

NEWS AND NOTES FOR FLORIDA VETERANS

Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office
St. Petersburg, FL



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The "News and Notes for Florida Veterans" is published monthly by the Veterans Service Center, VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg, Florida, to provide information on VA benefit programs to veterans and dependents in Florida. The material presented does not have the effect of laws or regulations. Please send questions or comments on this newsletter to Veterans Service Center, ATTN: "News and Notes," PO Box 1437, St. Petersburg, FL 33731. We do not have the resources to maintain a mailing list for distribution to individuals; however this newsletter is available on the St.

Petersburg

VA Regional Office web site at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/stpetersburg/>.

SEQUESTRATION VA is exempt from the sequester so there will be no effect. VA will continue to operate with no interruption of benefits or services. Persons requesting additional information should call VA's Office of Public Affairs at 202-461-7600.

VA JOINS WITH MILLION HEARTS CAMPAIGN (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – February is American Heart Month, a time to educate Americans on what they can do to live heart-healthy lives. With that mission in mind, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Department of Health and Human Services have joined forces to promote the Million Hearts™ campaign — a national initiative that has set a goal of preventing one million heart attacks and strokes over five years.

The Million Hearts™ campaign encourages a targeted focus on the "ABCS" – Aspirin for people at risk, Blood pressure control, Cholesterol management, and Smoking cessation —all of which address the major risk factors for cardiovascular disease and can prevent heart attacks and strokes.

VA has tobacco use cessation clinicians at each VA facility, as well as dietitians who are available to provide nutrition counseling. MOVE! — VA's national weight management program— is helping Veterans lose weight and keep it off. And our highly-trained VA pharmacists are talking to their patients about the importance of staying on blood pressure medications and controlling their hypertension.

Many Veterans in VA primary care population have chronic conditions, and many have multiple diagnoses. Of this population, 52 percent have hypertension, 36 percent have obesity, 24 percent have diabetes, and 18 percent have coronary heart disease.

VA's increased focus on helping patients quit smoking, lose weight, eat healthier, and become more physically active, will enhance the successful tobacco and alcohol intervention programs already in place, and help Veterans achieve greater success.

In its efforts to place more emphasis on disease prevention, VA has established a Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Program Committee at every VA medical center. Committee members represent a range of disciplines and content areas.

Their job is to oversee the prevention-related activities of the facility and to support VA's "Healthy Living" campaign, which was launched in 2011 to continually emphasize specific healthy living messages and suggestions for Veterans. These messages cover core prevention areas including nutrition, physical activity, weight management, smoking, alcohol use, stress management, clinical preventive services, safety, and health care communication.

VA HIRES MORE MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS TO EXPAND ACCESS FOR VETERANS (VA News Release) WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it has made significant progress in providing increased access to mental health care services for our Nation's Veterans by hiring new mental health professionals. As of January, 29, 2013 VA has hired 1,058 mental health clinical providers and 223 administrative support staff. The mental health professionals hired include psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, mental health nurses, licensed professional mental health counselors, licensed marriage and family therapists, and addictions therapists.

VA has also completed hiring and training of additional staff to increase the capacity of the Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-8255, press 1) and phone lines have been increased by 50 percent. As of December 31, 2012, the Veterans Crisis Line has received over 747,000 calls, over 83,000 chats, as well as over 5,000 texts, and has saved more than 26,000 Veterans in imminent danger.

There are many Veterans who are willing to seek treatment and to share their experiences with mental health issues when they share a common bond of duty, honor, and service with the provider. VA is in the process of hiring and training 800 Peer Specialists in the coming year.

Additionally, VA has awarded a contract to the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance to provide certification training for Peer Specialists. This peer staff is expected to all be hired by December 31, 2013, and will work as members of mental health teams.

The number of Veterans receiving specialized mental health treatment from VA has risen each year, from 927,052 in fiscal year (FY) 2006 to more than 1.3 million in FY 2012. One major reason for this increase is VA's proactive screening of all Veterans to identify those who may have symptoms of depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), problem use of alcohol or who have experienced military sexual trauma (MST).

Mental health care providers seeking opportunities to serve our Nation's Veterans can find additional information about rewarding VA careers and apply for jobs online at www.vacareers.va.gov and www.usajobs.gov. To locate the nearest VA facility or Vet Center for enrollment and to get scheduled for care, Veterans can visit VA's website at www.va.gov.

33RD NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES – SEIZE THE DAY IN TAMPA BAY! Join fellow Veterans at the 33rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG) July 13–18 in Tampa. This year's Games are hosted by the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital and the Florida Gulf Coast Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America. Official events are air guns, archery, basketball, bocchia, bowling, field, hand cycling, motor rally, nine ball, power soccer, quad rugby, slalom, softball, swimming, table tennis, track, trapshooting, and weight lifting.

Participation in the NVWG is open to Veterans with spinal cord injuries and other disabilities that require the use of a wheelchair for athletic competition, and are eligible to receive care at a VA medical facility. Registration is limited to 550 athletes. Completed registration forms are accepted in the order they are received, with priority given to novice athletes after the first 500 entries. For more information and a link to the application form, visit www.wheelchairgames.va.gov. The registration deadline is April 15.

Open to the public with free admission, competitive events for the 33rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games will take place at the Tampa Convention Center, the Tampa Bay Times Forum and other Tampa Bay venues. For more information about the event, and Sponsorship information, please visit www.wheelchairgames.va.gov.

Anyone interested in serving as a volunteer during the week of the 33rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games, July 13-18, 2013, must complete the VOLUNTEER APPLICATION at <http://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/VHA-10-7055-fill.pdf> and return the application to Wheelchair.games@va.gov. For more information call (813)-972-2000 EXT 6580.

VA FACILITIES ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

SUICIDE PREVENTION 1-800-273-8255

National Call Center for Homeless Veterans
1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838)

VA Regional Office, St. Petersburg - PO Box 1437,
St. Petersburg, FL 33731 1-800-827-1000

Regional Processing Office, Atlanta, GA (education claims) - PO Box 100022, Decatur, GA 30031-7022
1-888-GIBILL1 (442-4551)
Telephone number for Chapter 30 self-verifications
1-877-823-2378

VA EFT Information Hotline (electronic funds transfer - direct deposit) 1-877-838-2778

Veterans Health Administration Toll-Free Hotline (medical care) - 1-877-222-8387

VA Health Revenue Service (information on amounts owed to VA Medical Centers) 1-866-793-4591

VA Insurance Center, Philadelphia (VA Insurance) - PO Box 42954, Philadelphia, PA 19101 1-800-669-8477

VA Health Administration Center (CHAMPVA and Spina Bifida health care) 1-800-733-8387 CHAMPVA inquiries: PO Box 65023, Denver, CO 80206-5023; CHAMPVA claims: PO Box 65024, Denver, CO 80206-5024 Spina Bifida inquiries and claims: PO Box 65025, Denver, CO 80206-5025

National Cemeteries

10,000 Bay Pines Blvd N, Bay Pines FL 727-398-9426
6502 SW 102nd Ave, Bushnell FL 352-793-7740
6501 S State Rd 7, Lake Worth, FL 561-649-6489
4083 Lannie Rd, Jacksonville FL 904-766-5222
Naval Air Station, Pensacola FL 850-453-4108/4846
9810 State Hwy 72, Sarasota FL 877-861-9840
104 Marine St, St Augustine FL 352-793-7740

National Cemetery Administration Office of Memorial Programs (headstones and markers) - 5109 Russell Rd Quantico VA 22134-3903 1-800-697-6947

Loan Guaranty Eligibility Center (certificates of eligibility) PO Box 20729, Winston-Salem, NC 27120
1-888-244-6711

Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) - 711

INTERNET SITES OF INTEREST:

VA Web Site: www.va.gov

VA Web Automated Reference Materials System (WARMS) www.warms.vba.va.gov

VA Workload and Performance Reports;
<http://www.vba.va.gov/reports/>

St. Petersburg VA Regional Office:
<http://www.benefits.va.gov/stpetersburg/>

Property Management (sale of VA-repossessed homes): <http://va.equator.com>

Florida Dept of Veterans' Affairs: www.FloridaVets.org

Library of Congress (information on pending legislation) thomas.loc.gov