

FALL/WINTER 2018-2019

Visit us on the web: maryland.va.gov



MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Army Veteran Jackie Jeffries, 70, (left) with support of her daughter (right), meets with Dr. Eileen Potocki, a staff psychologist embedded in the Primary Care Clinic at the Baltimore VA Medical Center, where she can provide immediate access to mental health care when needed.

“When Jackie Jeffries, 70, came to her primary care appointment at the Baltimore VA Medical Center, her long-time provider—Katie Comen, NP—noticed that something just wasn’t right. Jeffries was struggling with memory issues that interfered with her ability to keep her appointments, and she didn’t seem herself.

“In truth, I was falling apart. I was depressed and anxious,” Jeffries said.

Comen suggested that Jeffries talk with another member of her treatment team and walked her down the hall to Dr. Eileen Potocki, one of the psychologists from the Mental Health Clinical Center now embedded in the Primary Care Clinic as part of a Primary Care-Mental Health Integration.

“I sat down and cried and told her everything—things I never shared with anyone else,” Jeffries said.

That hand-off from a primary care provider to a mental health provider proved to be the start of Jeffries’ transformation. Potocki recognized that Jeffries’ anxiety, depression and memory problems were interfering with her life, and referred her to a psychiatrist who was also embedded in the Primary Care Clinic. Test results pointed to multiple sclerosis as a major reason for Jeffries’ depression and anxiety, and she was struggling with

injuries from her military service that had never been addressed.

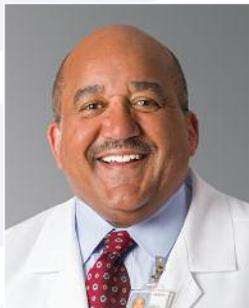
“I’m a different person now. The memory problems are gone, the anxiety and depression are gone, and I lost weight,” said Jeffries.

“We don’t always find hidden medical problems that contribute to a patient’s mental health issues, but usually medical and psychological conditions are related reciprocally,” Potocki said.

Jeffries’ transformation began due to easier access to mental health care and her openness to treatment. An increasing numbers of Veterans can now access both mental health and primary care during their initial clinic visits. In fact, evidence suggests that the two-way access to mental health and primary care helps achieve better outcomes for Veterans.

“People with chronic diseases such as diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or congestive heart failure tend to feel more psychological distress than do healthy people,” said Dr. Sarah Reading, the former director of the Mental Health Clinical Center at the VA Maryland Health Care System. “Poor physical health brings an increased risk of depression, as do the social and relationship problems that are very common among the

Ready to Serve: A Message from the Director



As a former Surgeon General of the U.S. Navy and now the director of the VA Maryland Health Care System, I'm proud to continue a 35-year military career by leading the charge to provide safe, quality and compassionate health care to Maryland's Veterans. With more than 3,000 employees standing with me, we're ready to provide the full spectrum of patient-and-family

centered care to our Veterans.

Many Veterans we serve learned about VA health care through a friend, family member or after a health care crisis. We are asking you to tell other Veterans about the advantages of applying for VA health care.

We have added convenient ways to access care, including a **text appointment reminder option, appointment scheduling app, and real-time scheduling for specialty appointments (see page 3)**. We also continue to connect with Veterans through the mail, social media enrollment fairs, and with face-to-face outreach events. Yet some Veterans are still unsure about the eligibility criteria for VA health care, or just don't consider themselves Veterans. That's where you come in!

In this newsletter, you'll find a section on **myths and facts about VA health care (see page 5)**. Use this article to start the conversation with a fellow Veteran and help them Choose VA for their health care needs.

Beyond providing outstanding health care services and new options for accessing care, we offer something else that no other non-VA health care system can: **a place where Veterans can embrace their journey to wellness with others who share similar experiences and the military culture that shaped them.**

On behalf of the employees and volunteers of the VA Maryland Health Care System, I want to thank you for your service and remind you that we stand ready to serve you to demonstrate our gratitude for a debt we can never otherwise repay.

Sincerely,



Adam M. Robinson, Jr., MD

Director, VA Maryland Health Care System
VADM, MC, USN (RET)
36th Surgeon General, USN

Continued from page 1

MENTAL HEALTH CARE



Aside from their regular primary care appointments, Veterans can access mental health care by walking into the Mental Health Care Clinics at any VA Maryland Health Care System outpatient clinic or calling the Telephone Care Line at **800-865-2441**. Veterans can also call the Veterans Crisis Line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at **800-273-8255 (Press 1)**.

chronically ill. It can work the other way as well. People with depression often have worse physical health and worse self-perceived health than those without depression," she said.

Mental illness itself poses a risk for poor physical health for a variety of reasons, including difficulty with self-care, increased tobacco and substance use, and barriers to medical care.

"It may take a patient with severe mental illness a little bit longer to process the management and self-care of a chronic disease like diabetes, but once they learn, the payoff is huge with significant benefits to their overall health and longevity," said Reading.

People with mental illness may avoid seeking help due to

concerns about social exclusion and stigma. "Having mental health providers embedded in the primary care clinics is a way to reduce stigma," said Reading. "Veterans receive care for a variety of issues in primary care, and mental health is one of the issues, just like the flu or any other condition. Having mental health clinicians embedded within primary care goes a long way toward increasing access and decreasing stigma to mental health care," said Reading.

For Jeffries, the easier access and the subsequent outcome couldn't be any better. "I live in Pennsylvania now, but I'm about to move to Baltimore to be closer to my VA. I won't go anywhere else."

Veterans Voices

The following are excerpts from the letters, e-mails and posts we've received from Veteran patients about their care throughout the VA Maryland Health Care System:

D. Stehlar – on wait times and provider interactions

“I waited less than 10 minutes. The doctor was not only interactive, but was well prepped for me before entering the room.”

S. Gilbert – on being treated by Dr. Kiana Trent

“Dr. Trent has an AMAZING and impeccable bedside manner. She smiled during the entirety of my visit. She showed complete empathy toward my pain and frustration. She has changed my mindset about the quality of care that is still attainable at the VA health care system in Baltimore.”

S. McBreen – thanks from the daughter of a Veteran

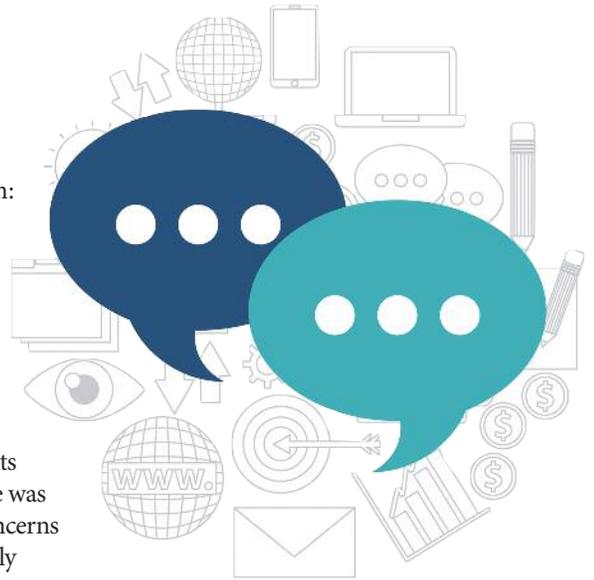
“My letter to you is all about the thanks and appreciation for the outstanding care my father received from the staff at the Perry

Point VA Medical Center, Unit 14A. Dad was a WWII vet who used the VA's outpatient care and pharmacy services until he was 92 years old when he needed more care. The staff of 14A always treated my father with the utmost respect and dignity. He was allowed to express his thoughts and opinions on his own care, plus he was given the opportunity to voice his concerns about the unit as a whole. It was vitally important to him to still be credible as an adult, and to be heard without diminishment.”

G. Brown – on supportive staff

“I would like to thank the staff at the Loch Raven VA Medical Center. They took awesome care of me when I was there for my rehabilitation for my hip replacement. They took their time and got me back walking again. They were there for me when my father

passed away while I was in rehabilitation. My son's mother passed away the very next day after my father. The staff at Loch Raven stepped up and carried me through those situations with support, counseling if I needed it, and with anyone that I felt I needed to talk to. My experiences with the VA these days are awesome.”



VA Care, When and How You Need It

The Department of Veterans Affairs continues to tap into technology to deliver convenient and accessible health care to Veterans.



The Veterans Health Administration has implemented VEText to remind Veterans of upcoming appointments via text messaging.

With VEText message appointment reminders, you don't have to worry about missing your appointments. Simply confirm the appointment once you receive the text on your cell phone. If you rather not receive the text reminders, opt-out of future messages after receiving the initial text message. This reminder service will be offered automatically. You can also cancel your appointment through the VEText message system.

No cell phone? No problem. VEText does not replace other methods of appointment notification. **It is another convenient benefit offered to our VA patients.**

Veterans will receive text messages for appointments 7 days prior to an appointment and a follow-up reminder 1 day prior.

When you schedule your next VA appointment, ensure we have your current cell phone number and other contact information on file.

Private health information and/or personally identifiable information **will not** be included in the text reminder.

Real-Time Scheduling for Specialty Care Appointments

Veterans can now save time and avoid playing phone tag with real-time scheduling for specialty care appointments. Most referrals for specialty care are generated during a primary care visit. In the past, primary care providers would place a consult for a specialty care appointment. Once the consult was received in that specialty care clinic, a staff member in the clinic would call the patient to schedule an appointment. With this new streamlined process, the primary care provider will place a consult as normal, and the PACT team will ensure the Veteran sees a primary care scheduler to check-out so that the appropriate follow-up appointments are scheduled on the spot! No more waiting for a phone call.

Online VA Appointment Scheduling Anytime, Anywhere Available Through My HealtheVet!

Schedule a VA appointment



myhealth.va.gov

Avoid the Flu!



Veterans enrolled in the VA Maryland Health Care System can get **free flu shots** at VA walk-in flu shot clinics. **No appointment necessary!** You can also receive the flu vaccination during your routine Primary Care or Specialty Care visits, or you can walk into the Primary Care Clinic, Mondays-Fridays, between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. at any VA Maryland Health Care System medical center or outpatient clinic throughout the flu season.

Veterans can also receive a flu shot at a local Walgreens with a VA ID card and another photo ID. You may be asked to complete a vaccine consent form at the time of service. Walgreens will automatically update your VA Electronic Health Record to indicate that you received your flu vaccination.

For medical advice or questions about the flu, call the Telephone Care Line 24 hours a day, seven days a week at **800-865-2441**. If you receive your flu shot at a non-VA health care facility other than Walgreens, please call a member of your primary care team.

My HealtheVet – It's Time for an Upgrade

My HealtheVet is VA's online personal health record, designed to help Veterans, active duty service members, their dependents and caregivers partner with your VA care team.

The VA Blue Button feature on My HealtheVet has added an upgrade to the Radiology Report making the actual pictures of the x-ray, MRI and other scans available for viewing and download.

Images and reports are available three calendar days after the report has been completed by the radiologist. The following radiology images are available through the VA Medical Images and Reports feature:

✓ Mammograms (screening and diagnostic)

- ✓ Radiographs (chest x-rays, abdominal x-rays, bone x-rays)
- ✓ Digital radiography (DR), Computed radiography (CR)
- ✓ Fluoroscopy (barium swallow, upper GI, barium enema)
- ✓ Ultrasounds
- ✓ CT scan images and nuclear medicine images (may include Magnetic Resonance (MR) in facilities with PET/MR)
- ✓ MRI, MR angiography, MR Venography
- ✓ Angiography radiographs and cine loops
- ✓ Interventional radiology as part of the procedure (may include radiographs, ultrasound, CT, or cine loop)



Update your My HealtheVet account to premium at any VA Medical Center or Outpatient Clinic.

For more information, call **410-605-7045** or **443-764-4021**. You can also visit the My HealtheVet booth located in the Enrollment Center on the first floor at the Baltimore VA Medical Center.



VA Health Care: Myth Busters

Some Veterans believe that they are not eligible for VA health care or should not use the services they've earned. Others are surprised to discover they can receive free or low-cost VA health care services. That's why the VA Maryland Health Care System encourages all Veterans to apply!

These are some of the more common myths, and they are all false! Check out the facts!

I didn't serve in wartime and I wasn't injured during my military service.

FACT: VA serves combat and non-combat Veterans, and you don't have to have been insured during your service to receive health care.

I already have my own health insurance.

FACT: You don't have to give up your health insurance when you apply for VA health care. VA and community providers frequently work together to care for Veterans. And VA health care can also provide an important safety net later in life.

I'm a woman, and the VA is for men. They won't "get" me.

FACT: Male or female, if you served, you are a Veteran. VA even has special programs and state-of-the-art technology designed to meet the unique needs of women Veterans.

I don't need VA health care. I'm healthy and I feel fine.

FACT: You don't have to be sick, injured or chronically ill to apply for VA health care. VA provides a full range of health care services that are important at any age. By **enrolling now**, you'll have access to VA health if you have an accident or develop a debilitating condition in the future.

There are other Veterans out there who need help more than I do. I should leave my spot open for them.

FACT: You can actually benefit your fellow Veterans by using VA health care. An increase in the number of Veterans served will result in increased funding for important VA programs and services that benefit all Veterans.

If you are already enrolled and receiving VA health care, share these myth busters with a fellow Veteran and help him or her apply! Applications can be found and submitted online at www.vets.gov/health-care/apply. Veterans can also apply in-person at any of our VA Maryland Health Care System facilities. If you need assistance, call 1-877-222-VETS (8387) and press 1.

New Eastern Baltimore County VA Outpatient Clinic

VA Health Care Returns to Eastern Baltimore County

Veterans in Eastern Baltimore County will soon be able to receive VA health care in their own community. The Eastern Baltimore VA Outpatient Clinic will replace the former Fort Howard VA Outpatient Clinic, which closed in March 2016 as a result of water damage. Located in the Franklin Square Professional Center at 5253 King Avenue in Rosedale, Maryland, the new 14,000 square foot facility will be significantly larger than the former Fort Howard clinic.

Veterans will enjoy the following amenities at the new clinic:

- Spacious exam rooms and comfortable patient waiting areas
- Easy access from major highways (I-95, I-695, U.S. Route 40, and Maryland Route 7)
- Access to public transportation
- A free shuttle service to and from the Baltimore VA Medical Center
- Plenty of free parking

The new Eastern Baltimore County VA Outpatient Clinic, which is scheduled to open in early 2019, will provide primary care, mental health care, women's health care, social work assistance, preventive health and education services, various medical screenings, and referrals to specialized care available throughout the VA Maryland Health Care System. The clinic will be open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Veterans who received their care at the Fort Howard VA Outpatient Clinic call the Appointment Center at (410) 605-7333 to transfer their care to the new clinic. Veterans who are not yet enrolled in the VA health care system can apply online at www.vets.gov/health-care/apply or call 1-877-222-VETS (8387) and press 1.

Applying for VA health care is easy, free and can be one of the most important steps a Veteran takes toward better health.

A Village to Call Home

HELP Veterans Village Now Open at Perry Point



The VA Maryland Health Care System's efforts to end Veteran homelessness have been greatly strengthened with the recent opening of the HELP Veterans Village at the Perry Point VA Medical Center.

This unique initiative has transformed vacant houses and space near the entrance of the Perry Point campus into a thriving community that offers permanent and affordable housing for at-risk and formerly homeless Veterans and their families. HELP USA, the nonprofit organization selected to develop and manage the community, has created a mix of 75 renovated and newly constructed apartments along the shores of the Susquehanna River. Backed by VA Supportive Housing (VASH) vouchers from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and VA, every apartment has subsidized rent that is in close proximity to a wide range of VA support services.

"This is a godsend because I've got a stable place where I can continue on with my life," said Rudolph "Rudy" Dahl, a retired U.S. Navy lieutenant who served from 1957-63 and recently moved into his new apartment in the HELP Veterans Village. "I had never used my VA benefits for anything before this, but I'm qualified for the medical service at Perry Point so I know I won't be a burden on my kids."

To learn more about resources available to homeless Veterans through the VA Maryland Health Care System, visit www.maryland.va.gov/services/homeless/index.asp.

If you are, or know of, a Veteran who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, call 877 4AID VET or 877 424 3838 for help.

Check out the Best Way to Check-in



Safe, quick and easy.

As part of a national effort to reduce the need to print sensitive patient information, patients now use the Check-in Kiosks to check-in for all clinic appointments (for appointments at the Baltimore VA Annex, check-in with staff at the desk). The Check-in Kiosks are located near outpatient clinics throughout the VA Maryland Health Care System. Once the patient checks in for an appointment, their provider will be notified electronically. **Patients will still need to see the staff at the desk to schedule follow-up appointments.**

Struggling with Weight Loss?

The VA Maryland Health Care System Can Help

Lawrence “Lunch” Epps, believed he was going to die from complications of obesity. Weighing more than 440 pounds, he couldn’t move around and spent most days in his van eating non-stop to combat loneliness and isolation. Complications of obesity killed his family members, and Epps resigned himself to the same fate.

Natacha Falu gained weight after being injured in the military. No matter how hard she tried to lose weight, she experienced micro losses and gains.

Neither Epps nor Falu are alone. Nearly 80 percent of Veterans are overweight, and another quarter struggle with diabetes, which is higher than the national average for all Americans. Statistics show that Americans are getting heavier, and dieters trying to lose weight on their own struggle to show any progress.

Epps and Falu have now shed substantial weight with help from the VA Maryland Health Care System. Epps shed a whopping 178 pounds and is on track for a knee replacement--impossible prior to his weight loss. Falu lost 42 pounds and now walks an hour daily. Both Veterans finished the VA MOVE! Program and went on to the Endocrine Weight Clinic, where clinicians focus on Veterans struggling with medical and other health issues that inhibit weight loss.

“Not everyone can lose weight easily even when they do everything right,” said Kristin Silva, a nurse practitioner in the Endocrine Weight Clinic. “A multitude of issues can inhibit weight loss.”

Unsuccessful in with weight loss? The Endocrine Clinic can help. Clinicians—including Dr. Juli Buchanan, a health psychologist/coach, Katherine Sellors, a registered dietitian, and Silva— identify barriers to weight loss and offer treatment plans that include medications. They assess patients who are candidates for bariatric surgery, and monitor those who’ve already had it. Bariatric surgery is the Sleeve Gastrectomy and is performed at the Washington DC VA Medical Center. In the Endocrine Clinic, however, Veterans discover they may no longer need the sleeve. “Obesity is determined by both genetic and environmental issues,” Silva said.

Looking at the whole picture determines what factors contribute to an unhealthy weight. “I did the TeleMOVE! Program, and lost and gained the same one or two pounds each time I stepped on the scale. It was frustrating to go up and down like that,” said Falu.

Although she didn’t achieve the weight loss success in MOVE!, Falu credits her participation in the class as the foundation for her success in the Endocrine Clinic. “In the MOVE! Program, I learned how to plan meals, incorporate portion controls, what to eat, and how to read nutrition labels. Setting goals like planning meals and increasing physical activity was like turning on a light switch and helped me feel better about myself,” she said.



Marine Veteran Lawrence “Lunch” Epps, 57, (center) shed 178 pounds after he sought help at the VA Maryland Health Care System’s Endocrine Weight Loss Clinic where Katherine Sellors a registered dietitian, (left), Dr. Kristin Silva, (right) a nurse practitioner, and Dr. Juli Buchanan, (far right) a health psychologist, set him on the path to weight loss success.

Epps realized he needed accountability and switched from TeleMOVE! to MOVE! “I had to step on that scale in class where others could see,” he said, knowing fellow Veterans would cheer his success and encourage him on when he gained. After completing MOVE!, he found he needed help for additional progress at the Endocrine Clinic where Silva, Sellors, and Buchanan provided an array of tools, including weight loss medications.

“I stopped eating a lot of foods I used to eat. I cut out dairy and don’t eat processed foods anymore,” said Epps.

In the Endocrine Clinic, Buchanan coaches Veterans with wellness goals and strategies. She helps them get back on track after a setback. “Mindful eating is a big one that we encourage. It’s easy to zone out while eating or making food choices without considering if we’re really hungry,” she said. Sellors educates Veterans about nutrition. “We start simple—such as eliminating all soft drinks from one’s diet,” she said. She explains multiple weight loss strategies, such as the plate method or tracking calories. “Typically, Veterans have some nutrition background from their time in the MOVE! Program,” she said. “My job is to build on what they already know and to help them understand that weight loss is a journey.” For Epps and Falu, proof of their success comes every time they look in the mirror. “I never thought my life could change the way it did or that I’d ever lose weight,” Epps said.

Veterans interested in weight loss should talk to their primary care provider or make an appointment with the MOVE! Program by calling 410-637-1245 to get started.

Reduce Your Pharmacy Waiting Time

To help reduce your pharmacy waiting times, please use one of the following **four** options to refill your prescriptions: **ask your provider at the time of your visit, by phone, by mail, or online.** New prescriptions, if needed on the day they are issued by your provider, can still be filled at the outpatient pharmacy window at the Baltimore or Perry Point VA Medical Centers.



REFILL BY PHONE

- Step 1** Call the Prescription Refill Line at **410-605-7395**.
 - Step 2** After hearing the greeting, enter your full nine-digit Social Security number followed by the “#” (pound) sign.
 - Step 3** Press option “2” for Pharmacy Information.
 - Step 4** Press option “1” to order prescription refills (press option “2” if you want to check on the status of your prescription refill).
 - Step 5** Enter your prescription number, followed by the “#” (pound) sign.
- If at any time you need to speak directly with a Pharmacy staff member, enter 8 followed by the “#” (pound) sign. *All refills ordered by phone will be mailed directly to the Veteran’s home address.*



REFILL BY MAIL

If a Veteran obtains an initial prescription from the VA Maryland Health Care System and is eligible for refills, he or she will be issued a refill request form and a return mailing label with their prescription. Simply fill out and sign the refill slip and use the label provided to mail the slip back to one of our two outpatient pharmacies:

Pharmacy Service
VA Medical Center
10 North Greene Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Pharmacy Service
P.O. Box 1015
VA Medical Center
Perry Point, MD 21902

Please **allow 14 days** for processing if you mail in your prescription request.



REFILL ONLINE

The VA’s My HealthVet system offers a secure online prescription refill service. The refill is sent directly to your home. To access the prescription refill service, users must register for My HealthVet at myhealth.va.gov.

NO REMAINING REFILLS

1. If your Primary Care team prescribed your medication:
 - a. Contact your team on the telephone number provided on your Clinic Check Out Sheet.
 - b. Use the Secure Messaging option on the My HealthVet online service to send a message to your primary care team.
2. If the medication was prescribed by a specialist, contact the specialty provider listed on the prescription label.
3. Call the Telephone Care Line for the VA Maryland Health Care System at **800-865-2441** and select the option for “Prescription Refills or Questions About Your Medications” using a touch tone phone.

NEW PRESCRIPTIONS

If you were seen by a non-VA physician and need a new prescription, please obtain documentation and/or records from that physician’s office and then contact your Primary Care Team Nurse.

PRESCRIPTION COPAYS

If you have any questions about prescription copays or charges, please contact a billing representative at **866-393-0006**.

MEDICATION SAFETY

Please note that each prescription is handled with individual care and concern. To maintain accuracy, the VA Pharmacy staff uses state-of-the-art technology and system safety checks.

BE PROACTIVE



DON'T RUN OUT!

To receive your medications on time, you must order your refills at least 14 days before your medicine runs out. *It's best to order your refills as soon as you receive your medication in the mail so that the next refill will be shipped to you before you are scheduled to run out.*

Be sure we have your current address. The next time you schedule, confirm or check-in for an appointment, confirm your mailing address.



THERE'S AN ACTIVE SHOOTER – DO YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO?

VA Police have been teaching employees throughout the VA Maryland Health Care System to be prepared in the event of an active shooter. Unfortunately, an active shooter situation can happen anywhere, so the health care system wants you to be prepared for your protection.

According to the Department of Homeland Security, an active shooter is someone who is attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area. In most cases, active shooters use firearms(s) and there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims. Active shooter situations are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Because active shooter situations are often over within 10 to 15 minutes before law enforcement arrives on the scene, individuals must be prepared both mentally and physically to deal with the situation.

HOW TO RESPOND WHEN AN ACTIVE SHOOTER IS IN YOUR VICINITY

Quickly determine the most reasonable way to protect your own life and remember to **evacuate, evade or engage**.

1. Evacuate: If there is an accessible escape path, attempt to **evacuate** the premises. Be sure to evacuate regardless of whether others agree to follow. Leave your belongings behind. Help others escape, if possible. Keep your hands visible and follow the instructions of any police officers. Do not attempt to move wounded people. Call 911 when you are safe.

2. Evade: If evacuation is not possible, find a place to **hide** where the active shooter is less likely to find you. Your hiding place should provide protection if shots are fired in your direction (i.e., an office with a closed and locked door). Blockade the door with heavy furniture.

Make sure to lock the door, silence your cell phone, turn off any source of noises, hide behind large items (i.e., cabinets, desks), and remain quiet. If evacuation and hiding are not possible, dial 911 (if you're able) to alert police to the active shooter's location. If you cannot speak, leave the line open and allow the dispatcher to listen.

3. Engage: **Take action against the active shooter as a last resort, and only when your life is in imminent danger.**

Attempt to disrupt and/or incapacitate the active shooter by acting as aggressively as possible against him/her, including throwing items, improvising weapons, and yelling.

When law enforcement arrives:

- Remain calm and follow officers' instructions.
- Keep your hands raised and visible at all times.
- Avoid quick movements toward officers.
- Avoid pointing, screaming or yelling.

Remember, the first officers on the scene will not help the injured on the way into the building. Their job is to find and stop the shooter. There will be rescue teams who follow to treat those who are injured.

Information to provide to law enforcement or the 911 operator:

- Location of victims and the active shooter
- Number of shooters, if more than one
- Physical description of shooter/s
- Number and type of weapons held by the shooter/s
- Number of potential victims at the location

INTRODUCING 5-DIGIT PHONE EXTENSIONS

Effective **November 5, 2018**,

the VA Maryland Health Care System will transition from 4-digit phone extensions to 5-digit extensions.

Here is what this will mean for you:

- 1** When calling the Baltimore and Loch Raven VA Medical Centers and the Baltimore VA Annex:
 - Dial 5 plus the old 4-digit extension after calling the main number
 - For example - 410-605-7000, 5 plus the old 4-digit extension
- 2** When calling the Perry Point VA Medical Center:
 - Dial 2 plus the old 4-digit extension after calling the main number
 - For example – 410-642-2411, 2 plus old 4-digit extension
- 3** Outside callers will still dial the 10-digit number to get the main numbers for Baltimore/Loch Raven and Perry Point:
 - Baltimore & Loch Raven – 410-605-7000
 - Perry Point - 410-642-2411
- 4** Outside callers will still dial the 10-digit number for direct dial lines (i.e. Appointments: 410-605-7333; Prescriptions: 410-605-7395).
- 5** Outside callers dialing our 800 numbers will need to use the 5-digit extension, even for direct dial lines:
 - Baltimore & Loch Raven – 800-463-6295, 5 plus old 4-digit extension
 - Perry Point – 800-949-1003, 2 plus old 4-digit extension



Processing a Beneficiary Travel Claim at Your Finger Tips

As of May 1, 2018, beneficiary travel claim for mileage reimbursement can be completed at a Check-in Kiosk. **Beneficiary travel claims will no longer be accepted at the Travel Office window. Please visit the window only to arrange for transportation or to obtain a paper travel claim form.**

Other ways to submit a travel claim:

1. Obtain a paper claim form at a VA Maryland Health Care System facility and place the completed form in a drop box or the mail.
2. Complete the form online and submit it electronically.
Download VA Form 10-3542 at www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vtp/beneficiary_travel.asp

Whichever method you choose, once it is received it will be processed and reimbursement will be made by electronic funds transfer.

Don't forget that applications for travel reimbursement must be submitted within 30 days of travel.

Check-in Kiosk Locations:

Baltimore VA Medical Center –
1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, and 6th floors

Perry Point VA Medical Center –
Buildings 361, 23 and 80)

All VA Maryland Health Care System
outpatient clinics

Drop Box Locations:

Baltimore VA Medical Center –
1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th floors

Perry Point VA Medical Center – Building 361

Mailing Address:

VA Maryland Health Care System
Beneficiary Travel Office
10 N. Greene Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Please call the **Travel Office** if you have questions: Baltimore **410 605 7318**;
Perry Point **410 642 2411, ext. 22478 or 26895.**

TAKING WHOLE HEALTH HOME

Are you Mindful?

Since the VA Maryland Health Care System officially adopted a whole health model of care, clinicians and Veterans alike have embraced it and are benefiting from the patient-centric approach toward better health and wellbeing. For some Veterans, like James Davis and John Logan, it's the first time troublesome issues stemming from decades ago are being addressed.

In addition to serving in Vietnam, followed by long careers in the Army Reserve, Davis and Logan had something else in common: anger, pain and post-traumatic stress. When the two met at a mindfulness meditation class at the Perry Point VA Medical Center last year, they became fast friends.

Davis' VA primary care provider had suggested the class as a way to help deal with his anger and manage his pain. He was skeptical, but decided he'd check it out. Now, Davis says, attending the weekly class is the best thing he ever did. "I used to be strife-driven, always ready to argue, ready to fight," he says. "These classes have opened my mind. I'm learning how to live."

"Mindfulness is a state of being where you can calmly acknowledge and accept your feelings, thoughts and bodily sensations while you focus on the present moment, without obsessing on the past or worrying about the future," explains class instructor Mary Lambert Gardner, PhD. "It's just one technique our Veterans are learning to help them achieve better health and wellness."



These days, Davis and Logan are "regulars" in multiple classes and they encourage their fellow Veterans to participate, reciting their own positive testimony. When describing how the VA and classes have helped him cope with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Logan says simply, "It's like waking up from a dream."

Practicing mindfulness is just one of many approaches to Whole Health.

To learn more about Whole Health at the VA Maryland Health Care System, call 410-642-2411, ext. 25248. If you are interested in classes that incorporate techniques like meditation, yoga, music, and martial arts, speak with your primary care provider or mental health provider for a referral.

UPDATES

Baltimore Lobby Project

If you have visited the Baltimore VA Medical Center lately, you've probably noticed a lot of construction and new glass barriers. This is part of new safety and security features that are being installed to protect our Veteran patients, employees, volunteers and visitors. As part of the project, the Information Desk has moved to the front corner of the lobby next to the entrance to the Emergency Department.

Loch Raven Name Change

The Veterans Health Administration has approved the designation of the Loch Raven VA campus as a medical center to reflect the comprehensive array of inpatient and outpatient services that are now available at the site. As of January 1, 2018, the Loch Raven VA Community Living & Rehabilitation Center and the Loch Raven VA Outpatient Clinic are now the Loch Raven VA Medical Center.

Veterans Museum Opening

The Perry Point Veterans Museum at the Grist Mill is now open at the Perry Point VA Medical Center every Thursday and the first and third Saturday of the month from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information about the museum, visit www.maryland.va.gov/veteransmuseum.asp. To schedule a group tour, call 410-642-2411, ext. 26071 or email perrypointveteransmuseum@va.gov.



VA



HealthWatch

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Maryland Health Care System

Public & Community Relations (135)
10 N. Greene Street
Baltimore, MD 21201

Published for the Veteran patients of the VA Maryland Health Care System. This newsletter is offered to provide reliable health information. It is not intended to take the place of medical advice, which should be obtained directly from your health care provider. If you have questions or comments about *HealthWatch*, please call 410-605-7098.



A Member of the VA Capitol Health Care Network

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ALEXANDRIA, VA
PERMIT NO. 1319

Important Phone Numbers

Please report a change of address to the Enrollment Center at 410-605-7324

Appointment Center
410-605-7333

Automated Appointment Line
410-605-7395 (Press Option 1)

Beneficiary Travel
Baltimore VA Medical Center:
410-605-7318

Perry Point VA Medical Center:
410-642-2411, ext. 26895

Billing Information
866-393-0006

Burial Information & Benefits
Baltimore National Cemetery
410-644-9696

State Veterans Cemeteries
410-923-6981

Care in the Community
410-642-2411, ext. 26924

Caregiver Support Program
410-605-7000, ext. 54143

Eligibility & Enrollment Center
410-605-7324

Long-Term Care Information Line
410-642-1121

Medical Records/Release of Information
Baltimore VA Medical Center
410-605-7348

Perry Point VA Medical Center
410-642-2411, ext. 26028

My HealthVet Coordinator
410-605-7045

Patient Concerns & Complaints
Baltimore VA Medical Center,
Baltimore VA Annex and Glen
Burnie VA Outpatient Clinic
410-605-7099

Perry Point VA Medical Center
and Cambridge & Pocomoke City
VA Outpatient Clinics
410-642-2411, ext. 25097

Loch Raven VA Medical Center and
Fort Meade VA Outpatient Clinic
410-605-7542

Patient Safety Hotline
410-642-2411, ext. 27233

Prescription Refill Line
410-605-7395 (Press Option 2)

Returning Veterans
(Transition Care Management)
410-605-7259

Telephone Care Line 800-865-2441

Toll-Free Numbers for VA Maryland Health Care System Facilities
Baltimore VA Medical Center
800-463-6295

Loch Raven VA Medical Center
800-463-6295

Perry Point VA Medical Center
800-949-1003

Cambridge VA Outpatient Clinic
877-864-9611

Fort Meade VA Outpatient Clinic
410-305-5300 (Not Toll-Free)

Glen Burnie VA Outpatient Clinic
410-590-4140 (Not Toll-Free)

Loch Raven VA Outpatient Clinic
800-463-6295, ext. 57650

Pocomoke City VA Outpatient Clinic
866-441-0287

VA Benefits
Veterans Benefits Information Line
800-827-1000

Maryland VA Service & Benefits
Program 800-446-4926, ext. 6450

Vet Centers
Annapolis Vet Center 410-605-7826
Baltimore Vet Center 410-764-9400
Dundalk Vet Center 410-282-6144
Elkton Vet Center 410-392-4485

Veterans Crisis Line
800-273-8255, Press 1

Women Veterans Services
420-605-7275

CLIP AND SAVE