



VETERAN HEALTH NEWS

VA SAN DIEGO HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

February 2021

COVID Vaccine Status Update



As of February, we have notified Veterans aged 65 and older of their eligibility and are actively scheduling vaccinations for that age cohort. We will be opening vaccination to other age groups and tiers of enrolled patient as we receive more vaccine.

Vaccinating Now

- Those 65 years old or older
- Frontline essential workers as defined by CDC
- Chemotherapy patients
- Congregate living patients
- Hemodialysis patients
- Homeless patients
- Solid-organ transplant patients

We anticipate offering vaccine next to Veterans less than 65 years of age with three or more high-risk conditions. We will open vaccinations to other eligible groups as more vaccine becomes available.

COVID-19 vaccine may be available at non-VA sites and are generally without cost to the recipient. However, please note, because 2nd dose vaccines are being sent to the same place as where each person gets their 1st dose, you must get your 2nd dose from the same source as your 1st (except under very rare circumstances). This will ensure 2nd dose vaccines are available for Veterans who were previously vaccinated at the VA San Diego Healthcare System. As with most services and care we provide, we are unable to administer vaccinations to unenrolled spouses and other family members.

To help us provide the best service possible to all our patients, please wait for us to contact you by email, phone or text when vaccine supply for your eligibility group becomes available. The VA San Diego call center is experiencing a significantly higher call volume than usual, which is resulting in longer than normal hold times. When the system reaches capacity, you will receive a message asking you to call back later. We sincerely apologize for this inconvenience.

Stay up to date with the latest vaccine eligibility groups by checking back here, submitting your email address in the Subscribe box on our [homepage](#), or by following us on [Facebook](#).

Veterans Justice Outreach



The Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Program is helping justice-involved Veterans to move on with their lives. VJO Specialists work with Veteran Treatment Courts and justice system partners to provide support and resources to eligible Veterans. For local contacts and more info, please visit:

<https://www.va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp>

2020 Annual Report

Please read our latest edition [here](#) for a snapshot of the care at our facilities in 2020.

San Diego VA Police Save A Life, Twice in One Day!



On January 20, VA Police Officers at the San Diego Medical Center responded to the facility's Health Benefits Office for a medical emergency. On the scene, the officers found a Veteran in cardiopulmonary arrest. Officers immediately began administering CPR until medical staff arrived and provided advance cardiac life Support. The Veteran was stabilized and eventually admitted to the Intensive Care Unit.

Later that day, VA Police were called to another medical emergency, this time in the facility's parking garage where an employee was found unresponsive in a locked vehicle. The officers immediately recognized the seriousness of this incident and quickly gained access to the vehicle by breaking a window.

The employee was found to be suffering from a serious medical condition and required immediate treatment to save her life. The officers' quick actions to gain access to the vehicle more than likely resulted in saving the employee's life.

In less than a day, VA Police Officers were there when needed to save two lives. They lived up to the VA Police Motto, "To protect those that served," as they always do, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Measuring Your Health Progress Without a Scale

Checking your weight constantly can lead to unhealthy feelings towards food, eating, body image and self-worth. Instead of focusing on weight, change the focus to the specific actions you are taking to improve your health and well-being. Over time you'll find that this shift will help you make peace with food and your body.

Try measuring a couple of these non-scale victories:

- You start to respect and appreciate your body
 - You notice which foods satisfy you most
 - Your focus has improved, or you have less headaches
 - You have more energy
 - You can stop eating when you feel comfortably full
 - You are eating less packaged foods and more whole foods
 - You eat less animal foods and more plant foods
 - You feel less anxious
 - You find new ways to manage emotions without using food
 - You practice staying present in the moment while eating
 - You tried a new food you have never had before
 - You are drinking enough water
 - You exercise for personal reasons
 - Your flexibility or strength has improved
 - Your blood sugars, blood pressure or cholesterol have improved
 - You participate in activities that bring you joy
 - You find yourself laughing more
- **Your VA Registered Dietitians are available for individual nutrition counselling appointments via video, phone or in-person and group nutrition education classes via video. No consult is needed from your provider. Simply contact the Call Center to make your appointment: 858-552-7475.**

Connected Care Customer Service Guide



VHA's Office of Community Care's (OCC) Customer Experience Office is pleased to distribute the new [Community Care Customer Service Guide](#), designed to assist [eligible Veterans](#) who have been referred to a community provider for services.



The two-page guide is a roadmap describing eight key points in the Veteran's community care customer experience from being referred to a community provider, all the way to billing at the end of the cycle. This guide will improve the Veteran's experience by providing a high-level "what to expect" overview to VA community care.

In addition to easily understandable language explaining the process, Veterans can add specific information related to their appointment in clearly identified areas provided for that purpose. For example, Veterans can add their VA and community provider's names and contact information.

OCC developed the customer service guide in response to limited understanding about the community care process identified through feedback from Veterans, community providers and VA staff. Because not every Veteran is eligible for VA community care, OCC also created the [Community Care Customer Service Guide Fact Sheet](#) that explains what the CSG is and when and how to use it to help Veterans with questions about their community care.

National Salute to Veteran Patients



February 14 – 20 is National Salute to Veteran Patients week. During this week, we usually take the opportunity to:

- Pay tribute and express appreciation to Veterans;
- Increase community awareness of the role of the VA medical center;
- Encourage citizens to visit hospitalized Veterans and to become involved as volunteers.

This year due to COVID, we are restricting visitations and participation. We appreciate your support and ask that in this time, you consider supporting Voluntary Service through donations. The link can be found here:

<https://www.pay.gov/public/form/start/52238064/>

Non-VA Emergency Care Notice



Veterans who receive Emergency care in a community hospital (non-VA) are required to notify the VA within 72 hours of the visit. Contact:

- Email: VHAEmergencyNotification@va.gov
- Phone: 1-844-72HRVHA or (844-724-7842)

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](#).

**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 1,256 medical interns, residents and fellows as well as 526 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, >250 principal investigators and 677 projects.

Number of Veterans who received care from

VASDHS in FY 2020: 84,572
*Number of Veterans in San Diego County:255,315
*Number of Veterans in Imperial Valley:5,694
Total Veterans living in SD & Imperial Valley Counties:261,009

**from VetPro, 3/2020*

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 option #3
Billing/POM (Community Care):.... (858) 623-1879 option 2
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