



# Network Director's Update Summer Issue 2011

## VISN 19:



This past summer has flown by with many activities occurring in VISN 19. Our summer issue features many of the events and key initiative kick offs that occurred over the past several months.

Read on about an exciting new program introduced this past summer.

## **VA to Take Applications for New Family Caregiver Program**

### ***VA implementing enhancements to existing services for Veterans and their caregivers***

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) published the interim final rule for implementing the Family Caregiver Program of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act 2010. This new rule will provide additional support to eligible post-9/11 Veterans who elect to receive their care in a home setting from a primary Family Caregiver.

On May 9, staff in VA's Office of Care Management and Social Work opened the application process for eligible post-9/11 Veterans and Servicemembers to designate their Family Caregivers.

Additional services for primary Family Caregivers of eligible post-9/11 Veterans and Servicemembers 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 care plan.

Veterans can download a copy of the Family Caregiver program application (VA CG 10-10) at [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov). The application enables the Veteran to designate a primary Family Caregiver and secondary Family Caregivers if needed. Caregiver Support Coordinators are stationed at every VA medical center and via phone at 1-877-222 VETS (8387) to

assist Veterans and their Family Caregivers with the application process. Caregivers for Veterans of all eras are eligible for respite care, education and training on what it means to be a caregiver, how to best meet the Veteran's care needs, and the importance of self-care when in a care giving role. The full range of VA services already provided to Caregivers will continue, and local Caregiver Support Coordinators at each VA medical center are available to assist Family Caregivers in identifying benefits and services they may be eligible for.

The Caregiver Support Coordinators are well versed in VA programs and also have information about other local public, private and non-profit agency support services that are available to support Veterans and their Family Caregivers at home.

VA programs for Veterans and their Family Caregivers include:

- o **In-Home and Community Based Care:** This includes skilled home health care, homemaker home health aide services, community adult day health care and Home Based Primary Care.
- o **Respite Care:** Designed to relieve the Family Caregiver from the constant challenge of caring for a chronically ill or disabled Veteran at home, respite services can include in-home care, a short stay in one of VA's community living centers or an environment designed for adult day health care.
- o **Caregiver education and training programs:** VA currently provides multiple training opportunities which include pre-discharge care instruction and specialized caregiver programs in multiple severe traumas such as Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Spinal Cord Injury/Disorders, and Blind Rehabilitation. VA has a Family Caregiver assistance healthy living center on My HealthVet, [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov), as well as caregiver information on the VA's main webpage health site.
- o **Caregiver support groups and other services:** Family Caregiver support groups, offered in a face to face setting or on the telephone, provide emotional and peer support, and information. Family Caregiver services include family counseling, spiritual and pastoral care, family leisure and recreational activities and temporary lodging in Fisher Houses.



- o **Other services:** VA provides durable medical equipment and prosthetic and sensory aides to improve function, financial assistance with home modification to improve access and mobility, and transportation assistance for some Veterans to and from medical appointments.

## FACT SHEET

### **Applying for the Caregiver Support Program under the Interim Final Rule for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers**

Family Caregivers provide crucial support in caring for our Nation's Veterans by allowing them to stay in the homes and communities they defended, surrounded by the loved ones they fought for. Caregivers in a home environment can enhance the health and well-being of Veterans under VA care. Additional VA services are now available to those Family Caregivers who share VA's daily charge to serve those "who have borne the battle." VA is accepting applications from seriously injured post 9-11 Veterans and their Family Caregivers for the new Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers as of May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2011. For those eligible to enroll in the program, training started in early June 2011. Many Veterans and caregivers, members of congress, Veteran Service Organizations and community partners helped make this legislation possible. We at VA appreciate all the support for the Family Caregiver as the regulation that will define this program is implemented.

#### **IMPORTANT ELIGIBILITY NEWS:**

- Veterans eligible for this program are those who sustained a serious injury including traumatic brain injury, psychological trauma or other mental disorder incurred or aggravated in the line of duty, on or after September 11, 2001.
- Veterans eligible for this program must also be in need of personal care services because of an inability to perform one or more activities of daily living and/or need supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological impairment or injury.
- To be eligible for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers, Veterans must first be enrolled for VA health services, if not enrolled previously.
- Veterans may download a copy of the Caregiver program application (VA CG 10-10) at [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov). The application enables Veterans to designate one primary Family Caregiver and up to two secondary Family Caregivers if desired. Caregiver Support Coordinators are available at every VA medical center to assist Veterans and their Family Caregivers with the application process. Additional

application assistance can be found by via phone at 1-877-222 VETS (8387).

- If the Veteran is not currently enrolled, both the VA Form 10-10 EZ for VA health services and the application for the Caregiver Program (VA Form 10-10 CG) will need to be completed.
- The application must be completed and signed by both the Veteran or their legal representative and the primary Family Caregiver. The application can be hand carried to a local VA Medical Center (VAMC) for walk-in processing, or if expedited processing is preferred, it may be mailed to:
 

**Family Caregivers Program  
Health Eligibility Center  
2957 Clairmont Road NE  
Suite 200  
Atlanta, GA 30329-1647**
- Within three business days of receipt of the initial application, the Caregiver Support Coordinator at the Veteran's preferred VA Medical Center will contact the Veteran and primary Family Caregiver to arrange for the Family Caregiver to complete the application and schedule required training.
- A clinical team from VA will coordinate arrangements with the Veteran to complete a clinical eligibility assessment. This will include evaluating what assistance the Veteran needs with activities of daily living such as eating, bathing, grooming, and/or need for supervision or protection.
- Training is completed by the primary Family Caregiver once it is determined the Veteran meets clinical eligibility criteria. Training can be completed in one of three ways: Attending the Family Caregiver classroom training conducted at a local VA medical center or community location; completing the training online on a security protected website; or by self-study using a workbook and DVD that will be mailed to the Family Caregiver.
- Once the Family Caregiver training is completed, a VA clinician will visit the Veteran's home. The purpose of this visit is to make sure that the Family Caregiver and Veteran have everything they need to be safe and successful in the home setting.
- After the home visit is completed, the Family Caregiver will begin receiving a monthly stipend based on the Veteran's level need and required assistance. The Family Caregiver may also receive health insurance benefits through CHAMPVA if the Family Caregiver does not have existing health insurance. The stipend and health insurance benefits will be retroactive to the date of initial application.



- There are over two dozen services specific to Caregivers of Veterans of all eras that are currently being offered by VA. Contact your local VAMC Caregiver Support Coordinator or the Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-230-3274 for information on these and other caregiver resources and services.

**Eastern Colorado Health Care System**



**Denver, CO – Replacement Medical Center Facility**

The Denver VAMC (parent Eastern Colorado Health Care System) provides monthly updates on the status of the Denver Replacement Hospital. Updates are distributed via e-mail monthly and can be found on [www.denver.va.gov](http://www.denver.va.gov) or on Facebook [WWW.facebook.com/denverva](http://WWW.facebook.com/denverva) . Also check out their new brochure [here](#) or at [www.denver.va.gov/projecteagle](http://www.denver.va.gov/projecteagle).



**P R O J E C T E A G L E U P D A T E**

*May 2011*

The first major construction contract of the project was awarded to Kiewit-Turner Joint Venture to perform the renovations of the former UPI Office Building, which will be known as Clinic Building South. This 120,000 square foot space includes areas for mental health outpatient services and administrative functions, in addition to a Department of Defense outpatient clinic for the United States Air Force. The contract also includes the demolition of select buildings on the site. Kiewit-Turner is working on the beginning phases of the contract including installation of the construction fence around the site and submitting required paperwork. The scheduled completion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and

4<sup>th</sup> floors is February 2012. The 3<sup>rd</sup> floor will be used for administrative functions while the 4<sup>th</sup> floor will be designated for the USAF.

The Joint Venture Design Team created a large, 3D model of the new Medical Center. It is on display in the main atrium of the Denver VA Medical Center, and provides a great new perspective of the space. ECHCS published a new brochure detailing the project and other visual productions. They are also available in the same area of the main atrium.

*July, 2011*

Kiewit Turner began the interior remodeling of the Clinic Building South (CBS), formally known as the University Physician's Inc building. This building will house Mental Health Outpatient Clinics on the first and second floor when the building is fully activated in 2014. The first two floors will undergo a complete renovation.

The third floor will undergo the least remodeling. It was used as administrative space before and will be used as administrative space again when activated in March of 2012. This will enable the Eastern Colorado Health Care System to save significant funds by vacating space that is currently leased. One of the major changes to this floor will be the addition of conference rooms and computer training rooms. Education, Nursing Administration, Human Resources, Logistics Service, Quality Management, and the Facility Planning Section will move into the third floor.

The Department of Defense's Air Force 460th Medical Support Squadron will open their clinic on the fourth floor of the CBS in March of 2012. The addition of the USAF Clinic to the campus will be exciting and interject a synergy between Veterans and active duty personnel. The clinic will serve active duty members and their families.

With DoD on campus, for the first time in the ECHCS's history, pediatric care will be an everyday part of doing business. Once the rest of the facility is activated in 2014, outdoor and indoor play areas for young children will be included. These areas will be a place where the children of active duty personnel and the children of Veterans can play together.

**VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System Employee Speaker at National Memorial Day Ceremony**

The annual Memorial Day Observance at The Wall in Washington, D.C., co-hosted by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund and the National Park Service, was held on May 30. Ms. Barbara Lilly, ECHCS Volunteer Specialist was a featured speaker at the Memorial Day ceremony.

Ms. Lilly served with the American Red Cross as a recreation worker during the Vietnam War. Currently she

supervises volunteers at the Denver VA Medical Center. She was introduced by Diane Carlson Evans, founder and president of the Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation.

The names of five servicemen added to The Wall in early May were read aloud for the first time by their family members on Memorial Day. The addition of these names brings the total number of names on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to 58,272.

The annual Memorial Day ceremony is hosted yearly by VVMF and the National Park Service to pay tribute to members of America's armed forces who have made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam and in all conflicts.

### **VA Montana Health Care System:**



### **Montana's first veterans' court launches in Missoula**

Montana's first criminal court treatment program devoted to military Veterans opened in Missoula on June 13.

The Missoula Co-Occurring Treatment Court with Veterans track is a collaborative effort of VA Montana Health Care System and state Veterans Administration officials, judges, local prosecutors, public defenders, and lawyer volunteers.

The court will be the state's first with Veterans-only case proceedings, and is modeled after the drug and mental health court treatment programs in Missoula and the nation's first Veterans' court in Buffalo, N.Y, which launched in 2008.

Veterans eligible for the court program may be pre-trial, post-trial, or on probation for any misdemeanor or non-violent felony. Montana law prohibits participation by persons who are subject to registration as sexual or violent offenders.

Veterans' treatment courts have been spreading throughout the country in an effort to improve public safety and rehabilitate Veterans coping from the adverse effects of war, including post-traumatic stress disorder

(PTSD), substance abuse, traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and mental illness.

Defendants may be referred to the court by anyone, including an attorney, judge, treatment provider or family member. Veterans' treatment courts are also being developed in Billings and Great Falls, Mont.



*Robin Korogi, director of VA Montana Health Care System, and Paul Harman, Veterans Justice Outreach specialist, speak during the opening of Montana's first Veterans treatment court at the Missoula County courthouse on June 13.*

### **VA Montana unveils inpatient mental health facility**

Hundreds gathered for the dedication ceremony of a new inpatient mental health facility at the Department of Veterans Affairs' Fort Harrison campus this past summer on June 3.

The more than \$7 million, 24,000 square foot, 24-bed facility will allow Veterans who need acute psychiatric care and residential rehabilitation for post traumatic stress disorder or substance abuse to get care at the VA campus near Helena, Mont.

Previously, Montana's Veterans in need of inpatient recovery care for PTSD, substance abuse, and acute psychiatric treatment travelled to VA facilities in North Dakota, Wyoming or Idaho.

The new mental health facility allows VA Montana to provide the region's Veterans with a full array of comprehensive mental health care.

"We have the best and the deepest breadth of integrated mental health services in the VA," said Dr. Robert Petzel, VA's Under Secretary for Health, who served as the keynote speaker at the ceremony. "Every day the Veterans Health Administration is renewing its commitment to honor our brave men and women who have served."



Jerri

Kettman (right), nurse manager for Outpatient Behavioral Health at VA Montana, provides a tour for Sen. Jon Tester (center), Glen Grippen, Network Director and Dr. Robert Petzel, VA Under Secretary for Health, of the new inpatient mental health facility.

Eight of the 24 beds will be in a locked acute unit that will provide a safe, therapeutic environment for Veterans that need acute psychiatric stabilizations.

The remaining 16 beds will be split between PTSD and substance abuse treatment beds.

Staff for the new unit will include psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, a licensed addiction counselor, a peer support technician, seven registered nurses and 12 licensed practical nurses.

The new unit began accepting patients in July.

**VA Montana Hosts VA Secretary during a three day trip to Montana**

VA Secretary Shinseki spent three days meeting and visiting with Veterans individually and in public forums in Helena, Bozeman and Billings, Montana early July. VAMTHCS captured highlights of his visit through this photo montage.

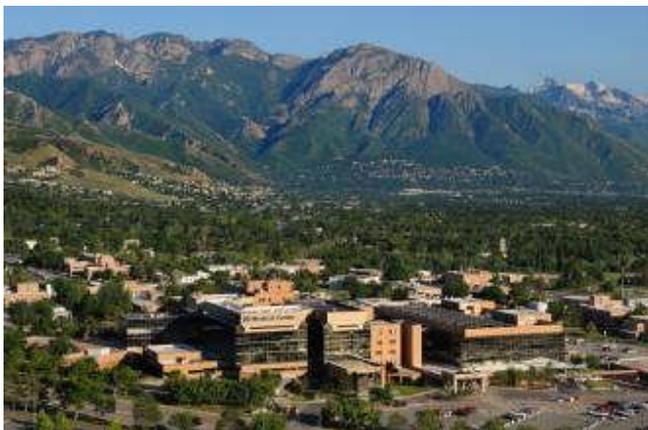


**Family Caregiver Program Launched For Veterans In Montana. VA Has Sent Out Stipends Through Program.**

On 8/15, the [KXLH-TV](#) Helena, MT website reported that the US Department of Veterans Affairs "has sent the first stipend payments to the family caregivers of Montana veterans.

Twelve Montana caregivers applied for the program to date; two have been approved so far." KXLH quoted Alex Bailey, program support coordinator for the VA Montana healthcare system, who said, "Family caregivers in Montana provide crucial support in caring for our nation's veterans. This support allows the veterans to stay in their homes and communities they defended, surrounded by loved ones they fought for."

**VASLCHCS**



**U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan Praises Utah's Homeless Efforts**

SALT LAKE CITY- U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan congratulated Governor Gary Herbert, the State of Utah and community partners (VASLCHCS is included in this group) for their efforts in reducing chronic homelessness by 26 percent since 2010 and 69 percent since Utah embraced a nationwide movement and developed and is implementing the State's strategy "HousingWorks" to end chronic homelessness within 10-years. Both Governor Herbert and Secretary Donovan toured Palmer Court and spoke to residents before talking with members of the media. This was Secretary Donovan's first visit to Utah.



Governor Gary Herbert discusses Utah's efforts in eliminating chronic homelessness as Gordon Walker, director of the Utah Division of Housing and Community Development

(left) and U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan (far right) listen during a press conference held at Palmer Court on June 1st, 2011.

**Open for Business!!  
VA Leadership, Veterans and City Leaders cut the ribbon on Price**

On July 14, 2011 VASLCHCS cut the ribbon on their brand new outreach clinic in Carbon County. The reception received from area Veterans and local leadership was amazing. After a short program, Veterans, dignitaries and others were able to tour the clinic, meet the staff and check out the latest and greatest in Telehealth technology. The new clinic will service Veterans in both Carbon and Emery Counties.



**Elko Re-Grand Opening!**

More space, more services, more Veterans! VASLCHCS's new clinic is open for business in Elko Nevada. Over 100 Veterans and other invited guests helped cut the ribbon on this brand new facility. Tours and telehealth demonstrations followed. Elko VFW Post 2350 did most of the honors, from the color guard to the keynote speaker. The program was top notch thanks to the pride and commitment shown by these Veterans. Elko City, county and state leaders were present, which included the Elko County Commission who was instrumental in making the VA Elko Clinic a reality.



VASLCHCS extends a big thank you to staff in Elko who have become part of the family there. The program was quite moving and a great reminder as to why we come to work every day.

### Fisher House "Digs" Salt Lake City!

#### VA Salt Lake City Health Care System becomes part of Fisher House family with ceremonial ground breaking.

George E. Wahlen would have been beaming from ear to ear had he lived to see such a ceremony. On the first of July VASLC leadership, Veterans, the widow of our namesake and the Fisher House V.P. officially broke ground on the VASLCHCS Fisher House.

The house will be close to 17,000 square feet with 20 suites, a common kitchen and family room for our Veterans and their family members. It will also boast a beautiful view of our Wasatch Mountains. This "home away from home" will provide refuge for those rural Veterans needing treatment and services long term. The best part about the Fisher House is they can bring their families along.

Once complete, the house will rely on community donations and volunteers to keep this house feeling like a home. We would also like to congratulate our local Fisher House Committee. See you at the dedication sometime in the fall!



#### SLC joins forces with Salt Lake City to "Salute Veterans this Fourth of July"

The Gallivan Center was the place to be this 4<sup>th</sup> of July as VASLCHCS christened the first annual "SLC Salutes Veterans" celebration. VASLCHCS combined every possible resource for Veterans with a lot of food, family and fun! The general public enjoyed free admission and live entertainment, capped off with a half hour fireworks show. Veterans were even enrolled right on the spot! The best part is that the city has committed to next year!



#### Sheridan VAMC:



In support of the Secretary's vision to end homelessness among veterans by 2015, the Sheridan VAMC held its first Veterans homeless stand down on August 24 in Casper Wyoming at the Wyoming National Guard Armory.

"This was our first Stand Down and it went very well" said Will Banks, Homeless Veteran Program Manager.

"Wyoming is really full of fantastic communities with wonderful resources and the state of Wyoming Veterans Commission resources that take care of everyone who is struggling and has partnered well with the VA to help us connect with Veterans to help them."

This first stand down brought together over ten Natrona County services along with the Wyoming Veterans Commission and the many programs the VA has for Veterans.

VAMC Director Debra Hirschman chairs the Sheridan VAMC Homeless committee and also helped out at the stand down. "The joy and in some cases relief Veterans had when they came in the door and were greeted by volunteers with food and clothing was special to see."



The term stand down comes from the military concept of a stand down where soldiers come in from combat to a safe place for food, rest, clean clothing and care. Stand Downs have been very successful across the country. Sheridan will begin planning the next event and location soon.

**Cheyenne VAMC:**



**Cheyenne VA: Comp & Pen Exam Timeliness Among Best in the Nation**

The Cheyenne VA Medical Center has earned a top ranking nationally for timely completion of compensation and pension exams to Veterans. These exams, also called "Comp & Pen" exams, are one of the most important clinical activities VA provides as the results of this exam links the Veteran to service connected health care and other potential VA benefits, including potential compensation and pension payments.

In the spring of 2010, access times to complete a Comp & Pen exam at the Cheyenne VA averaged 40-43 days. Through a series of performance improvement activities,

access to and the timeliness of a comp and pen exam at the Cheyenne VA is now within the top 10% in the nation.

As of July 2011, rates for a Veteran to complete the comp and pen exam process at the Cheyenne VA averaged 16 days, far exceeding the national VHA goal for timeliness. The national goal to complete the exams is 30 days.

Cheyenne VA Medical Center Director, Dr. Cynthia McCormack emphasizes the achievement, "On behalf of the Veterans who benefit from these important exams and the staff responsible for refining the processes, exceeding the 30 day goal for timeliness is a tremendous achievement. The Cheyenne VA facility is currently at a completion rate of almost half the national goal. I feel this really speaks to the dedication, hard working character and creativity of the staff to make this happen."

Kudos to Cheyenne VAMC!

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