

Patient Information Handbook

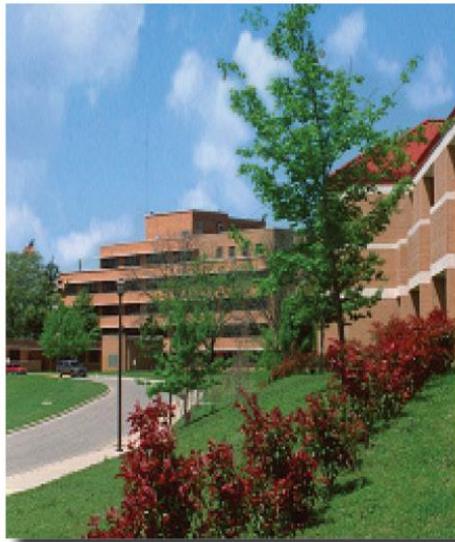
VA North Texas Health Care System

Bonham

Dallas

Fort Worth

Tyler



*Changing lives.
One Veteran at a time.*



Table of Contents

• Welcome	4
• VANTHCS Overview	4
• Community Based Outpatient Clinics	12
• Primary Care Clinics	13
• Your first visit at the VA – What to Bring with You	
• Records to bring	
• Medication information	
• Questions/Problems between Appointments	
• X-ray and lab results	
• Patient Call Center	
• Emergency Medicine	22
• Pharmacy	24
• Requesting medication refills	
• VA Enrollment	28
• Income Means Test	28
• Advance Access	28
• Appointments	
• Changing or Canceling Your Appointment	
• Missed Appointments	
• Specialty Clinic Phone Numbers	
• Beneficiary Travel Benefits	
• Billing	31
• Co-Pays	
• Recently Discharged Combat Veterans	
• Billing Questions	
• Combat Veteran Eligibility	
• Travel Benefits	
• Benefits	34
• Vision, Hearing and Dental	
• Advance Directives	40
• Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom	43
• Polytrauma Program	
• Mental Health Service	44
• Suicide Prevention Awareness	
• Returning From War (PTSD)	
• Patient Rights and Responsibilities	46
• Healthy Living	50

• My HealtheVet	54
• Other Resources	56
• Security Notice	58

WELCOME

Welcome to VA North Texas Health Care System. We are proud to serve those who have served our country. This handbook provides basic information to help you and your family take part in making choices for your care, recovery, and lifestyle. It is our vision that VA North Texas Health Care System will be known to our Veterans for the outstanding services we provide. If you have comments or concerns about how we may better serve you, we invite you to share them with us. It is our honor to serve America's Veterans and Veteran-families.

Mission Statement

Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

Vision Statement

To be a patient centered integrated health care organization for Veterans providing excellence in health care, research, and education; an organization where people choose to work; an active community partner and a back-up for National emergencies.

VA North Texas Health Care System (VANTHCS) Overview

VA North Texas Health Care System (VANTHCS) is comprised of Dallas VA Medical Center (VAMC), Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic (FWOPC), Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center (SRMVC) and Tyler Outpatient Clinic. Through these facilities, VANTHCS offers a continuum of health care services to a Veteran population of about 500,000 in 38 counties in North Texas and two counties in southern Oklahoma.

VANTHCS is a Level II Polytrauma network site to address the multiple severe injuries sustained by Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) military service members. Special care teams treat patients with conditions that were caused from explosions, blasts, missiles and other problems that arose in combat zones. They work with patients and their families to restore the OEF/OIF Veteran to the highest level of function.

Dallas VA Medical Center serves as the main referral center for VANTHCS. Through its partnership with University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas (UT Southwestern), it also has emerged as a major teaching and medical research center. Dallas VAMC includes an acute bed medical center, primary care and multi-specialty outpatient clinics, Community Living Center, Domiciliary, Spinal Cord Injury Center, and a Psychiatric Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program.

Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic (FWOPC) improves access to outpatient services for Veterans who reside in the western communities of our primary service area. FWOPC provides primary care, dental, nutrition, physical therapy, audiology, ophthalmology, ear, nose and throat, mental health, podiatry, laboratory, radiology, pharmacy, and social work services. Patients who require hospitalization or more specialized outpatient care are referred to Dallas VA Medical Center. The clinic also houses Veteran benefits and Veteran service officers, a VA supported housing program and a Home Based Primary Care office. FWOPC new 218,000 square foot clinic opened in 2010.

Tyler Outpatient Clinic improves access to outpatient services for Veterans who reside in the eastern communities of our primary service area. Tyler provides primary care, mental health, laboratory, and social work services. Patients who require hospitalization or more specialized outpatient care are referred to Dallas VA Medical Center.

Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center (SRMVC) serves Veterans residing in North Texas and southern Oklahoma. The campus includes primary care clinics, a Community Living Center, Domiciliary, and Psychiatric Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program. Its primary mission is to provide a full range of primary and geriatric services for the region's Veterans.

Hours of Operation

(operation hours may vary by clinic)

Outpatient Clinics 7:30 am – 4:30 pm, Monday – Friday

Laboratory 6:00 am – 6:00 pm, Monday - Friday

Pharmacy 8:00 am – 6:30 pm, Monday – Friday

VA Health Care Services

VA places a high priority on providing excellent health care to Veterans. VA provides a full spectrum of healthcare services, including health promotion, disease prevention, diagnostic, therapeutic, rehabilitative and palliative care.

The VA currently has 153 Medical Centers located across the United States that provide a very large range of treatment services such as surgery, critical care, mental health, orthopedics, pharmacy, radiology and physical therapy. The VA is proud to provide a team of highly qualified health care professionals dedicated to the health care needs of Veterans.

VA strives to ensure that Veterans have access to all needed services wherever they receive VA health care. This may be on-site during inpatient hospitalization, at one of the primary or specialty care clinics, at a Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC), in a Community Living Center, or in a residential care facility. However, all services are not provided at every site where VA health care is provided. Sometimes Veterans need to travel to another VA facility or a contracted community care facility to obtain the needed service. If that is necessary for you, your VA provider will work with you to obtain these services.

Inpatient Care Services

VA inpatient care includes a full spectrum of treatment services:

- Acute Care Inpatient Units
 - Medical
 - Surgical
 - Psychiatric
- Dialysis acute treatment
- Intensive Care Units
 - Medical
 - Surgical
 - Psychiatric
 - Cardiac Specialty
- Transplant Care Units
- Community Living Centers
- Residential Rehabilitation Units
- Domiciliary
- Spinal Cord Injury Units
- Traumatic Brain Injury Units
- Polytrauma Centers

Ancillary Services

VA health care providers often use ancillary services to help diagnose and/or treat a Veteran's medical condition. These services include:

- Audiology (hearing)

- Blind Rehabilitation
- Dental
- Diagnostic Laboratory
- Nutrition and Food Service
- Nuclear Medicine (imaging)
- Occupational Therapy
- Pharmacy
- Physical Therapy
- Prosthetics (artificial limbs, equipment, devices)
- Radiology (x-rays and imaging)
- Radiation Oncology (cancer care)
- Recreation Therapy
- Respiratory Therapy
- Social Work (housing, discharge planning, family support)
- Speech Therapy
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Traumatic Brain Injury

Specialty Care Services

Specialty care services provide expert knowledge to optimize the treatment provided in unique or complicated courses of care. Specialty care providers focus on a particular area of care and have extensive training and education. The list of VA medical and surgical specialty care services includes:

- Anesthesiology
- Bariatric surgery (weight loss surgery)
- Cardiology – Vascular (heart and veins)
- Chaplain (spiritual support)
- Dermatology
- Diabetes and Endocrinology
- Eye Care (Optometry & Ophthalmology)
- Geriatric Care
- Infectious Disease
- Nephrology (kidney)
- Neurology (nerves)

- Oncology (cancer)
- Pacemaker (heart)
- Pain Management
- Podiatry (feet)
- Pulmonary (lungs)
- Transplantation (heart, lung, liver, etc.)
- Urology
- Women's Care.

Long-term Care

VA Community Living Centers were formerly known as VA Nursing Home Care Units. They serve Veterans:

- with chronic stable conditions including dementia
- who need rehabilitation or short-term specialized services such as respite or intravenous therapy
- who need comfort and care at the end of life.

The goals of care are to restore Veterans to maximum function, prevent further decline, maximize independence, and/or provide comfort when dying. Most VA Community Living Centers are located on or near the grounds of VA medical centers throughout the United States.

Mental Health Services

VA places a high priority on providing mental health services for returning Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) Veterans as well as for those who served in prior eras.

VA provides specialty inpatient and outpatient mental health services at its medical centers and community-based outpatient clinics. In addition, readjustment counseling services are available for Veterans and their families at Vet Centers across the nation. Our goal is to support recovery and enable Veterans with mental health problems to live meaningful lives in their communities and achieve their full potential.

VA mental health services are available in specialty clinics, primary care clinics, nursing homes, and residential care facilities where Veterans receive health care. Specialized programs, such as mental health intensive case management, day centers, work programs, and psychosocial rehabilitation are provided for those with serious mental health problems.

VA is integrating mental health care into the primary care setting. Veterans may receive mental health care from their primary care providers or from a collaborating behavior health provider based in the primary care clinic.

The list of VA mental health services and programs includes:

- Inpatient Care
- Residential Care
- Outpatient Mental Health Care
- Homeless Programs
- Programs for Incarcerated Veterans
- Specialized PTSD Services
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Services
- Substance Use Disorders
- Suicide Programs
- Geriatrics
- Violence Prevention
- Evidence-Based Psychotherapy Programs
- Mental Health Disaster Response/Post Deployment Activities.

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

Veterans receive clinical preventive services from their primary care providers. These services include immunizations to prevent disease, screening tests to detect disease at an early stage, and behavioral counseling to avoid or reduce risk factors for disease.

Veterans participate in health education programs to help them manage their health problems. They also participate in health promotion programs to learn healthy living skills.

Care Management and Social Work Services

VA social workers are assigned to all patient treatment programs, including community-based outpatient clinics. They provide psychosocial and clinical services to Veterans and their families. Care Management and Social Work Services has responsibility for the VA Fisher House Program, the VA Temporary Lodging Program, policies on reporting suspected abuse and neglect, and family support for polytrauma patients. Care Management and Social Work Services collaborate closely with the Office of Seamless Transition to provide liaison services to military hospitals. It also provides case management services to Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) active duty service members and Veterans, and it partners with Voluntary Service and Chaplain Service to provide resources for OEF/OIF families.

Prosthetics

VA Prosthetics furnishes properly prescribed prosthetic equipment, sensory aids and devices to Veterans in accordance with authorizing laws, regulations and policies. Prosthetics serves as the pharmacy for assistive aids and as case manager for the prosthetic equipment needs of disabled Veterans.

Women's Health

VA is committed to meeting your unique needs by delivering the highest quality health care to you, while offering you the privacy, dignity, and sensitivity to your gender-specific needs that you deserve. Your local VA facility offers a variety of services including:

- Health promotion (healthy living, nutrition and weight management, stop smoking program etc.)
- Disease prevention (osteoporosis and cancer screening)

- Primary care and women's gender-specific health care (mammograms, menopause evaluation and treatment, hormone replacement, birth control, breast and gynecological care, maternity and limited infertility)
- Medical and surgical care services
- Emergency services, including having a nurse available to you by telephone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Mental health (management of depression, anxiety, and stress; adjustment from deployment; counseling and treatment for military sexual trauma, parenting and caregiver issues, violence and abuse, and alcohol and drug dependence)
- Special programs such as vocational rehabilitation, educational opportunities, Links to Job and Career Counseling, Services for Homeless Veterans
- Long-term care.

Your local VA facility has a full-time Women Veterans Program Manager who can help coordinate all the services and health care you may need.

Community Based Outpatient Clinics

How VA Health Care Works for You

Choose a Facility

You may choose the CBOC facility that is most convenient for you. Once you choose a facility, it is important to return there for your care so you get to know your provider and the primary care team gets to know you.

VA North Texas Health Care System has developed an innovative Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) program. The clinics provide health maintenance and preventive health care within 30 miles or 30 minutes of a Veteran's home. CBOC's reduce travel time and shorten waiting times for Veterans needing outpatient care.

CBOC's provide primary care services, including routine exams, labs, prescriptions, immunizations and preventive health

maintenance. Prescriptions ordered by the CBOC physician will be mailed to you. You cannot pick up your prescriptions at the clinic.

If you live in one of the listed counties you may be able to enroll in a CBOC near your home for primary care services.

Archer	Denton	Kaufman	Smith
Baylor	Eastland	Lamar	Stephens
Bryan	Franklin	McCurtain	Throckmorton
Callahan	Grayson	Montague	Titus
Camp	Henderson	Palo Pinto	Van Zandt
Choctaw	Hood	Parker	Wise
Clay	Hopkins	Rains	Wood
Collin	Hunt	Red River	Young
Cooke	Jack	Rockwall	

To enroll in the CBOC program contact the CBOC Enrollment Coordinator at:

1-800- 924-8387 ext. 36674 or 36676
Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center
1201 E. 9th St.
Bonham, TX 75418-4091

Primary Care Clinics

Get a Primary Care Provider

Primary Care is your gateway to VA health care. Your primary care provider can take care of most of your health care needs or refer you for specialty care.

You will be assigned a primary care provider—a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician’s assistant—who is part of a team. Your team may also include pharmacists, social workers, nurses, other health professionals, and support staff. The team is responsible for:

- building a partnership with you to promote your health and well-being
- providing or arranging for preventive health services, such as immunizations and screenings

- giving you medical care, and coordinating your care with other providers
- educating you about healthy living habits, your health problems, and any treatment you may need.

Your first visit at the VA – What to bring with you:

It is very important that your VA providers understand why your last provider started you on your current medicines and treatments. If your VA provider does not have the information needed it may be unsafe to start *any* medicines or treatments until you provide the information.

In order for your new provider to accept responsibility for your care and start any treatment s/he must:

- Review your health records when available.
- Perform a physical exam.
- Check your current lab test results.
- Review your health problems.
- Decide which medicines will best maintain your health.

Bring copies of: (if available)

- NOTES from all your doctor visits for the last year.
- DISCHARGE SUMMARY from last 2 hospital stays.
- Heart tests and results.
- Results of special studies.
- X-rays or reports such as CAT scan, MRI, mammogram, colonoscopy, bone density.

Medication Information:

- Bring in all bottles of your current medicines.
- Bring reasons why each medicine was started.
- Bring reason a medication dose was changed.
- Bring list of medicines that did not work or caused problems in the past.
- List of over-the-counter medications you take.
- List of food supplements you take.
- Bring a list herbals and vitamins you take.

Make a list of your problems and concerns and write down any questions you have for your provider:

- This will help you to ask about your concerns and then learn more about what you should do when you go home.
- This list will also help you and your provider set priorities.

Questions and problems between appointments

If you have a health problem or question before your next regularly scheduled visit, you can call the Patient Call Center to speak with a nurse. The nurse will either answer your question or ask your provider for suggestions. If needed, a special appointment will be made.

If you see a private provider between VA appointments, bring copies of those records to the next visit.

X-ray and Lab results

Your provider will call or write you, when needed, with results of studies that have been done. So, we always need your current phone number and address in our computer system.

Patient Call Center

Dallas Toll Free 1-800-677-8289 or Local 214-857-2081

Bonham 1-800- 924-8387 ext. 36733

Ft. Worth 1-800-443-9672, option 1

Services provided through the Patient Call Center:

- Information on health issues.
- Answers to health questions.
- Information on medications and refills.
- Assistance with appointments.

The Patient Call Center will route medical calls to a nurse.

Registered nurses will:

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- Suggest things you can try before making the trip to the Medical Center.
- Help you decide if you should come to the hospital right away.
- Provide results of lab work, x-rays and other studies and if you need to speak with your provider they will help you arrange that contact.
- Provide information about your medications:
 - Number of refills remaining.
 - Expected and unusual side effects.
 - Foods and other medications that can cause problems.

Referrals

Primary Care will coordinate all care for you. If you need to be evaluated or seen by a specialist, your primary care provider will request a consult from the specialty area you need. After the consult is made, the specialty care area will contact you about your appointment or your next step in care.

Coordination of Care among VA Facilities

Because you are enrolled in VA health care, you are eligible for care at any VA facility. You will be asked to name your preferred facility. We encourage you to receive the majority of your care through your preferred facility and your primary care provider.

If you travel a lot or live in more than one location, you may need to arrange for care at more than one VA facility. When you plan extended travel outside your usual VA care area, please give your primary care clinic and pharmacy:

- a temporary address and phone number
- the starting date and the expected date of return.

Routine refills can be sent to you at your temporary address. Be sure to allow time (approximately 7-10 days) for the refills to arrive at your temporary address by mail.

Fee Basis Care

In certain circumstances, your VA Medical Center may pay for care you receive from a non-VA provider. This can happen when:

- the services you need are not available in VA
- the services are available in VA, but at a great distance from your home.

Services provided by community vendors at VA expense must meet the VA's quality standards and must be authorized in advance.

We are here to assist Veterans with their medical bills when they cannot make it to the VA in an emergency situation.

- We receive claims and medical records from both vendors and Veterans.
- We provide letters to Veterans and vendors, indicating additional information needed to process claims.
- We submit claims and medical records for medical review.
- Once any decision on a claim is made, either payment or denial letters will be sent out to you, the Veteran, and all vendors listed.
 - We do not pay any claims on spouses or dependents (Tri-Care).
 - We do not pay secondary to any insurance. If your insurance paid a part of the claim, we do not pay the remaining balance.
 - We do not pay for any of your bills while you stayed at the VA Hospital.
 - The staff of the Fee Service Department does not make any decision regarding the payment or denial of claims. Those decisions are authorized by a medical clinician.
 - We only handle cases within our jurisdiction.
- Each case is handled on a case-by-case basis.

8 Things That Can Help Us Help You:

- Make sure that you are enrolled under the North Texas Healthcare System (Picture ID / DD214).

- Make sure that all information has been updated (a current address/ phone number/any other insurance you or your spouse may have).
- Make sure that you have a completed Means Test on file.
- You MUST be seen once every 24 months to maintain eligibility.
- When you get to a hospital, make sure that they know you are a Veteran and have that hospital call the VA if you are admitted.
- Make sure that Fee Service receives a bill within 30 days.
- VA is our first priority service.
- If you cannot be treated here, the VA may refer you to another location.

Partner With Your VA Providers

Veteran-Centered Care

We will treat you with dignity and respect. We will ask you about and honor your values, preferences, and needs. We will provide safe, high quality care that is designed for you. You will receive the right care, at the right time, in the right care setting. We will coordinate your care to make sure we meet your needs. We will explain your health problems and treatment options in ways you can understand. We will explain about self-care and help you learn to manage your health problems. We call this Veteran-centered care. It means that all our efforts focus on giving you what you need.

You are the center of your treatment team. The team wants to work with you to design the best care plan for you. The clinicians on the team have expertise in preventing, diagnosing, and treating illness. You have expertise about your body and your life. Together, you can create a plan to maintain your health and well-being.

Health Care Partnerships

We know that patients who are actively involved in their health care have better outcomes and are more satisfied with their care.

There is no single “right” way to partner with your treatment team. There are many ways to work together, and they may change over time. Your VA providers will talk with you about this. Together, you can find ways to build a partnership that meets your needs and offers you the best possible outcomes.

What You Can Do

There are many things you can do to take an active role in your health care.

- Give your treatment team accurate and complete information about:
 - Your current health problems
 - Your concerns about your health
 - Past illnesses
 - Hospitalizations
 - Your medicines, including over-the-counter and herbals
 - Other matters related to your health
- Plan ahead for your visits by writing down the questions and concerns you want to raise; share them with your provider at the beginning of each visit
- Share your beliefs about your health problems and your treatment
- Share your preferences for treatment options
- Ask questions about anything that’s not clear to you
- Ask for written information and instructions you can keep and share with your family
- Gather information about your health problems from your treatment team, the VA library, and websites such as My Health eVet
- Participate in decisions about your health care—you and your provider should agree on what will be done during each step of your care
- Know your medicines and why you take each one
- Ask when and how you will get results of any tests or treatments
- Make sure you have the name and telephone number of a person to call if you have a problem

- Let your team know if you face any obstacles to your care or if your condition changes
- Have a family member or friend with you to help you, if you wish
- Know the next steps in your care
- Speak up if you have any concerns about the care you are receiving or if you think something is wrong.

What Your VA Providers Will Do

To help you take an active role in your health care, your providers will:

- Ask if you have questions or concerns you want to discuss
- Encourage you to talk about your health concerns and the impact on your life
- Explain your health problems and treatment options in ways you can understand
- Share their own treatment recommendations
- Work with you so that, together, you can create a treatment plan that works for you
- Ask you to take some responsibility for following the treatment plan you have developed together.

Co-Managed Care/Dual Care

We encourage you to receive all your medical care through the VA and have a single VA primary care provider who coordinates all aspects of your care. However, we are willing to work with your private doctors to provide and coordinate your health care. We call this Co-managed Care or Dual Care. It means that your VA and private doctors must work together to provide safe, clinically appropriate, and ethical medical care.

VA Policy

If you are seeking care, medications, or supplies from VA, you must enroll in VA health care and have a primary care provider who manages your care, even if some of your care is provided in the community.

Specialty services will be provided according to the local facility or Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN) policy once you are enrolled in primary care.

VA Provider Responsibilities

Your VA provider must have the final say about how the VA will meet your health care needs. Your VA provider does not have to re-write prescriptions or order tests for any health problem that the VA provider does not directly manage.

If your private doctor writes a prescription for a medicine that is not on the VA list of approved medicines, your VA provider may offer you another medicine that is very similar, safe, and effective for your condition. If you choose, you may want to talk to your private doctor before changing to the VA medicine.

Some medicines need special blood tests. Your VA provider will not write prescriptions for any high-risk medicines unless you agree to have the tests done by the VA. If you live far away or have travel difficulty, you have the option of providing the written results from your private doctor's blood tests to your VA provider.

If you request a highly specialized medication, you must be seen by a VA provider competent in that specialty, or the prescribing clinician must be in direct verbal or written contact, or acting on recommendations of, a VA provider competent in that specialty.

VA providers are under no obligation to follow a treatment or medication plan recommended by community physicians if they disagree with that plan or if that plan conflicts with national or local policies related to prescription of medications. VA providers will explain their rationale for medication changes or refusal to you.

If you receive controlled substances on an ongoing basis, close monitoring is required by **one** designated provider. Dual care is avoided unless your community provider and VA provider collaboratively determine that this is in your best interest.

Emergency Care

In VA Facilities

If your VA facility has an emergency department and you live nearby, you should go there for emergency care.

In Non-VA Facilities

When it is not possible for you to go to a VA medical center, you should go to the nearest hospital that has an emergency room. If you are in an ambulance, the paramedics will usually take you to the closest emergency room.

What is emergency care?

A medical emergency is when you have an injury or illness that is so severe that without immediate treatment, the injury or illness threatens your health or life.

How do I know if what is wrong with me is an emergency?

Use your best judgment. If you believe you are suffering from something that is described in the section above, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

Do I need to call the VA before I obtain emergency care?

No. Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. If you are admitted, your family, friends or hospital staff should contact the nearest VA medical center as soon as possible to provide information about your emergency room visit.

If the doctor wants to admit me to the hospital, must I obtain approval from the VA?

- If the admission is an emergency—no.
- If the admission is not an emergency—yes. You, a friend, a family member, or someone from the non-VA hospital must call the closest VA medical center and speak to the patient transfer or patient administration representative. This must

be done within 72 hours of your arrival at the emergency room. If a VA bed is available and if you can be safely transferred, you must be moved. If you refuse to be transferred, the VA will not pay for any further care.

Does my enrollment in the VA Health Care System change my coverage for emergency care?

Yes, it may. Your local VA medical center's patient benefits counselor can explain your options.

Does my other insurance (TRICARE, Medicare, Medicaid, Blue Cross, etc.) change my VA coverage for emergency services?

Yes, it may. Your local VA medical center's patient benefits counselor can explain your options.

Will VA pay for emergency care if I am in jail?

No. Usually the jail has responsibility for providing you with medical care.

Will VA pay for emergency care received outside the United States?

Yes. This coverage is very different. VA will only pay for emergency care outside the US if your emergency is related to a service-connected condition. Contact the VA Health Administration Center at (877) 345-8179. You can find more information on the Foreign Medical Program at <http://www.va.gov/hac/hacmain.asp>.

How long do I have to file a claim for reimbursement for emergency medical care?

Time limits usually apply. Please file your claim with the nearest VA medical center within 30 days. If your regional office recently determined your benefits, you should submit a reimbursement claim as soon as you can. Contact your local VA medical center's patient benefits counselor to explain these limits.

Will I have to pay for a portion of my emergency care?

You may have to pay for a portion of your emergency care, depending on the care you received. Your local VA medical

center's patient benefits counselor can explain these factors and how they affect your obligation to pay for part of your care.

If I am admitted to the hospital as a result of an emergency, what will VA pay?

This depends on your VA eligibility status and other factors. VA may pay all, some, or none of the charges after you are admitted. Your local VA medical center's patient benefits counselor can explain these factors and their impact on your situation.

Where can I get more information?

You can get more answers to your questions on the Health Administration Center Internet website at <http://www.va.gov/hac/hacmain.asp> under Non-VA Care. You may also contact a patient benefits counselor at your VA medical center for details about your situation.

Transfer Coordinator (214) 857-1554 or (214) 857-1557

VA Pharmacy Benefits

VA has excellent pharmacy benefits. You can get all VA formulary medications and medical supplies your VA provider orders for you.

If you are transferring your prescriptions to VA, your VA providers may need to replace some of your medications with similar medications carried by the VA pharmacy. They will work closely with your community provider to coordinate your care. You must bring information from your community provider that explains why the medication was prescribed, the name of the medication, and the dose.

By law, VA pharmacy cannot fill a prescription written by a non-VA provider. VA is not responsible to pay for medications filled at a private pharmacy.

Pharmacy Co-payments

You may need to pay a co-payment for medications based on your eligibility. You may apply for free medications based on

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your finances. You can get information about patient eligibility from the benefits counselor at your local VA facility.

Pharmacy Telephone Care System

This system is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can use it to:

- Check on a prescription
- Learn about your medicine
- Order refills for your medicines
- Talk to someone in the VA pharmacy during business hours (Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm).

You need a touch-tone telephone to use this service. Before you call, have at hand your Social Security Number and your prescription number from the bottle.

1-800-849-3597 and press (1)

The automated phone system will give you step-by-step instructions.

New Prescriptions

A pharmacist will talk to you about any new medicine your provider orders for you. You can pick up new prescriptions at the VA pharmacy or have them mailed to your home. Mailed prescriptions usually take 14 days.

Refills for Prescriptions

You can request refills in any of these ways:

1. Call the telephone ordering system using a touch-tone phone **1-800-849-3597 and press (1)**
 - the automated phone system will give you step-by-step instructions
 - before you start, have at hand your full Social Security Number and your prescription number from the bottle
2. Mail the refill slip that comes with your prescription

Dallas:

Pharmacy Service (119)
VA North Texas Health Care System
4500 S. Lancaster Road
Dallas, Texas 75216

Bonham:

Pharmacy Service (119)
VA North Texas Health Care System
1201 E. 9th Street
Bonham, Texas 75418

Ft. Worth:

Pharmacy Service (119)
VA North Texas Health Care System
2201 S. Loop 820
Ft. Worth, Texas 76119

3. Use the Internet

- enroll in My HealthVet at the VA to use this feature, then log on to the website at <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

4. Drop off your refill slip at the VA pharmacy

For Dallas VA, drop your refill slips in the brown mailboxes marked "Prescription Mail-Out Drop Box". These are located on either side of the Pharmacy Prescription Pick-Up Area.

For Bonham VA and Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic, use the mail slots provided in the Pharmacy area to submit refill slips.

Request refills 2 weeks before you need more medicine to allow time for your prescription to be refilled and mailed to you.

When you get the refill, check the bottle to make sure these things are correct:

- your name on the bottle
- the name of the medicine
- the color and shape of the medicine

- the amount you should take for each dose
- the directions you should follow for each dose.

If you have any questions about your refill, please call the Pharmacy Call Center at **1-800-849-3597 and press (1)**.

To order **Dallas Refrigerated Medications ONLY** call 1-800-849-3597, extension 70504. Please note this telephone number is available for ordering Dallas Refrigerated Medications ONLY. Any regular refill requests made on this telephone number will not be processed.

Narcotics and certain controlled medications cannot be refilled. A new prescription is needed for each month's supply. You and your VA provider should discuss how and when you can get these prescriptions.

You will need a new prescription when your current prescription has no more refills. If you need to stay on the medication, contact your VA provider as soon as possible to have the new prescription ordered. It's a good idea to check your medicines before each visit with your provider to see how many refills are left, so you can ask for a new prescription of the medication at the visit.

Additional Information

You can get more information about your medicines in several ways:

- talk to a VA pharmacist
- talk to your provider
- use the Internet at one of these sites:
 - log on to the My HealthVet website at <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>
 - log on to the National Library of Medicine website at <http://www.medlineplus.gov>

VA Enrollment

When you enrolled at VANATHCS you completed a form 10-10EZ. If you move to another region, you may have to repeat the registration process again. For more information you can contact the local Eligibility Clerk at:

1-800-849-3597 ext 71343 or 1-800-849-3597 ext 71362

Income Means Tests

While many Veterans qualify for enrollment and cost-free health care services based on a service-connected condition or other qualifying factor, MOST Veterans will be asked to complete a financial assessment (form 10-10EZ) as part of their enrollment process.

This financial information will be used to determine the applicant's enrollment priority group and whether he/she is eligible for cost-free VA health care. Providers, social workers and nurses are not eligibility experts and cannot give information about eligibility. Please see the Eligibility Clerk for assistance.

Advanced Access

As a way to offer more appointments and to improve scheduling, Advanced Clinic Access is used at VANATHCS.

- About 30 days before the time your provider requested you to come back for an office visit, you will receive a card requesting YOU to call the clinic to schedule the appointment.
- This allows you the flexibility to choose a time that is good for you to come to the clinic.
- If you do not call and schedule the appointment, the clinic will not automatically schedule you for an appointment.

Appointments or Clinic Visits

At VA North Texas Health Care System we have established a number of procedures to assist you in getting an appointment without a long delay.

To schedule an appointment, to get a list of your current appointments, or to reschedule an existing appointment, please call the appropriate facility:

Dallas VA Medical Center	(214) 742-8387 1-800-849-3597, press 2
Sam Rayburn Memorial Veterans Center, Bonham	(903) 583-6425 1-800-924-8387 ext. 36425
Fort Worth Outpatient Clinic	(817) 730-2202 1-800-443-9672
Tyler Outpatient Clinic	(903) 590-3059

Primary Care Clinic appointments are scheduled just like in a private sector doctor's office. We send you a reminder card and you call your clinic to schedule an appointment.

- Appointment times are between 8:00 AM to 3:30 PM.
- Lab appointments are scheduled 2 hours before the appointment with your provider to allow time to obtain the results. You may be asked to fast before your labs.
- The nurse will check your blood pressure, blood sugar and ask about your current health problems before you see your provider.

Changing or Canceling Your Appointment

- Your appointment is reserved especially for you. Kindly give our office 48 hours notice if you are unable to keep this appointment.
- This will give another Veteran a chance to be seen.

To cancel or reschedule your appointments please dial 1-800-849-3597 then press 2 and a clerk will be available to assist you.

Missed appointments

If you miss an appointment the clinic secretary will mail you a letter or call you. If we are unable to reach you, we will assume you are no longer interested in obtaining an appointment at this time.

Specialty Clinic Phone Numbers

To make an appointment with a particular clinic or service at Dallas VAMC, call the listed phone number provided below:

Clinic	Contact Information
Cardiology	(214) 857-1556
Diabetes	(214) 857-4270
Gastroenterology	(214) 857-8941
Hematology/Oncology/MRTC	(214) 857-0737
Pulmonary disorders	(214) 857-1369
Women's Clinic	(214) 857-4800
Specialty Clinics	
Audiology	(214) 857-0951
Cardiothoracic	(214) 857-1811
Colon – Rectal	(214) 857-1371
Dermatology	(214) 857-1369
Ear, Nose, and Throat	(214) 857-1513
Wound Care	(214) 857-1439
Eye	(214) 857-1382
General Surgery	(214) 857-1811
Neurology	(214) 857-1381
Neurosurgery	(214) 857-1368
Orthopedics	(214) 857-1844
Plastic Surgery	(214) 857-1811
Podiatry	(214) 857-1443
Radiation/Oncology	(214) 857-0141
Urology	(214) 857-1444

Vascular	(214) 857-1808
Extended Care and Rehabilitation	
Occupational Therapy	(214) 857-1274
Physical Therapy	(214) 857-1274
Spinal Cord Injury	(214) 857-1781
Mental Health Clinics	
Access	(214) 857-0853
Health Care for Homeless Veterans	(214) 857-1121
Psychology	(214) 857-0530

Billing

Funds that are recovered from private insurance for care are used to offset the clients “co-payments” whether as outpatient or inpatient. These funds stay at the local facility to help fund programs for education, immunization etc., that are not funded through VA Central Office.

The VA does not receive payment from Medicare, since it is another federal entity, but can bill Medicare “supplement” plans since they are NOT federal plans.

- VA will bill private insurance for non-service connected treatment and medications.
- VA does submit claims through Medicare for pricing purposes only.
- VA does not receive payment from Medicare.

Outpatient Co-Pays

Most Veterans are required to complete an annual means test to decide if you qualify for cost-free service. You will be charged one co-pay regardless of the number of health care providers you see in a single day. Example: If you have a specialty care visit and a primary care visit on the same day, you will be charged only for the specialty care visit since it is a higher level of care.

- Outpatient co-pays are based on the higher of two levels of service on any individual day.

- No co-pay for preventive care services such as screenings and immunizations.

Inpatient Co-Pays

Inpatient co-pays are based on both a standard charge for each 90 days of care within a 365-day period as well as a daily charge. Example: If you are hospitalized on 1-1-08 and discharged on 1-10-08, you will be charged the standard co-pay and a daily charge. If you are re-admitted within 90 days (1-1-08 to 3-31-08) you will only be charged the daily rate. If you are admitted on 4-1-08 you are charged half of the standard co-pay (start of a new 90 day period) plus the daily co-pay.

- Standard co-pay charge for each 90 days of care within a 365 day period.
- A daily charge will be assessed for each day of hospitalization.

Which Veterans Are Not Required to Make Inpatient or Outpatient Co-Pays?

Many Veterans qualify for cost-free health care services based on service-connected conditions or other qualifying factors. These are some of the categories that do not require co-pays:

- Receiving a Purple Heart Medal.
- Former Prisoner of War.
- VA Service Connected Disabilities.
- Veterans who are 50% Service Connected or greater.
- Low Income based on Means Test Threshold.
- Other qualifying factors including treatment related to your military service experience.

Eligibility and Benefits

Every year VA publishes a booklet, *Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Overview*, which contains up-to-date information on eligibility, enrollment, and VA health care benefits. This booklet is the authoritative source for describing eligibility and health benefits for all Veterans. You received a

copy of this booklet when you enrolled in VA health care. You can also download a copy of the booklet at:

<http://www.va.gov/healthelibility/library/pubs/healthcareoverview>.

It is a very helpful booklet, and we encourage you to refer to it whenever you have questions about your eligibility for specific health care benefits. It also provides answers to frequently asked questions about eligibility and benefits.

Here are the topics in the booklet:

- Introduction and overview
- Veterans online access to VA health information and services (My HealthVet)
- Eligibility and medical program benefits
 - Basic eligibility
 - Minimum duty requirements
 - Women Veterans eligibility
 - Readjustment counseling services
 - Suicide prevention lifeline
 - Medically related travel benefits
- VA health care enrollment
 - Enrollment restriction
 - Recently discharged combat Veterans
 - Means testing (financial assessment)
 - Geographically-based means testing
 - Catastrophically disabled
 - Income verification
 - Financial hardships
 - Veterans identification card
 - Updating your information
 - Private health insurance
 - Insurance collections
 - Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage
- Priority Groups
 - Priority Group 8 enrollment relaxation

- Co-pays
 - Types of co-pays—outpatient, medication, inpatient, long-term care
 - Veterans who are not required to make co-pays
 - Services exempt from inpatient and outpatient co-pays
- Acute care benefits
 - Standard benefits—preventive care services, outpatient diagnostic and treatment services, inpatient diagnostic and treatment services, prescription drugs
 - Limited benefits—emergency care, ambulance services, dental care, durable medical equipment, eyeglasses, hearing aids
 - General exclusions
 - VA foreign medical program
- Long-term care benefits
 - Standard benefits
 - Financial assessment for long-term care services
 - Limited benefits
- Additional VA health benefits for dependents and survivors.

You can also call toll-free (877) 222-VETS [8387] to get more information on VA health care eligibility and benefits.

VA Benefits

Veterans are encouraged to contact the VA regional offices for assistance with specific questions about benefits not pertaining to medical/health care. There may be other counsel you can access within your communities for assistance such as Veterans Service Officers, Disabled American Veterans, Texas Veterans Commission, Paralyzed Veterans of America and others. They may be able to save you time and effort in clarifying your benefits or being re-evaluated for compensation/pensions.

Remember – Social Workers, Clerks and Medical / Nursing staff are NOT benefits counselors.

- Compensation, Pension and other Benefits are programs of the VA Regional Offices, 1-800-827-1000
- Benefit Counselors: Each County has a Veterans Service Officer for
 - Disabled American Veterans
 - Texas Veterans Commission
 - Paralyzed Veterans of America
 - Other organizations

Veterans are encouraged to access the “Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents” book to be familiar with programs that they may be eligible for within the system. You can discuss issues with a Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) representative or service organization representatives to clarify any questions you may have.

You can access the “Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents” book at: <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/index.htm>

Department of Veterans Affairs announced on July 16, 2008 the availability of a VA On-Line Claims Application (VONAPP) at www.va.gov/onlineapps.htm. This program is accessible via the web and allows the Veteran to initiate a claim without a physical signature.

Vision, Hearing, & Dental Benefits

- **Vision and hearing**
 - Any Veteran is eligible for glasses and hearing aids as long as their PCP says it's indicated. The PCP will need to consult the eye clinic and/or audiology.
- **Dental**
 - You must be 100% Service Connected or service connected for dental or have other certain medical conditions that qualify you for this service.

Combat Veteran Eligibility

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides cost-free health care services and nursing home care for conditions possibly related to military service.

- **Currently enrolled Veterans and new enrollees who were discharged from active duty on or after January 28, 2003,** are eligible for the enhanced benefits, for 5 years post discharge.
- **Veterans discharged from active duty before January 28, 2003, who apply for enrollment on or after January 28, 2008,** are eligible for the enhanced benefit until January 27, 2011.

Who's eligible:

- Veterans, Activated Reservists and Members of the National Guard.
- Veterans who served on active duty in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998.
- and Veteran who have been discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.

Documentation used to determine service in a theater of combat operations:

- Military service documentation that reflects service in a combat theater or
- Receipt of combat service medals and/or
- Receipt of imminent danger or hostile fire pay or tax benefits.

Health benefits under the "Combat Veteran" authority:

- Cost-free care and medications provided for conditions potentially related to combat service.
- Enrollment in Priority Group 6 unless eligible for enrollment in a higher priority group.
- Full access to VA's Medical Benefits Package.

What happens after the enhanced eligibility period expires?

- Veterans will continue to be enrolled even after their enhanced eligibility period ends.
- Veterans may be subject to co-pays depending on their income level.

What about combat Veterans who do not enroll during their enhanced authority period?

Eligibility for enrollment and subsequent care is based on other factors such as:

- Compensable service-connected disability.
- VA pension status.
- Catastrophic disability determination.
- Veteran’s financial circumstances.

Co-pays: Veterans who qualify under this special eligibility are not subject to co-pays for conditions potentially related to their combat service.

However, unless otherwise exempted:

- Combat Veterans must either disclose their prior year gross household income or
- Decline to provide their financial information and agree to make applicable co-pays for care or services VA determines are clearly not related to their military service.

Dental Care: Eligibility for VA dental benefits is based on very specific guidelines and differs significantly from eligibility requirements for medical care. Combat Veterans may be authorized dental treatment as reasonably necessary for the one-time correction of dental conditions if:

- They served on active duty and were discharged with other than dishonorable.
- And served on active duty no less than 90 days.
- Discharge paperwork **does not** show that the Veteran was provided a complete dental examination and treatment within 90-days before discharge.
- Application for VA dental treatment is made within 180 days of discharge.

Additional information:

- Your local Veterans Healthcare Facility.

- Health Benefit Service Center toll free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387).
- VA health eligibility website at www.va.gov/healtheligibility.

Patient Responsibilities

You need to coordinate your care when you have more than one provider. You need to tell both your VA provider and your private doctor that you want to have your care coordinated.

You need to give your VA provider the name, address, and telephone number of all your private doctors. You should also give your private doctors the same information about your VA provider.

You must have all necessary records and documents from your private doctor sent to the VA. If you would like information from your VA medical record sent to your private doctor, you may contact the Release of Information office and sign a release form to have that done.

For your safety, let your VA provider know about all medicines you're taking, including prescriptions written by your private doctor, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbals. You will also want to tell your private doctor about any medicines prescribed by your VA provider.

You need to tell your VA provider about any changes in your health, or changes in treatment or medicines made by your private doctor. You will also want to tell your private doctor about any changes made by your VA provider.

You must pay any required VA co-payments.

Please feel free to talk further with your VA primary care provider about co-managed/dual care health benefits.

Beneficiary Travel Benefits

Benefit Description: If you meet the criteria below, you may be eligible for VA beneficiary travel benefits for VA health care services. In most cases, travel benefits are subject to a deductible.

Deductibles **do not** apply for:

- compensation and pension examinations,
- travel by an ambulance or a specially equipped van.

You Qualify If:

1. you have a service-connected (SC) rating of 30 percent or more, or
2. you are traveling for treatment of a SC condition, or
3. you receive a VA pension, or
4. your income does not exceed the maximum annual VA pension rate, or
5. you are traveling for a scheduled compensation or pension examination.

You Qualify for Special Mode Transportation (Ambulance, wheelchair van etc.) If:

1. your medical condition requires an ambulance or a specially equipped van, and
2. you meet one of the eligibility criteria in 1 through 4 above, and
3. the travel is pre-authorized (authorization is not required for emergencies if a delay would be hazardous to life or health).

Note: OEF/OIF Combat Veterans must meet one of the qualifying eligibilities or conditions noted above.

Mileage Rates:

General Travel51 cents/per
mile

Scheduled appointments qualify for round-trip mileage.

Unscheduled visits may be limited to return mileage only.

Deductible:\$6.00 one-
way
(\$18.00/max per month)

Travel pay is given **AFTER** your appointment. Veterans must be checked in and out at their clinic before they can receive reimbursement. Eligible Veterans must collect their travel **pay the day of their appointment.**

Remember, it is important to update your address in the VA system to ensure you receive the correct travel reimbursement. Make sure you complete your means test annually as it may change your deductible requirement.

Proof of address may be required when making changes to address.

Veterans with P.O. Box addresses will be required to provide proof of a physical address

Travel is paid from Veteran's home to nearest VA, unless there is a referral from a VA doctor at the other facility. If referral is documented, travel is paid from Veterans home to Dallas VA.

Advance Directives

Introduction

As a VA patient, you have a say in the health care you receive. When you are ill your health care provider (doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant) should explain the treatments for your illness so that you can decide which one is best for you. If you are too ill to understand your treatment choices or to tell your provider what you want:

- Who would you want to make decisions for you?
- What type of health care would you want?
- What type of health care would you not want?

Questions like these may be hard to think about, but it is even more unpleasant to think that your choices would not be known if you couldn't talk to your provider directly. The best way to make sure these decisions are handled exactly as you would want them is to complete an advance directive. Please note: It is up to you to decide if you want an advance directive. Your decision must not affect your access to health care or other VHA service.

What is an Advance Directive?

It's a set of orders. While you are healthy and not under stress, you may write down the types of care you would and would not like to have if you become too ill to talk to your doctor yourself. This legal form helps your health care provider and family understand your wishes about health care. It can help them decide about treatments if you are too ill to decide for yourself.

There are three types of Advance Directives:

- Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care
- Living Will
- Treatment Choices.

What is a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care?

A Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care is a legal form that lets you name the person you trust to make health care decisions for you if you cannot make them yourself. This person becomes your health care agent and will have the legal right to make health care decisions for you. It's best to choose someone you trust, who knows you well and knows your values. You should make sure the person is willing to serve as your health care agent. If you do not choose a health care agent, your doctor will choose someone to make decisions for you in the following order: legal guardian (if you have one), spouse, adult child, parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild or a close friend.

What is a Living Will?

A Living Will is a legal form that states what kinds of treatments you would or would not want in different situations when you cannot make treatment decisions yourself. It can help your health care agent and your doctor make decisions the way you want. For example, you could have the document tell your doctor not to use heroic measures to keep you alive or prolong the process of dying if you are terminally ill.

What is Treatment Choices?

Treatment Choices is a legal form that allows you to choose a range of treatment options such as pain control and nutrition. This type of

advance directive is used less often, but it may be tailored to meet your needs.

Should I have an Advance Directive?

Yes, it's a good idea to have one. It helps protect your right to make your own choices. It helps make sure people respect your values and wishes if you can't speak for yourself.

What should I do with my Advance Directive?

You should give a copy of your Advance Directive to your health care agent and your health care providers. You should also keep a copy with your important papers in a safe place. Be sure to give a copy to your VA provider so it can be placed in your medical record.

Can my Advance Directive be changed?

Yes, but only by you. You may change or revoke it at any time. You should also review it periodically to make sure it reflects what you want. If you make changes, give the new version to the people listed above and make sure the new copy is in your medical record.

For more information

You can view and download the form (VA Form 10-0137, VA Advance Directive) from the Internet at the VA website or My HealthVet website:

<http://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/vha-10-0137-fill.pdf>
<http://www.myhealth.va.gov>.

If you would like more information about advance directives or help filling out the form, please contact:

Social Work Service 214-857-0388/Chaplain Service 214-857-1070

Organ Donation

Discuss this with your VA provider or social worker.

Nursing Home Care

- The VA provides nursing home services through three national programs: VA owned and operated nursing homes,

state Veterans homes owned and operated by the state, and contract community nursing homes. Each program has its own admission and eligibility criteria.

- The VA provides skilled nursing and long term residential care benefits to Veterans who require such care as a result of service connected conditions or who receive 70% or greater service connection compensation excluding any percentage of unemployability compensation. Contact Social Work Service for assistance with nursing home care options and eligibility.

OEF/OIF Program (Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom)

The Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense (DOD) have formed a joint venture to meet the needs of our newest Veterans. The programs ensure a link to improve coordination of healthcare and benefits for seriously injured and ill service members returning from theaters of combat operations as they transition from DOD to VA healthcare.

The OEF/OIF Program (Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom) provides support through assessment, referrals, case management and care coordination. The program also has quarterly Focus Groups that allow Veterans to provide the VA feedback. Annually there is a family friendly Homecoming Event to welcome home our newest Veterans.

Program Manager (214) 857-0369

Transition Patient Advocate (214) 857-2665

Social Work Case Managers (Dallas)
(214) 857-0360
(214) 857-0378
(214) 857-0475
(817) 730-0147 (Ft. Worth)

Nurse Case Managers
(214) 857-2667

(214) 857-4343

Polytrauma Program

VANTHCS Polytrauma care is for Veterans and returning service members with injuries to more than one physical region or organ system, one of which may be life threatening, and which results in physical, cognitive, psychological, or psychosocial impairments and functional disability.

The Polytrauma Network Site at VA North Texas Health Care System in Dallas is one of twenty-one facilities in the country designed to provide long-term rehabilitative care to Veterans and service members who experienced severe injuries to more than one organ system. Referrals are received from Military Treatment Facilities and by consult from your primary care physician.

Mental Health Services

Mental Health Service, at VA North Texas Health Care System, proudly serves Veterans with emotional disorders in the Dallas/Ft. Worth/ Bonham/Tyler area. Our programs are designed to promote mental health and wellness in the least limiting treatment setting. We have several programs and services to assist Veterans. Your primary care physician will consult Mental Health for assessment as needed.

Dallas Mental Health Access Clinic	(214) 857-0853
Ft. Worth Mental Health Clinic	(817) 882-7430
Bonham Mental Health Clinic	(903) 583-6241
Tyler Outpatient Mental Health Clinic	(903) 590-3059

Suicide Prevention

Suicide Prevention Awareness

Suicide is the 11th most frequent cause of death in the US. Suicidal ideas and attempts to harm oneself are the result of problems that may seem like they can't be fixed. Together, Vet Centers and VA

www.northtexas.va.gov

Medical Centers stand ready to reach out and help Veterans at risk for suicide.

Seek professional help...Call the toll-free National Suicide Prevention hotline and indicate you are a Veteran. You'll be immediately connected to VA suicide prevention and mental health professionals. We can help-- If you think you are in crisis--Call the Suicide Hotline (1-800-273-TALK) or If in immediate crisis, Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency center.

National Suicide Prevention Hotline 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Press 1 for Veterans and you'll be immediately connected with someone who can help you.

www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Get immediate help if you notice any of these signs

- Thinking about hurting or killing yourself
- Looking for ways to kill yourself
- Talking or writing about death, dying or suicide
- Self-destructive behavior such as drug abuse or weapons

Additional Warning Signs

- Hopelessness, feeling like there's no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, mood swings
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug abuse
- Withdrawing from family and friends

Call us if you experience any of these warning signs.

Pick up the phone if you are experiencing any emotional crisis and need to talk to a trained VA professional. You'll be immediately connected with a qualified caring provider who can help you.

www.northtexas.va.gov

Patient Rights and Responsibilities

We are honored that you have selected us to provide your healthcare. We want to improve your health and well-being. We will make your visit or stay as pleasant for you as possible.

As part of our service to you, other Veterans and the Nation, we are committed to improving healthcare quality. We also train future healthcare professionals, conduct research, and support our country in times of national emergency.

In all these activities, our employees will respect and support your rights as a patient. Your rights and responsibilities are outlined in this document. Please talk with your treatment team or a patient advocate if you have any questions or would like more information about your rights.

Respect and Nondiscrimination

- You will be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect as an individual. Your privacy will be protected. You will receive care in a safe environment. We will honor your personal and religious values.
- You or someone you choose has the right to keep and spend your money. You will receive an accounting of any funds VA holds for you.
- Treatment will respect your personal freedoms. In rare cases, the use of medication and physical restraints may be used if all other efforts to keep you or others free from harm have not worked.
- As an inpatient or nursing home resident, you may wear your own clothes. You may keep personal items. This will depend on your medical condition.
- As an inpatient or nursing home resident, you have the right to social interaction and regular exercise. You will have the opportunity for religious worship and spiritual support. You may decide whether to participate in these activities. You may decide whether or not to perform tasks in or for the Medical Center.

- As an inpatient or nursing home resident, you have the right to communicate freely and privately. You may have or refuse visitors. You will have access to public telephones. You may participate in civic rights, such as voting and free speech.
- As a nursing home resident, you can organize and take part in resident groups in the facility. Your family also can meet with the families of other residents.
- In order to provide a safe treatment environment for all patients or residents and staff, you are expected to respect other patients, residents and staff and to follow the facility's rules. Avoid unsafe acts that place others at risk for accidents or injuries. Please immediately report any condition you believe to be unsafe.

Information Disclosure and Confidentiality

- You will receive information about the health benefits you can receive. The information will be provided in a way you can understand.
- You will receive information about the costs of your care, if any, before you are treated. You are responsible for paying your portion of any costs related to your care.
- Your medical record will be kept confidential. Information about you will not be released without your consent unless required by law. You have the right to information in your medical record and may request a copy of your medical records. This will be provided except in rare situations when your VA physician feels the information will be harmful to you. In that case, you have the right to discuss this with your VA provider.
- You will be told of all outcomes of care, including any potential injuries. You will be told about how to request compensation for any injuries.

Participation in Treatment Decisions

- You, and any persons you choose, will be involved in all decisions about your care. You will receive information you can understand about the benefits and risks of treatment. You will be given other options. You can agree to or refuse

treatment. You will be told what is likely to happen to you if you refuse treatment. Refusing treatment will not affect your rights to future care, but you take responsibility for the possible results to your health.

- Being involved is very important for you to get the best possible results. Tell your provider about your current condition, medicines (including over-the-counter and herbals), and medical history. Also, share any other information that affects your health. You should ask questions when you do not understand something about your care.
- You will be given, in writing, the name and title of the provider in charge of your care. As our partner in healthcare, you have the right to be involved in choosing your provider. You also have the right to know the names and titles of those who provide you care. This includes students, residents and trainees. Providers will properly introduce themselves when they take part in your care.
- You will be educated about your role and responsibilities as a patient or nursing home resident. This includes your participation in decision-making and care at the end of life.
- If you believe you cannot follow the treatment plan, you have a responsibility to notify your provider or treatment team.
- You have the right to have your pain assessed and to receive treatment to manage your pain. You and your treatment team will develop a pain management plan together. You should help the treatment team by telling them if you have pain and if the treatment is working.
- As an inpatient or nursing home resident, you will receive any transportation needed for your treatment plan.
- You have the right to choose whether you will participate in any research project. Any research will be clearly identified. Potential risks of the research will be identified. There will be no pressure on you to participate.
- You will be included in resolving any ethical issues about your care. You may consult with the Medical Center's Ethics Consultation Service and/or other staff knowledgeable about healthcare ethics.

- If you or the Medical Center believe that you have been neglected, abused or exploited, you will receive help.

Complaints

- We encourage you to seek help from your treatment team or a patient advocate if you have problems or complaints. You will receive information you can understand about the complaint process. You may complain verbally or in writing, without fear of retaliation.

Patient Advocacy Program

The Patient Advocacy Program is for all Veterans and their families who receive care at VA facilities and clinics. We want you and your family to have someone to go to for discussion of your concerns, complaints or to offer a compliment.

We want to make sure you get the best care possible. Your treatment team is your first point of contact. Your treatment team includes your doctor, nurse, social worker, dietitian, pharmacist, chaplain, therapist, and other professionals who provide your medical care.

If you or your family member believes your concerns are not being addressed by your treatment team, you may contact a VA Patient Advocate. A Patient Advocate is an employee whose job is to help resolve your issues. The Patient Advocate works directly with management and employees to do this.

If you need help getting care or getting problems resolved, please contact the Patient Advocate.

Names	Phone Number	Location	Room
Stephanie Carey	(214) 857-0483	Dallas	CA (1B207)
Marci L. Doty-Hoffman	(214) 857-0482	Dallas	CA (1B207)

Jack P. Freeman	(214) 857-0466	Dallas	CA (1B207)
Reba Kennison	(903) 583-6216	Bonham	1 (141)
Wanda R. Lee	(214) 857-1154	Dallas	2 (1C220)
Karen Motin-Landry	(817) 882-6006	FWOPC	(105)
Loretta S. Tryon-Dread	(214) 857-0477	Dallas	CA (1B207)

Healthy Living

We are committed to providing you the highest quality health care. We also want to help you take care of yourself. There has been a lot of research in recent years on the best ways to maintain health and well-being. The behaviors listed below are the ones that have the most impact on your health. We encourage you to incorporate these behaviors into your daily life.

For more information about these healthy living behaviors, check out the recommended websites, talk to your VA provider, and review the directory of VA health education programs and services in the next section. We'll be happy to help you.

Eat Healthy Foods

We all should eat a wide variety of foods to get the daily nutrients we need. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend these amounts each day:

- Up to 4 servings of fruits
- Up to 5 servings of vegetables
- Up to 3 cups of low-fat dairy products
- Up to 6 ounces of protein foods such as lean meats, poultry, and fish, or 1 cup of cooked beans
- Up to 6 servings of whole grain breads and cold cereals, or 3 cups of cooked rice, pasta, and cereal

- Up to 3 tablespoons of oils, salad dressing, or margarine.

For more information about healthy eating, go to these websites:

2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (changes every five years)

<http://www.health.gov/DietaryGuidelines/>

My Health eVet Healthy Living Centers

<http://www.myhealth.va.gov>.

Maintain Healthy Weight

To find the weight range that is right for you, check your Body Mass Index. It measures body fat based on your height and weight. Go to the BMI calculator from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at <http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/>.

To stay at a healthy weight, balance calories from what you eat and drink with calories you burn off by your activities. To prevent gradual weight gain over time, make small decreases in food and beverage calories and increase physical activity.

For more information about weight management, go to:

VA MOVE program website <http://www.move.va.gov/>

My Health eVet website <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

Be Physically Active

Pick an activity that's easy to fit into your life. Do at least 10 minutes of physical activity at a time. Choose **aerobic** activities that work for you. These make your heart beat faster and can make your heart, lungs, and blood vessels stronger and fit. Also do **strengthening** activities which make your muscles do more work than usual.

It is up to you, but it is better to spread your activity throughout the week. And remember, some physical activity is better than none!

Slowly build up the amount of time you do physical activities. The more time you spend, the more health benefits you gain. If you are not physically active now, start small and work up to 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least 5 days a week. Walking briskly, mowing the lawn, dancing, swimming, and bicycling are just a few examples of moderate aerobic activities.

Do muscle strengthening activities at least 2 days a week. Include all the major muscle groups—legs, hips, back, chest, stomach, shoulders, and arms.

For more information, go to the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans at <http://www.health.gov/PAGuidelines/>

Don't Use Tobacco Products

Smoking and other tobacco products can increase your risk of cancer, heart disease, and other health problems. All adults should avoid tobacco products. If you smoke, talk to your doctor about quitting. If you are pregnant and smoke, quitting now will help you and your baby. Your doctor or nurse can help you, and you can also help yourself.

For tips on how to quit, go to: You Can Quit Smoking Now. <http://www.smokefree.gov>.

To talk to someone about how to quit, call the National Quitline: 1-800-QUITNOW.

For more quit-smoking resources, go to: <http://www.healthfinder.gov/>, and search for "smoking."

If you would like information about VA programs to help you quit smoking, please contact

Mental Health Service (214) 857-0534

Drink Alcohol in Moderation

Adults should drink moderately, if at all. For men, this means no more than 2 drinks a day. For women, this means no more than 1 drink a day. A standard drink is one 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine

www.northtexas.va.gov

cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits. If you are pregnant, avoid alcohol.

Get Recommended Preventive Services

Talk to your provider about the preventive services you should have. The recommendations are based on your age and health status. They include immunizations and screening tests for potential health problems.

For a list of the recommended services for men and women, go to this website:

Men: Stay Healthy at Any Age

<http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthymen.html>

Women: Stay Healthy at Any Age

<http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthywom.html>.

Build a Support Network of Family and Friends

People who have strong ties to family and friends have higher levels of well-being than those without such support. These networks give you many benefits:

- a feeling of connection to other people
- the knowledge that other people consider you a friend
- the security of knowing you can help others and they will help you.

There are many resources to help you build a support network for yourself. Try this website:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/social-support/>.

Learn to Manage Stress

Most people have some stress in their lives. It's important to learn how to manage the stress in your life because stress contributes to your risk for health problems. You may not be able to remove stress from your life, but you can learn what stresses you and how to take care of yourself during periods of stress.

www.northtexas.va.gov

VA also has excellent programs to help you manage post-traumatic stress disorder. Talk to your provider about your concerns, and learn about the many ways VA can help you manage stress in your life.

Mental Health Service (214) 857-0805 or (214) 857-0806

Many VA facilities have health education programs and services to help you. Check out the directory of VA health education programs and services in the next section to see what's available for you.

My HealthVet (www.myhealth.va.gov)

Website Features

My HealthVet is a website created especially for Veterans. You can use it to:

- Get accurate health information from sources you can trust
- Refill your VA prescriptions and get information about your medicines
- Create your own personal health journal
- Read VA news and feature stories
- Link to VA benefits and services.

Because this new feature has more personal information, extra security measures are required to protect each patient.

Personal Health Journal

You can control the features of the personal health journal. You can:

- Keep track of all your providers
- Keep track of your military health information
- Record your personal health history
- Keep track of your own vital readings, such as blood pressure or blood sugar, and monitor them over time
- Keep a list of your medicines

- Record your physical activity or food intake in daily logs
- Record your emergency contacts.

Registration and Authentication

To take advantage of all the features of My Health eVet, you need to register on the website and be authenticated in person at the VA. The authentication process protects your privacy and your personal health information. Here's what to do:

1. Go to the website: <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>
2. Click on the "Register today" button and follow the instructions
3. Go back to the My Health eVet home page
4. Click on the "In-Person Authentication" link
5. Watch the brief orientation video
6. Print out, complete, and sign the My Health eVet release of information form (Form 10-5345a-MHV)
7. Bring the form and a photo ID (Veterans ID card or driver's license) to the Library. (3rd floor building 2, room B304)
8. The staff will verify who you are and complete the process.

Coming Soon

New features will soon be added to My Health eVet to give you more options to take an active role in your health care. You will be able to:

- Communicate via email with your VA provider for non-urgent health care questions and issues
- View your VA appointments
- View your co-pay balances
- View your lab reports and selected parts of your VA medical record
- Check on possible drug interactions for your medicines
- Decide who to give access to your personal health information—for example, family members, doctors, etc.

More Information

For more information on My HealthVet:

Bring the form and a photo ID (Veterans ID card or driver's license) to Dallas- Clinical Addition, Room BA-301 or Medical Library, Bldg 2, Room B306
Bonham- Bldg 1, Room 167
Fort Worth Veteran's Resource Center Room 1S-344

Other Resources

VBA Regional Office (benefits)

701 Clay Ave.
Waco, Texas 76799
(254) 299-9103 or 1-800- 827-1000

Texas State Veterans Home

1300 Seven Oaks Rd.
Bonham, Texas 75418-9734
(903) 583-6342 or 1-800-924-8387, ext. 36342

Fort Worth Vet Center

1305 W. Magnolia Ave.
Fort Worth, Texas 76104
(817) 921-9095

D/FW National Cemetery

2191 Mountain Creek Pkwy.
Dallas, Texas 75211
(214) 467-3374

Dallas Vet Center

Chase Building, Suite 213
10501 North Central Expressway
Dallas, Texas 75231
(214) 361-5896

Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

Dallas	Bonham	Fort Worth
(214) 857-1119	(903) 583-6318	(817) 730-0399

Blind Veterans of America

(214) 857-0965

Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA)

(214) 857-0105 or (214)857-0595

Vietnam Veterans of America

(214) 857-1291

Military Order of Purple Heart

(817) 882-6192

Texas Veterans Commission (TVC)

Dallas

(214) 857-0444

Bonham

(903) 583-6390

Fort Worth

(817) 730-0402

Security Notice

We realize in certain parts of the country, a pocket knife or one worn on the belt may be a functional item that one uses daily. However, due to the heightened security awareness, we ask that you NOT bring this item or any other item that would not be allowed if you were boarding an airplane. Please allow your family members to take those items home or just leave these things at home before coming to the hospital or clinics.

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