

VA MIDWEST HEALTH CARE UPDATE
JUNE 14, 2011

VA Launches Outbound Women Veterans Call Center

On June 1, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched an outbound Women Veterans Call Center (WVCC). The outbound call center is expected to contact approximately 40,000 Women Veterans a quarter. Veterans contacted through the Women Veterans Call Center will be given the option to receive information on VA services via email or standard mail, based on their preference. Standard mail will include a pre-loaded flash drive that includes links to information on VA services and benefits. As needed, Women Veterans will also be referred to VA health or benefit responders and referees will receive a 30 day follow up call from the contact representative to ensure their needs are getting met. This is a major outreach initiative and a significant undertaking to bring more women into VA care. Please join us as we reach out to Women Veterans. Contact the Women Veterans Coordinator at a medical center near you for more information.

Two new features added to My HealtheVet

Veterans can view appointments and view their allergy and adverse reaction information stored in their electronic medical records.

Appointments - The system allows them to set up e-mail reminders of upcoming appointments if they elect to subscribe to e-mail reminders for appointments on the Health Calendar within the website. The feature is only available to Veterans who have registered for a My HealtheVet account and have been in-person authenticated. The in-person authentication process upgrades the Veteran's account, which allows them to take advantage of all the advanced features available on My HealtheVet.

Health Information – Veterans can view their allergy and adverse reaction information from their electronic VA health care record along with self-entered information on My HealtheVet.

For more information - Veterans can contact the My HealtheVet Coordinator at their local VA Health Care System or visit www.myhealth.va.gov

New Family Caregiver Benefits

On May 9, 2011, VA began processing applications for eligible post-9/11 Veterans and Service members for new services under the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus health Services Act 2010. New services for primary Family Caregivers of eligible post-9/11 Veterans include a stipend, mental health services, and access to health care insurance, if they are not already entitled to care or services under a health plan. The stipend portion of this service will be backdated to the date of the application. In the first week VA assisted more than 625 Veterans, Service members and their Family Caregivers in applying for new services. Since May 9th VISN 23 has made 40 inquires to families that may qualify for the Post 9/11 Caregiver Stipend program, 31 individuals completed the applications and are going through the assessment process to become eligible. Another role the Caregiver Coordinator is to assist the caregiver of veterans of all eras. The Caregiver Coordinator can connect caregivers to resources inside VA and in the community, this is especially important in VISN 23 because of our highly rural environment. VISN 23 currently has 122 active consults with caregivers of veterans for all Eras. Our referrals come directly from the caregiver to the medical center. Applications can be processed

by telephone through the Caregiver Support Line at (855) 260-3274, in person at a VA medical Center with a Caregiver Support Coordinator, by mail or online at www.caregiver.va.gov with the new Caregiver Application (VA Form 1010-CG). The website application also features a chat option that provides the Family Caregiver with a live representative to assist in completing the application form.

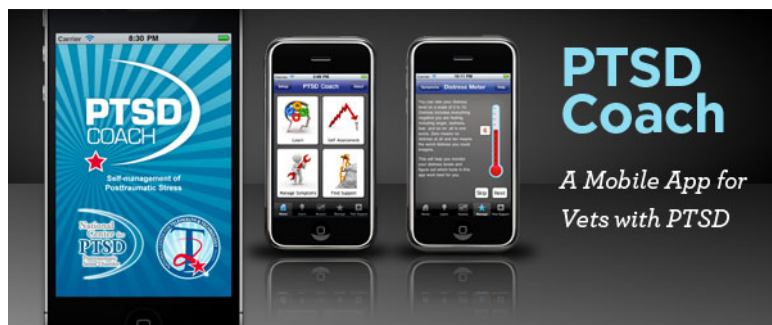
Ending Veterans Homelessness

VINS 23 has begun to receive the 2011 HUD-VASH (US Departments of Housing and Urban Development and Veteran Affairs Supported Housing) housing voucher allocation to assist Veterans with housing needs. Currently, HUD is in the process of finalizing FY11 housing voucher allocations. To date, we have received 885 vouchers and are moving forward in developing staffing in anticipation of receiving our full allotment of 1,035.

VA just announced they are expanding housing for Homeless Veterans and their families by developing new housing opportunities for homeless or at-risk Veterans and their families through public-private partnerships and VA's enhanced-use lease program in 34 locations across the country. Two of those locations are in Minneapolis and St. Cloud. The Building Utilization Review and Repurposing (BURR) initiative identified unused and underused buildings and land at existing VA property with the potential to develop. Basically, VA provides the land developers provide the building. In turn, Veterans reap the benefits. Under the EUL, the developer/lessee develops, operates, and maintains the land for an agreed-upon purpose that is consistent with VA's mission and operations. In return for the EUL, VA receives negotiated monetary and/or in-kind consideration. This results in reduced operating and maintenance costs to VA and, for the BURR initiative, yields housing for homeless or at-risk Veterans and their families.

Budget

VISN 23's budget for FY2011 is adequate to fulfill all of our commitments for this fiscal year. As you know, FY2012 budget is still being discussed in Congress. We will not know final figures until the Budget is approved and signed by the President. However, we expect our funding to remain about the same as in FY2011 with only a slight increase, perhaps less than one percent. We are committed to maintaining services and meeting Veterans needs and continue to plan with facility leadership using current funding levels.



The PTSD Coach smartphone application (app), launched in April by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Defense (DoD), has helped more than 5,000 users connect. While 96 percent of the users so far are located in the United States, the app has also been downloaded in 25 other countries. The app

lets users track their PTSD symptoms, links them with public and personalized sources of support, provides accurate information about PTSD, and teaches helpful strategies for managing PTSD symptoms on the go. Currently, the PTSD Coach app has received perfect customer review scores on

iTunes App Store. One user described the app as “a must for every spouse who has a family member with PTSD.”

The app has also proven to be a useful tool for the staff at the Veterans Crisis Line. Within the first two hours of the app’s official launch, the Crisis Line staff were contacted by a distressed Veteran who reported being instructed by the app to call the crisis line and was subsequently given an appointment at the local VA medical center.

The app is one of the first in a series of jointly-designed resources by the VA National Center for PTSD and DoD's National Center for Telehealth and Technology.

Information on the PTSD Coach app is on the VA’s National Center for PTSD Website:

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/PTSDCoach.asp>. More apps from [DoD's National Center for Telehealth and Technology](http://www.t2health.org/apps) can be found at: <http://www.t2health.org/apps>



In April, VA launched a suicide prevention outreach campaign focused on increasing awareness and use of the Veterans Suicide Hotline. The renaming of the Veterans Suicide Prevention Line to the **Veterans Crisis Line** is intended to reach Veterans early so they can get help during a crisis

before they reach a suicidal state. This confidential 24/7 Veterans Crisis Line is for Veterans and their families in crisis. Trained VA professionals are available at all times. Veterans and their families **do not** have to be enrolled in VA to use the free, confidential Veterans Crisis Line. Also available is a Veterans Chat line. The Veterans Chat enables Veterans, their families and friends to go online where they can anonymously chat with a trained VA counselor. If the chats are determined to be a crisis, the counselor can take immediate steps to transfer the chatter to the Veterans Crisis Line, where further counseling and referral services are provided and crisis intervention steps can be taken.

<http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/Default.aspx>

For more information contact: Sharyl Schaepe, Public Affairs Officer, VA Midwest Health Care Network at 402-613-0834 or via email at sharyl.schaepe@va.gov.