

NETWORK UPDATE

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November 2016

VA Midwest
Health Care Network
Honoring Service. Empowering Health.

VA recognizes Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service

EAGAN, MN – The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has designated October 31 through November 4, 2016, as National Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS) Week.

This year's theme, "Improving, Strengthening, and Enhancing Veterans Quality of Life," recognizes the equipment and services provided by VHA in maximizing independent living for Veterans.

There are 109 positions across the VISN that are focused on serving Veterans prosthetic and sensory aids needs. In the first nine months of fiscal year 2016 (October 2015 through June 2016) more than 157,000 Veterans were served by VISN 23 Prosthetics.

"We enjoy making a difference in the lives of the Veterans we serve and We realize that our job is an important piece of ensuring the Veterans we serve are able to stay as mobile as they can and active in their communities," said Lisa Curnes, Acting VISN 23 Prosthetic Manager. "We are here to serve Veterans and make a positive difference in their lives and that is what keeps us coming to work each day with a smile on our face and determination to make this happen."

VISN 23 Prosthetics consists of 8 Prosthetic and Sensory Aids services; three of which have orthotic & prosthetic labs: Omaha, Minneapolis, and Sioux Falls. Additional labs are planned for Iowa City and Des Moines in the near future. The VISN and the facility services work closely with primary and specialty care, surgical services, logistics and contracting to ensure that Veterans receive the products they need for their continued care.

"Our prosthetics staff have built a professional and collaborative relationship with other teams across the VISN ensuring Veterans receive the clinical support and appropriate equipment that improves their quality of life," said Jason Petti, VISN 23 Deputy Network Director.

Thousands of Veterans interact with the prosthetics team each month. More than 36,500 Veterans received



Mike Lagerstrand, certified prosthetist, works on an orthotic insert at the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System prosthetics and orthotics lab.

eyeglasses procured through VISN 23 Prosthetics in the first nine months of fiscal year 2016. Continuous positive airway pressure, and bi-level positive airway pressure (CPAP and biPAP) equipment was provided to 19,457 Veterans in the same time period. Thousands of Veterans also received blood pressure monitors and compression stockings through the prosthetics service. Many others received hearing aids, surgical implants, special shoes and footwear, artificial limbs, home oxygen services, ambulatory aids and other medical equipment.

Military Sexual Trauma impacts women and men

The Veterans Health Administration is working to raise awareness about men's experience of military sexual trauma (MST) and the services available through VA to assist in recovery.

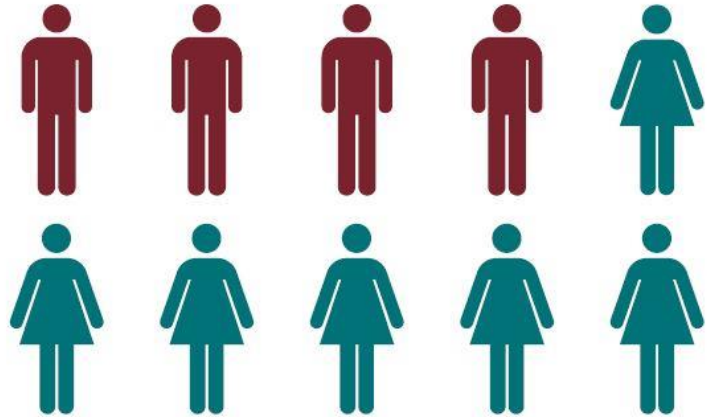
MST is the term used by VA to refer to sexual assault or repeated, threatening sexual harassment experienced by a Veteran during his/her military service. When screened by VA health care providers, about one in four women and one in 100 men report a history of MST. However, given the far greater number of men in military service, almost half of the Veterans seen in VA who disclose MST are men.

Many male survivors may believe they are alone in having experienced MST. This can lead to feelings of self-blame, isolation, and concerns about reaching out for help. Men may suffer in silence for years with problems like posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, and substance use; they also commonly struggle with issues related to their masculinity and sexuality, strong emotions, and relationship difficulties.

VA is committed to helping all Veterans, both men and women, who are struggling and need help to recover from MST. A wide range of services are available and all treatment for physical and mental health conditions related to experiences of MST is provided free of charge and for as long as needed. Veterans may be eligible for free MST-related care even if they are not eligible for other VA services, and neither service connection (VA disability compensation) nor documentation of MST experiences are required. Every VA health care system has an MST Coordinator who serves as a contact person for MST-related issues at the facility and can help Veterans access VA services and programs. Contact your local facility for more information.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Almost half of all Veterans who tell a provider they experienced MST are men.



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Upcoming Events

- Nov. 10 – Veterans Town Hall, Des Moines, IA
- Nov. 18 – Veterans Town Hall, Gibbon, NE
- Dec. 8 – Veterans Town Hall, Waterloo, IA
- Dec. 12 – Veterans Town Hall, Chippewa Falls, WI
- Dec. 16 – Veterans Town Hall, Brainerd, MN

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