMS average in 6 of 9 categories.
- In a patient experience survey, under the category of “Patients reported that staff always explained about medications before giving them,” VASDHS scored higher than all 5 local facilities and the national VA and CMS averages.
- In a patient experience survey, under the category of “Patients reported that they were given information about what to do during their recovery at home,” VASDHS scored better than 3 of 5 local facilities, was comparable to the other 2 of 5 local facilities and scored better than the national VA and CMS averages.
- Timely and effective stroke care was better than 2, and the same as 3, of the local facilities, and was better than the national VA and CMS averages.


DAV Drivers Needed

The Disabled American Veteran (DAV) transportation network is looking for a few good volunteer drivers to transport Veterans to and from their medical appointments at the Mission Valley Clinic and medical center in La Jolla. Drivers can choose between morning or evening runs. The service covers the greater San Diego area from South Bay to North County including Oceanside and Escondido and as far east as El Centro. Anyone who would like to volunteer should contact the DAV transportation office at (858) 552-7470 or the VA voluntary service office at (858) 642-1529.
Appointment Access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Primary Care:</th>
<th>Specialty Care:</th>
<th>Mental Health:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appt. wait times:</td>
<td>1.81 days</td>
<td>6.39 days</td>
<td>2.90 days</td>
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<tr>
<td>(completed appts as of 10/30/17)</td>
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Choice referrals: In fiscal year 2017, VASDHS referred 35,891 Veteran episodes of care to the community for a total cost of $69,891,170.

Calendar

- **Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day**: Dec. 7
- **Care and Share Silent Auction**: Dec. 7, 9 am. – 1 p.m., Multipurpose Room
- **Hanukkah**: Dec. 12-20
- **Winter Begins**: Dec. 21
- **Christmas**: Dec. 25
- **Kwanzaa**: Dec. 26 – Jan. 1
- **New Year’s Day**: Jan. 1

Facebook Question

We’d like to hear from you on Facebook. Here’s this month’s question:

What is one feature at other health care facilities that you do not see at VASDHS that you would like to see more of?

Other Newsletter Comments/Suggestions? Christopher.menzie@va.gov
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 1,440 medical interns, residents and fellows as well as 751 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 $41.3 million, 210 principal investigators and 698 projects.

Number of Veterans who received care from VASDHS in FY 2017: .................................................. 83,014
*Number of Veterans in San Diego County: ..........................243,369
*Number of Veterans in Imperial Valley: ............................6,225
Total Veterans living in SD & Imperial Valley Counties: ...249,594

*from VetPop, 9/30/2017

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
Billing (Community Care): ............................... (858) 657-1313
Billing (Choice Program): ................................. (855) 722-2838
Suicide Prevention: ................................. (800) 273-8255, press 1

VA’s Top 5 Priorities:

1. Greater Choice for Veterans
2. Modernize Our Systems
3. Focus Resources More Efficiently
4. Improve Timeliness of Services
5. Suicide Prevention