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**VA Moves to Streamline Identification of Rural Land Areas**

In order to more accurately identify and serve rural Veterans, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is improving the method it uses to define urban, rural and highly rural land areas.

The current method is being replaced by a model used by other leading federal agencies. It is anticipated that implementation will begin before October 1, 2014.

The Rural-Urban Commuting Areas (RUCA) system, developed by the departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services’ Health Resources and Services Administration, has become more accepted because of its sound social science basis and its adaptability for special programs.

This change will improve VHA’s method for identifying urban, rural and highly rural Veterans. Resulting in more accurate identification of rural Veterans, improved reporting of the number and location of rural Veterans and of statistics on their geographic access to sites of care along with improved allocation of resources and improved research on rural Veterans’ needs.

Currently, 3.2 million rural Veterans are enrolled in the VA system, which represents 36 percent of the total enrolled Veteran population. For a more detailed explanation of the change, visit the [VA Office of Rural Health website](#).

**September is Suicide Prevention Month**

***One click, one call, one text — one life.***

One small act can make a difference in the life of a Veteran or Service member in crisis. That’s the VA message this September in observance of Suicide Prevention Month.

Join VA, organizations and individuals across the country in spreading this message and showing how one act can encourage Veterans, Service members, and their loved ones to seek confidential support from the [Veterans Crisis Line](#).

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans, Service members, their families and friends with qualified, caring VA responders through a toll-free hotline, online chat, or text-messaging service.

Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](#), or send a text message to **838255** to get confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

If a Veteran or Service member you know is showing [signs of crisis](#) — such as hopelessness, anxiety, or withdrawal — one conversation can open the door to support.

This September and every day, show Veterans and their loved ones how one small act can make a big difference. Spread the word about the [Veterans Crisis Line](#), where confidential resources are just one call, chat, or text away. Visit [VeteransCrisisLine.net/ThePowerOf1](#) to find out how you can help.

## Fall Prevention Starts at Home

Falls happen every day but you can protect yourself by removing some of the risks. Your VA health care team can offer suggestions on how simple changes in your environment can make a difference. VA physical therapists, occupational therapists, and home health nurses can help evaluate your home to see where you are at risk for falls. Talk with them to learn more about fall prevention.



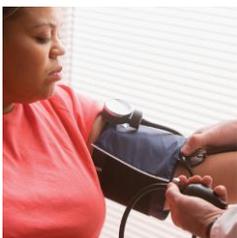
### Tips for Preventing Falls

- Remove throw rugs and objects from your path that may cause you to trip.
- Aim at having all necessities on one level to avoid stairs.
- Install grab bars for the shower and hand rails for stairs.
- Use a cane or walker to maintain balance.
- Improve lighting so that walkways and stairways are lit up during the day and at night.
- Wear shoes or socks with rubber soles.
- Exercise regularly - Activity during the day keeps your energy level up and can help keep you from getting weaker. Ask your care team about exercises you can do at home to prevent weakness.
- Review medications with your care team. Some medications have side effects that may cause dizziness. Your care team may suggest medication changes to reduce your risk for falls.
- Get your vision checked once a year and keep your eye-glass prescription up to date.
- Use emergency response systems, such as Guardian Alert or Freedom Alert. In-home alarm system will notify authorities if you are in your home alone and need help. Talk with your health care provider about these services.
- Hip protectors are an option for some Veterans. They are comfortable and discrete, and may be obtained from your health care provider.

### What to do if you have a minor fall:

- Contact your provider so that a health assessment can be made and the fall can be recorded.
- If you hit your head or are having trouble walking or moving an extremity, you should seek immediate medical attention.

## Health Living Messages – Get Recommended Screening Tests and Immunizations



Keeping Veterans Well and Well-Informed is what VA employees strive to do each day.

Did you know it is important to keep up with your screening tests and immunizations to prevent certain kinds of illnesses?

Most Veterans should receive a flu shot every year and tetanus shot once every 10 years. Veterans should also be screened for alcohol abuse, depression, high blood pressure, HIV, military sexual trauma, obesity, PTSD, and tobacco use.

Other recommended screening tests are based on age, gender, health status and family history. On your next visit, talk with your health care provider about preventative screening tests that are right for you. For more information log on to [The National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention](http://www.prevention.va.gov) website at [www.prevention.va.gov](http://www.prevention.va.gov).

## 2014 Health Care Benefits Overview - Update

It has been brought to our attention that in the new *2014 Health Care Benefits Overview* booklet, there was incorrect data on pages 22 and 36 concerning eyeglasses and hearing aids benefits. The Chief Business Office has confirmed the error and is making arrangements to re-publish the booklet. Here is the corrected text

### Benefits with Special Eligibility Criteria

While all enrolled Veterans enjoy access to VA's comprehensive medical benefits package, certain benefits may vary from individual to individual, depending on each Veteran's unique eligibility status. The following care services (partial listing) have limitations and may have special eligibility criteria:

- Ambulance Services
- Dental Care
- Non-VA Health Care Services

### Hearing Aids and Eyeglasses

Hearing aids, contact lenses and eyeglasses may be provided to the following Veterans as authorized in 38 CFR 17.149, provided they are receiving VA care or services:

- Veterans with any compensable service connected disability
- Former Prisoner of War (POWs)
- Veterans awarded a Purple Heart
- Veterans in receipt of benefits under 38 USC 1151 (i.e. Benefits for persons disabled by treatment or vocational rehabilitation).
- Veterans in receipt of increased pension based on the need for aid and attendance benefits or by reason of being permanently housebound
- Veterans who have a visual or hearing impairment resulting from the existence of another medical condition for which the Veteran is receiving VA care or which resulted from treatment of that medical condition
- Veterans with significant functional or cognitive impairment evidenced by deficiencies in activities of daily living (not including normally occurring visual or hearing impairments)
- Veterans with severe visual or hearing impairment and hearing aids and/or eyeglasses are necessary to ensure the Veteran's active participation in their own medical treatment
- Veterans with a 0% service connected hearing disability

## Calendar of Events – July 2014

- Sep 1** [Labor Day](#)
- Sep 1 Nebraska** [VA Food Pantry](#) 10:00 AM-11:30 AM (CST) VA Clinic, Bldg 40, Room 105, 600 S. 70th St, Lincoln
- Sep 1 Nebraska** [Veterans Group Exercise Class](#)-5:15 PM-6:15 PM (CST) Omaha VA Medical Center 3rd Floor TV Studio, 4101 Woolworth Ave, Omaha, Nebraska
- Sep 2 Fargo** [Walking or Chair Exercises](#) - 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM (CST) Basement - Room BD-22
- Sep 2 St. Cloud** [Veterans' Law Clinic](#) - 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CST) VA Medical Center, Building 28, Room 126
- Sep 2 St. Cloud** [Free Summer Golf Instruction \(Women's Session II\)](#)-4:30 PM-6:30 PM (CST) Building 96, St. Cloud VA Health Care System
- Sep 3 Nebraska** [Omaha VA Pantry for Veterans](#) - 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CST) 825 Dorcas St, Ste. 200, Omaha, NE
- Sep 3 Nebraska** [Veteran Group Exercise Class](#)-5:15 PM-6:15 PM (CST) Omaha VA Medical Center 3rd Floor TV Studio, 4101 Woolworth Ave, Omaha, Nebraska
- Sep 4 St. Cloud** [Lac Qui Parle County Fair](#) - 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CST) 705 Fair Street, Madison, MN
- Sep 4 St. Cloud** [Free Summer Golf Instruction \(Men's Session II\)](#) - 4:30 PM - 6:30 PM (CST) Building 96, St. Cloud VA Health Care System
- Sep 5 Sioux Falls** [Tobacco Cessation](#) - 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CST) Front Lobby, Room F-07
- Sep 6 St. Cloud** [2nd Annual Veterans Rendezvous](#) - 9:00 AM - 3:30 PM (CST) St. Cloud VA Health Care System
- Sep 6 St. Cloud** [Beyond the Yellow Ribbon](#) - 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM (CST) Becker City Park, 10362 Co. Rd. 23 SE, Becker, MN
- Sep 8 St. Cloud** [Veterans Affairs Radio Show](#) - KNSI AM 1450/FM 103.3
- Sep 8 St. Cloud** [St. Cloud VAHCS Town Hall Meeting](#) - 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM (CST) Auditorium (Bldg. 8) and Alexandria, Montevideo and Brainerd CBOCs
- Sep 9 Black Hills** [Safe Haven: Building on Family Strength](#)-8:00 AM - 9:00 AM (MST) Telephone Ed Group
- Sep 9 Fargo** [Walking or Chair Exercises](#) - 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM (CST) Basement - Room BD-22
- Sep 9 St. Cloud** [VA Caregiver Support Line](#) - 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CST) From your home phone
- Sep 11 Sioux Falls** [Stand Down](#) - Wagner
- Sep 16 Fargo** [Walking or Chair Exercises](#) - 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM (CST) Basement - Room BD-22
- Sep 16 St. Cloud** [Veterans' Law Clinic](#) - St. Cloud VA Medical Center, Building 28, Room 126
- Sep 17 Black Hills** [Safe Haven: Building on Family Strength](#)-5:00 PM-6:00 PM (MST) Telephone Ed Group
- Sep 17 Nebraska** [Omaha VA Pantry for Veterans](#) - 825 Dorcas St, Ste. 200, Omaha, NE
- Sep 19 Nebraska** [VA CoffeHaus](#) - 600 S. 70th St, Lincoln, Neb (canteen on lower level)
- Sep 19 Sioux Falls** [Stand Down](#)
- Sep 23 Sioux Falls** [VA HR at the U](#)-11:15 AM - 1:15 PM (CST)
- Sep 23 Fargo** [Walking or Chair Exercises](#) - 9:00 AM-9:30 AM (CST) Basement - Room BD-22
- Sep 24 Black Hills** [Safe Haven: Building on Family Strength](#)-1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (MST) Telephone Ed Group
- Sep 30 Fargo** [Walking or Chair Exercises](#) - 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM (CST) Basement - Room BD-22

\* Dates and times are correct as of August 29, 2014. 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](http://www.visn23.va.gov) or email [sharyl.schaepe@va.gov](mailto:sharyl.schaepe@va.gov)