Elks Help Homeless Veterans

VA San Diego Healthcare System’s Healthcare for Homeless Veterans uses many programs to assist with the local homeless Veteran community. One specific program is the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Supported Housing Program, known as the HUD-VASH program. Eligible Veterans are assisted in applying for Section 8 vouchers to secure housing with additional case management support provided by a social worker.

The National Elks Organization created the Elks Emergency Assistance Fund as an additional financial resource to assist HUD-VASH Veterans with housing sustainability. This one-time assistance allows a Veteran to submit up to three bills totaling $2,500. Examples of financial assistance that are covered under the fund include security deposit assistance, rental payments, and essential utility bills.

“We greatly appreciate the National Elks Organization in providing our HUD-VASH Veterans with this additional financial resource”, states Jonathan Flood, LCSW and Co-Supervisor of the HUD-VASH Program.

Note on Childcare Services at the Medical Center

VA San Diego Healthcare System does NOT provide childcare services. Patients presenting for an appointment at the medical center or community clinics with a child and without a responsible supervising adult will have the appointment cancelled and rescheduled.

Free Flu Shots Starting Sept. 17

Veterans are encouraged to get their FREE FLU SHOTS with their primary care provider during their scheduled appointments. We also offer walk-in flu shot clinics from Sept. 17 – Dec. 14, 2018. Here’s the link for more information.
Technology Streamlines Hospital Meal Ordering

Inpatients at the San Diego VA Medical Center can now order their meals via touchscreen or TV remote controls in patient rooms at their convenience. VA San Diego is the only medical center in San Diego and one of only three VA medical centers nation-wide that have implemented this patient-centered meal ordering program. This takes hospital meal preparation and service into the 21th century.

To select meals, the patient just taps a screen or clicks a remote and selects their order for breakfast, lunch and dinner. They can choose their entrée, side dishes, salad, desert and beverage. The system is available in the Spinal Cord Injury and Community Living Centers where patients tend to stay in the hospital longer. They hope to roll out the program facility-wide in the future.

The new bedside system communicates with nutrition management software the medical center had already been using for some time. Components of the nutrition management system include food ordering, inventories, menus, forecasting - all of which had to be set up before bedside ordering could be offered. The nutrition management system receives diet orders and food allergy information from patients’ computerized medical records, which enables Nutrition & Food Service to provide Veterans safe and appropriate foods based on their needs. A food satisfaction survey is also available on-line for patients to provide feedback.

The computer meal management system has led to increased patient satisfaction, increased efficiency for staff (who used to visit patients often multiple times to get a menu completed), less wasted food and fewer errors on patient meal trays. The San Diego VA Medical Center feeds approximately 165 patients three meals a day adding up to approximately 500 meals per day.

VA San Diego Nutrition & Food staff have blended innovation, dedication and hard-work to create a state-of-the-art system for managing meal preparation and food service. “This system fits with the medical center’s philosophy of patient-centered care by encouraging patients to be more involved in their care,” said Nutrition & Food Service Chief, Patricia Ouellette, RD.

Canine Services Through Recreation Therapy

Dogs can be a healing force for our inpatient and outpatient Veterans. Because of this, we partner with local organizations through our Recreational Therapy service to offer the best canine care available.

- We use certified “therapy dogs” to visit patients at bedside and on the wards on 4 South (CLC and Palliative Care units), Psychiatry and SCI. The recreation therapist in SCI also sometimes takes the dogs to other areas. Dogs are usually from organizations such as Love on a Leash and Helen Woodward Center. We have numerous write-ups about Pet Therapy if needed and probably some pictures of our regular dogs.
- New this year--- Recreation Therapy offers a 10-week, canine therapy outpatient clinic. Paws for Purple Hearts, our community partner, brings in two to three (golden lab) service animals in training and teach patients...
how to train them. The Veteran cannot bring their own dog; the skills learned can be used for patients to train their own animal at home.

For more information on these programs: please contact Ellen Berman at (858)552-7410.

**Women’s Equality Day**

The Federal Women’s Committee held a celebration at the VA San Diego Medical Center honoring Women’s Equality Day on August 15, 2018, which celebrates women being granted the right to vote. The program consisted of opening remarks by Associate Director, Patient Care Services/Nurse Executive Carmen Concepcion, a reading of the Joint Resolution of Congress from 1971, which designated August 26 of each year as Women’s Equality Day, and an inspirational Ted Talk titled, “There’s No Such Thing as Not Voting” by Eric Liu. Many people understand how important voting is and how it’s our civic duty as Americans. Eric Liu agrees, but also thinks it’s time to bring joy back to the ballot box and offers encouragement for everyone to show up on Election Day. The Federal Women’s Committee encouraged both men and especially women to exercise their right to vote this Fall!

**We All Play a Role in Suicide Prevention**

Year-round, and particularly during Suicide Prevention Month in September, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) empowers communities to take action to support our Nation’s Veterans. Each community across the country plays a role in supporting Veterans, but as an individual you may not know what to do or where to start.

You don’t need to have special training to support the Veterans in your life, and we can all do something to help a Veteran who is going through a difficult time. Even seemingly small actions can have a huge impact: Preventing suicide begins with just the willingness to **Be There**.

Showing your support can be as simple as sending a Veteran a text message — inviting someone over to catch up or sharing a positive thought are both great ways to communicate that you care. Your words could be exactly what a Veteran in crisis needs to hear, and could be a reminder of the many people out there who are willing to listen.

Simply reaching out to a Veteran in need and opening the door for a discussion could make all the difference. Learn more ways to show your support and **Be There** by visiting VeteransCrisisLine.net/BeThere to find more resources and information.

This September, our suicide prevention team is reaching out to the San Diego community at the following locations:

- 9/2, Spartyka 5k, Wounded Warrior Race
- 9/6 Mental Health Summit
- 9/21 MCAS Miramar
- 9/26 San Diego City College
- 9/26 Miramar College
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.

Accessing Community Care

You may be eligible for community care (outside a VA medical facility) when VA cannot provide the care you need. To find out if community care is available to you, follow the below three steps:

1. Go to VA:
   - Schedule an appointment with a VA provider (doctor).
   - Your VA care team will work with you to see if you are eligible for community care.
   - Eligibility is based on your medical needs, care that is available at VA, and other requirements.
   - **Important:** Make sure VA confirms you are eligible and authorized before going to the next step.

2. Make an Appointment
   - VA will work with you to find a community provider and make an appointment.
   - You can select a community provider or VA can select one for you.
   - **Important:** The community provider selected must be in VA’s network and be willing to accept payment from VA.

Appointment Access

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appt. wait times:</th>
<th>Primary Care: 1.08 days</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(completed appts as of 7/31/18)</td>
<td>Specialty Care: 5.31 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mental Health: 2.92 days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Choice referrals:**

In fiscal year 2017, VASDHS referred **35,891** Veteran episodes of care to the community for a total cost of **$69,891,170**.
Calendar
National Suicide Prevention Week: Sept. 9 – 15
National POW/MIA Recognition Day: Aug. 3 – 8
National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic: Sept. 16 - 21
First Day of Fall: Sept. 22

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 1,440 medical interns, residents and fellows as well as 751 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 2017: ............................................. 83,014
*Number of Veterans in San Diego County: ..................243,369
*Number of Veterans in Imperial Valley: .......................6,225
Total Veterans living in SD & Imperial Valley Counties: ...249,594

*from VetPop, 9/30/2017

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