



Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
VA MIDWEST HEALTH CARE NETWORK
Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 23
Network Update
May 2012
www.visn23.va.gov



VA Adding Family Therapists and Mental Health Counselors to Workforce

The Department of Veterans Affairs recently expanded its mental health services to include professionals from two additional health care fields: marriage and family therapists (MFT) and licensed professional mental health counselors (LPMHC).

Veterans and their families can face unique challenges. By providing a complete range of services, we can help them address those challenges and help keep more families together.

The two fields will be included in the hiring of an additional 1,900 mental health staff nationwide that VA announced April 19th. Recruitment and hiring will be done at the local level. The new professionals will provide mental health diagnostic and psychosocial treatment services for Veterans and their families in coordination with existing mental health professionals at VA's medical centers, community-based outpatient clinics, and Vet Centers.

For more information about mental health care that VA provides, visit:
www.mentalhealth.va.gov/

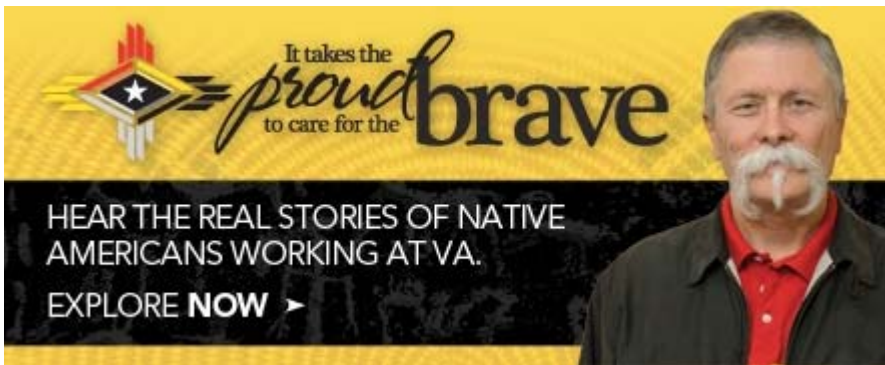


Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki announced last week that the department would add approximately 1,600 mental health clinicians – to include nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers as well as nearly 300 support staff to its existing workforce of 20,590 mental health staff as part of an ongoing review of mental health operations.

At this point in time, we don't know how many of the positions will be allocated to VA medical facilities within VISN 23. Our Mental Health Service Line leaders are working with individual health care systems to determine staffing needs.

Currently, VISN 23 is at 103% of the 2009 mental health staffing baseline and our vacancies tend to be in particular areas and disciplines – primarily in rural areas and in recruitment of psychiatrists. Our access is generally good and we are preparing for a surge in demand as National Guard units continue to return home. As in the past, we will adjust our workload, hours and use community providers to ensure timely access to medical and mental health services.

VA launches video to help recruit Native Americans



VA asks Native Americans to find out how their heritage makes them an ideal fit for VA. Native American doctors, nurses and other health care practitioners are invited to see what a career in VA can mean to them. A video of current Native American VA employees is posted on line at: www.vacareers.va.gov/na/

Is it a Food Allergy or Food Intolerance – What's the difference?



A [food allergy](#) occurs when a food you eat abnormally triggers your body's [immune system](#). Food allergies can range from merely irritating to life-threatening. "[Food intolerance](#)" is different from a food allergy. Food intolerance is a reaction to a food that does not involve the body's immune system. VA's [My HealthVet](#) can guide you through the important distinctions in the two conditions. For more information log on at <http://www.va.gov/health/NewsFeatures/20120426a.asp>

VA Ionizing Radiation Registry

VA's Ionizing Radiation Registry health exam alerts Veterans to possible long-term health problems that may be related to ionizing radiation exposure during their military service. The registry data helps VA understand and respond to these health problems more effectively. Contact your local [VA Environmental Health Coordinator](#) about getting an Ionizing Radiation Registry health exam. This comprehensive health exam includes an exposure and medical history, laboratory tests, and a physical exam. A VA health professional will discuss the results face-to-face with the Veteran and in a follow-up letter. Veterans who meet any of the following criteria are eligible:

- On-site participation in a test involving the atmospheric detonation of a nuclear device, whether or not the testing nation was the United States
- Participation in the occupation of Hiroshima or Nagasaki from August 6, 1945 through July 1, 1946
- Internment as a prisoner of war in Japan during World War II
- Receipt of nasopharyngeal (NP)—nose and throat—radium irradiation treatments while in the active military, naval, or air service
- Involved in the following "radiation risk activities":
 - Service at Department of Energy gaseous diffusion plants at Paducah, KY, Portsmouth, OH, or the K25 area at Oak Ridge, TN, for at least 250 days before February 1, 1992 under certain conditions
 - Proximity to "Longshot," "Milrow," or "Cannikin" underground nuclear tests at Amchitka Island, AK, before January 1, 1974

Learn more about [radiation-risk activities and nasopharyngeal \(NP\) radium treatments](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/radiation/military-exposure.asp) at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/radiation/military-exposure.asp



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Announcements and Calendar of Events for May 2012

May 2: [VA Black Hills Health Care System](#) - **Women Veterans Outreach.** Learn about your benefits as a Woman Veteran and share your concerns and ideas for improvement with Dianna Monahan, RN, Women Veterans Program Manager (WVPM) from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. (MDT) at the Eagle Butte Tribal Veterans Service Office.

May 2: [VA Black Hills Health Care System](#) - **Women Veterans Outreach.** Learn about your benefits as a Woman Veteran and share your concerns and ideas for improvement with Dianna Monahan, RN, Women Veterans Program Manager (WVPM) from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. (MDT) at the Veterans Industries in McLaughlin, S.D.

May 4: [Sioux Falls VA Health Care System](#) - **VA Day for Women.** Women Veterans can learn about all the services available to them at Sioux Falls VA Health Care System. Starting at 9 a.m. in the Sioux Falls VA Medical Center Education Center, 2501 W. 22nd St., Sioux Falls, S.D. [Learn more about the program here.](#)

May 17: [St. Cloud VA Health Care System](#) - **Effective Solutions to Manage Depression.** This free program is designed for Veterans and their families who want to learn more about Depression and take charge of lifestyle factors that help promote optimal health. Attend one of the two sessions: 9 a.m.-11:30 a.m., at the St. Cloud VFW, 9 18th Ave N, St. Cloud, Minn., or 6-8:30 p.m., St. Cloud VA Health Care System, Bldg. 8 (Auditorium), 4801 Veterans Dr., St. Cloud, Minn. [Learn more about the seminar here.](#)

May 18: [St. Cloud VA Health Care System](#) - **Southwestern Minnesota Veterans' Law Clinic** from Noon-2 p.m. at the Montevideo VA Clinic, 1025 North 13th St., Montevideo, Minn. Free legal consultation for Veterans for: Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal law issues will be discussed. Please call 320.430.1051 to schedule an appointment.

For more information about upcoming events, classes or weather alerts log on at:

Black Hills Health VA System (HCS) - www.blackhills.va.gov
Central Iowa VA HCS - www.centraliowa.va.gov
Fargo, ND VA Medical Center - www.fargo.va.gov
Iowa City, Iowa VA Medical Center - www.iowacity.va.gov
Minneapolis VA HCS - www.minneapolis.va.gov
Nebraska Western Iowa VA HCS - www.nebraska.va.gov
Sioux Falls VA Medical Center - www.siouxfalls.va.gov
St. Cloud VA HCS - www.stcloud.va.gov
VA Midwest Health Care Network - www.visn23.va.gov
HCS – Health Care System
VA – Department of Veterans Affairs

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