



VETERAN HEALTH NEWS

VA SAN DIEGO HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

March 2019

How Social Workers Can Help Veterans



Social workers are here to help you. Have questions or problems? Social workers can help or refer you to the right person. Here are just some of the services VA social workers provide:

- Counselling for feeling sad, depressed or anxious.
- Offer help on financial or housing assistance.
- Advice on getting help from the VA or from community agencies, such as Meals on Wheels, so you can continue to live in your own home.
- Assistance in applying for benefits from the VA, Social Security and other government and community programs? Ask your VA social worker.
- Develop and implement treatment approaches which address individual social problems and work with acute or chronic medical conditions, dying patients, and bereaved families.
- Coordinate with your doctor and other VA staff on your treatment team know your decisions about end-of-life issues, generally called advance directives and living wills. This includes things like whether you want to be on life support equipment, whether you are an organ donor, and which family member or other person you have chosen to make decisions on your behalf when you are unable to make those decisions yourself.
- Arrange for respite care for your caregiver so she or he can have a break or go on vacation without worrying about who will be caring for you.
- Provide counselling for marriage or family problems.
- Offer help with moving to an assisted living facility, a board and care home or a nursing home.
- Assistance for coping with the death of a family member.

There are many more ways VA social workers can help. If any of these situations apply to you or your family, ask to see the social worker at your [VA Medical Center](#). March is National Social Work Month.

Self-Referral Direct Scheduling Programs



VA San Diego Healthcare System has 11 (and counting) health care services in which patients can schedule appointments for themselves directly – without a provider’s referral. Patients can just pick up the phone and call any of the services listed on our [Self-Referral Direct Scheduling Programs](#) page, making it much easier to schedule a variety of appointments.

Celebrating National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Health



VA San Diego Healthcare System provides inclusive, patient-centered care to all Veterans, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Veterans.

We recognize that diverse populations have distinctive needs and have a process of continuous improvement through staff training and education to provide clinically and culturally competent care to LGBT Veterans. We have several policies, locally and nationally, to ensure non-discrimination, equal access to visitation, confidentiality and equal access to care.

To provide you with the best care possible, your VA primary care doctor should know your sexual or gender identity. It should prompt him/her to ask specific questions about you and offer appropriate health screens to best meet your health care needs. If your provider does not seem comfortable with your identity, please ask for another provider. Coming out to your providers is an important step to being healthy. You can ask your provider for information about mental health services, hormone therapy, LGB and Transgender specific groups. Your provider can then send a consult to the appropriate service provider. In addition, you can contact the following directly for services:

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Group (Mission Valley) Anthony Matthews, MSW (619) 497-8471
- Transgender Wellness Group (La Jolla) Clara Loginov, MSW (858) 642-6495
- Mental Health Services (You may ask for an LGBT trained provider) (858) 622-3391

For additional information: VA San Diego Healthcare System LGBT Work Group: SDCVAMCLGBT@va.gov or 858.552.8585 ext. 5531.

March is National Nutrition Month



Did you know that **nearly 30% of all edible food is wasted in the United States, and American households throw away nearly this much of the fruits and vegetables we purchase?** This year's message to "Go Further with Food" focuses on several of the ways we can fuel ourselves with nutritious foods while also making healthier choices easier throughout the week, saving money, and reducing our impact to the environment.

- Start with taking inventory of what is in your cupboards and refrigerator.
- Consider visiting your local farmer's market to add fresh, local foods into your week's meals.
- Estimate how many pieces of fruit you will need for your week's snacks and meal additions.
- Plan ahead when visiting the grocery store by bringing a shopping list.

One investment of your time that can pay dividends throughout your week is **preparing several meals on the weekends or whenever it is you have a spot of free time.**

For more advice on how you can eat right this March and all year long, visit this [link](#).

VA Online Scheduling



You can view, schedule, cancel, or request appointments from your cell phone or computer with the Veteran Appointment Online scheduling (VAOS) app now integrated with your MyhealthVet account.

At VA San Diego Healthcare System, you can schedule, or request assistance in scheduling an appointment with the following specialties:

- Primary Care
- Outpatient Mental Health
- Optometry
- Amputation Services

If you would like to learn more about VAOS, please visit: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/schedule-view-va-appointments/>

If you are interested in the learning more about the mobile app, please visit: <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-online-scheduling>

This National Nutrition Month®, consider at least a few small changes to help nourish your body, reduce food waste, and save time and money.

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](#).

Appointment Access

Appt. wait times:
(completed appts as of
1/31/19)

Primary Care:	1.13 days
Specialty Care:	5.03 days
Mental Health:	3.17 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

Vietnam War Commemoration: March 30, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m., formal program begins at 10 a.m., Army and Navy Academy, Carlsbad

National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic: March 31 – April 5

National Volunteer Week: April 7 – 13

Volunteer Awards and Recognition (MPR): April 8 10 – 11 a.m.

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 \$42.2 million, >200 principal investigators and 611 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 Secretary Wilkie's Priorities:

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