



**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
VA MIDWEST HEALTH CARE NETWORK
Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 23
Network Update
October 2013**



www.visn23.va.gov

In This Issue:

In This Issue:

- VA Convenes a Commission to identify candidates for Under Secretary for Health.....
- PTSD Coach Online Extends Reach of Award-Winning Mobile App.....
- VA Creating Housing for Homeless Vets in Minneapolis.....
- Frequently Asked Questions.....
- Mental Health Summits.....
- Make the Connection.....
- Calendar of Events – October 2013

VA Convenes a Commission to identify candidates for Under Secretary for Health

The Secretary of the Veterans Affairs is convening a commission to recommend candidates to the President for appointment as the Under Secretary for Health (USH) for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), the largest integrated health care system in the country.

Following a 40-year career serving Veterans as a VA physician, teacher, and administrator, Dr. Robert A. Petzel, announced he will retire in 2014.

VA is required by law to convene a commission to seek the next Under Secretary for Health. Due to the length of the process, VA is initiating the commission in advance of Dr. Petzel’s retirement.

As Under Secretary for Health since February 2010, Dr. Petzel has directed a health care system with over 286,000 employees and a medical care budget of \$53.1 billion, overseeing the care of more than 6.3 million Veterans. Dr. Petzel has led VHA’s innovative efforts at moving toward a new model of care and pursuing eConnected health, in which VA providers use mobile devices and technology to extend health care beyond traditional visits.

“I have appreciated the privilege to serve Veterans by developing a health care system that reached beyond simple treatment of diseases to a true partnership with Veterans,” said Petzel.

Prior to his appointment as Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Petzel served as the Network Director, VA Midwest Health Care Network.



While our fallen warriors are remembered on Veterans Day, the holiday is also intended to thank and honor all those who served honorably in the military - in wartime or peacetime. Celebrate Veterans Day by participating in local Veterans Day ceremonies.

PTSD Coach Online Extends Reach of Award-Winning Mobile App

[PTSD Coach Online](#) is for anyone who needs help with upsetting feelings. Trauma survivors, their families, or anyone coping with stress can benefit. With the release of PTSD Coach Online, Veterans and anyone dealing with symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can now go to their desktop or laptop computers anytime for help. PTSD Coach Online extends the reach of the PTSD Coach mobile app's groundbreaking symptom management tools, plus additional helpful tools, to those who do not have access to smartphones.

- [PTSD Coach Online](#) is a suite of 17 tools designed to help people cope with sleep problems, trauma reminders, anxiety and other symptoms that can develop after trauma.
- [PTSD Coach Online](#) offers tools that can help its users look at “big picture” issues such as problem solving and goal setting. A unique feature of PTSD Coach Online is the inclusion of videos from therapists—called “coaches”—who provide introductions for each tool of PTSD Coach Online. They also offer video help throughout each tool.
- [PTSD Coach Online](#) can help with symptom management, problem solving, and skill building. It is not, however, a substitute for professional mental health treatment and care. As with the PTSD Coach mobile app, PTSD Coach Online is primarily designed to enhance services for individuals who are already receiving mental health care.
- To learn more go to www.ptsd.va.gov/apps/PTSDCoachOnline/default.htm.

VA Creating Housing for Homeless Vets in Minneapolis



The Minneapolis VA Medical Center will convert five old buildings at Fort Snelling into 58 apartments for homeless Veterans and their families. Renovation work is expected to begin in late 2013 or early 2014. The project represents one aspect of VA's nationwide effort to end Veteran homelessness by 2015. “Building Utilization Review and Repurposing (BURR) is a department-wide effort to identify empty buildings and land for repurposing,” explained Ralph Heussner, Public Affairs Officer for the Minneapolis VA. “This contributes to two important VA goals: fighting Veteran homelessness and decreasing VA's inventory of vacant and underutilized buildings. A third benefit is that it allows VA to preserve and restore some of its many historically

valuable structures. Fort Snelling is what is known as an ‘unorganized territory’ located near Minneapolis. It contains numerous military and other federal facilities, including historic Fort Snelling, its cemetery and the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. VA's \$15 million Fort Snelling project covers six acres and will include the renovation of Building 210, an old stable where cavalry officers once kept their horses; and Building 211, where GIs repaired tanks during World War II. Fort Snelling was decommissioned as a military post in 1946. Read more at

<http://www.va.gov/health/NewsFeatures/2013/September/VA-Creating-Housing-for-Homeless-Vets-and-Their-Families.asp>

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I obtain a copy of my VA medical records?

Your VA medical records are maintained at the facility or facilities where you were provided medical care. You will need to contact each facility to personally request a copy of any medical records maintained at that facility. Requests must be in writing and should indicate what records you are requesting, why you are requesting those records, and to whom they are to be released. To learn more, contact Release of Information staff at your local VA facility.

Am I eligible for free prescriptions?

Medication co-payments are charged for each 30 day or less supply of medication provided on an outpatient basis for non-service-connected conditions. Exemptions from this co-payment requirement are provided for Veterans service-connected 50% or more, former POWs, and for Veterans whose income is less than the established dollar threshold. Also exempt from the medication copayment are Veterans receiving medication for the treatment of conditions related to Agent Orange, ionizing radiation, Persian Gulf, military sexual trauma, and certain cancers of the head and neck. Recent combat Veterans are exempt from medication copayments for two years following discharge when being treated for conditions related to their military service.



**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
VA MIDWEST HEALTH CARE NETWORK
Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 23
Network Update
October 2013**
www.visn23.va.gov



Mental Health Summits

Meeting the mental health care needs of Veterans and their families is among one of the highest priorities for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). While VA continues to expand mental health resources to meet the needs of Veterans, truly Veteran-centric, recovery-oriented care requires active collaboration and coordination with partners in the community. Through collaboration, VA can promote awareness and utilization of VA mental health resources, help Veterans gain access to community services, and build healthy communities for Veterans and their families. In the interest of promoting community collaboration, VA Midwest Health Care Network health care facilities hosted nine Mental Health Summits in September. Conducting these Mental Health Summits was time well spent. Over 500 health care professionals, advocates, Veterans, civic and federal officials came together to help shape service delivery.

The open discussion and breakout sessions provided participants the opportunity to explore new ideas and challenges. Main topics of discussion included, access, services and programs, community based recovery programs, and the importance of VA working with community partners.

We thank everyone for participating in these summits and look forward to building on the foundations established at these summits. To learn more go to <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/index.asp> or contact Mental Health staff at your local VA medical center.

Make the Connection



Make the Connection is a public awareness campaign by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) that provides personal testimonials and resources to help Veterans discover ways to improve their lives. Many of our Nation's Veterans—from those who served in World War II to those involved in current conflicts—return not only with physical wounds but also mental health issues they may not recognize.

The **Make the Connection** campaign encourages Veterans and their families to "make the connection"—with information and resources, with the strength and resilience of Veterans like themselves, with other people, and with available sources of support including mental health treatments. Central to this campaign is **MakeTheConnection.net**, a one-stop resource where Veterans and their families and friends can privately explore information about physical and mental health symptoms, challenging life events, and mental health conditions. On this site, Veterans and their families and friends can learn about available resources and support. Powerful personal stories and testimonials are at the heart of **Make the Connection**, illustrating how Veterans face and overcome mental health issues and challenges. These stories and testimonials come from Veterans of all service eras, genders, and backgrounds and each of them provides a resounding and compelling example of the positive outcomes for treatment, recovery, and the many paths to more fulfilling lives. Through Veterans' own voices, Veterans have the chance to hear from trusted and credible sources—other Veterans like themselves. **MakeTheConnection.net** helps Veterans recognize that there are people out there like them who are going through similar experiences, overcoming challenges, reaching positive outcomes for treatment and recovery, and finding paths to fulfilling lives. Log on at **Make the Connection.net** to learn more.



October is  national
breast
cancer
awareness
month

You served. Now let us serve you.
Schedule your screening
today by calling your local VA Medical Center.

Calendar of Events – October 2013

- Oct. 1 - [Red Cross Blood Donation](#) - 11:30 AM - 5:25 PM (CST) Minneapolis VA Medical Center, Flag Atrium
- Oct. 1 - [Law Clinic](#) – 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CST) St.Cloud VA Medical Center Building T-100
- Oct. 1 - [Women's Drum Circle](#) – 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM (CST) Building 8 (Basement)
- Oct. 1 - [Farmers Market](#) - 2:00 PM - 5:15 PM (CST) Minneapolis VA Medical Center - Northeast Corner parking lot
- Oct. 2 - [Veterans Exercise Class](#) – 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM (CST) Education Conference Room, Omaha VAMC, 4101 Woolworth
- Oct. 4 - [Tobacco Cessation](#) – 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CST) Sioux Falls VAMC, 2501 W. 22nd St., Room F07 in the Main Lobby
- Oct. 4 - [Red Cross Blood Donation](#) - 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM (CST) Minneapolis VA Medical Center, Flag Atrium
- Oct. 7 - [VA Pantry-Lincoln](#) – 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CST) Building 105, Room 50, VA Clinic, 600 S. 70th St, Lincoln, Nebraska
- Oct. 7 - [Radio talk show](#) – 8:10 AM - 8:45 AM (CST) AM 1450 KNSI
- Oct. 8 - [Women's Drum Circle](#) – 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM (CST) St. Cloud VAMC, Building 8 (Basement)
- Oct. 8 - [Red Cross Blood Donation](#) -11:30 AM - 5:25 PM (CST) Minneapolis VA Medical Center, Flag Atrium
- Oct. 8 - [Farmers Market](#) - 2:00 PM - 5:15 PM (CST) Minneapolis VA Medical Center - Northeast Corner parking lot
- Oct. 11 - [Red Cross Blood Donation](#) - 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM (CST) Minneapolis VA Medical Center, Flag Atrium
- Oct. 11 - [Tobacco Cessation](#) – 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CST) Room F07 in the Main Lobby
- Oct. 14 - [Columbus Day](#) – Federal Holiday
- Oct. 15 - [Law Clinic](#) –12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CST) St. Cloud VA Medical Center/Building T-100
- Oct. 15 - [Red Cross Blood Donation](#) - 11:30 AM - 5:25 PM (CST) Minneapolis VA Medical Center, Flag Atrium
- Oct. 16 - [Voices for Veterans radio show](#) –8:10 AM - 8:30 AM (CST) AM 1240 WJON
- Oct. 16 - [Voices for Veterans radio show](#) –8:10 AM - 8:45 AM (CST) AM 1240 WJON
- Oct. 18 - [Southwestern Minnesota Veterans' Law Clinic](#) –12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CST) Montevideo CBOC
- Oct. 18 - [Annual Women's Conference](#) – 9:00 AM-2:45 PM, Holiday Inn City Centre, Sioux Falls, SD
- Oct. 18 - [Tobacco Cessation](#) –2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CST) Sioux Falls VAMC, Room F07 in the Main Lobby
- Oct. 25 - [Tobacco Cessation](#) –2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CST) Sioux Falls, VAMC, Room F07 in the Main Lobby

* Dates and times are correct as of Sep 27, 2013. Information may change, please check local VA Health Care System websites for the latest information.

For More information, call the Network Office at (651) 405-5600 or
Log on at www.visn23.va.gov or email sharyl.schaepe@va.gov