



# Women's Health Transition Training

PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

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**VA**







U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**Women's Health Transition Training  
Participant Handbook  
Updated December 2022**



**Disclaimer**

This handbook was created to be used in conjunction with the VA Women's Health Transition Training program. The information contained within this handbook is current as of the date of the last update and all due diligence was used in compiling and validating the information within this handbook. All information, representations, links or other messages are subject to change. Please refer to [VA.gov](https://www.va.gov) for the most up-to-date information regarding VA care, services and health information. A number of third party links appear herein. By using a link to a third party's website you assume sole responsibility. VA does not assume any responsibility for third party website content, including any offers, information and opinions contained therein.

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# Acronym List

The list below describes frequently used acronyms throughout the Handbook.

Acronym	Description
<b>CBOC</b>	Community-Based Outpatient Clinic
<b>DOD</b>	Department of Defense
<b>IDES</b>	Integrated Disability Evaluation System
<b>IPV</b>	Intimate partner violence
<b>IPVAP</b>	Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program
<b>LARC</b>	Long-acting reversible contraceptives
<b>LEEP</b>	Loop electrosurgical excision procedure
<b>LGBTQ+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identities. The “+” sign captures identities beyond LGBTQ, including but not limited to questioning, pansexual, asexual, agender, gender diverse, nonbinary, gender-neutral and other identities.
<b>LGBTQ+ VCC</b>	LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator
<b>MCC</b>	Maternity Care Coordinator
<b>MHS</b>	Military Health System
<b>MST</b>	Military sexual trauma
<b>OEF/OIF/OND/OFS</b>	Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn/Operation Freedom’s Sentinel
<b>OTH</b>	Other than honorable
<b>PACT</b>	Patient Aligned Care Team
<b>PCM</b>	Primary Care Manager
<b>PC-MHI</b>	Primary Care-Mental Health Integration
<b>PCP</b>	Primary Care Provider
<b>PFPT</b>	Pelvic floor physical therapy
<b>PSC</b>	Polytrauma System of Care
<b>PTS</b>	Posttraumatic stress

# Acronym List *(continued)*

Acronym	Description
<b>PTSD</b>	Posttraumatic stress disorder
<b>SAFE</b>	Sexual assault forensic exams
<b>SAPRO</b>	Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office
<b>TAP</b>	Transition Assistance Program
<b>TBI</b>	Traumatic brain injury
<b>TCM</b>	Transition and Care Management
<b>TPA</b>	Transition Patient Advocate
<b>VA</b>	U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
<b>VAMC</b>	VA medical center
<b>VBA</b>	Veterans Benefits Administration
<b>VISN</b>	Veterans Integrated Service Network
<b>VHA</b>	Veterans Health Administration
<b>WHC</b>	Women's Health Center
<b>WHCC</b>	Women's Health Clinic Champion
<b>WHTT</b>	Women's Health Transition Training
<b>WHMD</b>	Women's Health Medical Director
<b>WH-PCP</b>	Women's Health Primary Care Provider
<b>WMHC</b>	Women's Mental Health Champion
<b>WVPM</b>	Women Veterans Program Manager

# Welcome!

## Welcome to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Women's Health Transition Training (WHTT)!

WHTT consists of five modules that are designed to help you gain a better understanding of how VA can support your health care needs post-separation from the military:



### Module 1: Shift From Active Duty

Shifting from an active-duty role is more than just a career change. It is a cultural change. This section focuses on the shift in mentality from the Military Health System (MHS) to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). We will also explore how your role in managing your health care will be different between MHS and VA.



### Module 2: Understanding VA Health Care

VA can seem like a giant puzzle; let us help you put the pieces together. This section discusses VA's transformation, specifically the changes to the infrastructure, care models and VA culture, so you can take charge of your health and well-being and live your life to the fullest.



### Module 3: Available Women's Health Services

VA Women's Health has you covered! Using the innovative Whole Health approach, VA Women's Health offers a wide range of services, including comprehensive primary care, cancer screenings, preventive care and wellness, reproductive health, mental health and specialty care. Your VA women's health team is your one-stop shop for helping you take charge of your health and well-being and living your life to the fullest.



### Module 4: Enrolling and Accessing VA Health Care

Ready to enroll? This section can help you navigate the process of enrollment with information about eligibility and the necessary forms. Then, we will discuss how to make your first appointment and what to bring.



### Module 5: Transition Assistance

Resources to help with the transition to civilian life, including social support services. VA is here to help you during the transition to civilian status.

## Transition Assistance Program

WHTT is offered as part of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) which provides training, information and services to help Service members and their families transition to civilian life. This training is complementary to the TAP VA Benefits and Services course. To learn more, visit the [VA Transition Assistance Program webpage](#).

## WHTT Learning OBJECTIVES

- 1 Identify the impacts of transitioning from military health care to VA health care.
- 2 Identify the structure of VA Health Care and VA Women's Health Services.
- 3 Identify VA Women's Health care resources and services to support women Veterans' whole health.
- 4 Recall the tools to apply and enroll in VA Women's Health care.
- 5 Recognize women Veteran-focused transition support resources, organizations and programs.





# Module 1

## Shift From Active Duty



I feel like I'm on a better path for the transition process. I felt like I was floating, but now have a plan. This was an eye-opener.

— Former Women's Health Transition Training participant



# Why We Are Here

VA recognizes you have distinct health care needs, both as a woman and due to your military experiences. As part of the fastest-growing group within our Veteran population, VA is dedicated to meeting your health care needs.

The transition out of the military into civilian life will encompass many areas of your life. It is not only a career change—it is also a psychological and cultural transition, and it will require developing your path for a rewarding post-military life.

As you transition out of the military, it is important that you become proactive about your health and fully understand your health care options. Because women are a distinct minority in VA, there is a widely held misperception that gender-specific care is not available through VA.

Over the last two decades, VA has made significant strides to become a place for women Veterans to receive high-quality health care from providers that understand their unique health care needs. It is no longer your “grandfather’s VA” or the VA that is often portrayed in the media. The VA health care system is here to serve you!

This course aims to help you on your transition journey. This journey is uniquely yours and can look different for everyone. You will need to set goals for your health and well-being, and work toward and manage your goals. You will need to be your advocate, and we are here to help you get started.



## Why WHTT? 5 REASONS

Top 5 reasons former Women’s Health Transition Training participants recommend this course:

- 1 Gained knowledge on earned health services and women-specific services that every Servicewoman needs to know
- 2 Women-only course design created a supportive environment and was conducive to honest conversation
- 3 Empowering and positive mental preparation for transition
- 4 VA eligibility and enrollment navigation
- 5 Thorough curriculum and resources

# Making the Change

## FROM MHS TO VA

Women often experience a notable health care culture change after leaving active duty. There are a number of differences between the Military Health System (MHS) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care systems, but understanding these differences early on your journey will ease your transition.

Topic	MHS	VA
<b>Organization Purpose</b>	Maintain a medically-ready force to support the full range of military operations.	Provide health care to improve overall health and well-being for Veterans post-military service.
<b>Health Care Ownership</b>	Your chain of command is responsible for making sure you meet your health care requirements.	Empower and equip you to take charge of your health care. You and your care team work together on your health and well-being, from urgent care or specialty care issues to experiencing complementary integrative health.
<b>Eligibility</b>	MHS provides virtually all health care services for your medical needs.	Your eligibility for benefits may vary.
<b>Facility Options</b>	There are limited choices for dedicated women-specific health areas or spaces at MHS facilities.	Women’s health care can either be delivered in a women-only clinic or in an integrated primary care setting.
<b>Health Care Providers</b>	You may have both a Primary Care Manager (PCM) and a gynecologist to address your needs.	Your Women’s Health Primary Care Provider (WH-PCP) can continue to address all your primary and most of your gender-specific health care needs.
<b>Women’s Health Care Navigators</b>	MHS does not have specific women’s health care navigators to help coordinate your health care.	Women Veterans Program Managers (WVPM) are advocates for women Veterans’ needs at every VA Medical Center (VAMC).
<b>Dependent Care</b>	Dependents are often enrolled in TRICARE.	VA rarely provides health care coverage for Veterans’ dependents. Talk to the Eligibility Office for more information.
<b>Making an Appointment</b>	Call the TRICARE helpline or make online appointments through Relay Health/TRICARE.	After enrolling, call your assigned VA facility to make an appointment. You can also schedule an appointment in person, online through the My Health eVet portal or by walking into a VA Urgent Care Clinic.
<b>Assigned Facility</b>	You are assigned a main Military Treatment Facility (MTF) but can receive care at any MTF or in the community if medically necessary.	You designate your preferred VA Medical Center (VAMC) and VA prefers that you receive the majority of your health care at that facility.
<b>Confidentiality</b>	Your health procedures and outcomes may sometimes be available to your chain of command due to readiness requirements (for example, dental).	Your consent is required to share any medical information with another person, including your spouse. All information is confidential.

# Making the Change *(continued)*

## A LIST OF WHO'S WHO

Topic	MHS	VA
<b>Manages the MTF or VA facility</b>	Hospital Commanding Officer (CO/CC)	Medical Center Director
<b>Assists in managing the MTF or VA facility</b>	Hospital Executive Officer/ Deputy (XO)	Deputy Director
<b>Oversees a specific specialty department at the MTF or VA facility</b>	Department leaders	Department Heads or Service Line Chiefs
<b>Manages the junior enlisted working in the MTFs</b>	Senior Enlisted	N/A
<b>Provides primary clinical care during medical visits</b>	Primary Care Manager (PCM)	Women's Health Primary Care Provider (WH-PCP)
<b>Advocates for women Veteran patients at every VAMC</b>	N/A	Women Veterans Program Managers (WVPM)
<b>Point of contact for women's mental health services at VA facilities</b>	N/A	Women's Mental Health Champion (WMHC)
<b>Coordinates care and provides case management for transitioning Service members and post-9/11 era Veterans at MHS or VA facilities</b>	PCM	Transition and Care Management (TCM) Team
<b>Coordinates care for LGBTQ+ individuals receiving care at MHS or VA facilities</b>	PCM	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Veteran Care Coordinator (LGBTQ+ VCC)
<b>Coordinates care for pregnant women who are receiving maternity care benefits from MHS or VA</b>	PCM	Maternity Care Coordinator (MCC)
<b>Provides information about services related to military sexual harassment and assault and assists in accessing care</b>	DOD Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office (SAPRO)	Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Coordinator

# VA Health Care Value

VA understands that you may have other health care options as you transition from service. Some key considerations when making this decision may include:

- Cost of care
- Location and access to health care services and facilities
- Health care services available
- Quality of network providers

At VA, Veterans receive a host of health care benefits, including:

- **Free or low-cost care:** Access free or low-cost health care that you have earned as a benefit of your service. Assume you are eligible for VHA services until you confirm otherwise. If you are enrolled in TRICARE, Medicare, or another form of insurance, you can still use that plan and add VA as a supplemental form of health care.
- **Integrated health care system:** Belong to an integrated, nationwide health care system with many access points and individuals available to help you navigate VHA. Additionally, VA can mail prescription refills to you at a temporary address.
- **Veteran-centered care:** Have a Veteran-centered health care option. VA providers understand the importance of women Veterans receiving health care in a community that understands the health impact of their military service. You will always be seen, heard, and understood by VA staff trained to recognize the connection between your service and your health.
- **High-quality care:** Receive high-quality health care from providers trained in Veterans' unique health care needs. When enrolled in VA health care, you will have access to highly qualified providers who will support you on your health journey. Also, VA has partnerships with private hospitals and other medical and health focused organizations nationwide committed to providing Veterans with world-class service and support.
- **Comprehensive Care for Whole Health:** VA's health services offerings are vast. Your journey with VA care will begin with establishing a strong foundation with your Women's Health Primary Care Provider. From there, you will have access to VA's specialty care, mental health care, and Whole Health–Integrative Health and Wellness services to provide you with well-rounded care tailored to your specific needs as a woman Veteran.

If you have questions regarding specific programs please reference the information provided within this guide relating to that program or visit [VA.gov](https://www.va.gov) for more information.

Additionally, your trainer may be available to answer questions.

## Choose What YOU USE

You can choose how much VA health care you use.



**All:** Use VA health care for all of your needs.



**Some:** Use VA for specific health care needs



**Supplementary:** Use VA health care with TRICARE, Medicare, or private insurance to meet your health care needs.



**Back-Up:** Enroll in VA health care as a back-up for peace of mind.

# Notes



# Module 2

## Understanding VA Health Care



Knowing more about what is available and the quality of services available makes me confident in transitioning.

— Former Women's Health Transition Training participant



# VA Organization

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) consists of three administrations that work to meet different needs for Veterans.

**Center for Women Veterans (CWV)**

**Office of the Secretary of VA**



## Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

Provides a variety of benefits and services for Service members, Veterans and their families. Some of these programs include disability compensation, Veterans pension, dependency and indemnity compensation, insurance services, education services, home loans and employment services. VBA also conducts the VA Benefits and Services course as part of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).



## Veterans Health Administration (VHA)

Is the largest integrated health care system with a patient-centered, holistic approach to care in the United States. VHA provides care for Veterans at more than 1,200 health care facilities. VHA serves Veterans of all ages, and offers services ranging from primary care, including women-specific health care, to a full continuum of gender-sensitive mental health services, as well as specialty care services such as neurology, cardiology and dermatology. VA's Office of Women's Health is part of VHA.



## National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

Supports burial and memorials for United States military Veterans. NCA honors Veterans and their families with final resting places. They provide the grave sites, headstones and U.S. flag. NCA also provides funding to establish, expand, improve and maintain Veteran cemeteries across 47 states, as well as tribal lands, Guam and Saipan.

## Did you KNOW?

VA has a dedicated office, the Center for Women Veterans (CWV), to lead women's initiatives and drive cultural change within VA. The CWV's mission is to monitor and coordinate VA's administration of health care, benefits, services and programs for women Veterans.

The CWV serves as an advocate for cultural transformation, and raises awareness of the responsibility to treat women Veterans with dignity and respect.

## Resources

Learn more about the CWV at [VA.gov/womenvet](https://www.va.gov/womenvet).

Learn more about the three VA administrations and your benefits by visiting [VA.gov](https://www.va.gov)



# Driving VA Transformation

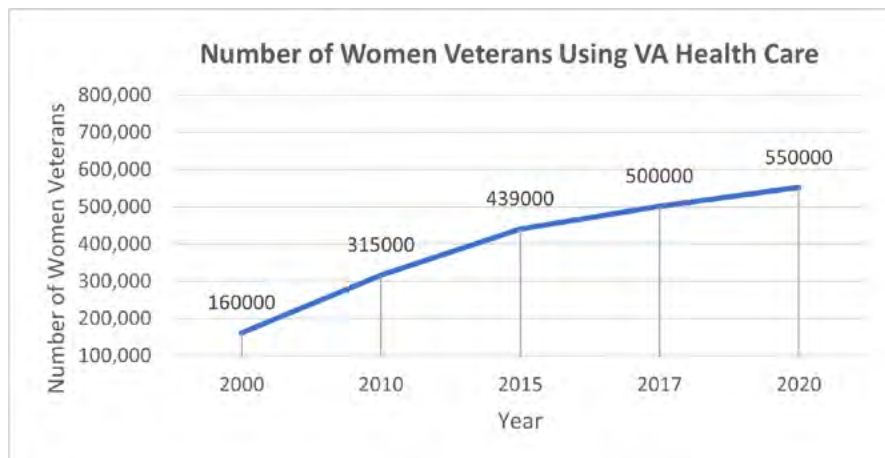
## Women Veterans are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. Veteran population.

The number of women Veterans is expected to increase at an average rate of about 18,000 women per year for the next 8 years. That is an average expected increase from 2 million in 2016 to 2.2 million in 2026. The growing number of women Veterans also results in greater diversity of race, ethnicity and sexual orientation in all age groups over time. This underscores the importance of efforts to ensure that services are sensitive to age, gender, culture, intersectionality and interactions among people of different genders, ages, and races and ethnicities.

In response to the changing demographic in the Veteran population and the specialized healthcare needs of women, VA established women's health research as a priority beginning in the early 1990s. Since then, VA has transformed its facilities and services to meet the needs of women Veterans. As more women Veterans enroll in VA healthcare, VA will continue to expand its offerings and infrastructure. When you use VA health services, you directly drive change.

In 2020, approximately 44% (827,729) of women Veterans were enrolled in the VA health care system, of which nearly 550,000 actively used VA health care services. However, only about 27% of women Veterans actively use VA health care. As more women Veterans enroll in VA healthcare, VA will continue to expand its offerings and infrastructure. When you use VA health care services, you directly drive change.

Sources:



Department of Veterans Affairs. Fact Sheet; Women Veterans Health care [Sourcebook, Volume 4: Longitudinal Trends in Sociodemographics, Utilization, Health Profile, and Geographic Distribution](#)

Washington DL, Farmer MM, Mor SS, Canning M, Yano EM. Assessment of the Healthcare Needs and Barriers to VA Use Experienced by Women Veterans. *Journal of Medical Care*, 53: S23-31, April 2015. [VA Women Health Care: About Us webpage](#)

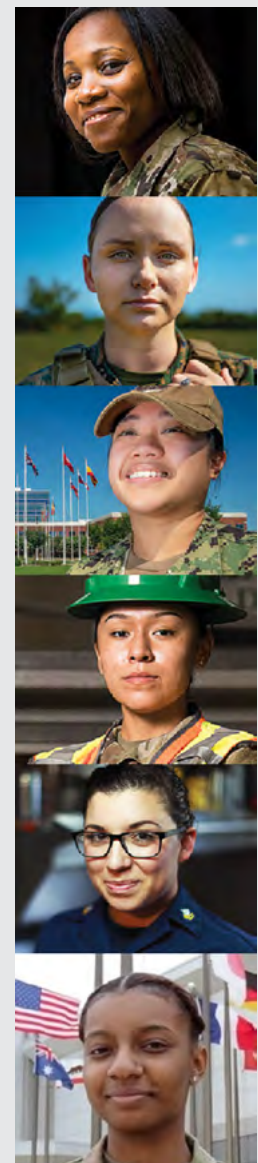
## Did you KNOW?

All Veterans are welcome at VA, including those who identify as a sexual or gender minority. Veterans enrolled in VA are treated and addressed by their gender identity.

Women currently comprise:

- 17.2% of the active-duty force
- 21.1% of the reserve components

Source: [2020 Demographics Profile of the Military Community](#)



# VA's Positive Impact



## RESEARCH SHOWS

VA has continuously developed, executed and improved evidence-based programs that enhance women's health care experiences. Over the last 20 years, VA has tracked health data and supplemented findings with published research on military and women Veteran populations. Studies have shown that women may confront or react to military experiences differently than men during and after military service, potentially affecting their health.

Health data and research also revealed:

- Women Veterans have higher rates of depression and suicide than non-Veteran women.
- When their VA health care provider screened them, about 1 in 3 women report having experienced military sexual trauma (MST).
- More than 40% of women Veterans who use VA have been diagnosed with at least one mental health condition.
- Women Veterans have higher rates of pain and chronic conditions than male Veterans and civilian counterparts.
- Women reported they were not comfortable seeking women-specific care in a male-dominated health care system.

## VA IS HERE TO HELP YOU!

In response to these findings, VA ensures that their health care providers are specially trained to care for women Veterans. Through programs such as the "Women's Health Mini-Residency training", VA continues to improve the expertise of primary care and emergency care providers to address the full range of women's needs. Over 6,000 providers have completed the residency to achieve the designation of a Women's Health Primary Care Provider (WH-PCP). These programs ensure women Veterans receive the high-quality health care they deserve.

Many of the efforts to transform VA services and facilities to the needs of women come from women Veterans' feedback. VA is dedicated to understanding your unique needs as a woman Veteran, and takes action to better serve you, no matter where you are on your health journey.



Level of trust reaches **90.1%**

## Veteran Signals

The Veteran Signals program is VHA's outpatient customer feedback survey. Since its inception in 2017, more than 4 million Veterans' surveys have been received. Feedback through this program has been used to drive improvements in the services and care delivered through VHA programs.

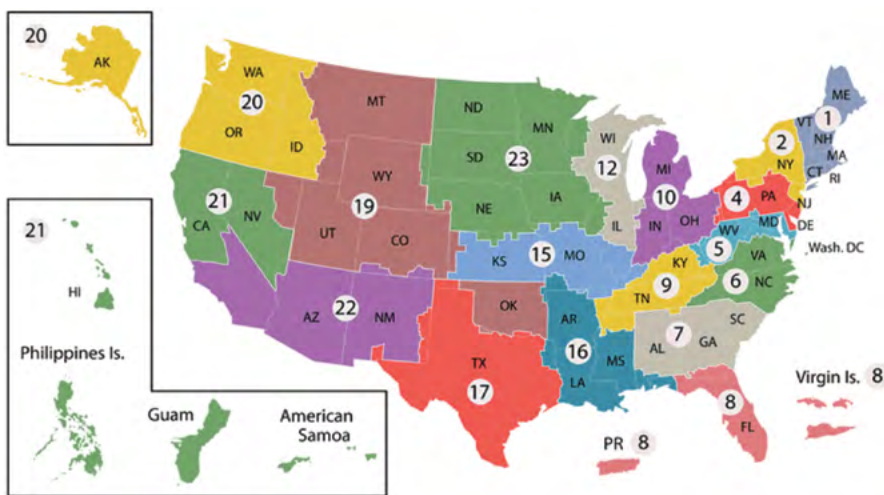
Recently released survey results show Veteran's trust in VA has increased, with 90.1% of Veterans' responses indicating they trust VA Health Care as of December 2021.

For more information and to view this report visit: [FY22Q1 VA Trust Report](#).

# VA Health Care Facility Structure

VA's health care system is America's largest integrated health care system with a patient-centered, holistic approach to care.

VA's health care system is divided into 18 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) pictured below.



## VISN MAP

Within each VISN, there are three different types of health care facilities:

- **Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC):** VAMCs (hospitals) are the largest facility type within VA's system, and they offer the most services. They provide comprehensive health care for all Veterans.
- **Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC):** VA implemented CBOCs to make it easier to access health care. These clinics provide the most common outpatient services—including health and wellness visits—without needing to visit a larger medical center.
- **Health Care Center (HCC):** HCCs are clinics operated at least 5 days per week providing primary care, mental health care and on-site specialty services. HCCs also perform ambulatory surgery and/or procedures that may require moderate sedation or general anesthesia.
- **Vet Center:** The goal of Vet Centers is to provide a broad range of counseling, outreach and referral services for Veterans in order to help with their transitions to civilian life.

Within VA health care facilities, you will find roles dedicated specifically to women's health care using a Whole Health approach that is all about you and what matters most to you regarding your health and well-being.

Available where  
**YOU ARE**

VA offers:

- ~172 VAMC sites
- ~1,241 CBOC sites
- ~300 Vet Centers

To find your local VA facility, visit: [Find VA Locations](#)

Or scan the QR code:



# Women's Health Clinic Models

Women's Health Primary Care Providers (WH-PCP) provide women's primary care in three VA clinic models.

The comprehensive primary care clinic models include the following:

## 1 Model 1: General Primary Care

Comprehensive women's primary care is **delivered to women Veterans within primary care clinics serving both men and women**. Mental health services for women are also offered in general primary care clinics through Primary Care–Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI). Your WH-PCP provides referrals to specialty care, such as gynecology care.

## 2 Model 2: Separate but Shared Space

Comprehensive women's primary care is **delivered to women Veterans in a separate space that may be located within or adjacent to primary care clinic areas**.

The clinic may be open part-time or full-time, and may be used for other non-gender-specific services when women Veterans are not being seen. Gynecological care and mental health services are also available in this space and readily available.

## 3 Model 3: Comprehensive Women's Health Center (WHC)

Comprehensive women's primary care is **delivered to women Veterans in an exclusive, separate space**. When possible, a WHC should have:

- A separate entrance
- A separate waiting room

Services and sub-specialty services provided in the space often include:

- Specialty gynecological care
- Mental health
- Social work services
- Breast care
- Neurology
- Nutrition
- Pharmacy

**Note:** Telehealth options are available with all three primary care clinic models

*Women's Health Centers make sure you have access to the appropriate number of health care providers you need for primary care, as well as appropriate support staffing for specialty services.*

# VA Medical Center Women's Health Team

VA's women's health clinics partner with women Veterans every step of the way to provide intentional, patient-centric health care.

VA has established a unique women's care team structure to ensure that women Veterans receive care specifically designed for them. A Women's Health Medical Director and a Women Veterans Program Manager lead a team of providers.

## Women's Health Medical Director (WHMD)

The WHMD works closely with the Women Veterans Program Manager to form the foundation and subject matter expertise of the Women's Health Program at their VAMC. The WHMD works to develop clinical leadership (including quality improvement and educational initiatives), determine appropriate and available models of care, and ensure women Veterans are offered and assigned to a WH-PCP.

Each VAMC has a WHMD or a Women's Health Clinical Champion responsible for clinical oversight of the women's health program.

## Women Veterans Program Manager (WVPM)

All VAMCs have a designated WVPM to help women Veterans access VA benefits and health care services. The WVPM is an advocate for women Veterans by establishing, coordinating and integrating accessible high-quality health care services with multiple disciplines within VA medical facilities. Usually, a practitioner with a health care background, the WVPM often has experience in Women's health care service delivery, with at least 3 years of experience and expertise in program administration.

The WVPM:

- Leads the administrative priorities of the Women's Health Program at their facility
- Assists women Veterans with enrolling in VA health care
- Promotes practices that enhance women Veterans' satisfaction with their care
- Connects women Veterans with other women Veteran peers
- Identifies gaps in health care services
- Ensures each VA facility environment addresses the privacy and quality needs of women
- Supports improvement activities to continually enhance women Veterans' experiences
- Develops and provides education for staff to enhance their awareness around unique needs of women Veterans, so the staff is well-equipped and knowledgeable about providing high-quality care
- Develops new programs and services that align with the needs of women Veterans and empowers them to take charge of their health and well-being

Each VA facility has a designated WVPM you can contact with questions about health services, enrollment and general health system navigation.

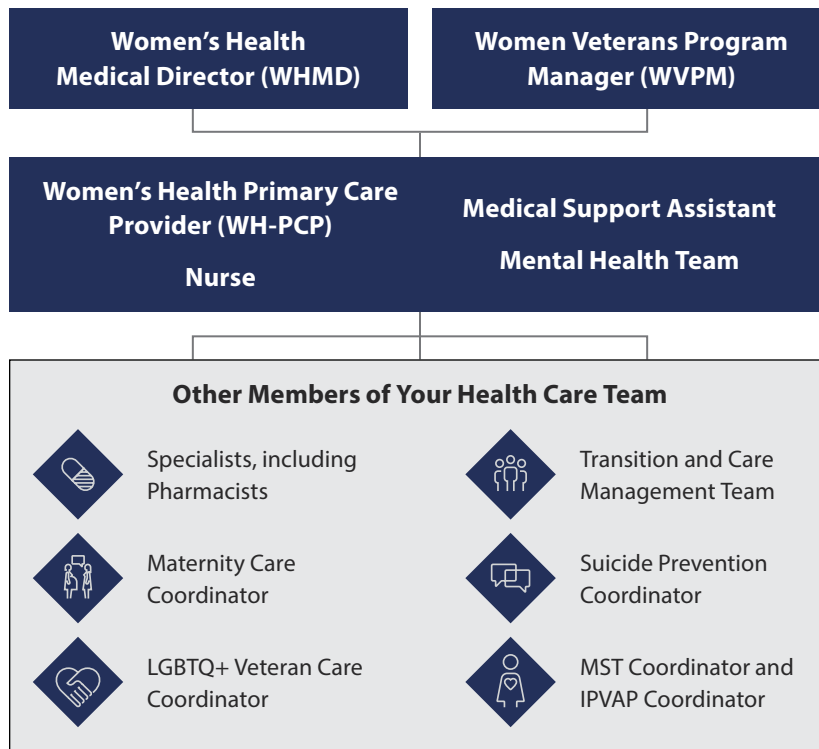
## Did you **KNOW?**

VA Women's health care is culturally competent. That means that the VA employees serving you understand how the military may have affected your health.

# Health Care Providers

When you receive health care at VA, you will typically see a health care provider that is a part of primary care, specialty care or community care.

## Your VA Health Care Team



## Women's Health Primary Care Provider (WH-PCP)

Once enrolled in VA services, you will be assigned or may request a WH-PCP with the gender of your choice, as staffing allows, at your preferred facility. VA women's health care providers are trained on how to care for women's health and conditions that are connected with women-specific military experiences.

The role of the WH-PCP is to provide comprehensive primary care services, including general primary care and gender-specific care for women Veterans enrolled in VA. Your WH-PCP will:

- Provide a long-term patient-provider relationship.
- Be your first point of contact with the VA health care system.
- Serve as the foundation for your VA health care experience.
- Provide referrals for mental health, specialty care, integrative health and wellness programs, community care (if allowable) and other services.

**Note:** Most primary care appointments can be conducted over the phone or through a virtual video appointment platform, making VA care more convenient.

## Did you KNOW?

When you receive health care at VA, you will typically see one of three health care providers:

### 1 Primary Care

Primary care is the foundation of health care at VA. As a woman Veteran, you will work with a WH-PCP as part of your PACT.

### 2 Specialty Care

VA offers many types of specialty care services. VA providers are extensively trained in Veteran needs and provide care tailored to your service experience.

### 3 Community Care

Community care providers are private health care providers. They are "in network" with VA and contracted to provide care for Veterans enrolled in VA health care.

**Note:** A referral is needed from your WH-PCP to see Specialty care and Community care providers.

# Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT)

The PACT is a patient-driven, team-based approach that uses primary care to address your medical, behavioral and psychosocial needs. The PACT collaborates with other VA health services and community resources.

## THE PACT PUTS YOU AT THE CENTER OF YOUR CARE.

- A PACT is a **partnership between you and your health care team** to ensure you receive whole-person care (Whole Health). The Whole Health approach to care empowers, equips and treats you so you can take charge of your health and well-being and live your life to the fullest. Whole Health encourages you to develop a Personal Health Plan, set goals based on what is important to you and work toward those goals with your health team. Many plans include well-being approaches, such as yoga, aquatic therapy, mindfulness meditation, acupuncture and/or creative writing classes. The aim is to equip you with what you need to reach your goals.
- A PACT **offers many ways to access health care**. In addition to personal visits with your WH-PCP, you may schedule visits with other team members, attend group clinics and educational seminars and access information on the web through My HealtheVet.
- A PACT **achieves coordinated care through collaboration**. All of your team members have clearly defined roles. They meet often to talk with you and with each other about your progress toward achieving your health goals. The focus is on building trusted, personal relationships resulting in coordination of all aspects of your health care.
- A PACT **uses a team-based approach**. You are the center of the care team that also includes your family members, caregivers and health care professionals. When additional services are needed to meet your health goals, other care team members may be called in to support your Personal Health plan.

For additional information, visit the [Patient Care Services](#) website.

## Your PACT will:

- Take collective responsibility for your care
- Engage with you to provide personalized high-quality, continuous care
- Arrange for appropriate care with other specialties

## WH-PCP team:

- Provider (WH-PCP)
- Health Technician
- Nurse
- Medical Support Assistant

## Specialist examples:

- Mental Health
- Clinical Pharmacy Specialist
- Social Work
- Nutrition
- Specialty Care Coordinators
- Whole Care Coach



# How VA Supports You

## VA'S ANTI-HARASSMENT AND ANTI-SEXUAL ASSAULT POLICY

VA is committed to an anti-harassment culture where everyone is treated with civility, compassion and respect. Harassment and sexual assault, including sexual harassment and gender-based harassment, are inappropriate conduct and are not tolerated in any VA facility. VA takes all reports of harassment seriously and will investigate and take appropriate action.

Everyone can take an active stance against harassment and sexual assault. You can help, beginning today by:

- Making the White Ribbon VA Pledge
- Completing the Bystander Intervention Training.

## White Ribbon VA

White Ribbon VA is a national call to action to eliminate sexual harassment, sexual assault and domestic violence across the Department of Veterans Affairs by promoting a positive change in culture so that the actions outlined in the pledge become the organizational norm. White Ribbon VA is an awareness movement where ALL people—regardless of their gender—can participate. Visit the [White Ribbon VA pledge website](#) to pledge your commitment to taking an active stand to end sexual harassment, sexual assault and domestic violence.

## Bystander Intervention Training

VA Bystander Intervention Training will give you tools to respond if you witness harassment, sexual harassment or assault. It will help you to feel confident in your ability to recognize an inappropriate situation, know what to do or say to prevent it from getting worse, and how to get help. Take the training today at the [Veteran Bystander Intervention Training home webpage](#).

## Where Can I Learn More?

[VHA White Ribbon VA webpage](#)

## White Ribbon VA PLEDGE



"I, (your name), pledge to never commit, excuse or stay silent about sexual harassment, sexual assault or domestic violence against others."

## Report It!

If you experience or witness harassment or sexual assault at a VA facility, contact:

### VA Medical Center or Clinic

- VA Police
- Patient Advocate
- VA Management Official

### VA Benefits Office

- Harassment Prevention Program Coordinator
- VA Management Official

### VA National Cemetery

- District Harassment Prevention Coordinator
- Cemetery Director
- VA Management Official

### Vet Center

- Local Law Enforcement
- Vet Center Director

### Inspector General (OIG)

Hotline 1-800-488-8244



# VA Community Care Network (CCN) Eligibility

The MISSION Act streamlines and improves VA's community care programs by providing Veterans with better customer service when receiving community care.

If you are eligible for health care through VA, our goal is to provide you with the care you need in a VA facility. When services are not available within a VA facility or other government medical facility, eligible Veterans may be referred to a community provider through VA's Community Care Program. **Prior authorization is required from VA before scheduling with a community provider.**

In June 2019, the MISSION Act replaced the Choice Program. If you are already enrolled in VA, the VA MISSION Act allows you to receive health care within the community. You may be eligible for community care if:

1. You need a service that is not available at a VA medical facility.
2. You live in a U.S. state or territory without a full-service VA medical facility.
3. You qualify under the "Grandfather" provision related to distance eligibility for the Veterans Choice Program.
4. VA cannot furnish care within certain designated access standards, such as average drive time and appointment wait time.
  - a. Average drive time to a specific VA medical facility includes:
    - i. 30-minute average drive time for primary care, mental health and non-institutional extended care services (including adult day health care)
    - ii. 60-minutes average drive time for specialty care
  - b. Average appointment wait time at a specific VA medical facility includes:
    - i. 20 days for primary care, mental health care and non-institutional extended care services, unless the Veteran agrees to a later date in consultation with their VA health care provider
    - ii. 28 days for specialty care from the date of request, unless the Veteran agrees to a later date in consultation with their VA health care provider
5. It is in the Veteran's best medical interest.
6. A VA medical service line does not meet certain quality standards

**Note:** VA calculates average drive times with geo-mapping software that uses inputs, such as traffic.

## Did you **KNOW?**

Eligible Veterans can receive urgent care from an urgent care provider that is part of VA's contracted network of community providers without prior authorization from VA. Please note: You need to confirm whether the location will accept VA benefits before receiving services.

For more information and all the details on community care eligibility, please visit the [Community Care webpage](#) or [Choose VA webpage](#).

*Through the MISSION Act, eligible Veterans can receive urgent care from an urgent care provider who is part of the VA's contracted network of community providers, without requesting prior authorization from VA.*

# Locate Your New VA Facility

The VA Facility Locator Tool is designed for ease of use, with facility information for more than 1,900 facilities.

Designed for ease of use, you can use the VA Facility Locator tool to browse by state and administration, and view an interactive map of the United States by VISN.

You may find several facility options in your local area and can choose which facility works best for you. To find your local facility, visit the [Find VA Locations](#) website. This website will ask for your address, preferred facility type and preferred distance. After inputting this information, you will receive a list of nearby facilities. Click the hyperlink for your facility and it will direct you to that facility's webpage, where you can learn more about specific operational details and service offerings.

## ACTIVITY: Locate a VA Health Center

### Step 1:

1. Visit the [Find VA Locations](#) website
2. Input an address or zip code
3. Filter "Facility type" by **VA Health**
4. Filter "Service type" by **All VA health services**
5. Select the **Search** Button

### Step 2:

Browse nearby facilities

### Step 3:

Record the following facility information:

The screenshot shows the 'Find VA locations' web form. At the top, it says 'Find a VA location or in-network community care provider. For same-day care for minor illnesses or injuries, select Urgent care for facility type.' Below this is a 'Coronavirus update' link. The form has a text input for 'City, state or postal code (\*Required)' with a 'Use my location' button. Below that are two dropdown menus: 'Facility type (\*Required)' with 'VA health' selected, and 'Service type' with 'All VA health services' selected. A blue 'Search' button is on the right.

- Facility address
- Contact information
- Hours of operation
- Website
- General facility services and program information
- Women's Health New Patient wait times
- Women's Health Existing Patient wait times
- Women Veteran Program Manager
- Contact information

**Note:** You can obtain local Women Veteran Program Manager (WVPM) information by directly contacting your local Women's Health Care Center.

# Notes



Module  
3

## Available Women's Health Services

“

Definitely took out the mystery of everything... it's good to know what options are out there and what I can expect.

— Former Women's Health Transition Training participant

”

# VA High-Quality Health Care

## VA IS A NATIONAL HEALTH CARE SYSTEM THAT PRIORITIZES PATIENT SAFETY, QUALITY OF CARE AND IMPROVEMENT.

The health care you receive at VA is equal to any private health system. You can trust that VA is delivering high-quality care.

### VA Delivers High-Quality, Safe Care

- VA facilities are accredited by the Joint Commission (JC), the largest and oldest accrediting body in the United States.
- JC accreditation “confers recognition that health care organizations meet certain standards of quality and safety but also confers deemed compliance with the health care quality standards of payors, both public and commercial.”
- JC accreditation is a nationally-recognized validation that an organization has systems and processes in place to provide safe and quality-oriented health care.

### VA Care Is Equivalent To Private Sector Care

- Research studies have been conducted and published to compare care delivered at VA to the private sector.
- A study in the Journal of Surgical Research found that “VAMCs match or outperform neighboring non-VAs in surgical quality metrics and patient satisfaction ratings. Veterans receiving surgical care at VAMCs may receive equivalent or better care than at non-VAs.”
- A study in the Journal of General Internal Medicine found that “The VA system performed similarly or better than the non-VA system on most of the nationally recognized measures of inpatient and outpatient care quality.”

### VA Publicly Reports Care Metrics

- VA publishes data on its facilities. You can view data on health care quality and safety at your facility at the [VA Facility Quality Data webpage](#).
- The data reported here is for standardized metrics also reported on the Center for Medicaid and Medicare (CMS)'s Hospital Compare Tool.

# Programs are Evidence Based

VA actively follows and collects information on the most common medical conditions seen among women Veterans using the VA health care system.

Only within the VA health care system can you be assured that your medical provider will acknowledge military service as a part of your life, understand your past experiences, and appropriately screen, diagnose and treat your needs.

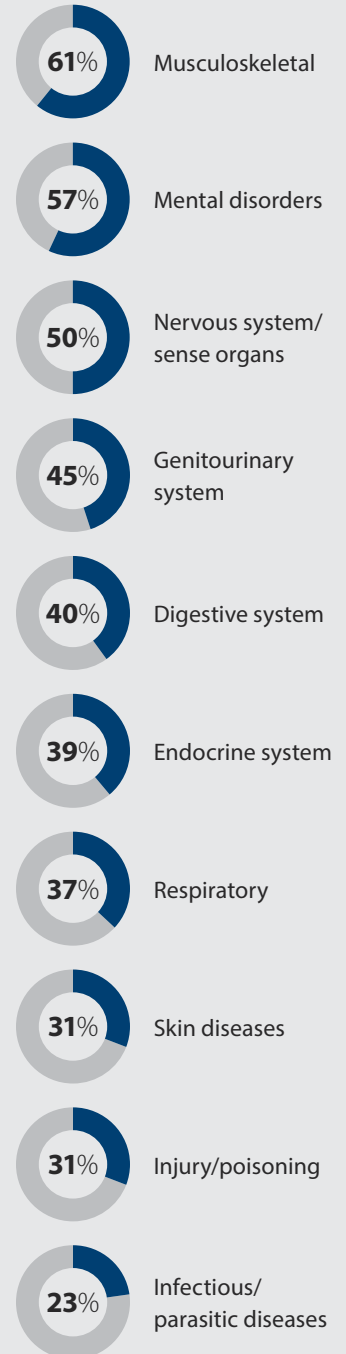
VA uses research to develop evidence-based strategies to improve care and tailor programs and services to better serve women Veterans through a personalized, holistic approach to care.

You can sign up to receive highlights via email regarding VA's research on women's health. Please visit [VHA's Email Updates sign up webpage](#) to subscribe.

Research* has shown...	Leading to...
Women Veterans assigned to Women's Health— Primary Care Providers have higher satisfaction and quality of care	Policy for Comprehensive Women's Health, as well as lower patient attrition
Pregnant women Veterans with mental health conditions can have more complications and risks during pregnancy	Policy for Maternity Care Coordination at VA Development of the National VA Women's Reproductive Mental Health Consultation Program
Women Veterans have high rates of chronic pain and musculoskeletal conditions	Development of specialized training for VA and DOD primary care providers on how to recognize and treat pain and musculoskeletal issues

\* Research is based on women Veterans utilizing VA services

Common post-deployment medical and mental health diagnoses in Servicewomen coming to VA 2002–2015.



# VA Whole Health

## Overview

Whole Health is VA's cutting-edge approach to health care that empowers and enables YOU to take charge of your health and well-being.

- Is comprehensive and centers around what matters to you, not what's the matter with you.
- Empowers you to work with your health care team to develop a personalized health plan based on your values, needs and goals.
- Includes all the necessary inpatient hospital care and outpatient services to promote, preserve or restore your health.



You will work with your Women's Health Primary Care Providers (WH-PCP) to create a personal health plan based on your values, needs and goals. Your WH-PCP will ask you questions from the Personalized Health Inventory (PHI) as the first step in the process to develop your Personal Health Plan. It can be helpful to complete the PHI prior to your first appointment, and you can create your PHI online Whole Health Plan at the [Making Your Plan webpage](#).

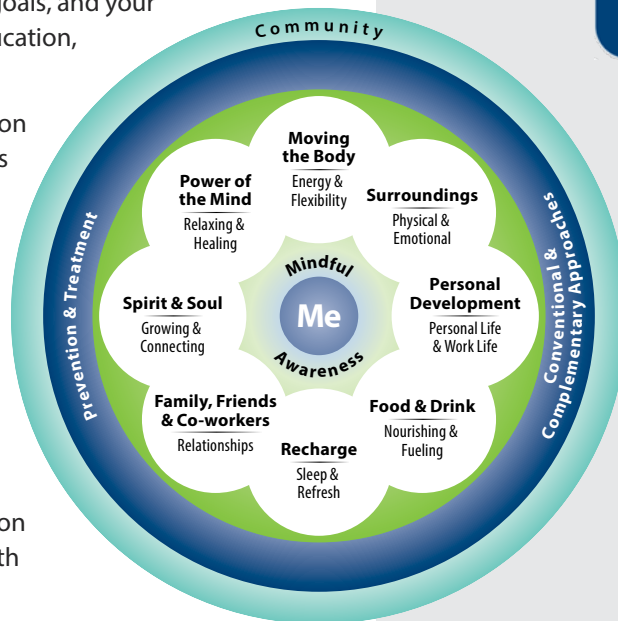
Example questions include:

- What brings you a sense of joy and happiness?
- What REALLY matters to you in your life?
- What is your vision of your best possible health?

The Components of Proactive Health and Well-being is a tool your health care team will use to help you focus on those areas of your life that impact your health and well-being. You will identify areas of strengths and opportunities where you can make healthy changes. You can create your goals, and your health care team will partner with you to provide education, resources or tools to help you reach those goals!

Your Personalized Health Plan may have a combination of clinical care, health coaching, well-being programs and complementary and integrative health (CIH) services. Available CIH services include but are not limited to: acupuncture (including battlefield acupuncture), biofeedback, chiropractic care, guided imagery, clinical hypnosis, mindfulness/meditation, tai chi or qi gong, yoga and massage for treatment of certain conditions. This integrated approach to care is to help you achieve the best version of you.

Please ask your WH-PCP about the 2-hour Introduction to Whole Health groups to start you off on your health and well-being journey.



## Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.

## Access

- Your WH-PCP should be able to answer any questions you have about available services and help you set up an appointment.
- Referrals are often required for complementary and integrative health services

## Resources

For additional information and resources about VA's Whole Health program, you can explore:

- [VA Whole Health website](#)
- [VAntage: Live Whole Health blog](#)
- [Whole Health Mobile Apps and Online Tools information page](#)
- [Live Whole Health app](#)



# Available VA Services



## Comprehensive Primary Care

- Cancer Screening
- Cardiovascular Risk Assessment and Prevention
- Musculoskeletal treatments
- Vaccines and Immunizations
- Other Preventative Screening Care



## Reproductive Health

- Gynecology Services
- Contraception
- Pre-Conception Planning
- Maternity Care
  - Belts
  - Bras
  - Pumps
- Newborn Care
- Infertility
- Incontinence Treatment/Support
- Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy
- Menopause



## Mental Health

- Mental Health Care Services
- Substance Use Disorder Treatments
- Interpersonal Trauma
  - Military Sexual Trauma
  - Intimate Partner Violence
  - Sexual Assault
- Suicide Prevention and Resources



## General Medical and Specialty Care

- Gender-Specific Prosthetics and Sensory Aids
- LGBTQ+
- Nutrition and Weight Management
- Other Medical Subspecialties



# Comprehensive Primary Care Cancer Screening

## Overview

VA uses the latest evidence-based practices for cancer screening. However, each person's screening timing is different based on their specific situation and potential risk factors. Since 2008, one of VA's major initiatives has been to enhance preventive screening services, specifically for breast and cervical cancer. All women Veterans are eligible for screening mammography either on-site or in the community. VA has expanded access to on-site mammograms by 62% since 2010. Additionally, some facilities offer mammograms for walk-in patients as well as same-day ultrasounds.

## Services

Through VA, you can expect services including, but not limited to:

- **Cervical cancer screenings**, which include Pap smears to look for precancerous changes on the cervix that might evolve into cervical cancer if not treated appropriately, and HPV tests to detect the human papillomavirus (HPV) that can cause cancer cell changes
  - Screening recommendation: Every 3–5 years based on age and risk factors
- **Breast cancer screening**, which looks for changes in breast tissue to detect cancer; mammography is currently available on-site at 62 VAMCs. VA also covers screening at mammography centers in the community
  - Screening recommendation: Annually for ages 45–54 and biannually after age 55
- **Lung cancer screenings**, which detect cell abnormalities in the lungs
  - Screening recommendation: Adults aged 55–80 with a history of smoking
- **Colorectal cancer screenings**, which detect cancerous colon cells through colonoscopy procedures
  - Screening recommendation: Starting at age 45–75; frequency depends on the type of test done and the results

Please reference the Preventive Care Recommendations Chart on [pages 92-93](#) and talk to your WH-PCP about your individual screening risks.

## Eligibility

- All Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are eligible for cancer screenings, which includes cervical and breast cancer screenings.
- Some VA facilities have on-site mammography, while others will refer you to a mammography center in the community.

## Access

- Your Women's Health Primary Care Providers (WH-PCP) will place an order for your mammogram.
- You can talk to your WH-PCP about any screening questions and needs.

*VA adopted the American Cancer Society guidelines for breast cancer screening—women should be able to start screenings as early as age 40, if desired. Talk to your WH-PCP about what is right for you.*

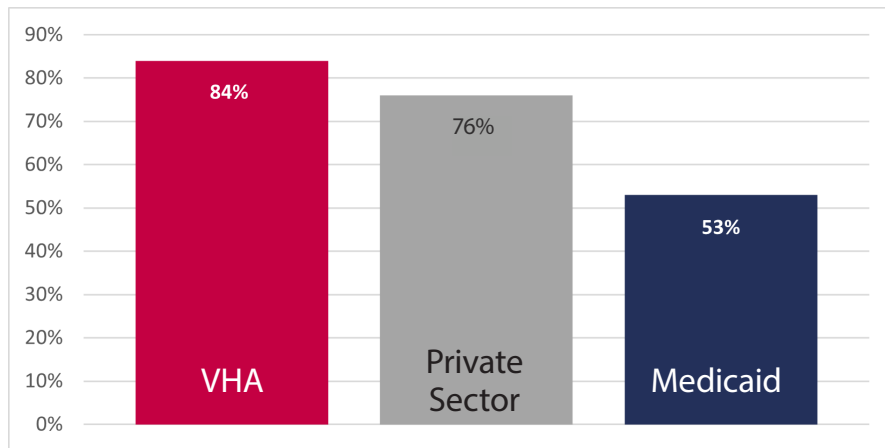
# Comprehensive Primary Care Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Rates

## DATA DRIVES QUALITY

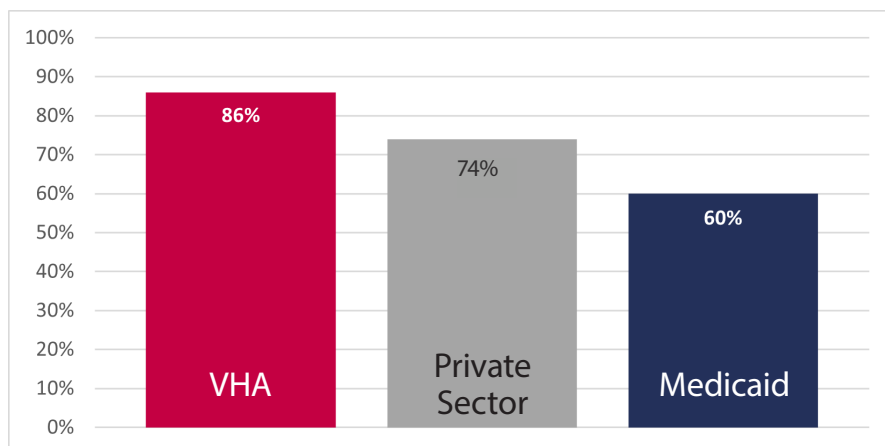
In 2019, VA analyzed data on breast and cervical cancer screening rates across three different health systems: VA, the private sector and Medicaid.\*

VA ranked highest for administering two specific women's health cancer screenings, outperforming the private sector and Medicaid, in 2019.

### 2019 Breast Cancer Screening Rates



### 2019 Cervical Cancer Screening Rates



\* VA data was collected from VA patient medical charts; VA's Veterans Support Service Center compiled measurements. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) collected and published private sector data in the Cancer Trends Progress Report. Medicaid health screening data was collected from the Medicaid website and the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA).

*Understanding the importance of data to drive health system reform, VA has prioritized data collection and research for women's health. Professional teams at VA Headquarters in Washington, D.C. provide oversight to constantly monitor and evaluate health care quality and health disparities.*

# Comprehensive Primary Care Cardiovascular

## Overview

The purpose of cardiac services for Veterans is to reduce life-long cardiac risks, as well as diagnose and treat cardiovascular diseases (CVDs). Looking at women's health over the past 2 decades, researchers have noticed that after being separated from the military for 2–5 years, women's risks increase for cardiovascular diseases, even in the youngest age group. Women are more likely to have additional risk factors for CVD, such as depression, certain autoimmune conditions and pregnancy-related CVD diagnoses (for example, gestational diabetes), compared with their male counterparts.

Your Women's Health Primary Care Providers (WH-PCP) will assess your risks and help you get started with any necessary cardiovascular prevention strategies that should be included in your Whole Health plan, which might include more exercise, changes in nutrition, weight loss, smoking cessation and/or medications.

## Preventative Measures

According to the American Heart Association, education and action can prevent 80% of cardiac events. To prevent cardiovascular issues, recommended efforts include:

- Maintaining a healthy, balanced diet
- Striving for a healthy weight
- Completing around 3 hours of exercise per week
- Keeping conditions like diabetes and hypertension well-controlled
- Managing your stress levels
- Aiming to get 7–8 hours of sleep every night
- Avoiding smoking and excessive alcohol intake

## Symptoms

Additionally, heart attacks may present differently for women. While women can experience classic chest pain, they also often experience the following symptoms:

- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing or pain in the center of the chest
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach
- Shortness of breath
- Cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

If you have any symptoms of cardiovascular disease, your provider may recommend further testing including: electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG), stress tests, cardiac catheterization and/or cardiac MRI. For Veterans in need of cardiovascular treatment, appointments and services are coordinated through your WH-PCP. VA covers all medically-necessary prescriptions for cardiovascular treatment.

## Did you **KNOW?**

The risk of heart disease and health outcomes differ by race and ethnicity.

## Risk Factors

- Research from the American College of Cardiology shows that Black and Hispanic adults have higher rates of risk factors like obesity, hypertension and diabetes.

## Social Determinants of Health

- The American College of Cardiology research also shows that disparities in factors such as access to care, physical environment and employment status affect cardiovascular health.

The VA Office of Health Equity supports efforts across VA to reduce health disparities by creating programs for Veteran groups at higher risk for poor health outcomes. For example, VA has launched a home-based cardiac rehabilitation program with the goal of increasing access to cardiac care for Black and rural Veterans.

*VA providers now have access to DOD records to support a smooth transition into VA care. Veteran patients with a high cardiovascular risk category receive a closer hand-off.*

# Comprehensive Primary Care Musculoskeletal

## INJURY EVALUATION AND TREATMENT

### Overview

Musculoskeletal conditions and injuries are the number one reason that women, as well as men, visit VA health care facilities. High-impact activities or heavy combat gear can be causes for these conditions and injuries.

Musculoskeletal injuries affect the human body's movement or musculoskeletal system (including, muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, discs and blood vessels). Early enrollment in treatment and physical therapy/rehabilitation can help prevent the development of chronic pain, additional injuries, limited muscle function and negative mood/motivation.

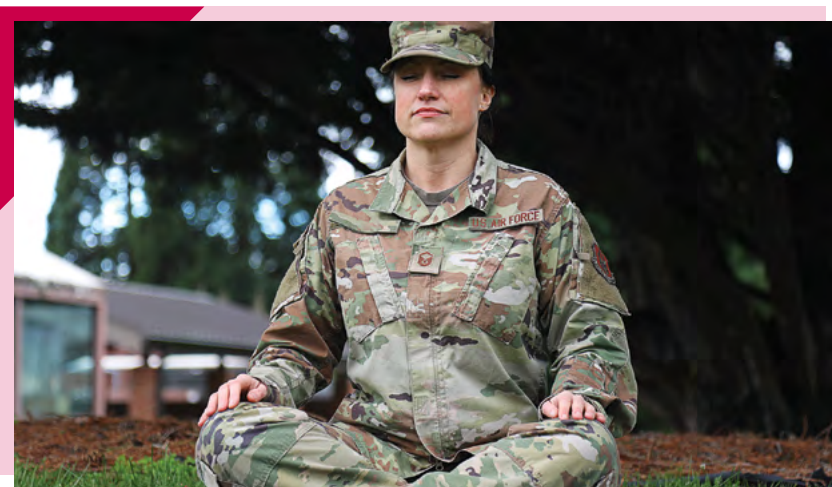
VA provides treatment, including primary care, rheumatology, orthopedics, psychiatry referrals and surgery, if needed.

### Services

Veterans are also eligible for the following services to treat musculoskeletal injuries:

- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Recreational therapy
- Chiropractic
- Pain management
- Steroid injections
- Complementary and integrative health services
  - Including yoga and tai chi

Fundamental musculoskeletal services are available at all VAMCs. Specialists will be assigned for musculoskeletal treatment. WH-PCPs are trained to address musculoskeletal issues for women.



### Eligibility

All Veterans enrolled in VA health care are eligible to receive musculoskeletal treatment that their WH-PCP deems medically necessary.

### Access

- You should talk to your WH-PCP about screening and treatment for musculoskeletal injuries.
- Your WH-PCP can take care of many musculoskeletal problems and will refer you to other services as needed.

*By enrolling in VA health care and attending your first VA appointment, you can ensure your musculoskeletal injury treatment continues from MHS to VA.*

# Musculoskeletal Treatments *(continued)*

## Physical Therapy

### Overview

VA offers physical therapy as part of the treatment for specific conditions and injuries. The number of sessions depends on the condition and initial needs assessment.

Physical therapy might be used to treat conditions such as musculoskeletal (MSK) pain, which is pain in muscles, tendons, ligaments, bones and joints. Women Veterans are more likely to experience MSK pain.

Your WH-PCP can discuss physical therapy with you and determine if it might be a good option. If referred, a Physical Therapist (PT) will examine you and work with you to develop a customized treatment plan. Goals of physical therapy might include reducing pain, improving function, decreasing disability, promoting wellness and improving quality of life.

If you separate from the military based on medical orders, you can work with a Transition Coordinator, as well as your WH-PCP, to get physical therapy at VA.

### Services

Physical therapy approaches will be tailored to your individual conditions and needs. Your provider will recommend the best services for you. Options may include:

- Heat treatments, such as hot water baths and heating pads
- Cold treatments, such as ice packs, ice baths, and ice massage
- Gentle stretching
- Muscle strengthening exercises
- Vibration therapy
- Aquatic therapy (therapy in a pool)



### Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.

### Access

- Your WH-PCP will provide a referral for physical therapy if it is designated as part of your treatment plan.
- The number of sessions depends on your condition and individual needs.

### Did you KNOW?

Many VA facilities can provide physical therapy via telehealth. Talk to your care team to determine if virtual physical therapy is an option for you.

# Musculoskeletal Treatments *(continued)*

## Pain Management

### Services

Through VA, pain management service offerings include both online resources and in-house treatment. Some of these services include:

- Interventional pain treatment (for example, injections, blocks)
- Botox for headaches
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Chiropractic care
- Acupuncture
- Yoga
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Massage Therapy

Your provider may also consider medication. Medications available for treating pain vary greatly. Each medication has its risks and benefits, so it is important to have open and honest conversations with your provider to determine the options that will work best for you.

### Pain Management 101: Suggestions to Decrease Pain

1. Pace yourself and take breaks
2. Practice relaxation and stress reduction
3. Incorporate daily motion
4. Spend time on activities you enjoy
5. Work with physical therapy
6. Share how you are feeling
7. Make healthy lifestyle choices, such as improving sleep habits



### Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.

### Access

Talk to your WH-PCP to explore the pain management strategies that are best for you. There is no limit to the quantity of services for eligible Veterans, but referrals are usually required.

### Resources

Learn more about VA's comprehensive resources for pain management at [the VA.gov Pain Management page](https://www.va.gov/pain-management/). This includes an overview of treatments available, self-management courses, and home practice exercises.

# Comprehensive Primary Care Immunizations

Immunizations are designed to protect you from the seasonal flu and other vaccine-preventable diseases. VA offers vaccinations against a range of infectious agents, including:

- Hepatitis A and B
- Human papillomavirus (HPV)
- Pneumococcus
- Influenza
- COVID-19
- Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis (Tdap)

## Influenza

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone over the age of 6 months receive an annual flu shot. In the military, it is mandatory to receive an annual influenza vaccination; however, once you are a civilian it is your choice whether or not to be vaccinated.

## Common Myths

**Myth ▶** The flu shot can give you the flu.

**Fact ▶** The flu shot **cannot** cause flu illness. Flu vaccines that are administered with a needle (flu shots) are currently made in two ways:

- a) Flu vaccine viruses that have been killed and are therefore not infectious, **OR**
- b) With proteins from a flu vaccine that are not infectious

**Myth ▶** It is too late to get the flu shot after Thanksgiving.

**Fact ▶** Influenza **vaccination can protect you** for as long as flu viruses are circulating. The flu is unpredictable and seasons can vary. Seasonal flu disease usually peaks between December and March most years, but the disease can occur as late as May. Getting an annual flu shot later in the flu season—December or later—can still be protective.

**Myth ▶** The flu shot increases your risk of getting COVID-19.

**Fact ▶** There is **no evidence** that getting a flu vaccination increases your risk of getting sick from a coronavirus like the one that causes COVID-19.

**Myth ▶** Thimerosal, present in multi-dose flu vaccines, is harmful to humans.

**Fact ▶** Thimerosal use in vaccines and other medical products has a record of being **very safe**. Flu vaccines in multi-dose vials contain thimerosal to safeguard against contamination of the vial. Most single-dose vials and pre-filled syringes of flu vaccines do not contain a preservative such as thimerosal because they are intended to be used once.

## Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.

## Access

- Work with your Women's Health Primary Care Providers (WH-PCP) to determine which vaccines and immunizations are right for you, discuss any possible side-effects and schedule an appointment.
- Currently, no-cost flu vaccines are available for eligible Veterans at more than 70,000 in-



network community providers nationwide.

# Comprehensive Primary Care Immunizations *(continued)*

## High-Risk Populations and Influenza

**Chronic Conditions:** A history of stroke, heart attack, kidney, liver and heart diseases puts your body at risk for complications, or even death, if you become infected with the flu. The CDC reports people with a positive flu test are at an increased risk of heart attack that is 6 times higher than normal the week following an infection. In fact, adults living with diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity and pregnancy are hospitalized more often from the flu than adults without these conditions.

**Over 65:** Women over age 65 are encouraged to receive the vaccine to prevent flu infection. As we age, our immune systems become more sensitive, and we are unable to fight off infections as well as when we were younger. Additionally, the flu is highly contagious and active seniors can share the virus with others who are at risk of complications from the virus.

- In recent years, it is estimated that between 70% and 85% of seasonal flu-related deaths have occurred in people age 65 years and older.
- Between 50% and 70% of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations have occurred among people in this age group.
- For the best protection this season, ask for a special "high dose" flu shot for people age 65 and older.

**Pregnancy:** If you are pregnant, or planning to become pregnant during this flu season, consider getting your vaccine now. The shot is safe in all trimesters of pregnancy and may help prevent a trip to the hospital. A 2018 CDC study reported that a flu shot may reduce a pregnant woman's risk of hospitalization from the flu by 40%.

For pregnant women receiving the flu shot, an additional benefit is that it may continue to protect their babies for a few months after birth. This is very important because infants are not able to get a flu shot until they are 6 months old.

- Changes in the immune system, heart and lungs during pregnancy make pregnant women more prone to severe illness from the flu. In addition, infection with the flu may be harmful for a pregnant woman's developing baby. The flu shot reduces the risk of flu-associated acute respiratory infection in pregnant women by about one-half.
- Flu shots have been given to millions of pregnant women over many years with a good safety record. There is a lot of evidence that flu vaccines can be given safely during pregnancy. CDC and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) continue to recommend that pregnant women get a flu vaccine during any trimester of their pregnancy because the flu poses a danger to pregnant women and a flu vaccine can prevent serious illness, including hospitalization, for pregnant women.

## Resources

- Please see [page 92](#) for a list of vaccines available from VA, as well as age-specific recommendations for doses and timing of vaccinations.
- The Preventive Care Recommendations chart is also available on the National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention's [Recommended Screening Tests and Immunizations for Women webpage](#).



# Additional Preventive Screenings

## Overview

Your health benefits include important preventive care services:

- Periodic medical exams (including women-specific exams)
- Health education, including nutrition education
- Immunization against infectious diseases
- Counseling on inheritance of genetically-determined diseases

VA offers many preventive screening tests such as screenings for:

- Cholesterol
- Cancer
- Blood pressure
- HPV

A full list of preventive screening services is on the Preventive Care Recommendations chart in the Additional Health Resources section on [pages 92-93](#) or online at the [National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention webpage](#).



## Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.

## Access

Work with your WH-PCP to determine which preventive screening tests are most appropriate for your care

# Reproductive Health Routine Women's Health Care

## Overview

VA provides women Veterans with a wide range of gynecology services, both routine and specialty, throughout their lives. Your WH-PCP provides your routine women's health care, and any gynecologic specialty needs will be referred to a gynecologist.

## Services

Routine women's health care includes:

- Breast health (including mammograms)
  - Your WH-PCP will refer you for your mammogram (either in-house or in the community)
- Cervical cancer screening (Pap smear)
  - Your WH-PCP can conduct your Pap smear; you will only be referred to a gynecologist if there are abnormalities
- Sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention and treatment
- Birth control counseling and management
  - You may be referred to a gynecologist for some types of birth control, like an IUD
- Pelvic exams
- HPV vaccine
  - The HPV vaccine can be administered up to age 45; however, it is important to get this vaccine earlier in life, ideally before age 26
  - The vaccine becomes more ineffective the older you get, due to the chances you have already had exposure to HPV through sexual activity

If you are unsure when you last got these routine gynecological screenings, talk to your MHS provider and get them before you separate. Your WH-PCP will ask when you last received exams, or they can perform exams again if you are unsure.

Visit VA annually for your well-woman exam, and talk to your provider about your concerns and desired path forward.

## Gynecology

If you need services beyond what your WH-PCP can provide, you may be referred to specialty gynecology. Specialists provide services such as treatment of abnormal cervical pathology and cyst removals, as well as gynecologic surgery for IUD insertion, pelvic pain, abnormal uterine bleeding and other needs.

For women who feel especially stressed by pelvic exams and gynecologic procedures (for example, after having experienced sexual trauma), specialized mental health services are available to help you reduce and manage this stress. If you anticipate stress associated with these procedures, talk to your WH-PCP, who can plan an appropriate referral.

## Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.

## Access

- Coordinate with your WH-PCP for necessary assessments and referrals. Referrals are required for all specialty services
- Screening timelines are determined individually with your provider.
- In all VA health care settings, you have the right to request a chaperone during a sensitive or near sensitive examination, procedure, or treatment. Trauma informed care (TIC) concepts will be utilized.

*Your WH-PCP will be able to provide all of your primary care and women specific health services, including well-woman exams. All additional services can be performed by a specialist.*

# Reproductive Health Family Planning

## SEXUAL HEALTH AND CONTRACEPTION

### Overview

Sexual health and wellness is an important area of overall well-being. Your team will ask you about your sexual health and functioning in an open and nonjudgmental way to support your overall health. If you have any concerns in this area, there may be services available. For additional information on family planning relating to pre-conception and infertility, refer to [pages 37-41](#).

### Contraception Services

VA provides comprehensive contraception care services and offers a wide range of birth control options for Veterans. Once enrolled at VA, Veterans are eligible for the following contraception services after discussion with their WH-PCP:

- Contraception counseling
- Birth control prescriptions
- Insertion of long-acting reversible contraceptives (LARCs)

After discussion with their WH-PCP, Veterans can access the following types of birth control:

- **LARCs:** implant, IUD, depo-injection
  - Some WH-PCPs at VAMCs can perform the procedure. Otherwise, a gynecologist will perform the insertion.
- **Hormones:** pill, patch, ring
- **Barrier methods:** condoms, sponges, cervical cap, spermicides
- **Same-day emergency contraception:** Plan B
  - This may require an order from your WH-PCP. You can pick-up medication at your VA pharmacy. You can also get this medication in advance with a prescription during your WH-PCP appointment, if needed.
- **Sterilization:** tubal ligation, bilateral salpingectomy (removal of both tubes)

Some birth control options may require an order from your provider. An advanced provision may be available, if needed. Many options can be obtained at your VA pharmacy. Copays may apply.

**Important to note:** Your WH-PCP will provide your women-specific health care (for example, Pap smears and contraception prescriptions). Any additional gynecology services, including invasive procedures, and some LARC insertions or surgery, will be referred to a gynecologist

### Eligibility

- All Veterans enrolled in VA health care are eligible to receive contraception care services and medications.
- Contraception is fully covered for many Veterans, but your priority rating will ultimately determine your cost of care and medication copays.
- Birth control prescriptions are available and have the same guidelines as all prescriptions.
- Veterans with greater than 50% service disability never pay for any medications.

### Access

- You should schedule an appointment with your WH-PCP to talk about your contraceptive needs.
- Bring your last refill or prescription with you to VA so you can continue your MHS prescription.
- VA's Pharmacy can provide your prescribed medications on-site or by mail order.
- Most types of contraception found in the community are also available at VA.
- VA does not cover abortion procedures and counseling.

*Through VA's Pharmacy, you can get your prescription medications, including birth control, for minimal or zero copay.*

# Reproductive Health Abortion Counseling and Services

## Overview

VA now offers abortion counseling and—in specific cases—abortion services to pregnant Veterans regardless of a state's local regulations. These services are available at VA medical centers across the country as part of VA's reproductive health offerings.

## VA Abortion Counseling

All pregnant Veterans enrolled in VA healthcare may receive tailored, unique abortion counseling as part of VA family planning services. The counseling women Veterans may receive will correspond to the unique health needs and situations as they apply to the Veterans seeking care.

## Available Abortion Services

VA offers abortion services to pregnant Veterans in the following situations:

- When a health care provider deems the abortion medically necessary
- When the life or health of the pregnant Veteran is in danger because of the pregnancy
- When the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest

Talk to your VA health care provider to determine if these services are available and clinically appropriate for you.

## Determining Eligibility

To receive these services, the Veteran must be enrolled in VA health care. VA provides this care based on an appropriate health care professional's determination that it is needed to promote, preserve or restore the health of the Veteran in accord with generally accepted medical practice standards. Applicable cases may include ectopic pregnancy or miscarriage.

VA will determine the clinical necessity of the procedure on a case-by-case basis, and after consultation between the provider and the Veteran they serve.

## VA Care and Local Laws

VA recognizes that some Veterans may live in states with more restrictions. However:

- VA is providing services to protect the health and life of Veterans.
- VA employees working within the scope of their federal employment may provide authorized services.
- For more information on the services VA provides please visit the [Reproductive Health](#) site and click on "Abortion Services."

## VA Community Care Program and Abortion Services

- Any VA service must be authorized under the Veterans Community Care Program (VCCP) to be covered in the local community by VA.
- If necessary, abortion services meet VA criteria and are authorized by VCCP they may be performed by providers in the community.
- For more information on Community Care, please see [page 17](#) of this handbook.

# Reproductive Health Pre-Conception Planning

## Overview

Pre-conception planning is about taking action now for a healthier pregnancy in the future. VA provides a full range of pre-conception planning services. During your visit, your WH-PCP will talk to you about your pre-pregnancy health. These conversations can include the following topics:

- General nutrition
- Reproductive history and life plan
- Smoking history
- Drug and/or alcohol use
- Physical assessment
- Healthy weight and nutrition
- Healthy environment
- Mental health
- Safety of currently prescribed medications during pregnancy
- Genetic counseling and screening
- Infections and immunization
- Management of chronic diseases, such as hypertension and diabetes

Additional areas covered can include vitamin supplementation, psychological and behavioral risks, pregnancy complications, IPV, partner's health and family history.

A detailed overview of VA Maternity Care services is provided on [pages 38-39](#).

If you voluntarily separate from active duty while pregnant, you may apply for transitional medical coverage under the Continued Health Care Benefit Program within 60 days after losing MHS/TRICARE eligibility.

VA's Teratogenic Drugs (T-Drugs) program is a medical record system for prescription drug management for pregnant women.

To avoid exposure to agents that could harm the development of an embryo or a fetus, VA's T-Drugs program ensures pregnant Veterans receive safe medications and alerts providers of unsafe medications.

## Eligibility

- All enrolled women Veterans of reproductive age are eligible for pre-conception planning as it is part of routine primary care.
- You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.
- If you are pregnant when you enroll at VA, ask your WH-PCP to refer you to a Maternity Care Coordinator.
- A maternity care consult to the community may also be required.

## Access

- Schedule an appointment with your WH-PCP.
- Referrals are not required. Typically, pre-conception planning is discussed during a primary care visit.
- Pre-conception planning can often be completed in one visit.
- If you are on medication for a mental health condition, such as anxiety or depression, your WH-PCP can access a reproductive mental health consultation to help you make a plan to keep you and your baby as healthy as possible during pregnancy.

# Reproductive Health Maternity Care

## Overview

Maternity benefits have been included in VA's medical benefits package since 1999. Generally speaking, maternity benefits begin with confirmation of pregnancy, during the first trimester if possible. Then maternity benefits continue through the postpartum visit, usually 6-8 weeks after delivery or when the Veteran is medically released from obstetric care.

Non-VA (community care) providers provide maternity care in non-VA facilities. Women can continue to receive care for other conditions at VA during this time. A Maternity Care Coordinator (MCC) will be assigned to each Veteran to help her coordinate maternity care.

## Services

Approved maternity services include:

- Comprehensive assessment
- Prenatal care and delivery with authorization
- Standard and special laboratory tests
- Prenatal screening for genetic disorders
- Gestational dating ultrasounds
- New specialty consultations, including lactation consultants
- Coordination with other VA care
- Screening for and treatment of mental health conditions, such as depression
- Postpartum care and contraception
- Newborn care (for 7 days, including the day of birth)
- Pharmacy prescriptions
- Pregnancy-related education, including lactation support
- Non-emergent maternity-related care
- National Cemetery Administration (NCA) services for infant loss

If you or your spouse are pregnant at the time of your transition, you may be eligible to extend your in-service health care benefits through six weeks following delivery. You may also choose to enroll in VA health care. Be sure to enroll as soon as possible after separating from the military.

More information is included in VHA Handbook 1330.03. VA/DOD Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Management of Pregnancy—Patient Summary can be accessed online: [VA/DOD Clinical Practice Guideline for Management of Pregnancy](#).

The Purple Book is a complete guide to pregnancy in VA and DOD, and can be accessed online: [Pregnancy & Children: A Goal Oriented Guide to Prenatal Care](#).

## Eligibility

- All confirmed pregnant Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are eligible for Maternity Care Coordination.
- Please note when transitioning from MHS continued coverage is not automatic; arrangements with your current coverage provider may be needed.
- Prenatal care and deliveries occur in non-VA facilities but are covered by CA.

## Access

- Each VAMC has a Maternity Care Coordinator that will reach out to you as soon as you are confirmed pregnant by a referral from your WH-PCP.
- You should work with your MCC and PCP team throughout your pregnancy to ensure that your health care needs are being met.
- Your MCC should be able to answer any questions you have during pregnancy around available services and coverage.

# Reproductive Health Maternity Care *(continued)*

## Nursing Bras, Breast Pumps, Maternity Belts and Other Supplies

Contact your MCC to obtain nursing bras, nursing pads, lanolin, breast pumps and maternity belts at least 2 weeks in advance of your estimated date of delivery.

Through the VA Pharmacy, you can obtain related supplies, such as breast pads, breast milk storage bags and nipple cream. Additional information can be found online: [Women Veterans Health Care: Breastfeeding](#).



## Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.

## Access

Work with your MCC or WH-PCP team to get a referral.

# Reproductive Health Newborn Care

## Overview and Services

VA provides newborn health care services for up to 7 days including the date of birth. This benefit includes all appropriate post-delivery services.

While VA will pay for up to 7 days of newborn care, services will be performed in the community and not at a VA health care facility. Also, sign up with the Text4baby App to get free health and safety information about your infant's development. Learn more at [text4baby.org](https://text4baby.org).



## Eligibility

- You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.
- You must be receiving VA maternity benefits.

## Access

Talk to your MCC at your preferred VA health care facility. The MCC, Social Work Office and Office of Community Care will work together to provide support around newborn care.



# Reproductive Health Family Planning

## INFERTILITY

### Overview

Infertility is the inability to conceive after 1 year of regular unprotected intercourse. Older women and women with a known cause of infertility should seek care earlier.

For eligible Veterans, VA has a range of infertility assessment and counseling services, which largely align with the infertility services available at DOD. All enrolled Veterans may be provided with comprehensive health counseling, evaluation management and select treatment for infertility conditions regardless of service connection, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or relationship/marital status.

### Services

Services include:

- Genetic counseling, screening and diagnostic testing
- Laboratory blood testing
- Pelvic and/or transvaginal ultrasound
- Surgical correction of structural pathology
- Reversal of tubal ligation
- Medication (for example, hormonal therapy, oral or injectable)
- Mental health counseling
- Oocyte cryopreservation (egg freezing) for medical indications
- Intrauterine insemination for medically indicated conditions (maximum of 6 cycles per pregnancy)
- In vitro fertilization (IVF) for Veterans with a service-connected condition that results in infertility; eligibility also includes that the Veteran is legally married, has an intact uterus, has at least one functioning ovary, and has a male spouse who can produce sperm or cryopreserved sperm
  - Donor eggs, donor sperm, donor embryos and surrogacy are not covered services
- Adoption costs, up to \$2,000, for Veterans with a service-connected condition that results in infertility; for more information, visit the [VAntage website adoption reimbursement](#) page
- Other diagnostic studies, treatments or procedures

## Eligibility

- All Veterans enrolled in VA health care are eligible to receive infertility treatment.
- Not all enrolled Veterans are eligible for assisted reproductive technology or in vitro fertilization (ART/IVF).
- Benefit is limited to married Veterans with a service-connected condition resulting in infertility.
- VA does not cover costs of obtaining, transporting or storing sperm/oocyte samples.
- VA does not cover donor eggs, donor sperm, donor embryos or surrogacy.

## Access

- You should talk to your WH-PCP about infertility evaluation and treatment services.
- You need a referral from your WH-PCP to receive infertility services.
- Check with the Eligibility Office at the time of your separation for details.

## Resources

VHA Directive 1332 defines the infertility evaluation and treatment services within VA that are available for all enrolled Veterans. Download the [VHA Directive 1332 PDF](#) to learn more about VA's infertility services.

# Reproductive Health Incontinence

## TREATMENT AND SUPPORT

### Overview

Urinary incontinence is fairly common in women, but it can be embarrassing and difficult to talk about. You can have incontinence at any age. Your providers at VA are here to help you.

Incontinence is the loss of bladder control leading to the unintentional passing of urine. You can have incontinence issues at any age. Risk factors for incontinence include repetitive heavy lifting, childbearing and chronic cough.

Symptoms for incontinence include:

- Involuntary release of urine
- Leaking a small to moderate amount of urine
- Frequent and sudden uncontrollable need to urinate

For incontinence, VA provides a variety of support services, ranging from basic primary care evaluation to referral to and treatment from a urologist or urogynecologist who specializes in the treatment of incontinence. Veterans are eligible to receive a spectrum of incontinence services as needed, including:

- Medications
- Referral to urology or urogynecology where available, for incontinence evaluation
- Surgery
- Pads from pharmacies
- Pelvic floor physical therapy (PFPT), which can involve:
  - Pelvic floor strengthening for improved muscle tone and bladder control, which may include biofeedback
  - Relieving abdominal, lower back or pelvic discomfort
  - Relieving chronic pain in the coccyx (the bone at the base of your spine or tail bone), vaginal or rectal areas
  - Help alleviating urinary/bowel incontinence and sexual dysfunction

Talk to your WH-PCP to start the evaluation and treatment process. You do not have to suffer in silence.

### Eligibility

All Veterans enrolled in VA health care are eligible to receive incontinence treatment and support services as deemed medically necessary.

### Access

- You should talk to your WH-PCP about incontinence services and treatment.
- If you need specialty care such as PFPT or surgery, your WH-PCP will refer you.
- Many pelvic floor physical therapy programs occur in community care.

# Reproductive Health Menopause

## MENOPAUSE MANAGEMENT

### Overview

Menopause is a normal change in a woman's life when her menstrual period stops. During menopause, a woman's body slowly produces less estrogen and progesterone hormones.

Menopause is a gradual process—often taking 3–5 years. In general, menopause starts between ages 45–55, but it could range from ages 40–60. Menopause beginning prior to age 40 is considered premature and requires evaluation.

Checking hormone levels in your blood can help determine if you are in menopause. Often, menopause will start for you around the same age that it started for your mother.

Menopause happens in three stages:

#### Peri-menopause

1. Women will start to experience symptoms that indicate menopause is coming as female hormone levels begin to slowly decrease. Menstrual periods become irregular. Women may experience hot flashes, night sweats, sleep problems and/or mood swings.
2. Be careful to consistently use contraception during this stage, as pregnancy can still occur.
3. Not all women will experience the same signs or symptoms of menopause; these represent examples of what you may experience.

#### Menopause

1. Menopause is the permanent ending of menstrual periods. You have reached menopause when you have not had a menstrual period for 12 consecutive months

#### Post-menopause

1. This is the period of time after menopause. During this time, a woman's body makes only a very small amount of estrogen. A woman's risk of heart disease and osteoporosis (weaker bones) increases.
2. WH-PCP support services can include hormone replacement therapy, non-hormonal treatments for symptom management, and medication to protect your bones.

### Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.

### Access

Request an appointment with your WH-PCP. Your WH-PCP can provide routine menopause management. If needed, they can refer you to a gynecologist.

*Though the average age of menopause is 51, symptoms related to menopause can start as early as your 30s. You can be evaluated and treated for these symptoms, if necessary, regardless of age.*

# Mental Health

## Overview

**VA offers a full continuum of gender-sensitive, evidence-informed mental health services for women Veterans.**

VA mental health providers are here to help you. At VA, mental health is stigma-free. Your care is tailored to address your individual needs and preferences, including gender-related concerns using a patient-centered, whole health approach to mental health. All VA providers have access to specialized training in women's mental health and they have the skills and expertise to address women Veterans' mental health concerns.

At every VA medical center, there are **Women's Mental Health Champions** who are specially trained to connect you with local resources and support to help you meet your mental health goals. More than half of VA's mental health providers are women, and all of VA's providers have access to specialized training in women's mental health, including reproductive mental health issues, such as perinatal depression and mood changes during the perimenopause transition.

## Services

VA offers a full continuum of gender-sensitive, evidence-informed mental health services for women Veterans that can be individualized based on your unique needs:

- Therapy (individual, group, and family) using evidence-based methods such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT)
- General outpatient care (including assessment, psychiatric medications and individual, group and family therapy)
- Treatments that address specific types of trauma:
  - Military sexual trauma (MST) services
  - Intimate partner violence (IPV) services
- PTSD screening and treatment
- Reproductive mental health services
- Eating disorders treatment
- Residential (mixed-gender and women-only) and inpatient treatment options
- Tele-mental health and mobile application services

Mental health care is also available in Primary Care–Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI) clinics. With PC-MHI, mental health experts work directly with your WH-PCP team to develop a coordinated treatment plan that is best for you.

Mental health care is available at VAMCs, CBOCs and Vet Centers. In addition to face-to-face appointments, you may receive care from mental health specialists at other VA facilities through telemedicine technology.

## Eligibility

- VA can help you connect with mental health support regardless of your discharge status, service history or eligibility for VA health care.
- Former Service members with an OTH discharge may receive support for a mental health emergency for an initial period of 1 year from discharge, which can include outpatient, residential or inpatient care.

## Access

- If you are enrolled in VA primary care, you can schedule an appointment with your WH-PCP to discuss your mental health concerns and treatment options.
- Check with your facility about their scope of local mental health services. Available on-site services vary depending on location.
- At some facilities, you are able to self-refer for mental health services. Talk to your WH-PCP or the WVPM at your local facility for more information.

# Mental Health Substance Use Disorder (SUD)

## Overview

Many Americans, including women Veterans, have concerns about their relationships with alcohol and drugs. They themselves might wonder if they are drinking or using too much, or concerned loved ones might be giving them feedback about their use. We want you to know that help is available in VA.

For some, the use of alcohol and drugs can be a slippery slope—particularly for those facing other challenges, including life stressors, anxiety, depression, other mental health concerns and chronic pain. Despite the temporary relief a substance may provide, increased substance use can lead to long-term consequences. Women are especially at risk of developing long-term physical health problems related to substance use, and many women find that substance use worsens their mental health concerns.

Often referred to as “addiction,” substance use disorder (SUD) is a disease that causes people to have difficulty controlling their use of alcohol and drugs, including prescription drugs. Untreated, SUD can influence many aspects of life.

## Signs and Symptoms of Substance Use Disorder include:

- Increased urge to drink or to use drugs
- Inability to stop drinking or using drugs, despite negative consequences
- Changes in relationships due to drinking or drug use
- Feeling depressed, anxious, guilty or ashamed about substance use
- Feeling sick and experiencing withdrawal symptoms when drinking or drug use stops
- Increased tolerance, which refers to the need over time for more alcohol or drugs to achieve the desired effect

## SUD and Women Veterans:

Overall, female Veterans are less likely than male Veterans to experience SUD. However, currently female Veterans are more likely than male Veterans to use tobacco products. Younger women Veterans are also much more likely than older women Veterans to drink alcohol at unsafe levels (more than 3 drinks in a day).

Younger women Veterans are also at a higher risk than older women Veterans for the misuse of prescription drugs, including opioid medications (for example, Oxycontin and Percocet). Misuse of prescription medicine can include taking more medicine than prescribed at a time, taking medicine more often than prescribed and/or taking someone else's medicine.

Women Veterans experiencing SUD are very likely to have experienced trauma, including childhood abuse, Military Sexual Trauma or MST, and domestic violence. For many, trauma results in Posttraumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD, depression and/or anxiety.

It is very common for women to experience SUD and mental health conditions at the same time. Studies show that it is important that both sets of concerns receive attention in treatment. Fortunately, there are many ways to recover from substance use disorders. Please consider taking the next step by learning about the many VA treatments available.

## How Your Providers SUPPORT YOU

Sometimes Veterans find that all they need is clear advice from their provider that their health would benefit if they made changes to their drinking and/or drug use.

Veterans enrolled in VA are asked at least once a year about their drinking habits and these screenings are an opportunity to learn whether one's drinking may be getting to a point that warrants shared decision-making discussion with their provider.

VA also routinely screens Veterans regarding tobacco use. Veterans are also encouraged to raise any concerns they might have about their use of drugs like cannabis (marijuana), cocaine, other stimulants, and opioids (prescription or otherwise).

## Resources

- Learn how to take the next step at the [VA Mental Health Take the Next Step page](#).
- Learn more about the VA treatments available at the [VA Mental Health Substance Use Treatment page](#).

# Mental Health SUD Treatments

## SUD Treatment Overview

More than half of women Veterans in VA's SUD treatment programs are treated for alcohol use disorder, and more than one-fifth are treated for cocaine use. Women are also treated for opiates, marijuana and other drugs. Options include therapy—either individually or in a group—and prescription medications.

For those who need formal treatment to address SUD, treatment programs may include medicine, counseling and attending support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA) or Rational Recovery. Treatment does not only focus on alcohol and/or drug use disorders; it can also help you manage problems in your daily life.

To help make sure that Veterans can attend VA's treatment programs, these programs offer evening and weekend hours.

## SUD Services Available

SUD treatments are provided in a continuum of care that includes:

- Brief counseling and/or medicine in primary care clinics, and in general mental health or PTSD outpatient clinics
- Specialty SUD treatment programs, including inpatient and residential programs (including some women only programs)

Within SUD treatment programs, services are also provided on a continuum of care. Treatments range from outpatient group and individual treatments to intensive services, including withdrawal management and SUD medicine.

Treatments provided are evidence-based therapies (therapies that have been scientifically tested for their effectiveness). Care can include psychosocial/behavioral talk therapies, as well as medication therapies. Psychosocial/behavioral talk therapies include:

- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** helps Veterans with SUD develop more balanced and helpful thoughts about themselves, others and the future. It can help Veterans develop the behavioral skills they need to manage the urge to drink or use drugs, refuse opportunities to use substances, and use a problem-solving approach to deal with substance use and achieve personal goals.
- **Motivational Interviewing (MI)** helps Veterans with SUD by evoking and strengthening their personal motivations and abilities for change. This therapy looks at your desires, abilities, reasons and needs to make a change, as well as the potential benefits of that change.
- **Contingency Management (CM)** helps Veterans by using incentives to immediately reward behaviors that support their recovery.
- **Evidence-Based Medication Therapy** helps Veterans by providing proven options for managing alcohol and drug use disorders. Just like diabetes or hypertension, SUD is a chronic disease that can be treated with medicine. Medicines for SUD can reduce cravings, prevent relapse and reduce the risk of death from SUD.

## Eligibility

If you do not qualify for VA health care, you may still be able to get certain health care services. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.

## Access

- Talk with your WH-PCP to help you coordinate your treatment options.
- To help make sure that Veterans can attend VA treatment services, programs may offer evening and weekend hours and treatment may also be available via telehealth.
- Treatment decisions are made collaboratively between Veterans and their VA providers.

## Did You KNOW?

### VA Offers Women-Only Treatment Options:

VA knows that many women with SUD have trauma histories making it difficult to be in treatment groups with men. Many larger VA medical centers have women-only group treatment options for women Veterans.

Virtually all VA facilities also offer individual counseling or case management.

### VA is Ready to Support You:

As an integrated healthcare system, VA is uniquely situated to address the needs of Women Veterans diagnosed with SUD. VA can provide support to address co-occurring medical, mental health, and psychosocial needs (housing, employment).

# Mental Health Smoking Cessation

## Overview

Studies have shown that quitting smoking may be more difficult for women than men. Women may have lower quit rates, relapse more often and have more difficulty during the process. Therefore, treatment combining both FDA-approved medication and behavioral counseling is important to help ensure you have all the tools you need to quit for good.

## Services

VA provides gender-specific and research-supported services for Veterans who would like to quit smoking or tobacco use. These services include:

- Behavioral Counseling
- Smoking cessation medication (such as the patch and chewing gum)
- Online resources: [Become a Smoke-Free Veteran](#)
- The **1-855-QUIT-VET** quitline
- The SmokefreeVet mobile texting program



## Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.

## Access

Talk to your WH-PCP or call 1-855-QUIT-VET to talk to a quitline counselor today. WH-PCPs can order smoking cessation medications and products for you. Referrals are needed for group counseling.

# Mental Health Detoxification

You may need detox before you start treatment if you are physically addicted to alcohol and/or certain drugs. Detox can occur in an inpatient unit or outpatient clinic depending on your medical risks and preferences.

Treatment programs may include medicine, counseling and attending support groups, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Treatment does not only focus on alcohol or drug addiction; it can also help you manage problems in your daily life.



## Eligibility

If you do not qualify for VA health care, you may still be able to get certain health care services. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.\*

## Access

Your WH-PCP will help you decide which treatment plan is best for you, and also help you understand how to access services.

## Resources

For more information on detoxification services and resources visit the [VA.gov](https://www.va.gov) [Substance Use](#) page.

\* Former Service members with an OTH administrative discharge may receive support for a mental health emergency for an initial period of up to 90 days from discharge, which can include outpatient, residential or inpatient care.



# Mental Health Women's Residential Programs

## Overview

VA provides Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Programs for women Veterans who might benefit from a 24/7 therapeutic setting. Care is provided using both professional and peer supports. Treatment will focus on your needs, abilities, strengths and preferences.

Women-only residential treatment is available to provide time-limited, intensive treatment for PTSD, substance use disorders and other mental health concerns, as well as treatment for psychosocial needs, including homelessness and unemployment. Women are admitted to a residential unit that provides 24-hour supervision, daily professional treatment and comprehensive care.

Screening tools are easily available to self-assess mental health needs for PTSD, depression, substance use and alcohol abuse. For more information, visit: [My HealthVet: Screening Tools](#).



## Eligibility

If you do not qualify for VA health care, you may still be able to get certain health care services. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.\*

## Access

Speak with your WH-PCP or, VA mental health provider or call 1-855-VA-WOMEN to get access to these services.

\* Former Service members with an OTH administrative discharge may receive care for a mental health emergency for an initial period of up to 90 days from discharge, which can include outpatient, residential or inpatient care.

# Mental Health Military Sexual Trauma

## Overview

Military Sexual Trauma (MST) is the term that VA uses to refer to sexual assault or sexual harassment experienced during military service. MST can occur at any time or place during your military service, such as while you are on or off duty, or on or off base. The perpetrator(s) may or may not be someone you know and may be fellow Service members or civilians.

MST includes:

- Being pressured into sexual activities, such as with threats or with implied better treatment in exchange for sex
- Sexual activities when you could not consent, such as when asleep or intoxicated
- Being overpowered or physically forced to have sex
- Being sexually touched or grabbed in a way that made you uncomfortable, including during hazing experiences
- Comments about your body or sexual activities that you found threatening
- Unwanted sexual advances that you found threatening
- Any other sexual activity where you were involved against your will or unable to say "no"

During screenings with their VA providers, about 1 in 3 women (regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity) report having experienced MST.

## VA Services for MST

MST can impact health and well-being, even many years later. That is why VA provides a full range of mental and medical services, including:

- **Free counseling and treatment** for mental and physical health conditions related to MST
- Outpatient, inpatient, and residential treatment options
- At every VA medical facility, an **MST Coordinator** who can help you access VA services and programs
- Options to meet with a female or male clinician to make you feel more comfortable during your treatments
- Additional MST-related counseling services at VA's community-based **Vet Centers**

Current Service members can receive these Vet Center services without a referral from the Department of Defense. Information about any MST-related services that current Service members receive at Vet Centers is confidential and will not be released to the Department of Defense.

All VA medical facilities can assist you in obtaining a Sexual Assault Forensic Exam (SAFE) to collect evidence and provide any acute treatment needed after sexual assault.

## Eligibility

- VA's MST-related services are available for Veterans and most former Service members with an Other Than Honorable (OTH) or uncharacterized discharge.
- There are no length of service or income requirements, and you may be able to receive MST-related care even if you are not eligible for other VA health care.
- Current Service members can also receive services related to MST, although you might need a referral from the Department of Defense for some types of services.
- In order to receive MST-related care, you do not need to have reported an incident at the time it occurred or have other documentation that it occurred
- You do not need to initiate MST-related care within a certain time period after an incident or separation from service.
- Service connection (VA disability compensation) is not required.

## Access

- Contact your WH-PCP, the MST Coordinator at your local VA health care system or your local Vet Center. Additional information is available online: [Mental Health: Military Sexual Trauma](#).
- You can also call the DOD SAFE Helpline at 1-877-995-5247 for support and DOD-specific information.

# Mental Health Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)

## Overview

VVA defines IPV as any **abuse that occurs between current or former intimate partners** IPV does not require sexual intimacy or cohabitation. This includes (but is not limited to):

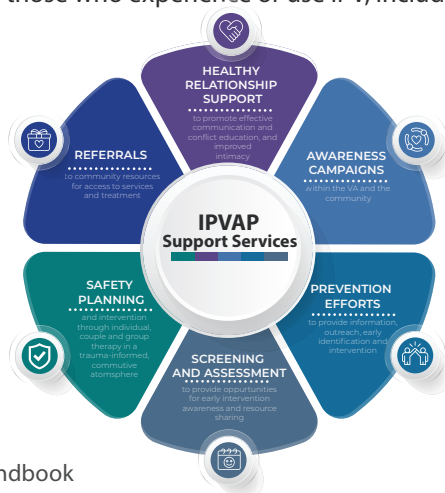
- Physical abuse: hitting, pushing, slapping, biting, kicking, choking, restraining
- Emotional abuse: humiliating, insulting, isolating, name calling
- Psychological abuse: controlling, coercion, stalking, gas-lighting, instilling fear
- Sexual abuse: any unwanted sexual activity including rape, molestation, reproductive coercion

Women are more likely than men to experience multiple forms of IPV and/or suffer psychological and physical consequences. Women Veterans may be twice as likely to experience IPV than non-Veteran women. In fact, 18.5% of women receiving VA primary care reported IPV. Some Veteran-centric risk factors include:

- Posttraumatic stress
- Loss of trust/moral distress
- Military family life stress
- Separation and isolation
- Mental health concerns
- Alcohol and/or drug use
- Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
- Increased anger
- Decreased frustration tolerance
- Pregnancy increases risk of IPV and is often a reason that IPV may become worse (for example, emotional to physical abuse)

## IPV Services

Your WH-PCP will screen for IPV. All VA medical facilities offer a comprehensive array of services for those who experience or use IPV, including:



## Eligibility

- You must be enrolled in VA health care.
- All women enrolled in VA care should be screened for IPV.
- Universal education, screening, resources and referrals are available for Veterans' intimate partners, regardless of partners' Veteran status.

## Access

- All VA facilities have an IPV Assistance Program Coordinator available to assist. You can locate your IPV coordinator on the [VA IPV Assistance Program Home page](#).
- You can call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1.800.799.SAFE (7233) for 24-hour confidential support.



- Call 911 if you are in immediate danger.

## Did you KNOW?

- Women Veterans who report IPV are 3 times more likely to have housing insecurity.
- 72% of all murder-suicides involve an intimate partner.
- Lesbian and bisexual women, as well as transgender and gender diverse individuals, are at increased risk of interpersonal violence.
- Brain damage or TBI can begin in 5–10 seconds, and death in only 62–152 seconds during strangulation.

# Mental Health Suicide Prevention

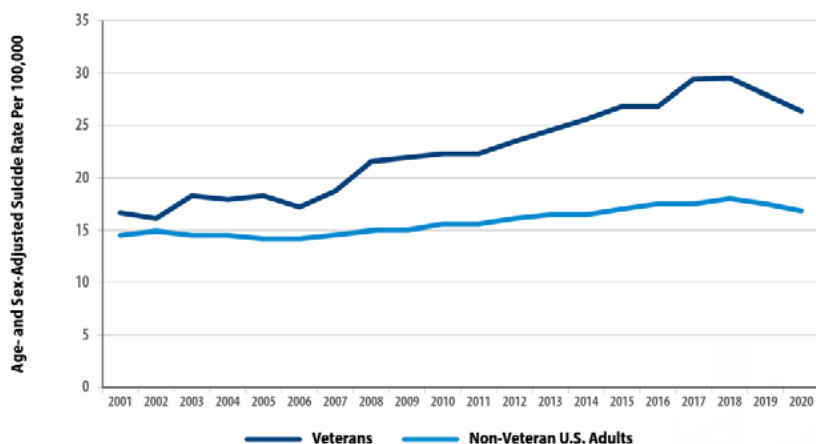
## OVERVIEW

According to the 2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, for all Veterans, the transition period is a high-risk period for suicide. Multiple outlets are available to help Veterans prevent suicide. 24-hour confidential crisis lines and chat lines are available, along with mental health specialists who can develop personalized safety plans and support groups. VA is here to help you recognize warning signs and understand when emotional issues reach a crisis point.

The rate of suicide among women Veterans is about double that of non-Veteran women. Women Veterans have a greater likelihood of using firearms, which are highly lethal. This may explain some of the differences in suicide rates between Veteran and civilian women. Some mental health problems and life events can also increase women Veterans' suicide risks, such as mental health and substance use disorders, traumatic experiences like sexual trauma and intimate partner violence, and difficulty managing strong emotions under stress.

No matter what you are experiencing, there are resources and support systems to help. Whether you are looking for clinical care, counseling, assistance with benefits or something else, we are here. Visit the [Veterans Crisis Line Resource webpage](#) to find local resources and assistance near you, including specially-trained Suicide Prevention Coordinators or teams who are available at all VA medical centers across the country.

## Age-Adjusted Suicide Rates Among Veterans and Non-Veteran U.S. Adults, 2001-2020



Source: [U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention 2022 Annual Report](#)

## Eligibility

- All Veterans enrolled in VA can access suicide prevention services.
- Some suicide prevention services are available for all Veterans, including those who are not enrolled in VA health care.
- Former Service members with an OTH administrative discharge may receive care for a mental health emergency for an initial period of up to 90 days, which can include outpatient, residential or inpatient care.

## Access

Go to any VA medical center (VAMC). Each VAMC has a Suicide Prevention Coordinator to connect you with the counseling and services needed.



To connect with the Veterans Crisis Line:

- Call **988**, then select or press 1, **OR**
- Text **838255**, **OR**
- Start a confidential online chat at [the Veterans Crisis Line Chat website](#).

# Mental Health Suicide Prevention *(continued)*

## Overview

Data from the 2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report indicates that using VA health care services may have a protective effect for women Veterans. The rate of suicide among women Veterans who have recently used VA services is lower than the rate of suicide among women Veterans who have not recently used VA services.

In fact, among women Veterans who used VA services, there was a slight decrease in the age-adjusted suicide rate and a decrease in the number of suicide deaths from 2017 to 2019. While women who use VA services tend to experience more known risk factors for suicide than non-VA users, they have about the same actual risk as non-VA users.

VA is a national leader in suicide prevention, including advances in universal suicide risk screening, primary care mental health integration (PC-MHI), same day mental health care services and 24/7 Veterans Crisis Line service availability with live professionals.

## Services

Some available services include:

- Outpatient mental health services
- Residential treatment programs
- Inpatient mental health care
- Evidence-based psychotherapies and interventions for suicide prevention
- Specialty treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Free treatment for mental and physical health conditions related to MST
- Women's Mental Health Champions
- Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Coordinators
- [VA Suicide Prevention Coordinators](#)

## Resources

- [VA's Mental Health home webpage](#)
- [Veterans Crisis Line](#)
- [Make the Connection](#)
- [Reach Out](#)
- [Firearm Suicide Prevention & Lethal Means Safety](#)
- [Coaching Into Care](#)
- [Whole Health](#)

Visit the [VA.gov Suicide Prevention webpage](#) for more information and resources.

## Take a Free Self-Check:

VA and its partners have developed a quiz to help you learn if stress and depression might be affecting you. This is a safe, easy and confidential resource. You can take the Self-Check Quiz at the Veterans [Self-Check Quiz home webpage](#).

## Did you KNOW?

VA recently launched the S.A.V.E. online suicide prevention training video in collaboration with PsychArmor Institute, a national nonprofit providing online education and support for those who work with, live with or care for Service members, Veterans and military and Veteran families.

S.A.V.E.—which stands for “Signs,” “Ask,” “Validate” and “Encourage/Expedite”—offers simple steps that anyone can take when talking with Veterans who are at risk for suicide.

Visit the [Psych/Armor S.A.V.E. course website](#) to view the training video.



To connect with the Veterans Crisis Line:

- Call **988**, then select or press 1, **OR**
- Text **838255**, **OR**
- Start a confidential online chat at [the Veterans Crisis Line Chat website](#).

# Mental Health PTSD

## Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Overview

PTSD is a mental health condition that some people develop after experiencing or witnessing a life-threatening event, like combat, a natural disaster, a car accident, or sexual assault. It is normal to have upsetting memories, feel on edge or have trouble sleeping after this type of event. If symptoms last more than a month, it may be PTSD. The good news is that there are effective treatments.

Trauma is common in women; five out of ten women experience a traumatic event. Women tend to experience different traumas than men.

Your VA health care provider can give referrals to PTSD specialists or therapy, or prescribe certain medications.

### Services and treatments:

- **Mental health assessment and screening**
- **Therapy:** Trauma-focused psychotherapies are highly effective treatments for PTSD. "Trauma-focused" means focusing on your memory of the trauma. This may include:
  - Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
  - Prolonged Exposure (PE) Therapy
  - Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- **Medications:** Some types of antidepressant medications can help PTSD by putting brain chemicals back in balance.
- **Peer Specialists:** Peer specialists are Veterans who have experienced and recovered from a mental health condition. As members of your treatment team, peer specialists help you design your own recovery plan, using tools such as personal goal setting and targeted coping skills training. They can also connect you with VA and local resources to help you find meaningful roles and activities in your community. You can request a referral from your VA health care provider to work with a peer specialist.



### Eligibility

If you do not qualify for VA health care, you may still be able to get certain health care services. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.\*

### Access

Talk to your WH-PCP or your VA mental health provider to get a referral for PTSD care or call the Veterans Crisis Line at 988, or call 911 in emergency situations.

### Resource

Visit the [National Center for PTSD webpage](#) for more information and resources.

\* Former Service members with an OTH administrative discharge may receive care for a mental health emergency for an initial period of up to 90 days from discharge, which can include outpatient, residential or inpatient care.

# Mental Health Traumatic Brain Injury

## Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Screening and Treatment

VA's Polytrauma System of Care (PSC) provides a full range of rehabilitation services, including inpatient, transitional and outpatient care (for both Veterans and Service members covered by TRICARE authorization) who have sustained polytrauma, TBI or other acquired brain injuries.

TBI is often referred to as an invisible wound, but it can have a large impact on a Veteran. Among OEF/OIF/OND Veterans, 12–20% experience TBI. Women present with more severe symptoms (5% of cases are women).

Symptoms of TBI include:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Problems with memory
- Headache
- Balance issues
- Dizziness
- Sleep issues
- Fatigue
- Irritability

An interdisciplinary team treats TBIs. The team includes psychiatry, psychology, occupational therapy, physical therapy and neurology.



## Eligibility

If you do not qualify for VA health care, you may still be able to get certain health care services. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.\*

## Access

Talk to your WH-PCP or your VA mental health provider to get a referral to neurology or other mental health specialists for TBI screening and treatment.

## Resource

Visit the [Polytrauma/TBI System of Care page](#) for more information and resources.

\* Former Service members with an OTH administrative discharge may receive care for a mental health emergency for an initial period of up to 90 days from discharge, which can include outpatient, residential or inpatient care.

# General Medical and Specialty Care Gender-Specific Prosthetics

## Overview

VA's Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS), Center for Women Veterans and Office of Women's Health collaborate closely to address the unique needs of women Veterans. VA is the largest and most comprehensive provider of prosthetic devices, sensory aids and associated services in the world.

Women-specific PSAS items include, but are not limited to:

- Nursing bras and breast pumps
- Pelvic floor physical therapy devices
- Post-mastectomy items
- Wigs for alopecia, after chemotherapy or gender transition
- Long-acting reversible contraceptives (for example, intrauterine devices)
- Maternity support belt items
- Vaginal dilators
- Mastectomy bathing suits

PSAS provides a wide range of comprehensive services including orthotic and prosthetic services, mobility aids, hearing aids, eyeglasses, communication and assistive devices, home respiratory therapy, recreational/rehabilitative equipment, surgical implants and durable medical equipment.



## Eligibility

- Generally, Veterans are eligible for prosthetic services or items if they are:
  - Enrolled in the VA health care system, AND
  - Have a medical need for a prosthetic service or item.
- For certain programs, additional eligibility criteria may apply

## Access

- You need a referral to receive any prosthetics, including gender-specific prosthetics.
- You should work with your WH-PCP to get a referral.



# General Medical and Specialty Care Hearing Loss

## Hearing Loss and Audiology

Your audiologist will use comprehensive diagnostic tests to assess hearing. If you have hearing loss, your audiologist will discuss the best treatment options. VA Audiology has access to the most current, state of the art technologies to include hearing aids, personal amplifiers, assistive technologies and cochlear implants. VA audiologists provide comprehensive hearing health care services, including:

- Disability audiology exams
- Assessment, evaluation, treatment and management of hearing loss
- Tinnitus
- Balance disorders
- Fitting and programming of assistive listening devices
- Post-surgical rehabilitation
- Hearing screening services

Talk to your provider about how to order accessories (such as batteries) for your hearing aid or other assistive listening devices.



## Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.

## Access

Setting up an appointment with an audiologist differs by facility. Some facilities allow patients to self-refer, while others facilities require a referral. Talk to your WH-PCP for details.

## Resource

For assistance with home hearing aid and accessory maintenance, visit the [VA.gov Audiology page](https://www.va.gov/audiology).

# General Medical and Specialty Care Nutrition

## Overview

VA Nutrition and Food Services (NFS) develops and provides comprehensive evidenced-based nutrition guidance. These services include access to registered dietitian consultations, as well as cooking classes at some facilities. Learn more about healthy cooking skills through the [VA Healthy Teaching Kitchen](#).

This service can also be accessed via TeleNutrition if a VA facility is not easily accessible. There is also a wide range of online resources at [VA Nutrition and Food Services](#).



## Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.

## Access

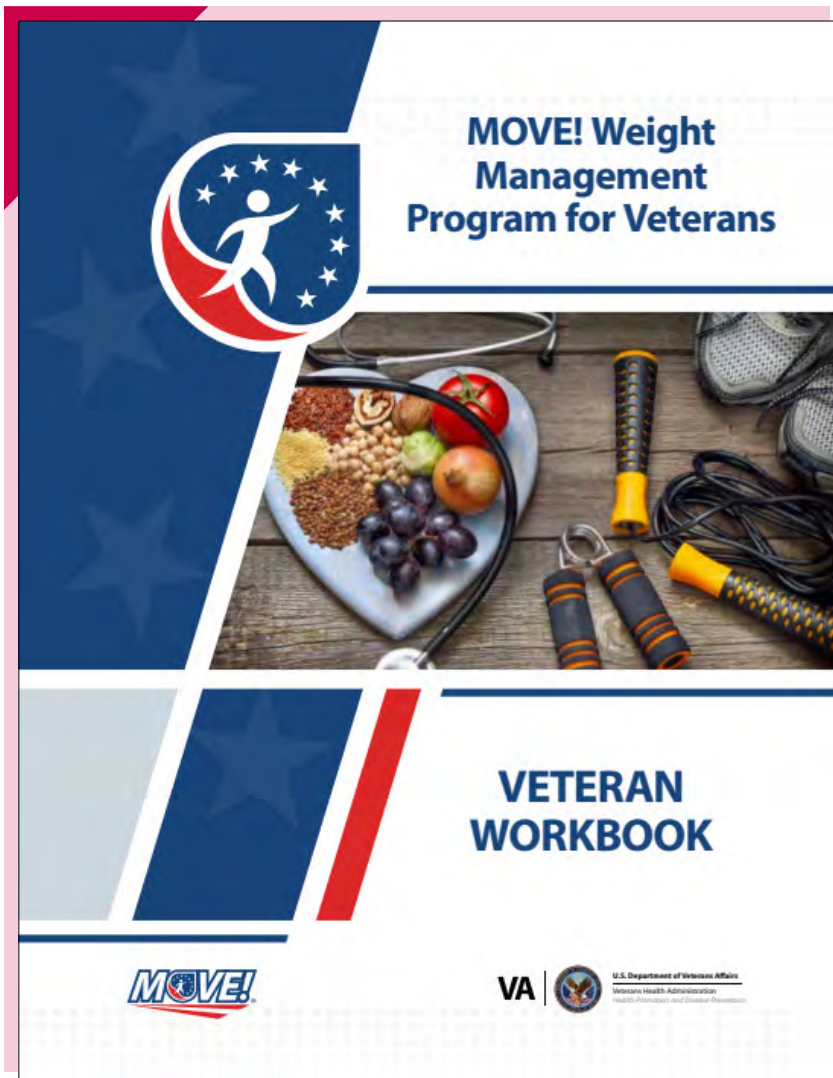
Work with your WH-PCP to determine how NFS can best support your nutrition goals. Referrals are usually needed for nutrition services.

# General Medical and Specialty Care Weight Management

## MOVE! Weight Management Program

The MOVE! Weight Management Program is a weight management and health promotion program designed to improve Veterans' lifestyles. MOVE! encourages healthy eating behaviors, increased physical activity and weight loss. MOVE! is based on the latest research in nutrition science. To learn more, visit the [Move! Weight Management Program webpage](#).

There are many other wellness programs available at VA. These programs vary by facility, but may include yoga, tai chi, meditation, mindful awareness and adaptive sports. Additional program information is online at: [Whole Health: Home](#).



## Eligibility

- You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.
- All Veterans, regardless of enrollment status, can use the MOVE! Coach mobile app and the MOVE! Veteran workbook.

## Access

- Talk to your WH-PCP or your local MOVE! Coordinator to learn how to get involved in the MOVE! Weight Management Program.
- Complete the [MOVE!11 Getting Started Questionnaire](#) and bring the report to your VA provider.

## Resource

- The Move! Veteran Workbook is available for all Veterans, regardless of enrollment. The workbook guides participants through learning and activities to support health lifestyle changes. Download the Move! Veteran Workbook and supporting materials at the [Move! Veteran Workbook page](#).
- The Move!Coach app is a self-guided program to manage your weight and achieve your goals. Download the app at the [Move! Coach app page](#).



# General Medical and Specialty Care LGBTQ+ Health

## LGBTQ+ Health Program Overview

VA welcomes all Veterans, families, caregivers and survivor beneficiaries, including those with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. "LGBTQ+" refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer identities. The "+" sign captures identities beyond LGBTQ, including but not limited to questioning, pansexual, asexual, agender, gender diverse, nonbinary, gender-neutral and other identities.

As a result of stigma, stress and discrimination, LGBTQ+ Veterans face increased health risks and unique challenges in health care. To offer the best care possible, VA wants you to be comfortable talking with your VA providers about all aspects of your life. Information about your sexual orientation and gender identity will prompt your provider to ask specific questions about potential risks to your health, and then offer appropriate health screens and referrals.

## Available Health Care Services

There is an LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator (LGBTQ+ VCC) at every facility. VA policies require that your health care is delivered in an affirming and inclusive environment, and that VA employees respect your identity.

VA health care includes, but is not limited to, the following services:

- Gender affirming hormone therapy
- Transgender and gender diverse electronic consultation
- Gender-affirming voice therapy via Telehealth
- Gender-affirming prosthetics
- Prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections with PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis) and PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) for Veterans at risk for HIV
- Self-identified gender identity (SIGI) in electronic health record (EHRs)
  - Previously, your medical record had only one place for your sex and gender. Now, you can have both your birth sex and your gender identity in your medical record. If you wish to change your birth sex information after talking with your health care team, this is your right in the VA system. You may contact your local LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator or local Patient Advocate to assist you with the process.

Visit the [VHA LGBTQ+ Health Program webpage](#) for additional information and useful fact sheets.

## Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.

## Access

- Reach out to your local facility's LGBTQ+ VCC for help getting started with any services. VCCs can also answer questions, handle concerns, and advocate for your right to care.
- Coordinate with your PCP for necessary assessments and referrals. Referrals are required for all specialty services.



## Resource

To find the LGBTQ+ VCC at your facility, visit the [LGBTQ+ VCC Locator webpage](#). They will be the most knowledgeable about local resources.

# General Medical and Specialty Care Other Subspecialties

## Overview

VA also offers many subspecialty services that Veterans may need in addition to Primary Care. The list below is not exhaustive.

Medical subspecialties include, but are not limited to, consultations, diagnoses, treatments and services for the following:

- **Gastroenterology:** includes treatments of digestive diseases, such as acid reflux disease, peptic ulcers, Crohn's disease and Hepatitis C
- **Dermatology:** includes diagnoses and treatments of diseases of the skin, hair and nails, including growths, rashes, discolorations, cysts, burns, injuries, infections and other disorders
- **Allergy:** includes diagnostic evaluations and comprehensive treatments for asthma, allergic diseases and non-HIV immune deficiencies
- **Neurology:** includes treatments of disorders of the peripheral and central nervous system such as neuropathies, strokes, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease and epilepsy
- **Endocrinology:** includes services for diabetes and other endocrine disorders, such as thyroid, pituitary and other related illnesses
- **Hearing loss/audiology:** includes comprehensive hearing examinations, hearing aid fittings and repairs, and cochlear implant management
- **Orthopedics:** includes, but is not limited to, diagnoses and treatments of tendinitis, fractures, sprains, strains, tears and post-operative joint replacement
- **Cardiology:** includes consultations for chest pain, electrophysiology/arrhythmias, valvular disease and heart failure; also includes diagnoses and procedures, such as exercise stress testing, echocardiograms and cardiac catheterization
- **Optometry:** includes comprehensive eye care, including eye exams
- **Urology:** includes women's urologic care and in-office procedures, such as cystoscopy and care for urinary incontinence, kidney stones, bladder cancer and other urological conditions.

## Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment (including medication and counseling) must be medically necessary.

## Access

- Coordinate with your WH-PCP for necessary assessments and referrals. Referrals are required for all specialty services.
- As a reminder, this is a great opportunity to recheck your vision and hearing when you are transitioning into the VA system.

# Notes



Module  
4

## Enrolling and Accessing VA Health Care



Initially my intent was not necessarily to utilize the VA for my primary health care provider, but after the class and understanding services the VA offers for females, it was much more of a place that I want to start.

— Former Women's Health Transition Training participant



# Enrolling and Accessing VA Health Care Common Guidelines

These high-level pointers will assist with your understanding of the services you can receive:

- The disability claim process is separate from your VA health care enrollment.
- When enrolling, you can state your gender preference for your WH-PCP.
- At some sites, you are auto-assigned to a WH-PCP. These clinical providers have been trained in primary care and women-specific health care.

**Note:** If you wish to be seen in general primary care, you can request this. If not auto-assigned, you may request to be assigned to a WH-PCP.

- Once enrolled, you are eligible for most VA health services. Service eligibility and affiliated copays depend on your assigned Priority Group. For a list of all Priority Groups, refer to [pages 74–75](#).
- Comprehensive women’s health is a model of care that provides primary care, gender-specific care and care coordination by one provider at one site.\*
- Primary care serves as the first point of contact for Veterans enrolled in VA. You can schedule appointments in person, via phone or online through My HealthVet. WH-PCPs will coordinate all specialty appointments.
- Medication is free for Veterans who have service-connected conditions, Veterans who have greater than 50% service-connected disability never pay for medication.
- Availability of services varies by facility. Many services are available at VA facilities, but otherwise your WH-PCP can refer you to services in the community.

*Even if you do not think you are eligible for VA health care, talk to your enrollment coordinator, as you might be eligible for certain services.*

\* With comprehensive women’s care, you can expect a variety of services, including treatment for acute and chronic illnesses, gender-specific primary care, preventive services, mental health services and coordination of care..



# Eligibility 101

## AM I ELIGIBLE FOR VA HEALTH CARE?

If you served on active duty, did not receive a dishonorable discharge and served for 24 consecutive months, you are eligible for VA health care starting when you separate.

However, there are exceptions to coverage levels, as VA assesses each individual's circumstance. For example, Veterans qualify to receive VA health care if they are recognized as having service-connected disabilities, even if they did not serve 24 consecutive months on active duty (such as Reservists with rated service-connected disabilities, or other circumstances).

Also, individuals do not need to have served on active duty for 24 continuous months in order to receive care related to sexual assault or sexual harassment experienced during military service (also known as Military Sexual Trauma, or MST.) You may be able to get MST-related support even if you aren't eligible for VA health care.

- Once you enroll in VA health care, and when you receive your final compensation and pension (C&P) exam results, you will be able to determine what care you can receive without cost, and what care will require a copay.
- If you are eligible for VA health care, you are eligible to receive all medically-necessary health care services.
- Once you are eligible for VA health care, you will always be eligible.

If you have TRICARE and/or private insurance, you are still eligible for VA services.

The **PACT Act** is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they've earned and deserve.

**The PACT Act (1)** expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era and Post-9/11 era, and **(2)** expands eligibility for benefits for Veterans exposed to toxic substances.

## WHAT ARE THE PACT ACT KEY COMPONENTS?

- **The Act** expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic-exposures **and** Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 era. VA **will improve the decision-making process** for determining what medical conditions will be considered for presumptive status.
- Every enrolled Veteran will **receive an initial toxic exposure screening** and a follow-up screening every five years. Veterans who are not enrolled, but who are eligible to enroll, will have an opportunity to enroll and receive the screening.
- VA health care staff and claims processors will receive **toxic exposure-related education and training**.
- The Act requires **research studies** on mortality of Veterans who served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War, Post-9/11 Veteran health trends, and Veteran cancer rates.
- The Act will help VA **build a stronger, more skilled workforce** to meet the growing demand for benefits and services.

Even if you think you are not eligible for VA health care, talk to an enrollment coordinator, as you might be eligible for certain services.

## Resources

If you have any questions regarding VA eligibility, please do one or more of the following:

- Call the Health Eligibility Center (HEC) at 1-877-222-VETS (8387).
- Contact your VAMC and ask for the Eligibility Specialist
- Visit the [VA health care eligibility page](#) for additional information on eligibility for VA health care.
- Call or text the Women Veterans Call Center at 855-829-6636
- For more information About the **PACT Act**, visit the [PACT Act website](#).
- Or scan the QR code:



# Eligibility 101

## Reserve Components Eligibility

For National Guard and Reserve members, there are two ways to qualify for VA health care. To be eligible, you must have separated under any condition other than dishonorable.

### 1 Veteran Status

Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations defines a Veteran as “a person who served in the active military, naval or air service and who was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.”

Once Veteran status is obtained, you must meet one of the minimum active-duty service requirements defined in title 38 U.S.C. § 5303A to qualify for VA health care. This includes:

- **Title 10:** active duty defined as full-time duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, such as unit deployment during war, including travel to and from such duty; this does not include active duty for training, **OR**
- **Title 32:** full-time National Guard duty, defined as duty performed for which you are entitled to receive pay from the Federal Government, such as responding to a national emergency

These orders do not have to be a certain length; the requirement is that you serve for the full time frame in which you were called to active duty

**OR**

### 2 VA Adjudicated Service-Connected Disability

If you have a **VA adjudicated service-connected disability**, then you would **automatically gain Veteran status**, regardless of the amount of time you served on active duty. This disability must have been incurred or aggravated during active duty or active duty for training. Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) determines service-connected disability ratings.

### Did you **KNOW?**

It is possible to have served in the National Guard or Reserve and not be eligible for VA health care. Please work with the Eligibility Office to determine your eligibility.

# Eligibility 101

## Reserve Components Eligibility *(continued)*

There are several other key points to highlight for National Guard or Reserve Component members enrolling in VA health care.

### National Guard and Reserve Components Disability Claims

While the process is similar to that of active duty members, National Guard and Reserve Component members should keep in mind the following items when enrolling in VA health care.

- **Examinations:**
  - You should complete a separation physical after each deployment. It is important to keep a running list of existing issues.
  - After you submit your disability claim, the C&P exams will be the same for you as for civilian VA clients.
  - If you have been activated multiple times, you can complete multiple claims.
- **Medical records:**
  - You will need to request your medical records from each active duty location where you have served.
  - Unlike active duty, your medical records are not consolidated and do not travel with you.
  - Double-check your medical records to ensure they are complete and accurate.

### Military Drill Pay Versus Disability Compensation Pay

You are not able to receive VA compensation at the same time you are receiving military (drill) pay. You will be required to waive either your VA pay or your military compensation.

Most Veterans choose to receive drill pay instead of disability compensation or pension, because drill pay is typically the greater benefit. These Veterans must waive their VA benefits for the same number of days they received drill pay.

You will need to elect which type of pay you would like to receive. For more information, download and refer to: [Section C. Adjusting VA Benefits Based on a Veteran's Receipt of Active Service Pay](#). You will need to fill out VA Form 21-8951.

### Remember

When you enroll in VA health care, bring all of your military discharge papers (such as the NGB Form 22 or other separation [documents](#)) when you enroll in VA health care.

# Eligibility 101

## Eligibility For Veterans

### JOINING THE RESERVE COMPONENTS

#### Reserve Components Eligibility

If you are leaving active duty to go into the National Guard or the Reserve Components, the following information will be pertinent to your enrollment:

- When in the National Guard or Reserve Components, you are no longer qualified to stay on TRICARE.
- Servicewomen can supplement their VA benefits with TRICARE Reserve Select instead.
- Your priority rating will determine your VA benefits and copays; it is the same determination process for civilian VA clients.
- TRICARE Reserve Select is the plan used to keep members of the National Guard and Reserve Components medically qualified for service and deployment.
- If separating from the military, you would need to stay in the National Guard or Reserve Components to be enrolled in TRICARE Reserve Select.
  - If you are a federal employee, you do not qualify for TRICARE Reserve Select.
  - If you are activated, you will be un-enrolled from VA; once you return to Reserve status, your VA eligibility will be reinstated.

Please visit [TRICARE](#) for more information on TRICARE Reserve Select, and to find your specific enrollment service portal

#### Returning Service Member (Combat Veteran) Eligibility

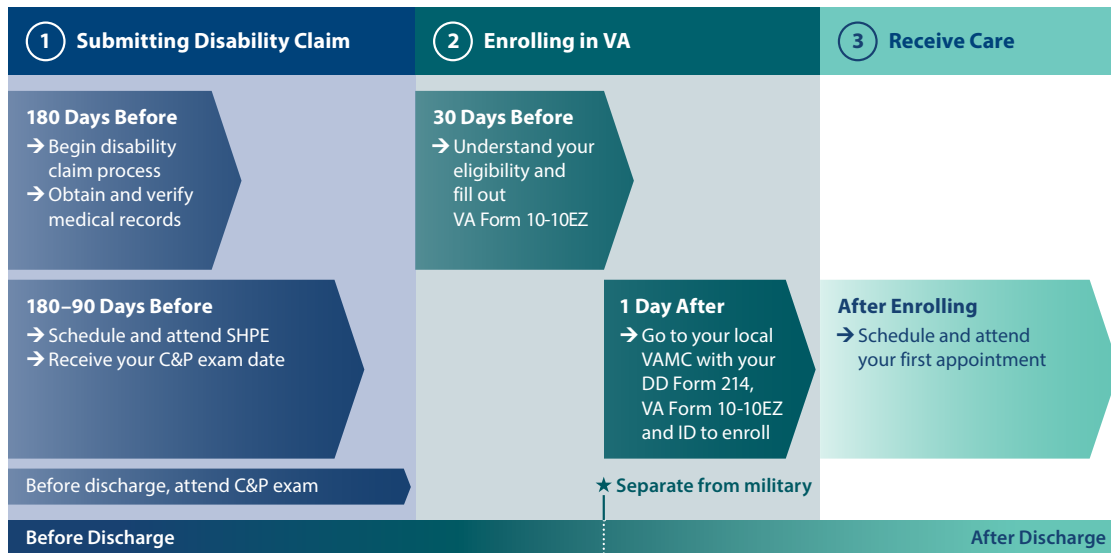
If you served on active duty in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998, you are eligible for an extended period of free VA health care benefits for service-connected conditions. This includes those who served in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation New Dawn (OND) and Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS).

Separating Service members who served in OEF/OIF/OND/OFS are eligible for 10 years of free post-separation health care benefits for any medical condition, including mental health, related to an in-theater combat deployment. Each VA medical center has a care management team in place dedicated to Service members with this status.

These combat Veterans are eligible for health care services and community living care for conditions possibly related to their military service. They are not required to disclose their income information unless they would like to be considered for a higher priority status, beneficiary travel benefits or exemption of copays for care unrelated to their military service.

*If you are joining the reserve components after leaving active duty, you are still eligible for VA health care. You should enroll in VA health care and supplement that care with TRICARE Reserve Select, if desired.*

# U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Enrollment Timeline



The figure above illustrates the key steps that transitioning Servicewomen should take to enroll in VA health care.

The VA enrollment timeline has three high-level steps:

- 1 Submitting your disability claim (if needed)**  
Your disability claim is submitted to VBA. For active-duty Service members, you should begin this process 180 days before separating or retiring.
- 2 Enroll in VA**  
Your VA health care enrollment will not be final until you separate or retire and receive your final DD Form 214. The DD Form 214 is your ticket into VA health care.
- 3 Schedule your first appointment**  
Call your VA facility or use the VA Online Scheduling Tool on My Health eVet. See [page 25](#) for details on how to prepare for your first appointment.

Each person’s individual situation will likely be unique, and we encourage you to talk to your Eligibility Office to discuss your specific situation.

Some individuals will need to submit a disability claim to start the enrollment process, but this may not be needed in all cases. The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) has great resources to help you. To learn more, visit, [VA TAP](#).

# Disability Claims and Exams

Submitting your disability claim is an important first step.

## Why is the Disability Claims Process Important?

The disability claims process is how VBA determines your service-connected status, which ultimately affects your VA priority group and what services you receive at no cost.

## Disability Claims Process

The recommended way to file claims for disability compensation is 180 days prior to separation or retirement. You can do this through the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program. Claims processing times tend to be much shorter. Applying for your claim will not automatically enroll you in VA health care.

The disability claims process involves submitting an application with documentation about your military service and medical history. The following five steps are a high-level recommendation to get you started, but each Veteran's situation is unique.

1. Complete your Pre-Transition Exam
  - o **Separation History and Physical Exam (SHPE)**
    - Timing: at least 180–90 days before separation or starting terminal leave
    - For more information, visit: [Separation Health Assessment](#)
  - o **Compensation and Pension Exam (C&P)**
    - Timing: 180–90 days before separation
    - For more information visit: [VA Claim Exam](#).
2. Obtain your DD-214 or other separation documents
3. Obtain your service treatment (medical) records
4. Submit your Disability Application: [VA Form 21-526EZ](#)
  - o [Online](#)
  - o In person
    - [Find a VA regional office near you](#)
  - o Mail the form to:
    - Department of Veterans Affairs Claims Intake Center, PO Box 4444  
Janesville, WI 53547-4444
5. Receive your rating from VA

For more information on the disability claims process, visit the [VA Disability Compensation webpage](#).

## How is Disability Rating Determined?

To determine a Veteran's Combined Disability Rating, VBA uses a concept called the **Whole Person Theory**.

A disability rating can never be greater than 100 since a person can never be more than 100% able-bodied.

VBA decides the severity of a disability based on the evidence submitted as part of a claim that VBA obtains from military records. **All medical challenges should be documented for an accurate rating.**

Some transitioning Service women will go through a different process to separate—**Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES), which is:** a joint DOD and VA disability evaluation process.

For ill or injured Service members, determinations are made regarding fitness for continued military service. If appropriate, a disability rating is given and disability benefits are provided.

For more information, refer to the [IDES Fact Sheet Resource](#).

## Resources

For assistance with your application:

- Call the VA benefits hotline at 800-827-1000
- Contact us online through the [Ask VA portal](#).

# Preparing to Apply

## Necessary Documents

There are three documents that you need to enroll in VA health care:

- **Finalized DD Form 214**  
Your finalized DD Form 214 provides details on your military experience that will help inform your eligibility and priority group at VA.
- **VA Form 10-10EZ Application for Health Benefits**  
This form can be completed online or in person. Visit the About [VA Form 10-10EZ webpage](#) on VA.gov for more information and to download the form.
- **Government-Issued ID**  
You will need to bring a government-issued ID with you when applying. Government-issued ID options include a state-issued driver's license, a state DMV-issued ID card and a U.S. passport. Your finalized DD Form 214 serves as a second form of ID.

## Health Benefits Application Information

To apply for your health benefits through VA, you will need the following categories of information:

<b>Finalized DD Form 214</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discharge or separation status</li><li>• Codes</li></ul>	<b>Military Service Information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Date of discharge</li><li>• Type of discharge</li><li>• Military history</li></ul>
<b>Personal Information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Name</li><li>• Address</li><li>• Marital status</li><li>• Phone number</li><li>• Preferred VAMC</li></ul>	<b>Insurance Information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Insurance details</li><li>• Eligibility for Medicaid or Medicare</li></ul>
<b>Spouse and Dependent Information</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Names</li><li>• Social Security numbers</li><li>• Birth dates</li></ul>	<b>Gross Annual Income</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Income (you, spouse, dependent children)</li><li>• Deductible expenses</li></ul>

To begin receiving your VA benefits, enroll and fill out [VA Form 10-10EZ Application for Health Benefits](#) as soon as possible.

# VA Health Care How to Apply

Using this information, you can follow the steps below to apply for VA health care. Remember, if you apply for VA health care in-person, you can also get your ID verified for a Premium My HealthVet account.

## How to Apply for VA Health Care

1. Receive DD Form 214 when leaving the military.
2. Apply for VA health care immediately
  - Online at the VA.gov: [Apply for VA health care webpage](#)
  - In-Person at your local VAMC
  - By Mailing the completed VA Form 10-10EZ, Application for Health Benefits, to: Health Eligibility Center, 2957 Clairmont Road, Suite 200, Atlanta, GA 30329-1647
  - By Phone by calling **1-877-222-VETS (8387)**
3. Choose a preferred facility.

**Note:** If you move, you can transfer to a new preferred facility.

4. Receive priority group assignment within 1-2 weeks.

**Note:** If you apply in person, you can receive priority group rating immediately.

5. Enroll in My HealthVet (recommended).
6. Call VA to start making appointments, or schedule appointments online through My HealthVet.

**Note:** If you apply in person, you can make appointments on the same day.

Call the Women Veterans Call Center if you have any questions, or if you want to understand the Women's Health offerings available at your facility.

## Recommendations for Applying Online

When you apply for VA health care online, keep a few things in mind:

- You must be within 1 year before your separation date.
- Before starting the health care application, it is recommended to sign in to VA.gov using your DS Logon, My HealthVet or ID.me account sign-in information, to save time and save your work in progress.
- You can sign in later by selecting **Sign In** at the top of any page.
- If you need to finish the application later, sign in to VA.gov and complete steps 1–4 on the next page to go to the application already in progress.
- You have 60 days from the date you start or update the application to submit it. After 60 days, your information won't be saved and you will need to start over.

*You can start the enrollment process before leaving active duty; however, enrollment is not final until you submit your DD Form 214.*



# Service Connected

## Service-Connected Overview

VA may determine that you have a **disability resulting from an injury or illness that occurred during or became worse due to your active military service**. These disabilities are considered service-connected. To be eligible for benefits related to a service-connected disability, you must have been separated or discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

**A compensation and pension (C&P) exam will determine your level of service-connected disability.** This service-connected status will help determine your priority group; your status and resulting priority group can change if your conditions worsen.

Watch the [YouTube video called "What is Service Connection?"](#) VBA created this video to provide more information about service-connected status.

## Service-Connected Status and Copays

Service-connected status will help place you in your priority group. Then, based on your priority group, a copay might be applicable. As of 2022, if you have a service-connected disability rating of 10% or higher you will not have copay costs for outpatient care and inpatient care.

Many Veterans qualify for free health care services based on a VA compensable service-connected condition or other special eligibilities. However, most Veterans are required to complete a financial assessment (based on IRS data) at the time of enrollment to determine if they qualify for free health care services.

Veterans whose income exceeds VA income limits, as well as those who choose not to complete the financial assessment at the time of enrollment, must agree to pay required copays in order to become eligible for VA health care services. A copay comparison can be found above. For more information, including copay amounts, refer to: [VA health care copay rates](#).

## Services that do not require a copay

You will not need to pay a copay for any of the services listed below, no matter what your disability rating is or what priority group you are in:

- Readjustment counseling and related mental health services
- Treatment for mental and physical health conditions related to Military Sexual Trauma (MST)
- Exams to determine your risk of health problems linked to your military service
- Care that may be related to combat service for Veterans who served in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998
- VA claim exams (C&P exams)
- Care related to a VA-rated service-connected disability
- Care for cancer of head or neck caused by nose or throat radium treatments received while in the military
- Individual or group programs to help you quit smoking or lose weight
- Laboratory (lab) tests
- Electrocardiograms (EKGs or ECGs) to check for heart disease or other heart problems

## Did you **KNOW?**

As of 2015, 37% of women Veterans enrolled in VA health care did not have any service-connected disabilities.

These women qualified for VA health care by meeting other requirements, and you may be able to as well.

To apply for VA health care, it is not required to have a service-connected disability rating. However, VBA's disability ratings are considered when you are assigned to a priority group. Your priority group determines if you are required to pay copays for VA health care. Every Veteran's situation is unique, and it is best to speak with an enrollment coordinator to understand what is best for you.

*Make sure to document all of your health care needs now. Even if you do not think it is an issue now, it might become an issue later.*

# VHA Priority Groups

## PRIORITY GROUPS DICTATE WHAT SERVICES YOU ARE ENTITLED TO RECEIVE AT VA.

Overall, you are entitled to receive more benefits if you are in a lower priority group number (For example, priority group number 1 receives the most benefits).

### Priority Group Overview

- Eight VA priority groups identify which no-cost services you are entitled to receive at VA.
- The Enrollment Coordinator will work with you to review your DD Form 214 to make sure you are placed in the appropriate VA priority group. Your priority group may change over time due to evolving medical conditions or income changes.
- These services are explained in your personalized Welcome Kit, which will detail your VA health benefits and provide important information concerning your VA access.

### Priority Group Definitions

#### 1

#### Priority Group 1

- Veterans with VA-rated service-connected disabilities 50% or more disabling
- Veterans determined by VA to be unemployable due to service-connected conditions
- Veterans awarded the Medal of Honor (MOH)

#### 2

#### Priority Group 2

Veterans with VA-rated service-connected disabilities 30% or 40% disabling

#### 3

#### Priority Group 3

- Veterans who are former Prisoners of War (POWs)
- Veterans awarded a Purple Heart medal
- Veterans whose discharge was for a disability that was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty
- Veterans with VA-rated service-connected disabilities 10% or 20% disabling
- Veterans awarded special eligibility classification pursuant to Title 38, U.S.C., § 1151, "benefits for individuals disabled by treatment or vocational rehabilitation"

#### 4

#### Priority Group 4

- Veterans who are receiving aid and attendance or housebound benefits from VA
- Veterans who have been determined by VA to be catastrophically disabled

To view an example Welcome Packet, visit: [Veterans Health Benefits Handbook](#).

# VHA Priority Groups *(continued)*

5

## Priority Group 5

- Non-service-connected Veterans and noncompensable service-connected Veterans rated 0% disabled by VA with annual income below VA and geographically adjusted income limits (based on their residential ZIP code)
- Veterans receiving VA pension benefits
- Veterans eligible for Medicaid programs

6

## Priority Group 6

- Compensable 0% service-connected Veterans
- Veterans exposed to ionizing radiation during atmospheric testing or during the occupation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- Project 112/SHAD participants
- Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam between January 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975
- Veterans of the Persian Gulf War who served between August 2, 1990 and November 11, 1998
- Veterans who served on active duty at Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987
- Currently enrolled Veterans and new enrollees who served in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998 and those who were discharged from active duty on or after January 28, 2003 are eligible for the enhanced benefits for 10 years following discharge

7

## Priority Group 7

Veterans with gross household income below the geographically-adjusted income limits for their resident location and who agrees to pay copays

8

## Priority Group 8

- Veterans with gross household income above VA and geographically-adjusted income limit for their resident location and who agree to pay copays
- Veterans eligible for enrollment who are **noncompensable 0% service-connected**:
  - **Subpriority a:** Enrolled as of January 16, 2003 and who have remained enrolled since that date and/or placed in this sub priority due to changed eligibility status
  - **Subpriority b:** Enrolled on or after June 15, 2009 whose income exceeds the current VA or geographic income limits by 10% or less
- Veterans eligible for enrollment who are **non-service-connected** and:
  - **Subpriority c:** Enrolled as of January 16, 2003 and who have remained enrolled since that date and/or placed in this sub priority due to changed eligibility status
  - **Subpriority d:** Enrolled on or after June 15, 2009, whose income exceeds the current VA or geographic income limits by 10% or less
- Veterans not eligible for enrollment – **Veterans not meeting the criteria above**:
  - **Subpriority e:** Non-compensable 0% service-connected (eligible for care of their service-connected condition only)
  - **Subpriority g:** Non-service-connected

# Transferring Medical Records

## FOLLOW THESE FIVE STEPS TO TRANSFER YOUR MEDICAL RECORDS TO VA.

### 1 Step 1

Request, gather and make at least two digital copies of all active duty and civilian (if referred out) medical records.

### 2 Step 2

Work with VA or a local accredited Veterans Service Organization (VSO) to review your medical records.

### 3 Step 3

Fill out VA Form 21-526EZ: Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits.

### 4 Step 4

Submit your VA Form and medical records to a local VA facility or by mail to:

Department of Veterans Affairs  
Claims Intake Center  
PO Box 4444 Janesville,  
WI 53547-4444

### 5 Step 5

Create a [VA.gov](https://www.va.gov) account so you can always add to your claim and receive results of your disability rating electronically. You will also receive your results by mail.

### Additional Resources

- [VA Compensation Home Page](#)
- [Compensation 101: What is Disability Compensation?](#)
- [Compensation 101: How Did I Get This Rating?](#)

## Did you **KNOW?**

VA-accredited Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) are available to help you review your medical records.

To locate VSOs in your area, refer to the [Accreditation Search](#).



*A VSO should never charge you to review your medical records and submit the disability claim. This is a free service provided to you as part of your military service.*

# VA Connected Care

## Overview

The Office of Connected Care brings VA digital technology to Veterans and health care professionals, extending access to care beyond traditional office visits. Through virtual technology, VA is able to deliver care to patients where and when they need it. After you enroll in VA, there are several resources to help you manage your health care and ask any questions.



**My HealthVet** is VA's award-winning Personal Health Record. When you use the tools on My HealthVet, you become a more active partner with your health care team.

### Available Features Include:

- Secure messaging with your health care providers
- Access to your medical records
- Ability to schedule appointments online
- Lab test results
- Pharmacy access and refill requests
- Tools to help transfer your DOD medical records into the VA system

We strongly encourage you to sign up for a My HealthVet Premium account. Doing so will give you access to the patient portal where you can securely message your providers, refill prescriptions, and schedule and view appointments. The My HealthVet Premium account can also be used to access any other VA applications that require signing in.



**VA Telehealth Services** is leading the way in telehealth innovation to make sure Veterans can access care when and where they need it. Using VA Telehealth Services, you can connect with your VA care team to access high-quality VA care from your home, a clinic, or the hospital or anywhere else. See [page 78](#) for more information on VA Telehealth services.



**VA Mobile** develops mobile solutions, such as the VA App Store and mobile health apps, which offer safe and secure access to your patient data, wherever you are. See [page 79](#) for more information on VA Mobile apps.

## Resources

To learn more about VA Connected Care Programs visit the [VA Connected Care website](#).

*Your information is safe. Any VA App that connects with VA's electronic health record (EHR) requires a DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) Account for your security.*

# VA Connected Care VA Telehealth Services

As the national leader in telehealth care services, VA is committed to providing all enrolled women Veterans with access to high-quality VA care. Using transformative virtual health technologies and devices, VA Telehealth Services gives you access to the care you need, when and where you need it. From your home, a clinic, or a hospital or anywhere else, VA telehealth technologies make it easier for you to connect with your VA care team.

Telehealth connects you with VA care teams and specialists through:

- Real-time, interactive video visits
- Secure messaging
- In-home and mobile health remote monitoring

You may even have access to technology to read your vital signs and health measurements directly from your home or another location. Telehealth availability is facility-dependent. There are three different ways that VA facilities can arrange for telehealth services.

- 1 Intrafacility**  
Between two facilities in the same VISN and local health care system
- 2 Interfacility**  
Between two facilities in the same VISN but different local health care systems
- 3 VA Video Connect (VVC)**  
Connects a provider with a patient in their home via a computer or phone with a web-cam

## Available Telehealth Services

### Tele Primary Care

Including comprehensive primary care services from your WH-PCP Team

### Tele Pain Management

Including chronic pain syndromes, chronic pelvic pain, joint pain, facial pain, fibromyalgia, headaches, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), physical therapy, chronic pain education classes, musculoskeletal pains and vulvodynia

### Tele Mental Health

Including MST-related counseling and readjustment counseling

### Tele Care Coordination

Including breast and cervical cancer screening coordination and maternity care coordination

### Tele Gynecology

Including contraceptive counseling, pre- and post-op visits, prenatal visits and reproductive endocrinology consultation

### Tele Gynecology

Including chronic disease management, pregnancy and lactation medication review, teratogenic counseling and medication management

### Tele Well-being

Including group exercise, nutrition counseling, stress reduction and relaxation

## Eligibility

Any Veteran who qualifies to receive VA health care, and lives in one of the 50 U.S. states or a U.S. territory, is eligible to use VA health care. Telehealth availability is facility-dependent.

## Did you KNOW?

In 2021, over 2 million Veterans received care through VA Telehealth. Benefits of Telehealth include:

- Reduced time away from competing responsibilities, such as work, childcare and other commitments
- Reduced or removed travel time to and from facilities
- The ability to attend appointments from a safe, secure and private space of your choosing

## Resources

For additional information on telehealth services, visit the [VA Telehealth website](#), or consult with your WH-PCP.

# VA Connected Care VA Mobile

To help you be an active participant in your health, VA has developed a suite of virtual care tools, including: a patient portal and personal health record, as well as a number of applications (apps). All of these virtual care tools are free, and many allow you to receive care and services with no need to visit a VA facility. Additionally, there is no copay for any virtual care provided using tools such as VA Video Connect. Below you will find a sampling of some of the tools that other Veterans have found useful, but you can browse all of these tools on VA's mobile app store at [VA Mobile](#).



**Annie** is a text messaging service that sends automated health-related notifications, reminders or motivational messages to help Veterans with their self-care, and empowers Veterans to play an active role in their care.



**VA Online Scheduling** allows Veterans to schedule VA appointments online if they have a My Health eVet Premium Account or DS Logon Premium Account.



**VA Video Connect** brings together Veterans with their health care team from anywhere. It allows quick and easy health care access from any mobile or web-based device.



**MOVE! Coach** allows Veterans to monitor, track and receive feedback on progress with exercise, diet and weight loss goals.



**PTSD Coach** provides users with education about PTSD, information about professional care, self-assessment for PTSD, opportunities to find support, and tools to help users manage daily stress.



**Beyond MST** is a self-help tool for people healing from military trauma (MST), which is sexual assault or harassment during military service.



**Rx Refill** allows Veterans to request refills of their refillable VA-issued prescriptions, track VA prescription deliveries and view VA prescription history.



**Preconception Care** offers provider-centric resources to guide the care and counseling of women Veterans of childbearing age. Patients can also access this app.

## Resources

For more information, including other VA-developed apps, visit: [VA Mobile](#). Many apps are web apps only; some apps are designed for iOS and/or Android devices.

*Some applications, such as Rx refill, pull data from VA Electronic Health Record and allow you to send information back. These apps require you to log on using a VA-approved credential. Many apps, such as PTSD Coach, do not pull from or share data with VA and so no log on is required.*

# VA Connected Care Bridging the Digital Divide

## Overview

VA is helping Veterans get the internet access and technology they need for telehealth care. For Veterans who do not have internet service or an internet-connected device in their home or community, accessing telehealth can be difficult. VA is working to bridge this digital divide to ensure that all Veterans can access VA care where they are.

If you or a Veteran you know could benefit from VA telehealth, here are some of the ways that VA can help you get connected.



**Digital Divide Consult** If you would benefit from video telehealth services but do not have internet access or a video-capable device, your VA care team can help through the Digital Divide Consult.

With the **Digital Divide Consult**, your VA provider can refer you to a VA social worker. The social worker can determine whether you are eligible for programs that can help you get the internet service or technology needed for VA telehealth. For more information about the Digital Divide Consult, talk with your VA provider and visit the [VA Telehealth: Bridging the Digital Divide webpage](#).



**VA Internet-Connected Devices** If you do not have a device with internet access, VA can lend you an internet-connected tablet so you can reach your VA care team through telehealth. The Digital Divide Consult can help determine if you are eligible.



**Mobile Connectivity Support for Telehealth** AT&T, SafeLink by TracFone, T-Mobile and Verizon help Veteran subscribers avoid data charges when using VA Video Connect on their networks. This enables Veterans to access their VA care teams through telehealth with fewer worries about data fees.



**ATLAS Program** Through **ATLAS** (Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations), VA is bringing telehealth care into Veterans' communities. ATLAS sites are comfortable, private spaces for Veterans to have video appointments with their VA providers. VA has teamed up with public and private organizations, including The American Legion, Philips North America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Walmart to create ATLAS sites in some locations in the U.S.



**Internet and Phone Service Discounts** You may be eligible to receive a discount on your home internet or phone service through two Federal Communications Commission (FCC) programs: **Lifeline** and the **Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP)**. The Digital Divide Consult can help determine your eligibility for both FCC programs.

Did you  
**KNOW?**



## Resources

- [VA Mobile Carrier Programs](#)
- [VA Video Connect](#)
- [ATLAS](#)
- [Lifeline Support](#)
- [ACP](#)

*For more information about the Digital Divide, or to schedule a consult, talk with your VA provider.*



# Women Veteran Call Center

## Women Veterans Call Center (WVCC)



The Women Veterans Call Center staff is trained to provide women Veterans, as well as their families, and caregivers, with information and assistance about VA services and resources. Call Center representatives can provide direct referrals for VA services and can also help connect you with your Women Veterans Program Manager. They can also help answer questions around disability claims and VA eligibility; if they cannot answer your question, they can connect you to someone who can.

The Call Center is completely staffed by women, and you do not have to be enrolled to use the Call Center.

VA now offers a new text feature for the Women Veterans Call Center. This provides women Veterans, as well as their families and caregivers, with another avenue to ask questions about VA benefits, health care and available resources specifically for women Veterans. You can use the WVCC text feature by contacting the same number you would use for phone calls: **1-855-VA-WOMEN (1-855-829-6636)**

# Preparing for Your First Appointment

To schedule a VA appointment for either acute or routine health visits after enrolling in VA health care, call your VA facility or use the VA Online Scheduling Tool on My HealthVet.

## What to Bring to Your First Appointment

- List of regular appointments and appointment frequency
- List of out-of-network providers and referrals
- List of current medications
- Last Pap and mammogram results
- Any recent x-rays or lab results
- You can bring CD-ROM or hard copies (ask medical facility for tabbed CD)
- Copy of your completed Personal Health Inventory (see [Whole Health: Making Your Plan](#) to obtain a copy)

## Managing Your DOD Specialty Care Referrals at VA

- Enroll in VA health care and schedule your first appointment with your WH-PCP.
- At your first appointment, talk to your WH-PCP about your current specialty care providers. If possible, bring a list.
- Your WH-PCP will review all of your providers and work with you to develop a care plan, potentially incorporating VA and community providers.
- The MISSION Act is available if you need to see physicians in the community.



*Your VA facility's number can be found by using the Facility Locator ([page 18](#)) or calling **1-855-VA-WOMEN**.*

# Preparing for Your First Appointment Innovative Post-Deployment VA Health Care

## Providers understand how military service and deployment can impact your health.

Standard practice includes taking military histories and administering appropriate screenings during your medical visits. In addition to medical, gynecological, mental/psychosocial and family histories, providers may also conduct a number of post-deployment evaluation screens, including:

- Gastrointestinal (GI)
- Musculoskeletal injuries
- Skin rashes
- Traumatic brain injury (TBI)
- Embedded fragments
- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Depression
- MST (sexual harassment and/or assault)
- Alcohol use
- Tobacco use

Military service can result in many potential health impacts. All wars have similar post-combat health outcomes, such as:

- Physical injuries with residual pain
- Mental health conditions, such as anxiety, depression and PTSD
- Unexplained symptoms with general health decline
- Psychosocial distress resulting in disruptions in relationships, work and social life

## Post-Deployment Medical History Checklist

### Military History

When and where did you serve?

What were your duties?

Were you exposed to chemicals, fumes or blasts?

Were you deployed? If so, where?

### Military Follow-Up

Did you see combat, enemy fire or casualties?

Were you or a colleague injured or hospitalized?

Did you become ill during service?

Were you a Prisoner of War?

Ask about symptoms of PTSD, depression or experiences to MST

# Notes

# Module 5

## Transition Assistance

“  
I think to know once you're outside the military, there's somebody still to help take care of you and can understand and translate your medical history that you had while in the military—I think that's a huge benefit.

— Former Women's Health Transition Training participant

”

# Veteran Support Organizations

Social support is incredibly important during the transition to Veteran status. There are countless nonprofits focused on connecting and empowering Veterans. Some of the available opportunities are listed below. For more information about VA's Office of Community Engagement (OCE) and VA's community partnerships, please visit [National Center for Healthcare Advancement and Partnerships](#). Additionally, there are 150 Community Veteran Engagement Boards (CVEBs) focused on providing access to local resources for Veterans and their families. Please visit [Veterans Experience Office](#) for more information and an interactive map to find a CVEB near you.

**Disabled American Veterans (DAV)** is a nonprofit charity that provides a lifetime of support for Veterans and their families. More information is at the [DAV website](#).

**Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)** is a VSO focused on serving our Veterans, the military and our communities, as well as advocating for Veterans. More information is at the [VFW website](#).

**American Legion** is a VSO devoted to mutual helpfulness and volunteerism for Veterans and their communities. More information is at the [American Legion website](#).

**American Veterans (AMVETS)** is a VSO focused on enhancing and safeguarding the entitlements and quality of life of all American Veterans. More information is at the [AMVETS website](#).

**Paralyzed Veterans of America** serves paralyzed Veterans by advocating for quality health care, research, education, benefits, civil rights and opportunities. To learn more, visit [Paralyzed Veterans of America](#).

**Vietnam Veterans of America** promotes and supports all issues important for Vietnam Veterans, creating a new identity for this generation of Veterans and changing public perception of Vietnam Veterans. To learn more, visit [Vietnam Veterans of America](#).

Local Women Veterans programs, support groups, and social events are available through Women's Health Programs at many VAMCs.

These are just a few of the great resources available.



# Resources and Professional Support for Women Veterans

## The National Resource Directory (NRD)

The National Resource Directory (NRD) is another government-owned search tool that provides access to vetted resources. NRD connects you with resources and services that support all Service members, wounded and injured Veterans, family members and caregivers including, but not limited to:

- Financial planning
- Education, training and employment
- Health care
- Housing
- Daycare

NRD connects you with resources and services that come from:

- Federal, state and local government agencies
- VSOs and Military Service Organizations
- Nonprofit and community-based organizations
- Academic institutions and professional associations

## Additional VA Transition Assistance Resources

Every VA medical center has a Transition and Care Management (TCM) team ready to welcome post-9/11 Veterans and help coordinate their care. VA Liaisons for health care, embedded at 21 military installations, as well as TCM Case Managers, who are either nurses or social workers, help coordinate patient care activities and can help patients navigate their way through the VA system. To locate a VA Liaison to assist with health care transition, please visit: [VA Liaisons for Healthcare](#).

The Transition Patient Advocate (TPA) can also act as a personal support as you learn to navigate VA. To contact the TCM team, check your local VA medical center website.

LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinators (LGBTQ+ VCC) help ensure consistent and timely access to culturally competent care for LGBTQ+ Veterans. To locate an LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator, visit: [VA Facilities with LGBTQ+ VCC webpage](#).

## Hotlines

### Veterans Crisis Line

Dial 988, then select or press 1

### Help for Homeless Veterans

877-4AID-VET (877-424-3838)

### Women Veterans Call Center

1-855-VA-WOMEN

### Caregiver Support

855-260-3274

### Women Veterans Call Center Chat

[womenshealth.va.gov](https://womenshealth.va.gov)

To learn more about NRD, visit the [National Resource Directory](#) website.



## TCM Programs

TCM programs provide comprehensive care coordination and case management services for transitioning Service members and post-9/11 Veterans, their caregivers and families as they transition into the VA health care system and across the continuum of care. To locate your local VA Facility TCM team, visit: [Transition and Care Management Teams](#).

More information is in the [VA Benefits and Services Participant Guide](#).

# Housing Insecurity

VA has a variety of resources to help Veterans who are struggling with housing insecurity or experiencing homelessness. VA's specialized programs for homeless Veterans serve hundreds of thousands of homeless and at-risk Veterans each year, independently and in collaboration with Federal and community partners. Learn more about these programs below.

Housing insecurity can impact Veterans of all backgrounds and genders. Women Veterans experiencing homelessness are found in communities across the country.

- Women make up 10% of Veterans experiencing homelessness; however, homelessness prevalence among women Veterans is significantly underestimated.
- Women Veterans have a four times-higher risk of experiencing homelessness than civilian women.
- HUD's housing vouchers and VA's homelessness programs have helped over 360,000 Veterans and their family members since 2010.
- In 2017, roughly 40,000 Veterans were experiencing homelessness, and 15,000 were unsheltered or on the street.
- The HUD Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (AHAR) indicated that 37,085 Veterans were experiencing homelessness on a single night in January 2019, of whom 61% were staying in emergency shelters or transitional housing programs.

## Resources Available

Below is a list of some resources available:

- National Call Center for Homeless Veterans (877-424-3838)
- Homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing
- Transitional and permanent supportive housing
- Residential treatment
- Financial and employment support
- Veterans justice programs
- Treatment and outreach

For more information about these programs, please talk to the Homeless Coordinator at your VAMC or visit: [VA Programs to End Homelessness Among Women Veterans](#).

## National Call Center

Veterans who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness—and their family members, friends and supporters—can make the call to or chat online with the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans, where trained counselors are ready to talk confidentially **24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 1-877-4AID VET** (877-424-3838).



*Program eligibility varies. Work with your VA representative to determine your eligibility for specific programs.*



# Patient Rights

## Patient Rights

VA employees must respect and support your rights as a patient. If you would like more information about your rights as a patient, please talk with your VA treatment team members or, if necessary, a Patient Advocate.

Patient Rights and Responsibilities are posted in outpatient and inpatient areas. If you have not received a copy of your Rights and Responsibilities, please contact the Patient Advocate who can provide you with a copy, or you may download a copy from the [VHA Rights and Responsibilities webpage](#).

## Patient Responsibilities

You also need to take an active role in your health care. This includes communicating with your providers about all current health information, and making sure your records are up to date. This includes, but is not limited to, health conditions, medications and over the counter supplements, personal information and emergency contacts. Prior to leaving active duty, ensure that your records are accurate, and update any information as needed.

## Do you need to update your records?

You can obtain instructions for changing or correcting your military service record, or changing your discharge status, by going to: [Veterans' Service Records: Correcting Military Service Records](#).

If your military service record requires a change or correction, you will need to submit DD Form 149, Application for Correction of Military Records, to the relevant service branch. The form provides branch addresses. To obtain this form, you will need to go to: [DD Form 149](#).

If you need to change your discharge status, you will generally need to submit DD Form 293, Application for the Review of Discharge or Dismissal from the Armed Forces of the United States, to the relevant service branch. The form provides branch addresses. To obtain this form, you will need to go to: [DD Form 293](#).

## What to expect:

### Nondiscrimination and Respect

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

### Privacy

Your privacy will be protected, and your health record will be kept confidential. Information about you will not be released without your authorization unless permitted by law.

### Partnering in Care

You, and any person(s) you choose, will be involved in all decisions about your care. You will be given information you can understand about the benefits and risks of treatment.

### Concerns or Complaints

You are encouraged to work with your care team or a patient advocate. Any concerns or complaints can be shared verbally or in writing, without fear of retaliation.

The full Patient Rights and Responsibilities are posted in outpatient and inpatient areas. You may request a copy from a patient advocate or download a copy from [Veterans Health Administration: Rights and Responsibilities](#).

# Notes



Knowing more about what is available and the quality of services available makes me confident in transitioning.

— Former Women's Health Transition Training participant



# APPENDIX

## Recommendations for Preventive Care

VA aims to help you stay healthy. The table below lists the preventive health services (screening tests, medications, health counseling and vaccines) that VA recommends for their patients to follow. Screening tests are used to look for health conditions before there are symptoms. **These recommendations apply only to adult women of average risk.** You are a woman of average risk if you have no personal or family history, and no symptoms, of the conditions listed below. If you are having symptoms of a condition, please talk with your provider. Review the table below for recommendations. For more information, visit: [National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention: Get Recommended Vaccines and Screening Tests.](#)

- Green: Recommended
- Yellow: Recommended for some women – talk with your provider
- Red: Not recommended (NR)

### SCREENING TESTS FOR AVERAGE RISK VETERANS

HEALTH CONDITIONS	18–29 years	30–39 years	40–49 years	50–59 years	60–69 years	70–79 years	80 years and older	
<b>Breast Cancer</b>	Not recommended (age 18–39)		Recommended annually (45–54) Recommend biennial (55 and older or have opportunity to continue annually) Have opportunity to begin annual screening (40–44)			Recommended for some women – talk with your provider (age 75 and older)		
<b>Cervical Cancer</b>	Every 3 years (age 21–29)	Recommended. Every 3 or 5 years, depending on tests chosen (age 30–65)				Not recommended (age 66 and older)		
<b>Colon Cancer</b>	Not recommended (age 18–44)		Recommended. Frequency varies by test chosen (age 45–75)			Talk with your provider (age 76–85)	NR (age 86 and older)	
<b>Depression</b>	Recommended every year							
<b>Hepatitis B Infection</b>	Recommended for some women – talk with your provider (age 18 and older)							
<b>Hepatitis C Infection</b>	Recommended in adults aged 18–79 years, and in all pregnant women, during each pregnancy							
<b>High Blood Pressure</b>	Recommended every year (age 18 and older)							
<b>HIV Infection</b>	Recommended once (age 18 and older); in all pregnant Veterans; annually in Veterans with ongoing risk factors							
<b>Lung Cancer</b>	Not recommended (age 18–49)			Recommended for some women – talk with your provider (age 50–80)			Not recommended (age 81 and older)	
<b>Osteoporosis</b>	Recommended for some women – talk with your provider (age 18–64)				Recommended once (age 65 and older)			
<b>Overweight &amp; Obesity</b>	Recommended every year (age 18 and older)							
<b>Sexually Transmitted Infections</b>	Recommended. Test for gonorrhea and chlamydia every year (age 18–24). Talk with your provider about syphilis testing.	Talk with your provider about testing for gonorrhea, chlamydia, and syphilis (age 25 and older)						
		Early screening for syphilis infection is recommended for all pregnant Veterans, regardless of age.						

# Recommendations for Preventive Care *(continued)*

Green: Recommended

Yellow: Recommended for some women – talk with your provider

Red: Not recommended (NR)

## MEDICATIONS

HEALTH CONDITIONS	18–29 years	30–39 years	40–49 years	50–59 years	60–69 years	70–79 years	80 years and older
<b>Folic Acid for Pregnancy Planning</b>	Recommended. Daily folic acid supplement for any woman who may become pregnant (age 18–55)			Not recommended after child-bearing age (age 55 and older)			
<b>Aspirin to Prevent Cardiovascular Disease</b>	Not recommended (age 18–49)			Talk with your provider (age 50–69)		Not recommended (age 70 and older)	
<b>PrEP to Prevent HIV Infection</b>	Talk with your provider (age 19 and older)						
<b>Statin to Prevent Cardiovascular Disease</b>	Not recommended (age 19–40)		Recommended for some women – talk with your provider (age 40 and older)				

## HEALTH COUNSELING

HEALTH CONDITIONS	18–29 years	30–39 years	40–49 years	50–59 years	60–69 years	70–79 years	80 years and older
<b>Tobacco Use</b>	Recommended every visit (if using tobacco) (age 18 and older)						
<b>Alcohol Use</b>	Talk with your provider about healthy alcohol use (age 18 and older)						
<b>Healthy Diet and Physical Activity</b>	Talk with your provider about a healthy diet and physical activity (age 18 and older)						

## VACCINES

HEALTH CONDITIONS	19–29 years	30–39 years	40–49 years	50–59 years	60–69 years	70–79 years	80 years and older
<b>COVID-19</b>	Recommended for all women – talk with your provider to make sure you stay up-to-date ( <a href="https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/">https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/</a> )						
<b>Hepatitis A</b>	Recommended for some women – talk with your provider (age 19 and older)						
<b>Hepatitis B</b>	Recommended for all women who have not already had Hepatitis B vaccine (age 19–59)				Recommended for some women – talk with your provider (age 60 and older)		
<b>Herpes Zoster (Shingles) RZV vaccine</b>	Recommended for some women – talk with your provider (age 19 and older)			Recommended 2 doses (age 50 and older), with second dose 2–6 months after first dose			
<b>Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) HPV9 vaccine</b>	2–3 doses (age 19–26) if series not completed	Talk with your provider (age 27–45)		Not recommended (age 46 and older)			
<b>Influenza (Flu) Injectable, Inhaled</b>	Recommended every year (age 19 and older)						
<b>Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR)</b>	Recommended for some women – talk with your provider (age 19 and older)						
<b>Meningococcal Disease</b>	Recommended for some women – talk with your provider (age 19 and older)						
<b>Pneumococcal Disease</b> PCV20 vaccine, PCV15 vaccine, PPSV23 vaccine	Recommended for some women – talk with your provider (age 19–64)					Recommended – talk with your provider to make sure you are up-to-date (age 65 and older)	
<b>Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria &amp; Pertussis)</b>	Recommend at least 1 dose. Get additional dose with every pregnancy (Or for wound management if > 5 years have passed since last tetanus toxoid-containing booster vaccine).						
<b>Td (Tetanus and diphtheria)</b>	Recommended. Booster every 10 years (age 19 and older) (Either Tdap or Td may be used) (Or for wound management if > 5 years have passed since last tetanus toxoid-containing booster vaccine).						
<b>Varicella (Chickenpox)</b>	Recommended for some women – talk with your provider (2 doses if born 1980 or later)						

# Online Reference Guide

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) provides training, information and services to help Service members and their families transition to civilian life. The Women's Health Transition Training (WHTT) is complementary to the TAP Benefits and Services course. WHTT describes functions and services specific to women transitioning out of their roles in the Military. This Online Reference Guide provides you with the web links to important resources related to the course.

## Key VA Resources

The VA.gov website offers current resources, tools and contact information for all VA benefits and services that may be available to Service members, Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors.

- [VA home page](#)
- [The Center for Women Veterans](#)
- [COVID-19 Information](#)
  - [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#)
- [Choose VA home page](#)
- VA benefits hotline: 1-800-827-1000
  - Hearing impaired: 1-800-829-4833
  - Technical Issues: 1-800-983-0937

### Where to go for information:

- [Women Veterans Call Center](#)
  - Call or Text: 855-829-6639

## VA Women's Health Care

- [The VA Women Veterans Health Care home page](#)
- [Patient Care Services](#)
- [VA Whole Health](#)
- [Sign up for VHA emails](#)
- [VHA White Ribbon Pledge webpage](#)
- [VA Community Care](#)

### VA Health Centers

- [Locate a VA Health Center](#)
- [VA Facility Quality Data](#)
- Inspector General hotline: 1-800-488-8244

## Bridging the DIGITAL DIVIDE

VA has several programs to help you stay connected if you don't have regular online access.

- [VA Mobile Carrier Programs](#)
- [VA Video Connect](#)
- [The ATLAS Webpage](#)
- [Lifeline Support](#)
- [The ACP Webpage](#)

# Online Reference Guide *(continued)*

## Comprehensive Primary Care

- [The VA Whole Health webpage](#)
  - [The Whole Health live blog](#)
  - [VA Whole Health Apps and Online Tools Information](#)
  - [Live Whole Health app](#)
- [VHA Pain Management](#)
- [Recommended Screening Tests and Immunizations for Women](#)

## Reproductive Health

- [VA/DOD Clinical Practice Guideline for Management of Pregnancy](#)
- [Pregnancy & Children: A Goal Oriented Guide to Prenatal Care](#)
- [Women Veterans Health Care: Breastfeeding](#)
- [The Text4Baby app](#)
- [VA Adoption Reimbursement](#)
- [VA Directive 1332, Infertility Evaluation and Treatment](#)

## Mental Health

- [Mental Health](#)
- [MyHealthVet Screening tools](#)

## Substance Use Resources

- [VA Substance Use webpage](#)
- [Substance Use: Take the Next Step](#)
- [Substance Use: Treatment](#)

## Smoking Cessation

- [SmokeFree.gov for Veterans](#)
- [Smoke-Free Vet texting program](#)
- Veterans quitline: 1-855-QUIT-VET

## [Military Sexual Trauma](#)

### **[Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program](#)**

- National Domestic Violence hotline: 1-800-799-7233 (799-SAFE)

## Suicide Prevention

- [Veterans Crisis Line Resource webpage](#)
- [Veterans Crisis Line Online Chat](#)
- Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988, then press 1 or text 838255
- [Psyche/Armor S.A.V.E. webpage](#)
- [Make the Connection](#)
- [Reach Out](#)
- [Firearm Suicide Prevention & Lethal Means Safety](#)
- [Coaching Into Care](#)

# Online Reference Guide *(continued)*

## Suicide Prevention (continued)

- [Veterans Self-Check webpage](#)
- [National Center for PTSD webpage](#)
- [Polytrauma/TBI System of Care](#)

## General Medical and Specialty Care

- [VHA Audiology and Hearing Loss](#)

## Nutrition

- [VA Healthy Teaching Kitchen](#)
- [VA Nutrition and Food Services](#)
- [MOVE! Weight Management Program](#)
- [MOVE! Questionnaire](#)
- [VHA LGBTQ+ Health Program](#)

## [LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator Locator](#)

- Women's Health Services Access hotline: 1-855-VA-WOMEN

## Enrolling in and Accessing VA Health Care

- [VA Eligibility webpage](#)
- Health Eligibility Center hotline: 1-877-222-8387
- [PACT Act Information](#)
- [VA List of Discharge Documents](#)
- [Information on Drill Pay versus Disability Compensation Pay](#)
- [Reserve Component TRICARE eligibility](#)
- [VA Disability Compensation webpage](#)
  - [VA Separation Health Assessment](#)
  - [VA Claim Exam](#)
  - [Form 21-526EZ](#)
  - [Integrated Disability Evaluation System \(IDES\)](#)
- [VA Compensation 101](#)
  - [Compensation 101: What is Disability Compensation](#)
  - [Compensation 101: How did I get this rating?](#)
- [Form 10-10EZ Benefit Application form](#)
- [What is Service Connection?](#)
- [VA Health Care copay rates](#)

## Connected Care Programs

- [My HealthVet webpage](#)
- [VA Telehealth Services](#)
- [The VA Mobile app store](#)
- [Ask VA](#)
- [Veterans Health Benefits Handbook](#)
- [VA Health Administration Rights and Responsibilities](#)



# Online Reference Guide *(continued)*

## Transition Assistance

- [VA Transition Assistance Program](#)

## Veterans Service Organizations

- [Disabled American Veterans \(DAV\)](#)
- [Veterans of Foreign Wars \(VFW\)](#)
- [American Legion](#)
- [American Veterans \(AMVETS\)](#)
- [Paralyzed Veterans of America](#)
- [Vietnam Veterans of America](#)

## Resources and Professional Support for Women Veterans

- [The National Resource Directory \(NRD\)](#)
- National Call Center for Homeless Veterans: 1-877-4AID-VET (424-3838)
- [VA Programs to End Homelessness Among Women Veterans](#)
- Women Veterans Call Center: 1-855-VA-Women
- Caregiver Support: 1-855-260-3274

## Additional Links

- [Correcting Military Service Records](#)
  - [DD Form 149- Correction application](#)
  - [DD Form 293- Discharge review](#)

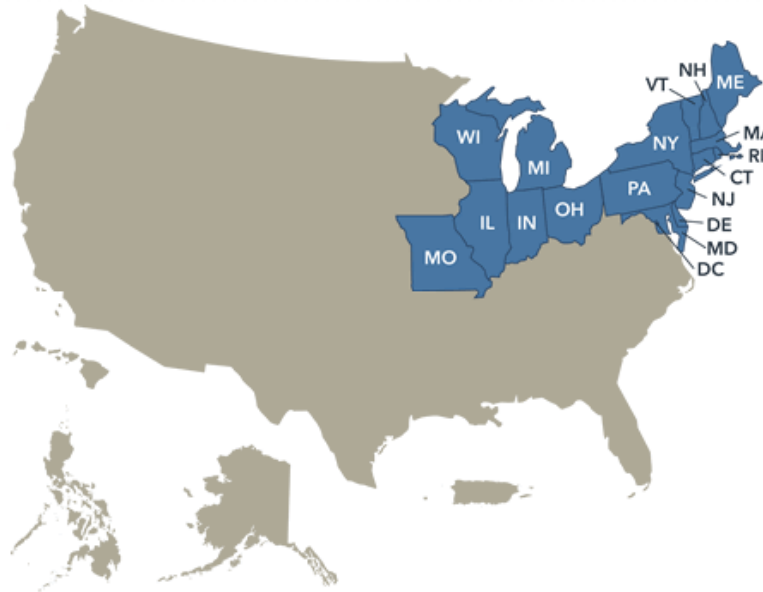
## Data Sources

- [2021 Demographics Profile of the Military Community](#)
- [Sourcebook, Volume 4: Longitudinal Trends in Sociodemographics, Utilization, Health Profile, and Geographic Distribution](#)
- [FY22Q2 VA Trust Report](#)
- [U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention 2022 Annual Report](#)

# Veterans Benefits Administration

## REGIONAL OFFICES

### NORTHEAST DISTRICT



**Hartford**  
**Regional Office:**  
555 Willard Ave.  
Newington, CT 06111

**Indianapolis**  
**Regional Office:**  
575 North Pennsylvania St.  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

**Detroit**  
**Regional Office:**  
477 Michigan Ave.  
Detroit, MI 48226

**Buffalo**  
**Regional Office:**  
130 South Elmwood Ave.  
Buffalo, NY 14202

**Pittsburgh**  
**Regional Office:**  
1000 Liberty Ave.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

**Wilmington**  
**Regional Office:**  
1601 Kirkwood Highway  
Wilmington, DE 19805

**Togus**  
**Regional Office:**  
1 VA Center  
Augusta, ME 04330

**St. Louis**  
**Regional Office:**  
Charles F. Prevedel  
Federal Bldg  
9700 Page Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63132

**New York**  
**Regional Office:**  
245 W. Houston St.  
New York, NY 10014

**Providence**  
**Regional Office:**  
380 Westminster St.  
Providence, RI 02903

**National Capital**  
**Regional Office:**  
1722 I St. NW  
Washington, DC 20421

**Baltimore**  
**Regional Office:**  
31 Hopkins Plaza  
Baltimore, MD 21201

**Manchester**  
**Regional Office:**  
Norris Cotton Federal Bldg  
275 Chestnut St.  
Manchester, NH 03101

**Cleveland**  
**Regional Office:**  
1240 East Ninth St.  
Cleveland, OH 44199

**White River Junction**  
**Regional Office:**  
163 Veterans Dr.  
White River Junction, VT  
05009

**Chicago**  
**Regional Office:**  
2122 West Taylor St.  
Chicago, IL 60612

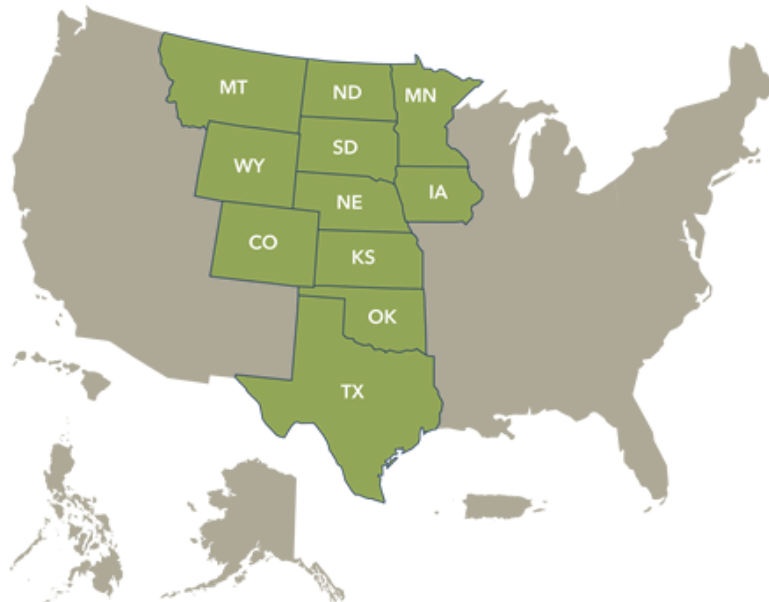
**Boston**  
**Regional Office:**  
JFK Federal Bldg  
15 New Sudbury St.  
Boston, MA 02203

**Newark**  
**Regional Office:**  
20 Washington Place  
Newark, NJ 07102

**Philadelphia**  
**Regional Office:**  
5000 Wissahickon Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA 19144

**Milwaukee**  
**Regional Office:**  
5400 West National Ave.  
Milwaukee, WI 53214

## CONTINENTAL DISTRICT



### Denver

#### Regional Office:

155 Van Gordon St.  
Lakewood, CO 80228

### Fort Harrison

#### Regional Office:

3633 Veterans Dr.  
Fort Harrison, MT 59636

### Houston

#### Regional Office:

6900 Almeda Rd.  
Houston, TX 77030

### Des Moines

#### Regional Office:

210 Walnut St.  
Des Moines, IA 50309

### Lincoln

#### Regional Office:

3800 Village Dr.  
Lincoln, NE 68516

### Waco

#### Regional Office:

1 Veterans Plaza  
701 Clay Ave.  
Waco, TX 76799

### Wichita

#### Regional Office:

5500 East Kellogg  
Wichita, KS 67218

### Fargo

#### Regional Office:

2101 Elm St.  
Fargo, ND 58102

### Sioux Falls

#### Regional Office:

2501 W. 22nd St.  
Sioux Falls, SD 57105

### St. Paul

#### Regional Office:

1 Federal Dr.  
Fort Snelling  
St. Paul, MN 55111

### Muskogee

#### Regional Office:

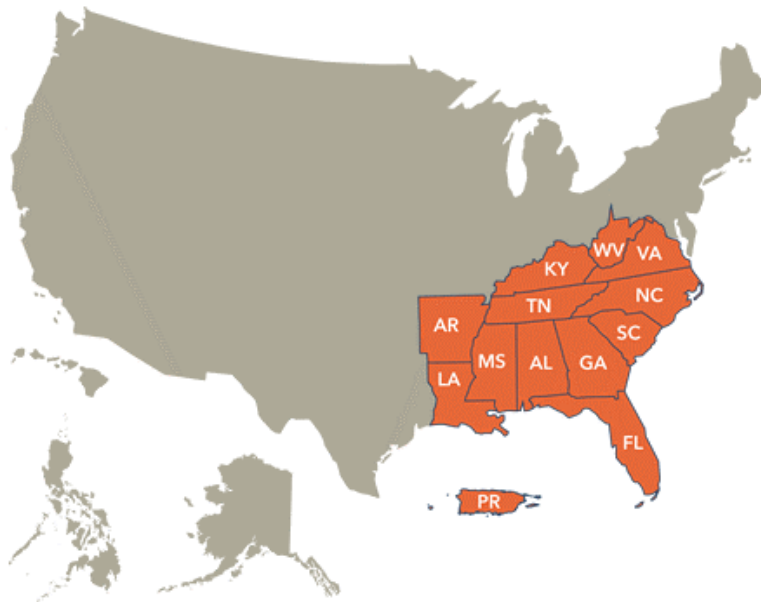
125 South Main St.  
Muskogee, OK 74401

### Cheyenne

#### Regional Office:

2360 East Pershing Blvd.  
Cheyenne, WY 82001

## SOUTHEAST DISTRICT



**Montgomery**  
**Regional Office:**  
345 Perry Hill Rd.  
Montgomery, AL 36109

**Louisville**  
**Regional Office:**  
321 West Main St.  
Suite 390  
Louisville, KY 40202

**San Juan**  
**Regional Office:**  
50 Carr 165  
Guaynabo, PR 00968-8024

**Huntington**  
**Regional Office:**  
640 Fourth Ave.  
Huntington, WV 25701

**Little Rock**  
**Regional Office:**  
2200 Fort Roots Dr.  
Building 65  
North Little Rock, AR 72114

**New Orleans**  
**Regional Office:**  
1250 Poydras St.  
Suite 200  
New Orleans, LA 70113

**Columbia**  
**Regional Office:**  
6437 Garners Ferry Rd.  
Columbia, SC 29209

**St. Petersburg**  
**Regional Office:**  
9500 Bay Pines Blvd.  
Bay Pines, FL 33744

**Jackson**  
**Regional Office:**  
1600 E. Woodrow  
Wilson Ave.  
Jackson, MS 39216

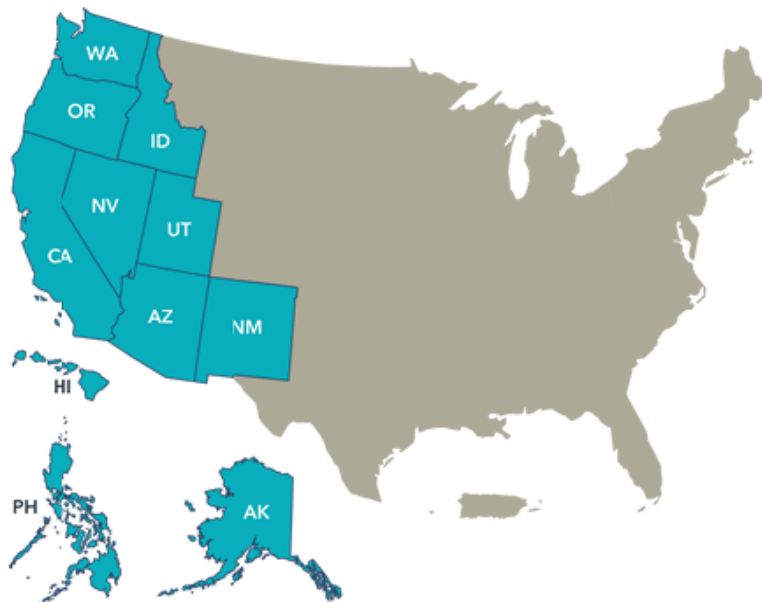
**Nashville**  
**Regional Office:**  
110 9th Ave.,  
South Nashville, TN 37075

**Atlanta**  
**Regional Office:**  
1700 Clairmont Rd.  
Decatur, GA 30033

**Winston-Salem**  
**Regional Office:**  
Federal Bldg.  
251 N. Main St.  
Winston-Salem, NC 27155

**Roanoke**  
**Regional Office:**  
210 Franklin Rd., SW  
Roanoke, VA 24011

## PACIFIC DISTRICT



### **Anchorage**

#### **Regional Office:**

1201 N. Muldoon Rd.  
Anchorage, AK 99504

### **San Diego**

#### **Regional Office:**

8810 Rio San Diego Dr.  
San Diego, CA 92108

### **Albuquerque**

#### **Regional Office:**

Dennis Chavez Federal Bldg.  
500 Gold Ave., SW  
Albuquerque, NM 87102

### **Seattle**

#### **Regional Office:**

Jackson Federal Bldg  
915 2nd Ave.  
Seattle, WA 98174

### **Phoenix**

#### **Regional Office:**

3333 North Central Ave.  
Phoenix, AZ 85012

### **Honolulu**

#### **Regional Office:**

459 Patterson Rd. E-Wing  
Honolulu, HI 96819

### **Portland**

#### **Regional Office:**

First and Main Bldg.  
100 SW Main St.  
Floor 2  
Portland, OR 97204

### **Los Angeles**

#### **Regional Office:**

11000 Wilshire Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90024

### **Boise**

#### **Regional Office:**

444 W. Fort St.  
Boise, ID 83702

### **Manila**

#### **Regional Office:**

U.S. Embassy  
1501 Roxas Blvd.  
Pasay City, PI 1302

### **Oakland**

#### **Regional Office:**

1301 Clay St. North Tower  
Oakland, CA 94612

### **Reno**

#### **Regional Office:**

5460 Reno Corporate Dr.  
Reno, NV 89511

### **Salt Lake City**

#### **Regional Office:**

550 Foothill Dr.  
Salt Lake City, UT 84148



# Notes





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