



Patient Handbook

Welcome to VA Northern California Health Care System (VANCHCS)!



David Stockwell, Director,
VA Northern California Health Care System

First of all, and most importantly, thank you for your service to our country and trusting us with your health care. With more than 4,000 employees, of whom approximately forty percent are Veterans themselves, we are committed to serving you with high-quality, compassionate care in a way that honors you as a Veteran and a person.

The one theme that our Veterans repeat and which crosses all age groups and branches of service is “Can you please make the system easier to access and navigate?”, and we at VA Northern California are dedicated to doing just that.

This handbook is one of our tools to help you and your loved ones navigate our health care system and to serve as a reference guide for questions that you may have. We also encourage you to attend our Patient Orientations, or browse our website at www.northerncalifornia.va.gov.

I hope this guide will assist you throughout your journey here at VA Northern California Health Care System. You have earned excellent customer service and responsive health care. You served us; it is our honor to now serve you.

David Stockwell
Director, VA Northern California Health Care System

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Three Administrations of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)



1. Veterans Health Administration

VA operates the nation's largest integrated health care system with more than 1,700 hospitals, clinics, community living centers, domiciliaries, readjustment counseling centers, and other facilities.

Contact Information

www.va.gov/health/

Call Center: 1-800-382-8387



2. Veterans Benefits Administration

VA administers a variety of benefits and services that provide financial and other forms of assistance to service members, Veterans, their dependents, and survivors.

Contact Information

benefits.va.gov/benefits Phone:

1-800-827-1000

VA Regional Office

1301 Clay St, North Tower
Oakland, CA 94612

Rancho Cordova Satellite Office

3046 Prospect Park
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670



3. National Cemetery Administration

VA operates national cemeteries in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Burial and memorial benefits are available for eligible service members, Veterans, and family members.

Contact Information

www.cem.va.gov/

Burial Arrangements: (Phone) 800-535-1117, (Fax) 866-900-6417

Office Hours

Monday—Friday: 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Closed Federal holidays, except Memorial Day

Veterans Health Administration

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission Statement

Honor America's Veterans by providing the best health care to improve their health and well-being.

Vision Statement

The VHA is committed to providing the best health care and benefits to our Veterans. The VHA achieves this goal by providing exceptional services that are research-proven and patient-centered.

Care and services will be provided by interdisciplinary teams. The setting will be unified to support learning, discovery, and continuous improvement.

Care and services will focus on preventive health for all Veterans. The VHA will strive to improve the nation's well-being through education, research, and service in national emergencies.

I CARE Core Values

Integrity:

I will follow a high moral and professional code. I will do my best to keep the trust of everyone.

Commitment:

I will work hard and do my best to serve Veterans, their families, and the VHA. I will follow and believe in the VA's mission.

Advocacy:

I will focus on Veterans and their needs. I will provide information and services that promote the interests of Veterans.

Respect:

I will treat everyone with respect. I will show respect in order to earn it.

Excellence:

I will do my best to provide the highest quality service and seek ways to make improvements. My decisions will be thoughtful and fair. I will take ownership for my actions. When I make a mistake, I will admit it and be quick to correct it.

About VA Northern California Health Care System



VA Northern California Health Care System (VANCHCS) offers a full range of health care services across Northern California. VANCHCS is staffed with highly trained medical and nonmedical personnel, offering a full range of patient care services based on the latest research and best technology.

Emergency room services are available at the Sacramento VA Medical Center.

Veteran Centered Care

VA Medical Centers deliver health care using a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) model that is focused on the Veteran.

My VA Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT)

Call Center: 1-800-382-8387

Team Member	Name	Phone Number
Primary Care Provider		
Registered Nurse Care Manager (RNCM)		
Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN)		
Social Worker		
Medical Support Assistant		

Non-VA Emergency Care (call within 72 hours): 1-844-724-7842 or 707-562-8430, option 4

Important Phone Numbers and Websites



VANCHCS Call Center

1-800-382-8387*

Open 24/7

Follow the instructions and prompts

- Press '1' to check the **status of an Appointment**
- Press '2' for **Pharmacy**
- Press '3' to **cancel an appointment**
- Press '4' for **Primary Care**
- Press '5' for **Specialty Care**
- Press 6 for **Telephone Advice Nurse** (available 24/7 including holidays)
- Press '7' for **Flu Information**

*If you are having an emergency, please call **911**

*If you are in a crisis, call the **Crisis Hotline** at 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) then press 1.

Billing Questions for Non-VA Care

1-877-881-7618

Monday - Friday: 6:00 AM – 2:00 PM
Pacific Time

General Billing Questions (VA Co-pay)

1-866-347-2353

Make a Payment

www.pay.gov

1-888-827-4817

Monday—Friday: 9:00 AM—9:00 PM
Pacific Time

California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet)

www.calvet.ca.gov

1-800-952-5626



Facebook

www.facebook.com/VANCHCS

VA NorCal

www.northerncalifornia.va.gov

My HealtheVet

www.myhealth.va.gov

Veterans Health Library

www.veteranshealthlibrary.org

Explore Benefits for Veterans and their families: www.explore.va.gov

**VA Northern California Health Care System
Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)
CBOC Hours of Operation:
Monday—Friday 7:30 AM to 4:30 PM
Closed weekends and federal holidays**

Sacramento Valley Division		
<p>Sacramento VA Medical Center 10535 Hospital Way Mather, CA 95655 916-843-7000 Or toll-free 855-771-9321</p>		
<p>Chico 1601 Concord Ave Chico, CA 95928 530-879-5000</p>		
<p>McClellan 5342 Dudley Blvd McClellan, CA 95652 916-561-7400</p>		
<p>Redding 351 Hartnell Ave. Redding, CA 96002 530-226-7555</p>		
<p>Sierra Foothills 11985 Heritage Oak Place, Suite 100 Auburn, CA 95603 530-889-0872</p>		

<p>Yuba City 425 Plumas Street Yuba City, CA 95991 530-751-4500</p>			
<p>Yreka Rural Health Clinic 101 E. Oberlin Road Yreka, CA 96097 530-841-8500</p>			

East Bay Division

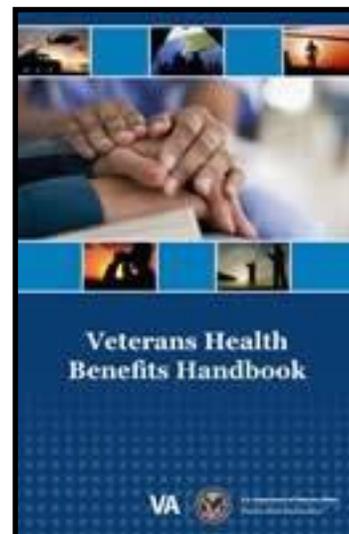
<p>Martinez Outpatient Clinic / Community Living Center / Center for Rehabilitation and Extended Care 150 Muir Road Martinez, CA 94553 925-372-2000</p>			
<p>Fairfield VA Outpatient Clinic 103 Bodin Circle, Travis AFB Fairfield, CA 94535 707-437-1800 or 707-437-1800</p>			
<p>Mare Island VA Outpatient Clinic 201 Walnut Ave Vallejo, CA 94592 707-562-8200 or 707-562-8200</p>			
<p>Oakland 2221 Martin Luther King Jr. Way Oakland, CA 94612 510-267-7800</p>			

VHA Eligibility and Benefits

Each Veteran that enrolls with the VA Health Care System receives a personalized Veterans Health Benefits Handbook in the mail, after enrollment is confirmed. The handbook is tailored for each Veteran and contains information on VA health care benefits that are available.

The handbook contains personal identifying information and should be kept in a safe place. To request a replacement handbook, call 1-877-222-8387 Monday - Friday between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. ET.

For more information, visit www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhbh/ Health Benefits Overview digital download:
www.va.gov/healthbenefits/resources/epublications.asp



Service Connected Claims

A service connected rating is an official ruling by the VA that your illness or condition is directly related to your active military service. Veterans with a VA-rated service connected condition may receive treatment for that condition. To obtain more information or to apply for any of these benefits:

- Call VA Regional Office at 1-800-827-1000
- Visit www.ebenefits.va.gov
- Go to the **VA Regional Office**
1301 Clay St, North Tower
Oakland, CA 94612
- Go to the **Rancho Cordova Satellite Office**
3046 Prospect Park
Rancho Cordova, CA 95670

Disability and Compensation

Service-connected disability compensation is a monthly tax-free benefit paid to Veterans for a disability (or disabilities). A Veteran needs to be rated at least 10% disabled due to a condition that either:

- Arose during service
- Was worsened or aggravated by service
- Is presumed by the VA to be related to military service

To obtain more information or to apply for any of these benefits, contact your nearest VA Regional Office at 1-800-827-1000 or visit www.ebenefits.va.gov to apply online. You will need the following documents to help with the claims process:

- Discharge or separation papers (DD214)
- Medical evidence (doctor and hospital reports)



PACT stands for Patient Aligned Care Team. A PACT is a partnership between you and your health care team to make sure you receive whole-person care. This is personalized care to meet your individual health care goals. Your care team looks at all aspects of your health. The emphasis is on prevention and health promotion.



A PACT uses a team-based approach. You are the center of the care team that also includes your family members, caregivers, and your health care professionals (primary care provider, nurse care manager, clinical associate, and administrative clerk). When other services are needed to meet your goals and needs, another care team may be consulted.

For more information, visit:

- www.va.gov/health/services/primarycare/pact/index.asp

What You Need to Know Before Visiting a VANCHCS Provider

Plan to arrive at your VA facility early, to allow time for parking and getting to your appointment. Feel free to use the shuttle to help transport you around our larger campuses. At the Sacramento VA Medical Center, the parking lot shuttle numbers are 916-869-1390 and 916-869-1664. At Martinez, the number is 925-250-5146.

For a speedy check in, please check in at the kiosks located in each clinic.



What you need to bring to your first appointment:

1. Bottle and/or a list of all VA and non-VA medications (including names, dosage, and instruction on when and how to take them)
2. Non-prescription medications such as over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and herbals
3. Latest lab results
4. Any notes from non-VA doctors explaining why you are taking a medication
5. Information on changes in your health (such as recent illness or new health problems)
6. Copies of medical records from any non-VA facility you have visited
7. Diabetic glucose testing meter (for patients with diabetes)
8. Feel free to bring a family member with you

Making Appointments

Contact the Call Center at 1-800-382-8387 to make an appointment or to cancel or reschedule an appointment. If you need specialized care, your provider will send a referral to the specialist and you will be notified of your specialty appointment by letter or phone call.

How can I verify my enrollment?

Once your enrollment is confirmed, you will receive a Veterans Health Benefits Handbook notifying you of your enrollment status. You may also call to verify your enrollment: 1-877-222-VETS (8387), Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM Eastern Time.

Services Offered at VANCHCS

The VHA's number one goal is to give Veterans the best health care anywhere. The VA tries to make sure that Veterans have access to all needed services, wherever they get care.

All services are not offered at every VA site. Sometimes Veterans may need to travel to other VA sites or non-VA facilities to receive specialized care. If that is the case, your VA PACT team will work with you to obtain these services.

Long-Term Care/Geriatrics

VA Community Living Center (CLC) / Center for Rehabilitation and Extended Care (CREC) serves Veterans who:

- Have long-term stable conditions requiring nursing home care, including dementia
- Need rehabilitation or short-term skilled nursing services
- Need end of life/hospice care

www.va.gov/health-care/about-va-health-benefits/long-term-care/

Women's Health

Women are the fastest growing group within the Veteran population. The VA wants to meet the needs of women by providing them with the best care in a safe and healing environment. In addition to general health care, women Veterans also have access to reproductive health care from their health care team. Maternity care and newborn care may also be provided to eligible women Veterans (organized by VA, but usually given off site).

www.womenshealth.va.gov/

Prosthetics and Sensory Aids

The mission of the Prosthetic & Sensory Aids Service is to provide comprehensive support to optimize health and independence. The vision is to be the premier source of prosthetic and orthotic services, sensory aids, medical equipment, and support services for Veterans. All prosthetic items are requested through your provider.

www.prosthetics.va.gov

Mental Health Services

The health and well-being of the Nation's men and women who have served in uniform is the highest priority for the VA. VA is committed to providing timely access to high-quality, recovery-oriented, evidence-based mental health care that anticipates and responds to Veterans' needs and supports the reintegration of returning Service members into their communities. The VA provides specialty outpatient, residential, and inpatient mental health services.

www.mentalhealth.va.gov/

Vet Centers

In addition to mental health services at VA Medical Centers, readjustment counseling services are available for Veterans and their families at Vet Centers across the nation.

www.vetcenter.va.gov/

Caregiver Support Program

The VA has two programs for caregivers: The Program of General Caregiver Support Services and the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. The Program of General Caregiver Support Services provides resources, education and support to caregivers of Veterans. The Veteran does not need to have a service-connected condition, for which the caregiver is needed, and may have served during any era. The Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers is for eligible Veterans who have incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty on or after September 11, 2001. This program provides resources, education, support, a financial stipend, and health insurance (if eligible), beneficiary travel (if eligible), to caregivers of eligible Veterans.

www.caregiver.va.gov or call 1-855-260-3274

TeleHealth

VA Telehealth Services aims to provide the right care in the right place at the right time by using technology to improve access to health care for Veterans.

www.telehealth.va.gov

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

Veterans may receive clinical preventive services from their VA health care team. These services include vaccines to prevent diseases, screening test to find illness at an early stage, and counseling to avoid or reduce risk factors for disease. Veterans may take part in health education programs to learn self-management skills.

www.prevention.va.gov/

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans

The VA is committed to ending homelessness among Veterans. Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness can call or chat online with the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans, where trained counselors are ready to talk confidentially 24/7. You'll get information about VA homeless programs, health care and other services in your area.

www.va.gov/HOMELESS

or call **1-8774AID-VET (1-877-424-3838)**

Dental

VA offers comprehensive dental care benefits to certain qualifying Veterans. Veterans' eligibility and benefits for dental care are limited by law.

www.va.gov/dental

If not eligible for VA dental care, you can enroll in the VA Dental Insurance Program to purchase dental insurance at a reduced cost.

www.va.gov/healthbenefits/VADIP/

Laboratory

All VANCHCS sites offer laboratory services. most lab tests and services.

Crisis Prevention

Factors related to military service may worsen the emotional and mental health of Veterans. When emotional or mental health issues reach a crisis point, it is time to call the Veterans Crisis Line.

Sometimes life is overwhelming, and you may think about suicide.

Look out for these warning signs:

- Feeling helpless, hopeless, or like there is no way out
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Taking part in risky activities without thinking
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Pulling away from family and friends

**Veterans
Crisis Line**



**1-800-273-8255
PRESS 1**

If you are a Veteran or know a Veteran showing any of these signs, contact the **Veteran Crisis Line** using one of these methods:

1. Call **1-800-273-8255** and press 1
 2. Text message **838255**
 3. Chat online at **www.veteranscrisisline.net/**
- *These services are free, confidential, and available 24/7*

**MAKE THE
CONNECTION**
www.MakeTheConnection.net

Other Information

- Each VA medical site has a suicide prevention coordinator to make sure Veterans have access to counseling and services.
- **Maketheconnection.net** is an online resource designed to connect Veterans, their family members and friends, and other supporters with information, resources, and solutions.

**Veterans
Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

STAND BY THEM

Confidential help for
Veterans and their families

• • • • Confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net or text to **838255** • • • •

Pharmacy and Medications

VA Northern California Health Care System has excellent pharmacy benefits which follow a national formulary for medications. VA doctors, pharmacists and nurses have developed this list of medications that are safe and cost effective. If you are transferring your pharmacy needs to VA, your new providers may need to replace some of your medications with similar medications carried by the VA pharmacy. Therefore, it is very important to bring a list of your current medications to your first visit. Medications for psychiatric conditions may need to be evaluated by a VA psychiatrist.

Paying for Medications

VA charges a copayment for each 30 day or less supply of medication provided on an outpatient basis for the treatment of a non-service connected condition. Copayment ranges from \$5.00 to \$11.00 per 30-day supply, per medication, with a cap of \$700.00 per year. The copay may be waived for some low income Veterans who meet specific financial conditions. The VA will perform a “means test” based on income and expense information provided by you. Your ability to participate in this program is reviewed annually.

Ways to Refill Medication

1. Automated refill request line: 1-866-600-VARX (1-866-600-8279) Toll-Free 7:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding federal holidays.
2. Request via My HealtheVet
3. The Call Center: 1-800-382-8387 and follow the prompts.
4. Mail-in refill slips with provided address label (at least 14 days before you run out). Mailed medications may take up to 14 days to receive.

Need information about your medication?

- Talk to a VA pharmacist
- Talk to your VA doctor
- Log onto My HealtheVet at www.myhealth.va.gov
- Log onto the National Library of Medicine at www.medicinesplus.gov

Pharmacy Hours

Pharmacy services are available at each of our Northern California sites. The hours of operation may vary at each location; however, you can reach a pharmacy specialist by calling (800) 382-8387 and follow the prompts or by calling the automated refill system at (866) 600-8279.



Instructions for Prescriptions from VA Contracted Community Providers



For all controlled substance (example: narcotics) prescriptions from authorized VA contracted community care providers:

The patient **must** bring the prescription into their local VA pharmacy to fill.

For non-controlled substance (example: non-narcotics) prescriptions from authorized VA contracted community care providers:

The patient may bring in the prescription to the local VA pharmacy to fill.

Or

The provider can fax the prescription to the Martinez pharmacy at 925-372-2169. VANCHCS will implement eRx; once implemented, prescriptions will only be accepted electronically directly from providers, and we will no longer accept faxes. Please contact your local pharmacy for information on the current process.

Site	Hours of Operation (Mon – Fri, excluding federal holidays)
Sacramento VA Medical Center (Mather)	8:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
Martinez	8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Fairfield	8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Mare Island	8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
McClellan	8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Chico	8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Redding	7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Oakland	8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Accessing VA Health Care After Hours



1. Call the Call Center at 1-800-382-8387

The Call Center is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and is open on federal holidays. Use the Call Center to get help with your health concerns. The Call Center has Advice Nurses who are able to talk with you about your medical concerns.



2. Write a secure message through My HealtheVet

Use the online secure messaging function in My HealtheVet to ask questions that are not an emergency. With secure messaging you can send questions about your medications, future visits, day-to-day health plan and more. Message your clinic any time of the day. They will reply to you as soon as possible. They will reply using the online response or phone to provide you with answers to your health care concerns.



Emergency Care

What is an emergency?

A medical emergency is an injury or illness so severe that without immediate treatment, it threatens your life or health. Your situation is an emergency if you believe your life or health is in danger. Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room if you believe your life or health is in danger. You do not need to call the VA before calling for an ambulance or going to the emergency room.

When should I contact the VA regarding an emergency room visit?

You, your family, friends, or hospital staff should contact your local VA medical center within 72 hours (3 days) of your emergency room visit. This allows the VA to assist you in coordinating necessary care. Calling will make you aware of what services the VA may or may not cover. Provide the VA with information about your emergency. Also, let the VA know what services are being provided to you. Ask the VA for guidance on what emergency charges are covered, so you can plan accordingly. By law, VA is not authorized to pay for all emergency care for Veterans. Your individual eligibility will determine if VA is able to pay.

Call 1-844-724-7842 or the Community Care Office: 707-562-8430; Option 4

If the doctor wants to admit me to the hospital, must I obtain advanced approval from the VA?

If the admission is an emergency, advanced approval is not required. Prompt notification to the VA is necessary (within 72 hours). If the admission is not an emergency, then you must obtain advanced approval from the VA.

Will the VA pay for emergency care received outside the United States?

VA may pay if your emergency is related to a service-connected condition. You are required to call the Foreign Medical Program at 303-331-7590 or toll-free at 1-877-345-8179 or visit www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/fmp/index.asp.

For more information, visit:

www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/Emergency_Care.asp



Beneficiary Travel (BT) Program

The Beneficiary Travel (BT) Program reimburses eligible Veterans for costs incurred while travelling to and from VA health care facilities. The BT Program may also provide pre-approved transportation solutions and arrange special mode transportation (SMT) at the request of the VA. Veterans may be eligible for common carrier transportation (bus, taxi, airline, and train) under certain conditions.

A Veteran may be eligible for Beneficiary Travel services if the following criteria are met:

You qualify if:	You qualify for special mode transportation (Ambulance, Wheelchair Van, etc.) if:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you have a service-connected (SC) rating of 30 percent or more, or • you are SC below 30% and are traveling for treatment related to a SC condition, or • you receive a VA pension or your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, or • you are traveling for a scheduled Compensation and Pension (C&P) exam • you are a VA transplant care donor or support person • you have vision impairment and receive care at an inpatient blind rehab center or other program for which VA provides temporary lodging for outpatient rehab; intermediate and advanced low vision clinics and vision impairment centers • you are a double or multiple amputee • you have a Spinal Cord Injury or disorder 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you meet one of the eligibility criteria in the left column, and • your medical condition requires an ambulance or a specially equipped van as determined by a VA clinician, and • the travel is pre-authorized (authorization is not required for emergencies, if a delay would be hazardous to life or health)

Travel benefits may be subject to a deductible.

Fill out VA Form 10-3542 (Veteran/Beneficiary Claim for Reimbursement of Travel Expenses) at your local VA Beneficiary Travel Office or online to receive mileage reimbursement.

For more information, visit:

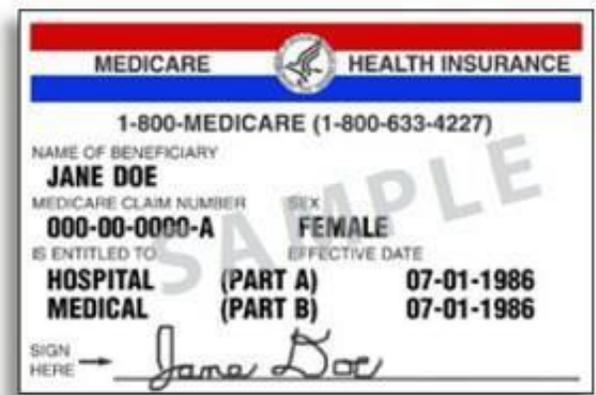
va.gov/health-care/get-reimbursed-for-travel-pay/

VA And Other Health Insurance

If you have other forms of health care coverage, you can continue to use the VA alongside other health insurance plans. By law, the VA is obligated to bill health insurance carriers for services provided to treat a Veteran's nonservice-connected conditions. Veterans are asked to disclose all relevant health insurance information to ensure current insurance information is on file, including coverage through a spouse.

Medicare Coverage

If you are eligible for Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage, enrollment in the VA health care system is considered creditable coverage for Medicare Part D purposes. This means the VA prescription drug coverage is at least as good as the Medicare Part D coverage.



Medicare Part B is **not** creditable coverage.

Creditable coverage under Medicare Part B can only be provided through an employer. Although a Veteran can avoid the late enrollment penalty for Medicare Part D by citing VA health care enrollment, that enrollment would not help the Veteran avoid the late enrollment penalty for Part B.

The VA does not recommend Veterans to cancel or decline coverage with other health insurance providers. Some things to consider before canceling a health insurance coverage are the following:

- There is no guarantee that, in the future, Congress will appropriate sufficient funds for the VA to provide care for all enrollment priority groups
- Non-Veteran spouses and other family members generally do not qualify for VA health care
- If participation in Medicare Part B is cancelled, it cannot be reinstated until January of the following year, and there may be a penalty for reinstatement
- Private insurance provides additional coverage for Veterans who receive care from VA and non-VA providers, allowing more flexibility in where you want to receive your care



My Health, My Care: 24/7 ^{Online} Access to VA

My HealthVet is an online resource for Veterans and caregivers that provides:

- A secure web-based Personal Health Record to access personal health information from the VA Electronic Health Record
- The ability to download and share personal health information using the VABlue Button
- Online services, such as online medication refill requests
- Trusted health education resources
- Secure messaging between patients and their VA health care team

If you are a VA patient and have an upgraded account (obtained by completing the one-time authentication process), you can:

- Participate in secure messaging with your VA health care team members
- Request prescription refills
- View key portions of your DoD military service information
- Get or view your VA
 - ◇ Wellness reminders
 - ◇ Appointments and lab results
 - ◇ Allergies and adverse reactions
 - ◇ Key portions of your electronic record
 - ◇ Continuity of Care Documents
- Participate in future features as they become available



Visit My HealthVet at www.myhealth.va.gov to register and learn more about authentication as well as the many features and tools available to you 24/7, anywhere you have internet access.

Veterans Health Information Exchange (VHIE)

Do you see a non-VA health care provider?

VHIE is a program that allows doctors and health care staff to share and exchange certain parts of your health information with participating private health care providers both locally and nationally.

What type of information is shared?

- Allergies
- Medications
- Immunizations
- List of health problems
- Chemistry and hematology reports
- Lab results
- Physicals and diagnoses
- Vital signs
- Discharge summaries



How does this benefit me?

- Improves coordination and continuity of care
- Reduces likelihood of repeated tests
- Saves time
- Reduces costs
- Provides a more complete understanding of your health
- Reduces need to carry documents with you between appointments

For more information, visit:

www.va.gov/VLER



Dual Care

Each Veteran should have a single assigned Primary Care Provider (PCP) who oversees all aspects of care. However, some patients choose to see non-VA health care providers as well as VA providers. The VA will assign you to a PACT that will manage all areas of your VA medical care. In addition, VA doctors are willing to work with non-VA doctors to provide you with medical care that is safe and ethical. This is called dual care or comanaged care.

VA Doctors' Duties With Dual Care

- Your VA doctor will work with your non-VA doctors. Your VA doctor is not required to write medication orders or order tests for any health problem the VA doctor does not treat you for.
- If your non-VA doctor writes a medication order for a medication not offered at the VA, your VA doctor may offer you another medication. The medication will be very similar, safe, and work well for your condition. If you choose, you may want to talk to your non-VA doctor before changing to the VA medication.
- To receive specialty medication, you must be seen by a VA doctor skilled in that specialty or the ordering doctor must communicate with a VA doctor by phone, e-mail, or letter.
- Your VA doctors do not have to follow a treatment or medication plan suggested by non-VA doctors. If your VA doctor disagrees with that plan or if that plan conflicts with national or local policies related to medications, the VA doctor can refuse to follow it. VA doctors will explain to you why they change or refuse a treatment or medication plan.
- If you receive controlled substances on an ongoing basis, close monitoring is required by one designated doctor.
- You must pay any required VA copayments for medications provided by VA.

Dual care is not used unless your non-VA doctor and VA doctor both agree that this is the best plan of care for you. Talk to your VA PCP about dual care benefits.



Veteran Community Care: VA MISSION Act of 2018

Under the VA MISSION Act, eligible Veterans can receive health care in their local community. Meeting any one of these criteria means you are eligible to elect to receive care from a community provider:

- The specific care you need is not available at the VA
- You live in a U.S. state (AK, HI, or NH) or a territory (Guam, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, or U.S. Virgin Islands) that does not have a full-service VA medical facility
- The specific care you need is not available within designated access standards
- You and your referring clinician decide it is in your best medical interest to receive the specific care you need in the community
- VA has designated the VA medical service line delivering the specific care you need as not providing care that complies with VA's standards for quality

You need a preauthorization from the VA to receive care from a community care provider. Seeing a VA authorized community health care provider does not impact your VA health care or your VA benefits.

How do I get my prescription filled if prescribed by an authorized VA community care provider?

- Have the community care provider fax the prescription to the Martinez pharmacy at 925-372-2169. VANCHCS will implement eRx; once implemented, prescriptions will only be accepted electronically directly from providers, and we will no longer accept faxes. Please contact your local pharmacy for information on the current process.
- Take the prescription to a VA pharmacy.

Can I receive urgent care services?

Eligible Veterans can receive urgent care from an urgent care provider within the VA's contracted network of community providers without prior authorization from the VA. The urgent care benefit covers treatment for minor illness or non-life-threatening symptoms, such as flu-like symptoms, wheezing, sprains, sore throats, painful urination, bumps, bruises, ear pain, and mild skin irritations. Copayment charges may apply.

How can I find a VA contracted network of urgent providers near me?

- Go to www.va.gov/find-locations/

How do I fill my medication prescription from a VA contracted urgent care provider?

- Go to vaurgentcarelocator.triwest.com/Locator/Rx

For issues with payment to non-VA providers:

- call the Claims line at 1-866-651-4977 or 1-855-722-2838

To learn more about the VA MISSION Act, visit: missionact.va.gov/

Advance Directives

What is an advance directive?

An advance directive is a legal form that specifies your preferences about your future medical and mental health care. If you become too ill to make decisions about your care, an advance directive helps your doctors and family members understand what you want.

Types of advance directives:

1. Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare

In this type of advance directive, you name a person as your health care agent who is to make health care decisions for you if you are not able to do so. Your health care agent is the first person your health care team contacts for decisions about your care, if you are unable to make these decisions for yourself.

2. Living Will

In this type of advance directive, you state your preferences about treatments you want, or don't want, in different situations when you cannot make treatment decisions yourself. A living will helps your health care agent or others know what treatments you would choose.

Should I have an advance directive?

Yes, an advance directive helps protect your right to make your own choices. It helps to ensure that people respect your values and wishes if you are unable to speak for yourself. Your advance directive is used only when you can't make decisions yourself.

How do I complete an advance directive?

Fill out VA Form 10-0137, VA Advance Directive: Durable Power of Attorney and Living Will. You may also use any valid state advance directive form. Your primary care doctor, social worker, spiritual advisor, or attorney can help you create an advance directive. Please provide a copy to your local PACT social worker to file the advance directive in your medical record. You can also contact your local PACT social worker for assistance.

Do I need to fill out a durable power of attorney and a living will?

No, even though the VA form contains both, it's up to you whether you complete the durable power of attorney for healthcare, the living will, or both.

Can I change my advance directive?

Yes, you may change or cancel your advance directive at any time. In fact, you should look over your advance directive from time to time, especially if there is a change in your health. If you make a change, be sure to tell your health care team and provide a copy for placement in your health record. Be sure to share your changes with your family and other loved ones. **For more information, visit:**

www.va.gov/geriatrics/guide/longtermcare/advance_Care_Planning.asp

Ethics Consults

When faced with difficult decisions about health care, Veterans and families often face the difficult question of “What should be done?” The best choice for one patient may be the wrong choice for another. If you are unsure, or if you can’t agree with your health care team or your loved ones about what’s best for you, you can ask for an ethics consult.

What is an ethics consult?

When you are unsure or there is conflict about the right thing to do, ethics consultants, who are specially trained VA staff, may be able to help. They help patients, families, and staff make choices about health care issues. Ethics consultants will not investigate complaints or claims of misconduct; these problems are handled by a patient advocate.

When should I think about asking for an ethics consult?

Here are some examples of why Veterans and families ask for an ethics consult:

- “I have to make a serious decision about a treatment that could affect how long I may live. After talking it over with my health care team, I am still not sure I agree with the doctor’s recommendation.”
- “My mother is too sick to make her own decisions. How do I know what is best for her now?”
- “Our family is unsure and upset. We don’t agree about the right thing to do for our brother’s care.”

What happens in an ethics consult?

The ethics consult team will not decide for you, but they can help you determine what is best for your situation. They will also:

- Ask about your concerns.
- Gather information from all the people involved.
- Determine if other experts are needed. For example, lawyers will be asked for legal opinions and medical specialists will be asked for medical opinions.
- Identify possible options.
- Make recommendations to you and the other people involved.
- Write a note in your health record if the ethics consult relates to your medical care.
- Ask you to fill out a feedback form that lets the ethics consult team know about your overall experience. This form is voluntary and your health care will not be affected by whether you fill out this form.

For more information, visit:

www.ethics.va.gov/index.asp

Patient Advocate

The Patient Advocate Program ensures that Veterans can communicate their concerns and compliments about the care they receive in a timely manner. If you need help to get care or to get your problems resolved, first speak with the service level advocate (SLA) in the clinic where you need assistance. If the SLA or your healthcare team are unable to resolve your concern, please contact a patient advocate for assistance.

- Send a secure message through My HealthVet (www.myhealth.va.gov)
- Call the patient advocate at your site of care:

Chico: 530-879-5009	Oakland: 510-267-7810
Fairfield: 707-437-1803	Redding/Yreka: 530-226-7508
Mare Island: 707-562-8391	Sacramento VA Medical Center: 916-843-7034
Martinez: 925-372-2883	Sierra Foothills (Auburn): 530-889-4946
McClellan: 916-561-7540	Yuba City: 530-751-4560

For more information, visit: www.va.gov/health/patientadvocate/

We want to hear from you!

If you are interested in joining VA Northern California’s journey of providing the best care possible, contact your local Patient Advocate to learn more about the following opportunities:

Voice of the Veteran:

Site-specific monthly meeting to hear from Veterans/family members that drives local change and process improvement.

Veteran and Family Advisory Committee:

Health Care System Level Committee that is project-based. Comprised of Veterans and their family members. Drives system-wide process improvement and grows patient centered care throughout VANCHCS.



Transition and Care Management Program

The Transition and Care Management Program offers transition assistance, case management, and outreach services to Veterans who have served in combat since November 11, 1998, in their transition to civilian life.

The Transition and Care Management Program will help you receive the health care you may want or need. This program also provides you and your family the following service options:

- Support for you and your family as you readjust to life after military services
- Individualized care, specific to your unique post-combat readjustment needs
- Assistance scheduling and accessing VA Medical Center services
- Contact assistance for VA services near your home
- Information on VA and community services for which you may be eligible
- Personal assistance finding your way through the VA system
- Information and assistance regarding health care benefits and eligibility

Combat Veterans who served post 9/11 are eligible for five years of cost-free health care for any condition related to their service in the Iraq/Afghanistan theater and 180 days of dental benefits.

*Note: The 5-year enrollment period applicable to Veterans begins on the discharge or separation date of the service member from active duty military services or, in the case of multiple call-ups, the most recent discharge date.

For more information, visit

www.oefoif.va.gov/



Vet Centers

Vet Centers welcome war Veterans, with honor, by providing quality readjustment counseling in a caring manner. Vet Center personnel understand and appreciate Veterans' war experiences, while assisting them and their family members toward a successful post-war adjustment in or near their community.

Vet Centers offer a wide range of services to Veterans and their families at community-based locations. Some services the Vet Centers provide includes:

- Readjustment counseling
- Individual and group counseling for Veterans, service members, and their families
- Family counseling for military related issues
- Bereavement counseling for families who experience an active duty death
- Military sexual trauma counseling and referral
- Outreach and education including post-deployment health reassessments, community events, etc.
- Substance abuse assessment and referral
- Employment assessment and referral
- Veterans Benefits Administration benefits explanation and referral
- Screening and referral for medical issues including traumatic brain injury (TBI), depression, etc.

For more information, visit:

www.vetcenter.va.gov/

1-877-WAR-VETS is an around the clock confidential call center where combat Veterans and their families can talk about their military experience or any other issue they are facing in their readjustment to civilian life. The staff is comprised of combat Veterans from several eras as well as family members of combat Veterans. This benefit is prepaid through the Veteran's military service.

For assistance after hours, weekends, and holidays call: 1-877-WAR-VETS (1-877-927-8387)



Vet Center Locations

For assistance after hours, weekends, and holidays call: 1-877-WAR-VETS
(1-877-927-8387)

Sacramento Vet Center

1111 Howe Avenue
Suite 390
Sacramento, CA 95825-8541
Main Number: 916-566-7430

Citrus Heights Vet Center

5650 Sunrise Boulevard
Suite 150
Citrus Heights, CA 95610
Main Number: 916-535-0420

Chico Vet Center

250 Cohasset Road
Suite 40
Chico, CA 95926
Main Number: 530-899-6300

Eureka Vet Center

2830 G Street
Suite A and B
Eureka, CA 95501
Main Number: 707-444-8271

Grants Pass Mobile Vet Center

135 N.E. Steiger Street
Grants Pass, OR 97526-3214
Main Number: 541-479-6912

Concord Vet Center

1333 Willow Pass Road
Suite 106
Concord, CA 94520-7931
Main Number: 925-680-4526

Oakland Vet Center

7700 Edgewater Drive
Suite 125
Oakland, CA 94621
Main Number: 510-763-3904

San Francisco Vet Center

505 Polk Street
San Francisco, CA 94102
Main Number: 415-441-5051

You can play an active role when you have a visit with your health care team. To get the most out of your visit, plan the questions you want to ask and the things you want to discuss. Be sure to leave the visit with information about your care.

How do I become involved in my health care?

- To help your health care team provide you with the best care, make sure you give them complete information about your current health status.
- Be sure to tell your team about all medications you take. Remember to include over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbals.
- Before your visit, write down questions and concerns you want to ask your PACT.
- Share your ideas and beliefs about your health problems and treatments with your team.
- Work with your health care team to create your treatment plan and share in making decisions about your care.
- Talk with your provider about the treatment options you prefer.
- Ask questions if you need clarification about anything that is unclear.
- Ask your PACT about the different educational health classes your local VA facility offers.

The VA wants to give you the best health care possible and help keep you healthy. You are the most important person on your health care team. Most of your time is spent away from healthcare providers and what you do in your time away has the biggest impact on your health.

VA created nine Healthy Living Messages to guide you on your path toward whole health. Veterans who embrace these healthy behaviors are more likely to improve their quality of life.

For more information, visit:
www.prevention.va.gov

Nine Healthy Living Messages

-  **Get Recommended Screening Tests and Immunizations**
-  **Be Involved In Your Health Care**
-  **Manage Stress**
-  **Be Tobacco Free**
-  **Limit Alcohol**
-  **Be Safe**
-  **Strive for a Healthy Weight**
-  **Be Physically Active**
-  **Eat Wisely**

Veterans Health Education and Information

Veterans and their families ask, “Where can I get information about my medicines, diagnosis, chronic condition, recommended treatments and tests including laboratory work? What can I do for these issues now?”

From your home computer, in the privacy of your own home, go to the Veterans Health Library at <https://www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov/>.

Here you will find information related to diagnostic tests and procedures, diagnoses, conditions, and treatments.

Veterans Health Education Calendars

Pick up your free Veteran calendar, available in September, from your Voluntary Services desk/entrance. The QR code on every month, if scanned, provides you with a 340 page book with self-care information and self-help for small emergencies, bites, poison ivy, skin issues, indigestion, coughs, colds, strains and sprains. A scanned QR code on the bottom calendar flap puts you into the Whole Health Library.

What happens when I complete the Calendar Opinions questions and mail them back?

All completed “We Value Your Opinions” inside the Calendars are used to make publishing changes every year. Additionally, they are provided to the Veterans Health Education and Information Committee members and to VANCHCS Executive Leadership.



Patient Rights and Responsibilities

Our goal is to make your experience as positive and pleasant as possible. Some basic rights and responsibilities are listed below.

1. Nondiscrimination and Respect. You will be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect as an individual. You will not be subject to discrimination for any reason, including reasons of age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, physical or mental disability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.

2. Health Information and Privacy. Your privacy will be protected and health records will be kept confidential. You will receive information about the health benefits you qualify for and any associated costs, if applicable. Please respect the privacy of other patients; do not reveal their health information that you may overhear or become aware of.

3. Partnering in Care. You have the right to express your preferences concerning future medical care in an advance directive, including designating a health care agent to make health care decisions on your behalf when you can no longer do so. You will be informed of all outcomes of your care, including possible injuries associated with your care. You have the right to choose whether to participate in any research project.

4. Concerns and Complaints. You are encouraged and expected to seek help from your PACT or patient advocate if you have any problems or complaints. If you believe the organization has failed to address or satisfy your concerns about health care quality and safety, you may contact the Joint Commission's Office of Quality and Patient Safety at 1-800-994-6610.

5. Responsibilities. Patients will interact with all staff and fellow Veterans in a respectful, considerate manner; provide information to healthcare staff that facilitates their care, treatment, and services; ask questions and inform staff when they do not understand something about their care; adhere to a mutually developed treatment plan; follow facility rules and policies that support safe, quality care for patients.

For more information, visit:

www.va.gov/health/rights

Abbreviations Key

AD.....	Advance Directive
A.O.D	Administrative Officer of the Day
BMI.....	Body Mass Index
C & P	Compensation and Pension
CBOC.....	Community Based Outpatient Clinic
CLC/CREC	Community Living Center/Center for Rehabilitation and Extended Care
DoD.....	Department of Defense
ER/ED.....	Emergency Room/Emergency Department
FAQ.....	Frequently Asked Questions
HCA.....	Health Care Agent
HPDP.....	Health Promotion Disease Prevention
IPA	In-Person Authentication
LPN	Licensed Practical Nurse
MHV.....	My HealtheVet
NCA.....	National Cemetery Administration
OEF/OIF/OND	Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/ Operation New Dawn
OPC.....	Outpatient Clinic
PACT	Patient Aligned Care Team
PHR.....	Personal Health Record
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RN.....	Registered Nurse
VA.....	Department of Veterans Affairs
VBA... ..	Veterans Benefits Administration
VHA.....	Veterans Health Administration