

January 2008

Veterans Guide to Health Care

- Quality
- Safety
- Service Standards
- Rights
- Benefits
- Special Services
- Locations



VA Midwest Health Care Network

Veterans Integrated Service Network 23
www.visn23.va.gov

VA Midwest Health Care Network Mission/Vision Statements

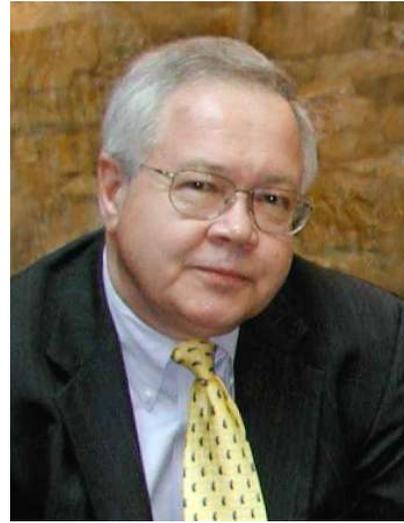
Mission: Honor America's veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

Vision: To be a patient centered, integrated health care organization for veterans, providing excellent health care, research and education; an organization where people choose to work; an active community partner and a backup in National emergencies.



Welcome

On behalf of our highly trained and dedicated staff, I welcome you to the VA Midwest Health Care Network, also known as Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 23. Thank you for your service to our country and for allowing us the privilege to serve you during this time of need. We are committed to providing you high quality health care in an atmosphere where your needs and concerns are met and your rights and interests are protected.



Robert A. Petzel
Network Director

We provide a wide range of inpatient, outpatient and long term care services for veterans living in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and portions of Western Illinois, Western Wisconsin, Northern Kansas, Northern Missouri, and Eastern Wyoming. Within the 390,000 mile area served by this Network, there are eight VA medical centers, thirty-nine community based outpatient clinics (an additional eight new clinics will open in FY08) four domiciliaries (residential rehabilitation treatment programs), and seven VA nursing home care units.

There are over 350,000 veterans enrolled with us, and among them, more than 250,000 chose to use VA as their primary care provider. All of our medical facilities are accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations – an independent organization that evaluates and accredits nearly 20,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States.

We proudly serve America's veterans and we hope this patient packet provides timely and useful information. Your health is important to us. We will make every effort to meet your health care needs and service expectations.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Mission and Vision | 1 |
| Welcome | 2 |
| VA Health Care | 4 |
| Quality, Satisfaction, and Safety | 5 |
| How can I be sure I am getting high quality care? | |
| What do I do if I am not satisfied with some aspect of my care? | |
| How can I tell VA what I think of my health care experience? | |
| What can I do to help assure my care is safe? | |
| Customer Service Standards | 8 |
| Standards guiding our care to you. | |
| Rights and Responsibilities | 9 |
| What are my rights and responsibilities as a patient? | |
| Special Services and Benefits..... | 13 |
| Are there special services to assist me if I am hearing or speech impaired? | |
| What if I need a translator? | |
| Does VA provide lodging when I have to go to another VA for care? | |
| What are <i>Advance Directives</i> and why would I need them? | |
| What is <i>My HealthVet</i> ? | |
| <i>Nurse VA</i> – Health Care Advice | |
| National Suicide Prevention Lifeline | |
| Overview of VISN 23..... | 17 |
| Facility Listing | |
| Map of the Network | |

VA Health Care

Over time, VA health care has changed significantly. In recent years, legislative changes have dramatically enhanced veterans' health care benefits as well as access to those benefits. Today's veterans have a comprehensive benefits package, which VA administers through an annual patient enrollment system. The enrollment system is based on priority groups to ensure that health care benefits are readily available to all enrolled veterans.

VA Health Care Overview provides veterans and their families with the information they need to understand VA's health care system, its enrollment process, including enrollment priority groups, required co-payments, if applicable and what service are covered.

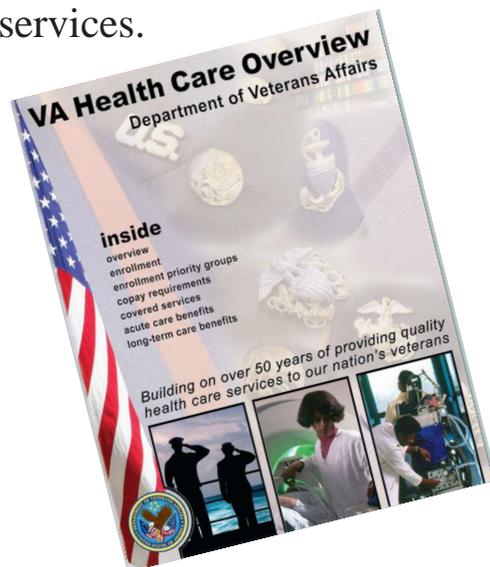
If you did not receive a copy of *VA Health Care Overview*, you may obtain a copy for the guide by contacting your local VA health care facility's Enrollment Office or by calling the Veterans Health Benefits Service Center at 1-877-222-VETS (8387).

You may also download a copy of the guide from the VA's website using:

<http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility/library/pubs/healthcareoverview/healthcareoverview.pdf>.

In addition, the following web link provides a wide range of information on eligibility for care and available services.

Weblink: <http://www.va.gov>



Quality, Satisfaction, Safety

How can I be sure I am getting high quality care?—

We want to provide you with the best care possible and encourage you to let us know when you think we are doing a good job. We also want to know if you have problems or concerns about your health care.

- If you have a problem with your Primary Care Provider, you are encouraged to discuss it directly with him/her. If you do not feel that your problem was resolved, contact the Patient Advocate.
- If you have a problem about VA, contact the Patient Advocate. The Patient Advocate is generally able to solve problems quickly by contacting the necessary VA staff. They also share your compliments with the staff involved and their supervisors.
- If you have a question about eligibility, contact the Enrollment or Business Office at your local VA health care facility.

What can I do to help assure my care is safe? ———

Everyone has a role in making health care safe and your VA health care team makes your safety a priority. You, the patient, also play a vital role in making your care safe by becoming an active, involved and informed member of your health care team. Here are some tips you can use to get involved:

- Speak up if you have questions or concerns, and if you don't understand, ask again. It's your body and you have a right to know.
- Your health is too important to worry about being embarrassed if you don't understand something that any health care professional tells you.
- Don't hesitate to tell any health care professional if you think he or she has confused you with another patient.

- Understand that more tests or medications may not always be better. Ask your Provider what a new test or medication is likely to do for you.
- Know who will be taking care of you, how long the treatment will last, and how you should feel.

Safety: With Medications

- Know what medications you take and why you take them. Medication errors are the most common health care mistakes.
- It's a good idea to keep a list of all of your medicines, what they do and when you must take them.
- Bring all your medications or a list of them to your next appointment. You should include any drug store medications, herbal products and dietary supplements you use. Review them with your Provider to make sure they work well and safely together.

When a new medication is prescribed

- Explain all of your medicine allergies to your Provider.
- Be sure the nurse, pharmacist or doctor explains the purpose and side effects of the medicine, as well as how to take it.

Safety: For Outpatient Appointments

- Bring a family member or friend if you need help in giving important health history to the nurses and doctors.
- If tests are done, ask when the results will be ready and how you will learn the test results.

Safety: Before Surgery

- Ask questions if you don't understand what the procedure is.
- If you are going to have surgery, the staff may mark or ask you to mark the side of your body to be operated on with an "X" so there is no confusion in the operating room.

Safety: While in the hospital

- Make sure your nurse or doctor confirms your identity, that is, checks your wristband or asks your name, before he or she administers any medication or treatment.
- If you've never received a medication before, ask what it is.
- If you feel strange after receiving a new medicine, let your doctor or nurse know.
- Expect health care workers to introduce themselves when they enter your room and look for their identification badges. Ask your health care workers their names if they do not identify themselves.
- Expect that hospital staff wash their hands before giving you treatment.
- When you are ready to go home be sure you understand your home treatment plan, your medications, and the schedule for your follow-up visit with your doctor. Get a copy in writing.

Customer Service Standards

Guiding Our Care to You

- Staff Courtesy** We will design and maintain a health care environment where you, your family, and your significant others are treated with courtesy and dignity throughout every aspect of their treatment.
- Timeliness** We will provide you with timely and convenient access to health care.
- One Provider**..... We will make sure you have one VA health care team in charge of your care.
- Decisions**..... We will involve you, your family and your significant others in decisions about your health care.
- Physical Comfort**..... We will strive to meet your pain management and physical comfort needs.
- Emotional Needs**..... We will provide support to meet your emotional needs.
- Coordination of Care**... We will take responsibility for providing seamless coordination of your care within other VA offices, as well as in non-VA facilities and organizations.
- Patient Education**..... We will provide written and oral information and education about your health care that you, your family and your significant others will understand.
- Family Involvement**..... We will provide the opportunity to involve your family and significant others in your care when appropriate.
- Transition**..... We will provide a smooth transition between your inpatient and outpatient care.

Patient and Nursing Home Resident Rights and Responsibilities

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is pleased you have selected us to provide your healthcare. We want to improve your health and well-being. We will make your visit or stay as pleasant for you as possible. As part of our service to you, to other veterans and to the Nation, we are committed to improving healthcare quality. We also train future healthcare professionals, conduct research, and support our country in times of national emergency. In all of these activities, our employees will respect and support your rights as a patient. Your basic rights and responsibilities are outlined in this document. Please talk with VA treatment team members or a patient advocate if you have any questions or would like more information about your rights.

Respect and Nondiscrimination

- You will be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect as an individual. Your privacy will be protected. You will receive care in a safe environment. We will seek to honor your personal and religious values.
- You or someone you choose has the right to keep and spend your money. You have the right to receive an accounting of any VA held funds.
- Treatment will respect your personal freedoms. In rare cases, the use of medication and physical restraints may be used if all other efforts to keep you or others free from harm have not worked.
- As an inpatient or nursing home resident, you may wear your own clothes. You may keep personal items. This will depend on your medical condition.
- As an inpatient or nursing home resident, you have the right to social interaction and regular exercise. You will have the opportunity for religious worship and spiritual support. You may decide whether to participate in these activities. You may decide whether or not to perform tasks in or for the Medical Center.

- As an inpatient or nursing home resident, you have the right to communicate freely and privately. You may have or refuse visitors. You will have access to public telephones. You may participate in civic rights, such as voting and free speech.
- As a nursing home resident, you can organize and take part in resident groups in the facility. Your family also can meet with the families of other residents.
- In order to provide a safe treatment environment for all patients or residents and staff, you are expected to respect other patients, residents and staff and to follow the facility's rules. Avoid unsafe acts that place others at risk for accidents or injuries. Please immediately report any condition you believe to be unsafe.

Information Disclosure and Confidentiality

- You will be given information about the health benefits you can receive. The information will be provided in a way you can understand.
- You will receive information about the costs of your care, if any, before you are treated. You are responsible for paying your portion of any costs associated with your care.
- Your medical record will be kept confidential. Information about you will not be released without your consent unless authorized by law (an example of this is State public health reporting). You have the right to information in your medical record and may request a copy of your medical records. This will be provided except in rare situations when your VA physician feels the information will be harmful to you. In that case, you have the right to have this discussed with you by your VA provider.
- You will be informed of all outcomes of care, including any potential injuries. You will be informed about how to request compensation for any injuries.

Participation in Treatment Decisions

- You, and any persons 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. You will be given other options. You can agree to or refuse treatment. You will be told what is likely to happen to you if you refuse treatment. Refusing treatment will not affect your rights to future care but you take responsibility for the possible results to your health.
- Tell your provider about your current condition, medicines (including over-the-counter and herbals), and medical history. Also, share any other information that affects your health. You should ask questions when you do not understand something about your care. Being involved is very important for you to get the best possible results.
- You will be given, in writing, the name and title of the provider in charge of your care. As our partner in healthcare, you have the right to be involved in choosing your provider. You also have the right to know the names and titles of those who provide you care. This includes students, residents and trainees. Providers will properly introduce themselves when they take part in your care.
- You will be educated about your role and responsibilities as a patient or resident. This includes your participation in decisionmaking and care at the end of life.
- If you believe you cannot follow the treatment plan, you have a responsibility to notify your provider or treatment team.
- You have the right to have your pain assessed and to receive treatment to manage your pain. You and your treatment team will develop a pain management plan together. You are expected to help the treatment team by telling them if you have pain and if the treatment is working.
- As an inpatient or nursing home resident, you will be provided any transportation necessary for your treatment plan.
- You have the right to choose whether you will participate in any research project. Any research will be clearly identified. Potential risks of the research will be identified and there will be no pressure on you to participate.

- You will be included in resolving any ethical issues about your care. You may consult with the Medical Center's Ethics Consultation Service and/or other staff knowledgeable about healthcare ethics.
- If you or the Medical Center believes that you have been neglected, abused or exploited, you will receive help.

Complaints

- You are encouraged and expected to seek help from your treatment team or a patient advocate if you have problems or complaints. You will be given understandable information about the complaint process. You may complain verbally or in writing, without fear of retaliation.
- You may also voice your complaint to the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JCAHO) at www.complaint@jointcommission.org or 1-800-994-6610.

More info at: <http://www.patientadvocate.va.gov/rights.asp>

Special Services and Benefits

Are there special services to assist me if I am hearing or speech impaired? _____

VA facilities can get translators or interpreters and Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) services to help you and your loved ones communicate with your Primary Care Provider and health care team or other staff. Ask your nurse or the Patient Advocate for help and they will coordinate any needed services for you.

Does VA provide lodging when I have to go to another VA for care? _____

Lodging may be available at another VA facility when you are referred there for care and live some distance away. Availability of lodging may differ from one facility to another, contact the Business Office at the VA facility directly to inquire about lodging services. Lodging is an optional service based on eligibility, availability of space and resources.

What is an Advance Directive and would I need one?

- You have the right to make decisions regarding your medical care. This includes the right to accept or refuse medical treatment. An Advance Directive is a written statement about medical decisions you want made for you in the event you can no longer speak for yourself. The two most common forms of Advance Directives are:
 - Living Will – a document in which you state in writing your wishes about medical care.
 - Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care – a document giving a person you appoint, such as a relative or friend, the authority to speak for you about your treatment, should you be unable to do this for yourself.

What is *My Health eVet*?



Enter VA's new Veteran Health Web Site Discover what VA has for you and your family

Log on to: www.myhealth.va.gov
Begin the journey today...



My Health eVet is a website that helps veterans and their families take a more active role in managing their health care. It offers one-stop shopping for VA benefits, special programs, health information and services, self-assessment tools, and a chance to work with your health care providers to help you achieve the highest level of health possible for you.

Features of *My Health eVet*

Now *My Health eVet* gives you:



- Information about medical conditions, medications, health news, and preventive health
- A prescription checker, health calculators, and self assessment tools
- Easy links to benefits and resources available from VA and other federal sources
- Personal health journal to track blood pressure and blood sugar
- Online prescription refills

How do I access *My Health eVet*

The decision to use *My Health eVet* is yours. If you decide to use this resource, you must self-register at the website.

You can access *My Health eVet* from any computer. The web address is <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

Nurse VA Health Care Advice

- Available evenings, nights, and 24 hours a day on weekends and federal holidays.
- During regular business hours call you local VA Medical Center.

One Toll Free Number: 1-866-687-7382
(1-866 NURSE VA)

In Case of a Life Threatening Emergency: Call 911 Immediately

Call the Nurse VA when you:

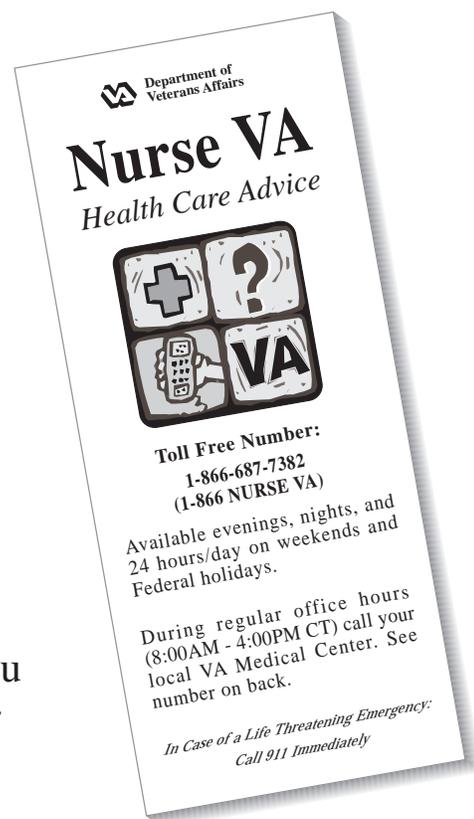
- Have health care questions
- Are sick
- Are hurt
- Need health care advice
- Are not sure if you should:
 1. See a doctor
 2. Make an appointment
 3. Go to an emergency room

The nurse will ask for your:

- Name
- Social Security number
- Telephone number and area code
- What VA medical center serves you
- Name of your health care provider

The nurse will:

- Ask about your symptoms
- Answer health care questions
- Give health care advice
- Direct you to health care services



Nurse VA Health Care Advice, continued

Please call your local VA Medical Center for:

- Wanting to speak to your provider or clinic nurse
- Pharmacy questions
- Medicine refills
- Billing questions
- Eligibility questions
- Checking on appointments
- Canceling, scheduling or rescheduling appointments
- Authorization and payment for your non-VA facility visits

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

The National Suicide prevention Lifeline has a special feature for veterans.

Call for yourself, or someone you care about:

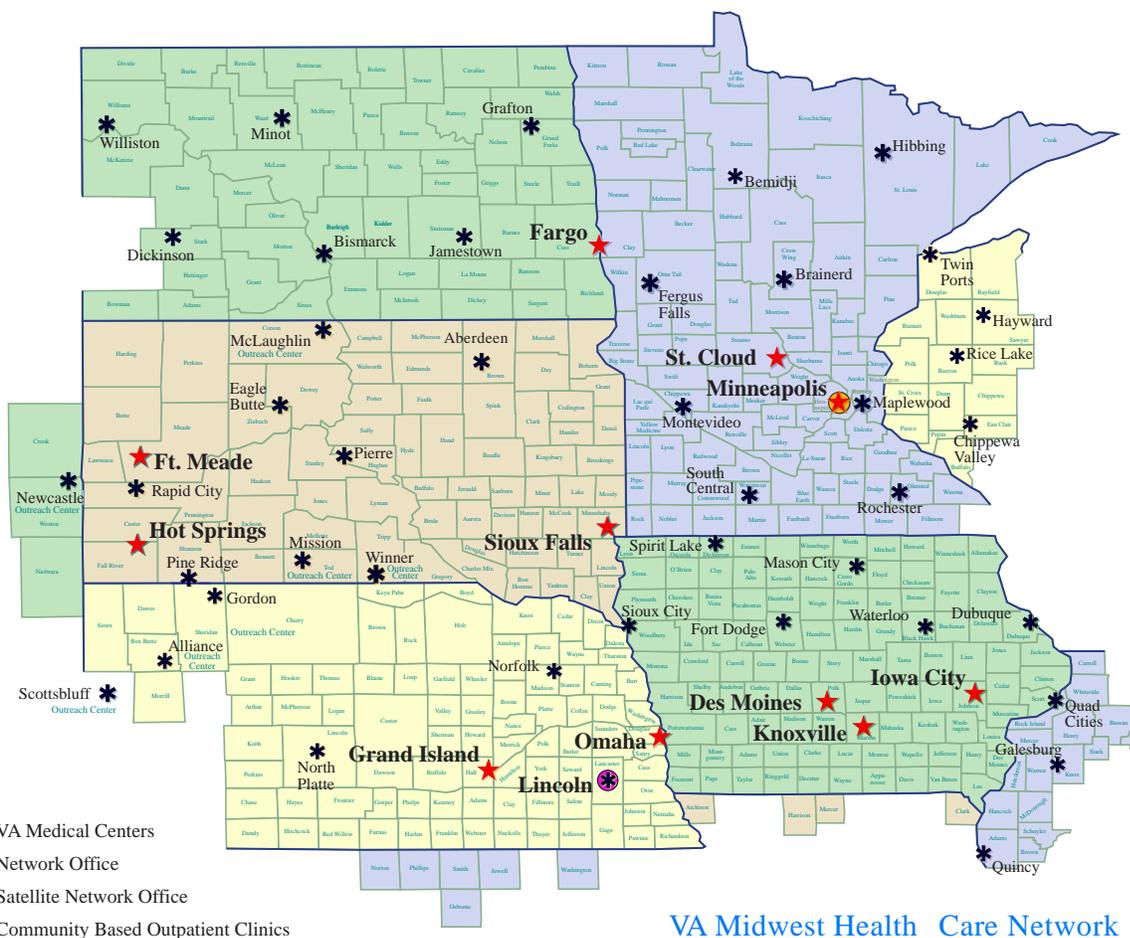
1-800-273-TALK (8255) and press 1.

Your call is free and confidential.

Additional information on Suicide prevention Awareness is available at: www.mentalhealth.va.gov.



VA Midwest Health Care Network Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN)23 Facility Listing



VA Midwest Health Care Network



Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 23 Offices

www.visn23.va.gov

VISN 23 – Minneapolis Office

5445 Minnehaha Ave. S.
2nd Floor
Minneapolis, MN 55417-2300
612-725-1968

VISN 23 – Lincoln Office

4th Floor
600 South 70th Street
Lincoln, NE 68510
402-484-3200

VA Central Iowa Health Care System

<http://www.centraliowa.va.gov>

Des Moines Division

3600 30th St.
Des Moines, IA 50310
515-699-5999
800-294-8387

Knoxville Division

1515 W. Pleasant St.
Knoxville, IA 50138
641-842-3101
800-816-8878

VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System

<http://www.nebraska.va.gov>

Grand Island Division

2201 N. Broadwell Ave.
Grand Island, NE 68803
308-382-3660
866-580-1810

Lincoln Division

600 S. 70th St.
Lincoln, NE 68510
402-489-3802
866-851-6052

Omaha Division

4101 Woolworth Ave.
Omaha, NE 68105
402-346-8800
800-451-5796

Iowa City VA Medical Center

<http://www.iowa-city.va.gov>

601 Highway 6 W.
Iowa City, IA 52246
319-338-0581
800-637-0128
800-346-1843

VA Black Hills Health Care System

<http://www.blackhills.va.gov/>

Fort Meade Campus

113 Comanche Rd.
Fort Meade, SD 57741
605-347-2511
800-743-1070

Hot Springs Campus

500 N. Fifth St.
Hot Springs, SD 57747
605-745-2000
800-764-5370

Fargo VA Medical Center

<http://www.fargo.va.gov>

2101 Elm St.
Fargo, ND 58102
701-239-3700
800-410-9723

St. Cloud VA Medical Center

<http://www.stcloud.va.gov>

4801 Veterans Dr.
St. Cloud, MN 56303
320-252-1670

Minneapolis VA Medical Center

<http://www.va.gov/minneapolis>

One Veterans Dr.
Minneapolis, MN 55417
612-725-2000
866-414-5058

Sioux Falls VA Medical Center

<http://www.sioxfalls.va.gov/>

2501 W. 22nd St.
P.O. Box 5046
Sioux Falls, SD 57117
605-336-3230
800-316-8387

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

VBA provides non-medical benefits administration. Some of the benefits handled include disability compensation for injuries or diseases that happened or were worsened while on active duty, disability pensions for wartime veterans with limited income and no longer able to work, vocational rehabilitation, life insurance, and home loan guaranty. For a more comprehensive listing of all VA Benefits you may visit www.seamlesstransition.va.gov

To contact a VA Regional Office call 800-827-1000.

IOWA

VBA Regional Office

210 Walnut Street
Des Moines, IA 50309

MINNESOTA

VBA Regional Office

Bishop Henry Whipple Building
1 Federal Drive
Fort Snelling, MN 55111

NEBRASKA

VBA Regional Office

5631 South 48th Street
Lincoln, NE 68516

NORTH DAKOTA

VBA Regional Office

2101 Elm St.
Fargo, ND 58102

SOUTH DAKOTA

VBA Regional Office

P.O. Box 5046
Sioux Falls, SD 57117

National Cemetery Administration

- Fort Snelling National Cemetery, Minneapolis, MN 612-726-1127
- Black Hills National Cemetery, Sturgis, SD 605-347-3830
- Keokuk National Cemetery, Keokuk, IA 319-524-1304 or refer to Rock Island National Cemetery, below
- Rock Island National Cemetery, Rock Island, IL 309-782-2094
- Fort McPherson National Cemetery, Maxwell, NE 308-582-4433

VA Veterans Outreach Centers

Illinois

Quad Cities Vet Center
1529 46th Ave #6
Moline, IL 61265
309-762-6954

Iowa

Des Moines Vet Center
2600 MLK Parkway
Des Moines, IA 50310
515-284-4929

Cedar Rapids Vet Center
1642 42nd Street NE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404
319-378-0016

Quad Cities Vet Center
1529 46th Ave #6
Moline, IL 61265
309-762-6954

Sioux City Vet Center
Suite 204
1551 Indian Hills Dr
Sioux City, IA 51004
712-255-3808

Minnesota

Vet Center
405 East Superior Street
Duluth, MN 55802
218-722-8654

Vet Center
2480 University Ave.
St. Paul, MN 55114
651-644-4022

Nebraska

Omaha Vet Center
2428 Cuming Street
Omaha, NE 68131
402-346-6735

Lincoln Vet Center
920 L Street
Lincoln, NE 68508
402-476-9736

North Dakota

Vet Center
Suite 100
3310 Fiechtner Dr. SW
Fargo, ND 58103
701-237-0942

Vet Center
2041 3rd Street NW
Minot, ND 58701
701-852-0177

Vet Center
1684 Capital Way
Bismarck, ND 58501
701-224-9751

South Dakota

Vet Center
621 6th St. Suite 101
Rapid City, SD 57701
605-348-0077

Vet Center
601 South Cliff Ave, Suite C
Sioux Falls, SD 57104
605-330-4552

Vet Center
East Highway 18
Martin, SD 57551
605-685-1300

*VA Midwest Health Care Network
Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN)23*

**VISN 23
Minneapolis Office**

Second Floor
5445 Minneahaha Ave.
Minneapolis, MN 55417
Phone: (612) 725-1968
Fax: (612) 727-5967

**VISN 23
Lincoln Office**

Building 5
600 South 70
Lincoln, NE 68510
Phone: (402) 484-3200
Fax: (402) 484-3232

www.visn23.va.gov

VA's website www.va.gov has a significant amount of information for veterans and their families including 1-800 numbers of helpful contacts.

