



VETERAN HEALTH NEWS

VA SAN DIEGO HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

July 2020



Protect the public, flatten the curve, do your part:

Wear a mask when appropriate.

Wash your hands.

Practice social distancing.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
VA San Diego Healthcare System

Virtual Health Resource Center Now Available



Our Virtual Health Resource Center is now open for telephone and video appointments! Get support for VA virtual tools – like VA Video Connect and My HealthVet – without having to leave home. Call today: 619-892-8906.

Stand Down Update



Since the June 26-28 Stand Down 2020 was postponed due to COVID-19, a revised version is in the planning stage. The event will consider state and local requirements for distancing, healthy practices while still providing necessary products and services for Veterans. It will be a one-day event in late October, of which the logistics are still being discussed.

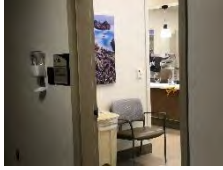
Tip of the Month

VASDHS is continuing to expand our efforts to provide care during the pandemic. Though we are providing limited care through face-to-face visits, we are also continuing to expand our telehealth (video) capabilities. If you would like to request a virtual video appointment with your provider, please contact our call center at (858) 552-7475.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
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New Unit Opens on 4W



On June 16, VASDHS opened a newly remodeled clinic on the 4th floor offering pain/anesthesia, wound care, cardiology, plastic surgery, Hepatitis C Virus, liver fibro scan, podiatry and sleep services. As you can see from the photo, the results are truly amazing!

Introducing VEText



Starting Aug. 3, 2020, we are pleased to introduce a new feature that will make your visit to the San Diego VA medical center or one of our community clinics safer during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have implemented a new notification procedure using VEText. This new feature allows Veterans with scheduled appointments to notify their care team when they arrive at the facility for further instruction. Veterans can wait for their appointments outside rather than in waiting rooms where social distancing can sometimes be a challenge. Your health care team will then text you back when they are ready for you to check in, allowing you and other Veterans to spend as little time as possible in waiting rooms.

To use this feature, Veterans must have a text-capable cell phone number on file with us. If you are unsure if we have a number on file, please contact your care team or you can verify that information when you are contacted to schedule an appointment.

The process is simple!

1. Once you arrive on campus, send a text message stating “HERE” to the previously sent appointment reminder to your cellphone, or send to 53079. This will alert your care team you are at the facility waiting to be called to your appointment.
2. You will receive a text acknowledging your check-in status.
3. When your care team is ready for you, you will receive a text instructing you to proceed to your appointment.

We look forward to seeing you soon!

Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program Reopens



On Monday, June 29, 2020, VASDHS celebrated the re-opening of its Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (SARRTP) unit in San Diego VA medical center on 2 West. The unit closed in 2015 due to flooding, requiring a complete remodel before it could reopen. The new 29-bed unit offers comprehensive treatment for addiction recovery including 16 private counseling rooms, three group session rooms, a dining room and a recreation room and includes a staff of nine nurses, one-unit coordinator (social worker), two social workers, two addiction therapists, one psychologist, and one peer support specialist.

The program includes recovery focused care including recreational therapy, smoking cessation, relapse prevention, communication skills, PTSD treatment options, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART), spirituality, relaxation/meditation and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). The nursing staff educate Veterans on the importance of their medication using the process of safe medication management. Discharge planning is very important for continuation of care after the stay.

Moving Forward



We are expanding face-to-face health care appointments based on clinical needs. As we welcome patients back into our medical facilities, your safety remains our top priority. During the reopening, VA clinics will prioritize in-person appointments for outpatient procedures and services that can't be provided through telehealth options. Clinic appointments will open progressively, making sure we maintain a safe environment. Veterans will be seen by appointment for provider visits, tests, or studies. Veterans can pick up medications, prosthetics, or physical therapy equipment without an appointment. We are discouraging walk-in care. If you need emergency care, call 911 or go to an Emergency Room. In order to maintain safe physical distancing, please only bring a companion if essential.

As we reopen, we will:

- See patients in-person prioritized by clinical need
- Continue to maximize virtual care options to promote physical distancing and provide increased access to care regardless of geographic location
 - Continue to use telehealth for primary care and mental health services to the extent possible to help ensure everyone's safety
 - Expand telehealth options for other specialty areas for all patients, unless care can only be performed face-to-face such as for procedures and surgery
- Follow physical distancing and environmental cleaning recommendations outlined by the CDC
- Screen staff members and Veterans for fever and other signs of COVID-19 infection at all entrances
- Require a face covering for everyone upon entering our facility

Veterans will be contacted to set up appointments based on urgency of care. For more information or questions, call (858) 552-7475 or send your health care teams a Secure Message on My HealthVet (www.myhealth.va.gov).

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 1,399 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