



**VA**  
HEALTH  
CARE

Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century



**VA MIDWEST HEALTH CARE NETWORK**  
*Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 23*  
**Network Update**  
**March 2012**

## Playing it Safe

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March 4-10 is Patient Safety Awareness Week. But at the Department of Veterans Affairs, patient safety is Job Number One, 52 weeks a year.

In its 2000 report, "To Err is Human," the Institute of Medicine estimated that medical errors cause between 44,000 and 98,000 preventable deaths each year in U.S. hospitals, and about one million injuries.

VA's National Center for Patient Safety is 'Playing it Safe' by placing a strong emphasis on teaching both residents and seasoned VA personnel how to recognize and address flaws in the health care delivery system. At VA, mistakes are regarded as teachable moments and, consequently, an opportunity to improve the entire system.

Today, VA is training staff and young residents — tomorrow's doctors — that it's OK to report their mistakes and even their 'near misses.'

When something goes wrong, VA is evaluating the system, taking action to make sure the same thing doesn't happen again.

To learn more about VA making health care safe for everyone go to:  
<http://www.va.gov/health/NewsFeatures/20120305a.asp>

## VA's New Mantra: Treat the Patient, Not the Disease

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Have you ever gone to an Urgent Care facility where you were unknown, and had to fill out multiple forms every time you visited? Have you ever felt like you were a number in the health care system? Have you ever felt like you were telling the same story over and over and over again to different health care providers? If so, you are not alone.

### **VA is Leading the Pack**

Fortunately, there is change coming to the Department of Veterans Affairs as well as the private sector. In many ways, VA is leading the pack. In fulfilling its responsibility to provide 'The best care anywhere' for every Veteran, VA is embracing an opportunity to move away from problem-based disease care toward something very different: patient-centered care based on relationships that are built gradually, over time, and committed to positive results over the Veteran's lifetime. This new way of thinking regarding your health care is called PACT, or Patient Aligned Care Team.

"Reactive, physician-centered care will be a thing of the past as VA designs and delivers a 21st century health care delivery system that is based in lifelong planning and support, and centered on the Veteran patient," explained Dr. Tracy Gaudet, director of VA's Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation. "The 21st century VA will be a healthcare system that has the Veteran at the center, and begins with their vision of health and their goals."

The key to PACT is relationships. The patient is the number one health care advocate! Veterans are encouraged to talk with PACT team members about treatment options, health care goals and desires. With PACT, the Veterans and their families get to make decisions and help direct care!

## VA Federal Register Notice for Public Comment

On Wednesday Feb 8, 2012, VA published a Federal Register Notice for public comment on approved VHA guidance entitled, "Meeting the Challenge of Pandemic Influenza: Ethical Guidance for Leaders and Health Care Professionals in the Veterans Health Administration." The 60-day comment period will close April 9, 2012. We are including this information in our VISN update to ensure that Veterans and VA staff who may be directly affected during a severe infectious disease outbreak have an opportunity to contribute to the development of ethical concepts and processes that will guide VA emergency planning. The Notice, Guidance and related links can be accessed at:

[http://www.ethics.va.gov/activities/pandemic\\_influenza\\_preparedness.asp](http://www.ethics.va.gov/activities/pandemic_influenza_preparedness.asp)

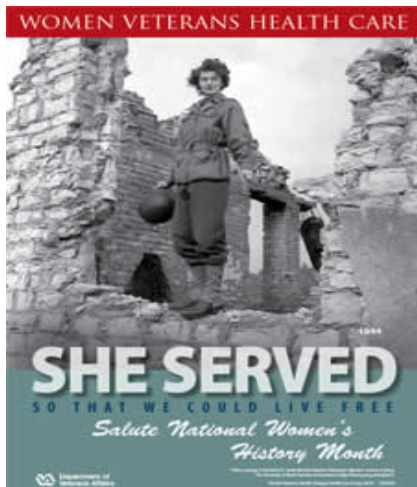
## Vet Centers – Serving Combat Veterans and Their Families



Did you know there are Vet Centers across the country where Combat Veterans can receive a broad range of counseling, outreach and referral services? There are thirteen Vet Centers located within VISN 23. Vet Center staff is comprised of combat Veterans and family members of combat Veterans. The Vet Center Program was established by Congress in 1979 out of the recognition that a significant number of Vietnam era vets were still experiencing readjustment problems. The Vet Center program now serves Veterans from armed hostilities after the Vietnam era, including Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, The Persian Gulf, Somalia and Kosovo/Bosnia. WWII and Korean Combat Veterans are also eligible to receive Vet Center benefits.

In 2010, the Vet Center program provided 1,273,035 visits to 191,508 Veterans and their families. Family members of combat Veterans can also receive services. Bereavement counseling services are provided to surviving parents, spouses, children and siblings of service members who die of any cause while on active duty, including federally activated Reserve and National Guard personnel. At the end of 2011, VA reports there are 300 Vet Centers operating across the US and surrounding territories (US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, and American Samoa). To speak confidentially with a Vet Center Counselor at any time around the clock call 877-WAR-VETS (927-8387). For more information or to locate a Vet Center near you, visit the VA Vet Center website at <http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/>

## In the Spotlight: VA Celebrated Women's History Month



March is Women's History Month and VA is recognizing the contributions of women Veterans as history makers. Watch the **new videos** in VA "Stories of Service" series, and **download posters** and other resources celebrating Women's History Month. Read **more headlines** about women Veterans and VA health care, and stay tuned for updates throughout the month. Go to <http://www.womenshealth.va.gov/> for more information.



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## VA Extends Timeline for Gathering Feedback on Future State

### VA Black Hills Health Care System



Veterans, community members and leaders have answered the call to provide feedback to the proposals for the improvement of Veteran's health care services in portions of South Dakota, Nebraska and Wyoming. In response to requests for additional time to provide feedback regarding the proposals, the Department of Veterans Affairs has extended the period for input to **April 30, 2012**.

After that date, VA Black Hills will submit gathered comments, recommendations and counter-proposals to VA Central Office for review. VA Black Hills will continue to welcome and consider input

received after April 30th. For more information go to

[http://www.blackhills.va.gov/features/Deadline\\_Extended.asp](http://www.blackhills.va.gov/features/Deadline_Extended.asp)

## Be Prepared – Know Who to Call and Where to Gain Information

Winter weather can quickly present transportation challenges. Before you hit the road, check VA websites to see if there are any weather related Outpatient clinic closures, late starts, or early closings. Weather-related emergencies will be posted on VA websites. For a **medical or mental health emergency, call 911** or go to the nearest hospital. If you are having **thoughts of harming yourself, call the VA Veterans Crisis Hotline 1-800-273-8255**. To speak with a nurse after hours or on weekends or holidays, call the toll free **Nurse VA Advice Line at 1-866-687-7382**

**For information on what is happening at any of your VA Health Care Systems, visit your facility website:**

VA Black Hills Health System (HCS)	<a href="http://www.blackhills.va.gov">www.blackhills.va.gov</a>
VA Central Iowa HCS	<a href="http://www.fargo.va.gov">www.fargo.va.gov</a>
Iowa City VA HCS	<a href="http://www.iowacity.va.gov">www.iowacity.va.gov</a>
VA Minneapolis HCA	<a href="http://www.minneapolis.va.gov">www.minneapolis.va.gov</a>
VA Nebraska Western Iowa HCS	<a href="http://www.nebraska.va.gov">www.nebraska.va.gov</a>
Sioux Falls VA HCS	<a href="http://www.siouxfalls.va.gov">www.siouxfalls.va.gov</a>
St. Cloud VA HCS	<a href="http://www.stcloud.va.gov">www.stcloud.va.gov</a>
VISN 23	<a href="http://www.visn23.va.gov">www.visn23.va.gov</a>

## Calendar of Events – March 2012

**March 9:** [Fargo VA Health Care System](#) - **Veterans Health Fair** from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. (CST) in Fargo VA Health Care System, 3rd Floor Auditorium, Fargo VA Health Care System, 2101 N. Elm, Fargo, ND. Join us for the Healthy Living Fair on March 9th from 9am-3pm at the Fargo VA. Open to all Veterans, free of charge. Gain health information, meet VA staff and the first 50 Veterans through the door will get a prize!

**March 10 & 11:** [VA Central Iowa Health Care System](#) - **Veterans Benefits Fair** from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. (CST) at the Sam's Club, 1101 73rd St., Windsor Heights, IA.

**March 16 & 17:** [VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System](#) - **VA Information Open House** from 12-7 p.m. (CST) on March 16 and 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. (CST) on March 17 at the York County Fairgrounds Cornerstone Ag & Event Center, 2400 N. Nebraska Ave, York, NE. Representatives from the following agencies will be available to provide Veterans assistance and information: VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System, Veterans Benefit Administration Regional Office, Vet Centers, Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Nebraska National Guard Transition Assistance Advisor. [Learn more here.](#)

**March 23 & 24:** [VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System](#) - **VA Information Open House** from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. (CST) on March 23 and 9 a.m. - Noon (CST) on March 24 American Legion Hall, 112 N. M Street, Avoca, IA. Representatives from the following agencies will be available to provide Veterans assistance and information: VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System, Veterans Benefit Administration Regional Office, Vet Centers, Nebraska and Iowa Department of Veterans Affairs, and the National Guard Transition Assistance Advisor. Community agencies that provide Veteran services will also be available. [Learn more here.](#)

**March 27:** [St. Cloud VA Health Care System](#) - **Warrior to Citizen Annual Education Conference** from 8 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. St. Cloud State University - Atwood Ballroom, 651 1st Ave. South, St. Cloud, MN. Hosted by St. Cloud State University and the Warrior to Citizen Initiative. Conference is FREE! [PRE-REGISTER online here.](#)

**March 28:** [VA Central Iowa Health Care System](#) - **Women Veterans Lunch and Service Project**, from 11 a.m.-12 p.m. (CST) in Room 1632 of Building 1, VA Central Iowa Health Care System, 3600 30th St., Des Moines, IA. Come share a light lunch with other female Veterans and work on a simple service project, such as making fleece blankets for hospitalized female Veterans. All supplies will be furnished. Just bring yourself. For more information, contact Michelle Finley, Women Veterans Coordinator at 515-699-5999 x5824.

**April 6:** [St. Cloud VA Health Care System](#) - **Former Prisoner of War Recognition Ceremony**, from 10 - 11:30 a.m. (CST) in Building 8, Auditorium, St. Cloud VA Health Care System, 4801 Veterans Dr., St. Cloud, MN.

**April 24 - 26:** [St. Cloud VA Health Care System](#) - **2012 Physically Disabled Veterans Turkey Hunt**. The St. Cloud VA Health Care System, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Minnesota National Guard, Camp Ripley hold the 8th Annual Physically Disabled Veterans Turkey Hunt April 24-26, 2012, at Camp Ripley near Little Falls, MN. [Learn more here.](#)

For More information, call the Network Office at (612) 725-1968,  
Log on at [www.visn23.va.gov](http://www.visn23.va.gov), or email [sharyl.schaepe@va.gov](mailto:sharyl.schaepe@va.gov)