



**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)  
VA MIDWEST HEALTH CARE NETWORK  
Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 23  
Network Update  
February 2011  
[www.visn23.va.gov](http://www.visn23.va.gov)**



## Expanding Care: Suicide Prevention Hotline Reaches Out to Homeless Veterans



Homelessness can be a trigger for a downward spiral into suicidal thoughts. Recognizing this, the National Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline proactively provides Veterans a way to change their circumstances. In March 2010, the hotline expanded and began providing services over the phone and online for homeless Veterans. Dialing 1-877-424-3838 directs Veterans to a unique line where they can request assistance and information on VA resources for the homeless. Since its launch they have logged more than 7,500 calls. Homeless Veterans at a public computer can also use Homeless Veterans Chat for a one-on-one conversation online with a responder similar to AOL or Gmail chat at <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/homelessness.asp> [http](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/homelessness.asp)

## WINTER WEATHER ALERTS

Winter road conditions can change rapidly in the Midwest. When planning a trip to your local VA facility get the latest road conditions before you leave home. You can check current road conditions online on National Weather Service website at [www.nws.noaa.gov](http://www.nws.noaa.gov). VA facility closures are posted on local VA medical facility websites.

## VA Adds Chat Feature to Online Application for Health Benefits

Veterans will find it easier and faster to apply for their health care benefits now that the Department of Veterans Affairs has enhanced and streamlined its online Form 10-10EZ, "Application for Health Benefits." This revised online application now features a chat function which will allow Veterans to receive live assistance while they are filling out the form. Additional enhancements to the process include simplification of questions relating to military service in Southeast Asia during the Gulf and in the Vietnam wars. Several additional minor enhancements make the application easier and faster for Veterans to complete.

Since November 2000, nearly 400,000 Veterans have already used the online 10-10EZ to start receiving health care benefits from VA. Future enhancements to the online application will include a 10-10 EZR Health Benefits Renewal Form for Veterans to update their personal information and a special 10-10EZ designed specifically for demobilizing military service members.

Veterans may complete or download the 10-10EZ form at the VA health eligibility Web site at [www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez](http://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez). Veterans may also contact VA at 1 (877) 222-8387 (VETS), visit the VA health eligibility Web site at [www.va.gov/healtheligibility](http://www.va.gov/healtheligibility) or apply for health care benefits at any VA medical center at [www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp](http://www2.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp). For more information contact a VA health care eligibility specialist at the nearest VA medical facility.

## Please join us for the Homeless Veteran Summit

**Tuesday, February 8<sup>th</sup> 2011  
12:30PM to 4:30PM  
VA Medical Center, Bldg 9  
Minneapolis, MN**

In 2009, VA initiated a 5 Year Plan to End Veteran Homelessness. We remain committed to this work and we continuously seek opportunities to learn from our community partners. On February 8, the Minneapolis HCS will host a Homeless Veteran Summit to discuss and learn from community partners on what is working and how VA can continue to help end Veteran's homelessness. Our goal is to coordinate efforts at the local level so we can best service veterans in all of our communities. The summit will help us synchronize plans and

strengthen relationships. All persons working to end homelessness is invited to the summit. To RSVP and or gain more information contact Jonelle Draughn, Homeless Program Coordinator, Minneapolis HCS, at 612-467-1702 or email at [Jonelle.Draughn@va.gov](mailto:Jonelle.Draughn@va.gov)

## Secure Messaging is Making VA Health Care More Accessible



Secure messaging is a tool the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is putting in place at VA medical facilities across the country to help make health care more accessible to Veterans and it is now available at all VA medical facilities in the VA Midwest Health Care Network. "With secure messaging patients can communicate electronically in a secure environment with their medical team," said Brady Bautch, My HealthVet coordinator

for the VA Midwest Health Care Network. "Secure messaging is similar to e-mail, but it is totally secure and safe." He added that a big plus to secure messaging is the elimination of trying to catch your health care team on the phone. It also has the potential to minimize the number of trips Veterans have to make to a VA medical facility.

Bautch noted that while all VA medical facilities in the VA Midwest Health Care Network are offering secure messaging, not all physicians and clinics are yet active in the program. "We continue to grow secure messaging participation in the facilities, but it will take some time before all physicians and clinics are involved in the program," he said.

To take advantage of these new features and participate in secure messaging, Veterans must create an account on My HealthVet, fill out an in-person authentication form and show a photo ID. The Veteran may create an account at home, but the in-person authentication form must be completed at a VA medical facility or community-based out-patient clinic.

Once the authentication process is complete, the Veteran will see "Secure Messaging" in the top navigation bar of the My HealthVet site once they log in. Vets need to click on that link, read the privacy and security statements and then select 'Opt In' at the bottom of the page. For more information or help with getting registered contact a My HealthVet coordinator.

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## National Salute to Veteran Patients

During the week of 14, VA facilities across the network will host activities to pay tribute and express appreciation to Veterans; increase community awareness of the role of the VA medical center; and encourage citizens to visit hospitalized Veterans and to become involved as volunteers. During the National Salute, VA invites individuals, Veterans groups, military personnel, civic organizations, businesses, schools, local media, celebrities and sports stars to participate in a variety of activities at VA medical centers. The activities and events include special ward visits and valentine distributions; photo opportunities; school essay contests; special recreation activities and Veteran recognition programs. The week also provides an opportunity for the community to become acquainted with the volunteer opportunities within the medical center. For more information contact your nearest VA Medical Center and ask for Voluntary Service to discover the wonderful things you, your group or organization can do to salute America's Heroes.

## CBOC Construction Update – Ramsey, Minnesota



*The temporary shelter pictured above encloses the stairwell for the soon to come Ramsey, Minn. facility.*

The VA announced last October that plans would move ahead for a community-based outpatient clinic (CBOC) to be built in Ramsey, MN, a suburb northwest of Minneapolis. Ground was broken last fall. Despite a harsh winter, work is continuing at the new community-based outpatient clinic in Ramsey, Minn. According to the developer, steel beams will begin to be erected in early February.

PSD LLC, a Ramsey, Minn. based company, was awarded the lease in July. The lease is for 20,000 square feet of clinic space in a free-standing building located at the NE corner of Sapphire Street NW and Civic Center Drive in the 7400 block of Civic Center Drive. The lease is for a firm term of five years with options to extend up to a maximum of twenty years. Design and construction of clinic space will be complete in approximately 12 months. The clinic will provide a wide range of services including primary care, mental health care and audiology.

## VA Opens Caregivers Support Line

Caregivers are the family members and loved ones who provide care for Veterans living with the effects of war, disability, chronic illness, or aging. They deserve VA's highest level of support. We want all caregivers to feel supported and have trust in VA to assist them in their caregiving roles. A National Caregiver Support Line opened on February 1. The support line serves as a resource and referral center for caregivers, Veterans and others seeking caregiver information; provide referrals to local VA Medical Center Caregiver Support Coordinators and VA/community resources; and provide emotional support. The National Caregiver Support Line is open Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. and Saturday 10:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

**The National Caregiver Support Line Toll-Free number is 1-855-260-3274.**

To learn more about how VA is providing support for caregivers contact a Caregiver Support Coordinator at your local VA medical facility or log on at [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov).

## Announcements and Calendar of Events –February 2011

**Bemidji Minnesota Van Shuttle begins in February** – Starting in February, Fargo VAMC Voluntary Services has secured a 12-passenger van from the St. Cloud VAMC to work with the Bemidji North Central MN Chapter # 7 DAV in starting a DAV Transportation Program shuttling Veterans from Bemidji area to Fargo VAMC for their appointments. Pick-up Points are at the Bemidji Community Based Outpatient Clinic at 6:30 a.m. and Fosston MN (west end of town) Hwy 2 at 7:30 a.m. Call 218-556-4633 or 218-243-2663 for information.

**Feb 9 & 10 - Veterans Art Show** - The annual Veterans Art Show at St. Cloud VA HCS is scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 9 from 12:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., and Thursday, Feb. 10 from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The show is held in the Auditorium (Building 8). The Art Show is an annual competitive event that provides veterans receiving treatment at VA facilities the opportunity to participate in creative self-expression in art, creative writing, dance, drama and music as part of their therapy, and to gain recognition for these artistic accomplishments.

**Feb 17 Women Veterans Open House** - American Legion Post 428, 17 2d Ave N., Waite Park, MN joins VA in hosting a Women Veterans Open House on Feb. 17 from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Open House is for all women Veterans in the St. Cloud area. Women Veterans are invited to meet and network with other women Veterans, receive information about VA benefits and health care programs, provide input about VA services, and meet VA staff. Mickie Pittman-Leyendecker, St. Cloud VA Health Care System Women Veteran Program Manager, will serve as host of the event. Mickie is a Women's Health Nurse Practitioner and can answer your questions related to women's health and the VA's Women Veteran Program. Representatives from the Eligibility Office, Mental Health, Health Promotions, and other VA offices will be present to provide information on accessing healthcare benefits and staying health.

### **February Women Veteran Series hosted by Sioux Falls VAMC:**

- February 1- Spirit Lake Area Women Veterans Open House, Public Library, 3-6P
- February 2 – Yankton Area Women Veterans Open House, Public Library, 3-6P
- February 16 – Sioux Falls Area Women Veterans Open House, Ronning Library, 3100 E. 49th St., 3-6P
- February 22 – Aberdeen Area Women Veterans Open House, Alexander Mitchell Library, 3-6P
- February 23 - Sioux City Area Women Veterans Open House, Public Library, 3-6P.
- February 24 – Watertown Area Women Veterans Open House, Public Library, 3-6P
- February 26 – Sisseton Area Women Veterans Open House, 305 S. Maple, 3-6P

**February 19** – Sioux Falls VAMC Annual VA Variety Show, 2P, VA auditorium. This program highlights the talents of Veterans of all eras, volunteers, and VA staff and shows that talents have no boundaries.

**February 26** – Sioux Falls VAMC Quarterly Service of Remembrance for recently deceased Veterans, 1:30P, front foyer of the medical center

**March 2** – Sioux Falls VAMC All Veteran Craft Show, VA auditorium, 10A-5P

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

Black Hills Health VA System (HCS) -	<a href="http://www.blackhills.va.gov">www.blackhills.va.gov</a>
Central Iowa VA HCS–	<a href="http://www.centraliowa.va.gov">www.centraliowa.va.gov</a>
Fargo, ND VA Medical Center -	<a href="http://www.fargo.va.gov">www.fargo.va.gov</a>
Iowa City, Iowa VA Medical Center–	<a href="http://www.iowacity.va.gov">www.iowacity.va.gov</a>
Minneapolis VA HCS –	<a href="http://www.minneapolis.va.gov">www.minneapolis.va.gov</a>
Nebraska Western Iowa VA HCS-	<a href="http://www.nebraska.va.gov">www.nebraska.va.gov</a>
Sioux Falls VA Medical Center –	<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>

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