



VETERAN HEALTH NEWS

VA SAN DIEGO HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

January 2019

Veteran Signal Survey – We Want to Hear From You!



The Veteran Signals Survey is a satisfaction survey sent to randomly selected Veterans about their recent encounter with outpatient services administered by the Veteran Health Administration (VHA). Any Veteran who received outpatient services within the previous week (1-2 million Veterans on average nationwide) is eligible to receive a survey in their email inbox.

Surveys remain open for two weeks after the invitation is sent. The Vet-designed survey helps VHA identify and measure the quality of services they received during their recent outpatient encounter. The exact questions vary by survey type and were designed and finalized after extensive interviews with Veterans. Patients provide responses using two methods: (1) 4-6 Likert scale (a scale of 1-5 from strongly disagree to strongly agree) questions and (2) An opportunity to identify a concern, compliment, or recommendation using free-text. In the future, the surveys will also include inpatient care questions.

Are You at Risk for Diabetes?



One-in-three American adults are already pre-diabetic! Risk factors include age over 45 years, being overweight, not enough activity, and a family history of diabetes. If you are a woman who had diabetes during pregnancy or a had a baby over nine pounds at birth – you're at an increased risk to develop Type 2 diabetes.

Type 2 diabetes can be prevented or delayed with weight loss (7 percent) and increased activity (150 minutes/week). Does this sound like your New Year's resolutions? Need a little support to reach these goals?

Learn about our Intensive Diabetes Prevention Program at one of the information sessions on January 16 or January 30 at 1:30-2:30 p.m. in the San Diego VA Medical Center patient classroom, 1 East #1493. At the session, we'll give you an overview of what to expect if you commit to joining us for 14 one-hour group sessions over 6 months.

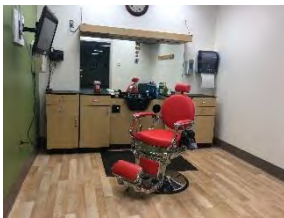
Or, show up at session 1 on Wednesday February 6th at 1:30-2:30 PM in the La Jolla patient Classroom, 1 East #1493. No consult is needed!

Risk factors for Transition from Suicidal Thoughts to Attempts

A team co-led by a VA San Diego Healthcare System researcher identified characteristics that differed between service members who contemplated suicide and those who went on to make a suicide attempt. As part of the Army STARRS study, researchers surveyed more than 10,000 soldiers. They found that, compared with soldiers without suicidal thoughts, those with suicidal thoughts had higher rates of interpersonal violence, relationship problems, major depressive disorder, PTSD, and substance use disorder. Soldiers with combat trauma in the past 12 months, intermittent explosive disorder, or any college education were less likely to have suicidal thoughts.

Of those with suicidal thoughts in the past 30 days, those with PTSD had higher risk of suicide attempt. Those with intermittent explosive disorder or some college education were less likely to have attempted suicide. The results show that PTSD, intermittent explosive disorder, and education should be considered when studying what makes suicidal ideation transition into suicide attempts. ([Depression and Anxiety](#), Dec. 14, 2018)

Barber Shop to Reopen Monday



The barber shop located in the San Diego VA Medical Center will reopen Jan 14 at 9 a.m. New hours will be Monday to Friday 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. at site 1409 in front of the multipurpose room.

Be Involved in Your Health Care



There are many ways to take an active role in your health care. talk with your VA health care team about your questions or interest in making a healthy living change. For more information go to:

http://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Be_Involved_in_Your_Health_Care.asp

In November 2018, the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP) of the US Department of Health and Human Services, released the 2nd Edition of the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (PAG). The Guidelines can be accessed on the ODPHP [here](#). An **Executive Summary** is available on the ODPHP website [here](#).

The Key Guidelines for Adults are:

Adults should move more and sit less throughout the day. Some physical activity is better than none. Adults who sit less and do any amount of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity gain some health benefits.

- For substantial health benefits, adults should do at least 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) to 300 minutes (5 hours) a week of moderate-intensity, or 75 minutes (1 hour and 15 minutes) to 150 minutes (2 hours and 30 minutes) a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity, or an equivalent combination of moderate- and vigorous-intensity aerobic activity. Preferably, aerobic activity should be spread throughout the week.
- Additional health benefits are gained by engaging in physical activity beyond the equivalent of 300 minutes (5 hours) of moderate-intensity physical activity a week.

Adults should also do muscle-strengthening activities of moderate or greater intensity and that involve all major muscle groups on **two** or more days a week, as these activities provide additional health benefits.

Medical Care Status During Shutdown



VA San Diego Healthcare System is providing care at the medical center and community clinics. We are not impacted by the current partial government shutdown.

Recent Performance Improvements



The VASDHS' most recent quarterly performance report showed we are making progress under the VA Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) scoring system. Improvements were seen in nearly every domain of performance and pushed our overall quality ranking above the 30th percentile ranking among VA facilities. ***This moves us into the overall 4-star performance range.***

Some improvements include:

- We have one of the lowest mortality rates in VA
- Our Call Center made tremendous gains in FY18 and now exceeds VA averages and national benchmarks.
- Significant improvement in access to care
- Significant reduction in adverse events

We have deployed performance teams focusing on each measure and will continue to focus on providing 5-star care to the Veterans we serve.

Suicide Prevention – It Takes a Team



VA San Diego has a Suicide Prevention Team who work daily to prevent suicide in Veterans, but with only 30 percent of Veterans getting care at our facilities nationwide, the problem needs community attention. Developing a safety plan is something you can discuss with Veterans you know.

How do you develop a safety plan?

Safety planning is a collaborative process between the Veteran at risk and a provider or friend. The provider and the client complete the safety plan together, and the client can use the plan to help manage a crisis.

A safety plan should include six steps to assess the situation:

1. Warning signs: “How will I know when the safety plan should be used?”
2. Internal coping strategies: “What can I do to take my mind off my problems without contacting another person?”
3. People and social settings that provide distraction: “Are there people I can talk to or places I can go for a positive distraction from my suicidal thoughts?”
4. People I can contact and ask for help: “Who can I call, text, or visit to get emotional support?”
5. Professionals or agencies I can call during a crisis: “Do I have any health care providers, counselors, or other professionals I can call for help?”
6. Making the environment safe: “What can I do to make my environment safer? Is there anything I’ve thought of hurting myself with that should be removed or given to someone for safekeeping?” (firearms, pills, rope)

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](#).

Featured Program: The Million Veteran Program: CSP #595 – “Service and Health Among Deployed Veterans” (SHADE) is a study to better understand the health, including lung health, of Veterans who deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), or Operation New Dawn (OND) and other deployments following these operations.

The study looks at the impact of deployment-related pollution exposures during the Post-9/11 Gulf War Era on current respiratory health using standardized scientific measures. The study will look at how cumulative exposure to particulate matter (PM2.5) during deployments to the U.S. bases and other locations in Central Asia (Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan), Southwest Asia (Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates) and Africa (Djibouti) relates to current measures of lung function and clinical outcomes of medically-treated asthma. The investigators will also explore the impact of deployment duration on both pulmonary function and asthma.

This study will enroll approximately 6,200 Veterans who live within around six VA recruitment sites (San Diego is one site). If you're interested in participating, click on the link above.

Appointment Access

Appt. wait times:
(completed appts as of 11/30/18)

Primary Care:	.90 days
Specialty Care:	4.99 days
Mental Health:	2.59 days

Choice referrals:

In fiscal year 2018, VASDHS referred **42,830** Veterans to the community for care at a total cost of **\$103,490,589**.

The top five categories of care referred to the community in FY 18 were: mental health, physical therapy, dental, acupuncture, and chiropractic care.

Calendar

National Certified Nurse Anesthetist Week: Jan. 20 – 26

Martin Luther King Jr: Jan. 21

National Wear Red Day: Feb. 1

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 \$41.3 million, 210 principal investigators and 698 projects.

Number of Veterans who received care from VASDHS in FY 2018: 84,712
***Number of Veterans in San Diego County:**240,926
***Number of Veterans in Imperial Valley:**6,148
Total Veterans living in SD & Imperial Valley Counties: ...247,074

**from VetPop, 9/30/2018*

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