



Decrease in homeless Veterans



The results of the 2020 San Diego Regional Task Force on the Homeless Point in Time count showed a total of 940 homeless Veterans in 2020, compared to 1,068 homeless Veterans in 2019, a decrease of 128 Veterans - that's a 12% decrease from 2019!

The VASDHS Homeless Veteran Outreach team works very hard year-round to assist San Diego Veterans with resources and housing with a team that includes nurse practitioners, registered nurses, a licensed vocational nurse, an occupational therapist, social workers, addiction therapists, vocational development specialists, and program support staff.

San Diego programs managed by the team include:

- Outreach
- Grant and Per Diem Transitional Housing
- HUD-VA Supported Housing
- Homeless - Patient Aligned Care Team
- Safe Haven Program
- Recuperative Care Program
- Churchill Project
- National Call Center for Homeless Veterans
- Veterans Justice Outreach and Treatment Court

Congratulations to the VASDHS Homeless Veteran Outreach team!

New Chula Vista Clinic Opening



VA San Diego Healthcare System is pleased to announce the official opening of the new VA Chula Vista clinic on Monday, October 19, 2020. The new clinic, located at 353 H Street in Chula Vista, CA, 91910, is a two-story, 31,000-useable square foot building, three times the size of the current clinic and offers:

- convenient covered parking
- future expanded capacity for Veteran care
- Primary Care, Mental Health, Audiology, Tele-medicine, Optometry, Podiatry, Women's Health/Gynecology, and Laboratory services

Routine appointments will be scheduled at the new clinic starting October 19. Reminder that the current VA Chula Vista Clinic (365 Third Avenue) will officially close on Friday, Oct. 9. Due to COVID-19 only Veterans with a medical appointment will be allowed in the clinic.

We will be having a virtual ceremony posted on our Facebook page on Friday, October 16, 2020 at 10 am.

Beneficiary Travel Self-Service

VASDHS initiated an online claims reimbursement tool for submitting beneficiary travel - mileage reimbursement claims. This new tool called Beneficiary Travel Self Service System (BTSSS) offers eligible Veterans, caregivers, and other beneficiaries greater peace of mind and ease of submitting travel reimbursement claims through a new online portal that can be accessed from any computer, or mobile device, 24/7, 365 days a year through a secure website. Veterans can submit, and track, their beneficiary travel reimbursement claims with this new tool. BTSSS is enhanced with much more automation than the current process and will result in faster payment times for users. This new tool replaces the need to utilize a kiosk or complete hard copy claims (paper) which will be phased out in the coming months.

To begin, Veterans will need to build a profile at <https://access.va.gov>. This is the same website where BTSSS can be accessed beginning September 8, 2020. Please direct any questions to our VASDHS Beneficiary Travel office at 858-552-7572.

Veteran Flu Shot Program 2020



October 1 - December 31, 2020

VA Medical Center and Community Clinics

Veterans can get a flu shot from their provider during a scheduled appointment or at a [DRIVE-UP](#) or [WALK-UP](#) clinic listed below (no appointment needed).

For more information on our walk-in/drive in clinics at the medical center and clinics, please see our [2020 Flu Shot Program Flyer](#)

Community Care Flu Shots

Veterans can begin locating a CCN Retail Pharmacy (starting 9/4) or Urgent Care (starting 9/30) for influenza vaccines. No appointment or referral is required.

Veterans should tell community provider they are an eligible Veteran enrolled with the VA and show a valid government-issued identification card. Veterans (enrolled for VA health care) can also get free/no co-payment flu shots at Walgreen, CVS, Costco, Safeway, Kroger and Walmart pharmacies and VA community urgent care clinics and pharmacies. **To confirm flu shots are available, please check the VA Facility Locator first.** https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/pubfiles/factsheets/FactSheet_25-11.pdf

*available starting September 4, 2020

2020 Virtual Summer Youth Volunteer Project



On Saturday, August 8 at the at the VFW Post 1512 in Lemon Grove, our Virtual Summer Youth volunteers conducted a drive for items needed for the medical center clothing room. Items collected included pants, socks, shirts, and shoes. The drive was a success, with approximately 30 bags of clothing and shoes donated by the community to Veterans in need. Thank you to everyone who made this a success.

Friendly Reminder to Stay Cautious



We want to remind all patients to remember to social distance, wear a mask when appropriate, avoid touching your face and wash your hands regularly. Together with the right behaviors, we can reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Remember that face coverings should be worn over the nose and mouth and are especially important when it is difficult to stay at least 6 feet apart from others or when people are indoors to help protect each other.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/how-to-wear-cloth-face-coverings.html>

Neuromodulation Clinic Opens



VA San Diego Healthcare System (VASDHS) welcomed the grand opening of the Therapeutic Neuromodulation Program Suite on August 31, 2020 at the 2 South Wing of the San Diego VA Medical Center in La Jolla.

The suite offers state-of-the-art equipment and space to consolidate and expand the range of neurostimulation and neuromodulation interventions offered by the Mental Health Care Line at VASDHS.

Treatments offered by the program include cutting edge interventions such as repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulations (rTMS), intranasal esketamine (Spravato) and intravenous ketamine infusions for Veterans with Treatment Resistant Mental Health Conditions including Major Depressive and Bipolar Disorders and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. The suite offers dedicated private rooms for rTMS and ketamine as well as for treatment recovery, education, and relaxation.

“In addition to our existing programs, we are constantly exploring new ways to safely and effectively treat Veterans with treatment resistant conditions and this new suite provides us with specialized resources,” said Sharon De Peralta, Section Chief of Acute & Intensive Mental Health Programs in the Mental Health Care Line.

Our multidisciplinary team of psychiatrists, nurses and clinical pharmacy specialists partner with Veterans to determine an optimal treatment strategy and intervention in a patient centered environment designed to promote healing (design includes high ceilings, smart lighting and art highlighting natural settings).

Veterans should discuss with their mental health provider whether a consultation with the program is appropriate.

September is National Suicide Prevention Month



September is Suicide Prevention Month and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) wants to remind Veterans and their loved ones through the [Be There](#) campaign that small actions can make a big difference to Veterans experiencing difficult times.

During this and every month, VA San Diego Healthcare System (VASDHS) remains committed to spreading awareness of suicide prevention to Veterans and their supporters and connecting them to the resources they need.

“Where there is breath, there is hope,” said Neal Doran, mental health director of clinical improvement at VASDHS.

Locally, VASDHS staff works to reduce Veteran suicidality with activities including coordinating care for at-risk Veterans including responding to crisis line and staff referrals; providing supportive care to high-risk Veterans; and providing training and education to VA staff and community partners.

VASDHS is also participating in the Rapid Referral Research Study, which provides brief psychotherapy, utilizing the Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS) framework, for Veterans experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Be There suggests several simple actions that can help make a difference for a Veteran to include:

- Learning about the warning signs of suicide, found on the [Veterans Crisis Line website](#).
- Watching the free [S.A.V.E. training video](#) to learn how to respond with care and compassion if someone indicates they are having thoughts of suicide.
- Contacting VA’s [Coaching Into Care](#) program where a licensed psychologist or social worker will provide loved ones with guidance for motivating Veterans to seek support.
- Sharing stories of hope and recovery from VA’s [Make the Connection](#).
- Reaching out to the Veterans in your life to show them you care by sending a check-in text, cook them dinner or simply asking, “How are you?”
- [Utilize community organizations like 211sandiego.org to find resources for Veterans in need]

For more information and resources visit [BeThereForVeterans.com](#).

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive free, confidential support and crisis intervention available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Call [1-800-273-8255](#) and Press 1, text to 838255, or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](#).

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

Are you a veteran? Do you find it hard to stop eating or feel like you've lost control over your eating? Do you want to lose weight? If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may qualify for a study designed to help veterans regain control over-eating, lose weight, and create healthy lifestyle behaviors – Controlling Hunger and Regulating Eating (CHARGE) study. Dr. Niloofar Afari, in collaboration with Dr. Kerri Boutelle and colleagues at the UC San Diego Center for Healthy Eating and Activity Research (CHEAR), is conducting a research study to learn more about overweight/obesity and binge eating. The overall purpose of the study is to examine the effectiveness of two different group treatments in helping overweight or obese veterans reduce binge eating and improve eating habits to aid in weight loss. The treatment is totally FREE and may help you take better control of your eating and may also help with your weight loss goals. Take CHARGE today! Call 858-552-8585 x 2583 to learn more.

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 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