

Veteran Updates

News and updates on Veterans issues from the San Francisco VA Health Care System • April 2016

San Francisco VA Medical Center Opens Same Day Walk-in Mental Health Clinic

VA is recognized as a pioneer in mental health research, high-quality, evidence-based treatment, and a provider of top-quality care. Over 1.3 million Veterans receive specialized mental health treatment from VA each year.

San Francisco VA Health Care System's (SFVAHCS) Mental Health Service provides state-of-the-art care to almost 13,000 patients annually here at our Medical Center and at our 6 VA community clinics located in Eureka, Ukiah, Santa Rosa, Clearlake, San Bruno, and downtown San Francisco.

As part of our ongoing efforts to increase access to mental health services, San Francisco VA Medical Center (SFVAMC) is excited to announce an expansion of our Mental Health services with the addition of a same day access clinic.

The new clinic is an important part of our continuing work to reduce any barriers to Veterans seeking non-emergency, outpatient mental health care.

Patients are seen in the new, walk-in clinic Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. – 6 p.m. It is located in Bldg. 203, Ground Floor, Room GA-28.

Once you have arrived at the Access Center front desk, let them know that you would like to be seen in the same day clinic.

The mental health same day clinic sees Veteran patients who:

- are having issues with stress, anger, depression, alcohol, or drugs, and are interested in talking with someone about it;
- are transferring their care from a different medical center and need a refill of a psychiatric medication;
- need to establish outpatient mental health care at SFVAMC and want to speak with someone about it; or
- are interested in learning about mental health resources provided at SFVAMC.

After 6:30 p.m. and on weekends, patients with urgent or emergency psychiatric concerns may be seen in the SFVAMC Emergency Department (Bldg. 200, Ground Floor, lobby entrance), which is open 24/7 for Veterans in crisis, (e.g., experiencing suicidal thoughts, acute intoxication/withdrawal, or acute psychosis).

“We look forward to offering Veterans an additional opportunity to be introduced and connected to outpatient mental health care at SFVAMC,” says Danielle Roselin, MD, Assistant Chief, Mental Health Service. “We welcome any questions, comments, or feedback on how you think this clinic can best carry out our mission.”

Please call the same-day clinic at (415) 221-4810, ext. 2-4824, with further questions.

For some adults, drinking small amounts of alcohol does not cause health problems. For many adults, one drink can lead to binge drinking and can put them at a higher risk for health problems, such as liver damage, cancer, psychological disorders, high blood pressure, and stroke. Excessive drinking can also lead to alcohol poisoning, violence, motor vehicle crashes, and death, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If you choose to drink, the recommended limit is one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men. One drink is one 12 oz. beer, one 5 oz. glass of wine, or 1.5 oz. of liquor.

Binge drinking involves drinking more than four drinks on one occasion if female or over age 65; five drinks if male and under 65.

People who should not drink alcohol include those recovering from alcohol dependence, children and teenagers, those who are planning to drive or operate machinery, those who cannot limit their drinking to the recommended levels, women who are pregnant or plan to become pregnant, and people who take medications that interact with alcohol.

By not drinking too much, you can reduce the risk of short- and long-term health risks. Remember, you can always talk with your VA health care team about resources VA has to help you.

Enroll for VA Health Care by Telephone

Enrolling for VA health care has never been easier!

The VA recently amended its enrollment regulations to allow Veterans to complete applications for enrollment in VA health care by telephone, without the need for a signed paper application.

Telephone enrollment is effective immediately for Combat Veterans, and will be effective July 5, 2016 for all Veterans.

To enroll, Veterans can call the Health Eligibility Center Enrollment and Eligibility Division, toll-free at **(855) 488-8440**.

By adding this telephone application option, VA will now offer three ways to enroll. The other two ways are to complete a VA Form 10-10EZ online at bit.ly/1UY6Rqz, or in person at any VA medical facility.

VA also offers an enhancement to their enrollment experience through "Welcome to VA." Veterans enrolled since July 1, 2015 have received a personal introduction to VA health care services, programs, and resources to help them become more familiar with VA's services. VA sends each new enrollee an introductory letter and a personalized handbook. VA also reaches out to all new enrollees by phone to provide assistance with health care inquiries, and to help set up their initial medical appointment at the Veteran's preferred VA health care facility.

New Call Center for Choice Issues

The VA has established a community care call center to resolve complaints by Veterans who have been called by debt collectors due to inappropriate or delayed Choice Program billing.

Veterans can call **(877) 881-7618** for assistance in resolving billing and debt collection issues, including any adverse credit reporting that happened because of the program. VA hotline staff will also help medical providers with delayed payments.

The new call center is the first step in addressing these issues. VA presented The Plan to Consolidate Community Care in October 2015 that outlines additional solutions to streamline processes and improve timely provider payment.

"As a result of the Veterans Choice Program, community providers have seen thousands of Veterans. We continue to work to make the program more Veteran-friendly," said Dr. David Shulkin, Under Secretary

for Health. "There should be no bureaucratic burden that stands in the way of Veterans getting care."

The VA is urging Veterans to continue working with their VA primary care team to obtain necessary health care services regardless of adverse credit reporting or debt collection activity. The Veterans Choice Program was established so Veterans who can't be seen within the VA system within 30 days, or who live 40 miles or more from a VA medical center or clinic, or who have certain travel hardships, can instead choose to be scheduled with non-VA doctors and specialists in their community, closer to their homes.

For more details about the Veterans Choice Program and the VA's progress, visit www.va.gov/opa/choiceact. Veterans seeking to use the Veterans Choice Program can call (866) 606-8198 to find out more about the program, confirm their eligibility and schedule an appointment.

Resources for Veterans

National VA Phone Numbers:

VA Benefits/Claims
(800) 827-1000

Education (GI Bill)
(888) 442-4551

Health Care Benefits
(877) 222-8387

Veterans Crisis Line
(800) 273-8255 (Press #1)

Women Veterans Call Center
(855) 829-6636

SFVAHCS Phone Numbers:

Billing Office
(866) 347-2353

Mental Health/Substance Abuse
(415) 750-6674

Pharmacy (Auto Refill)
(415) 750-2233

Patient Experience Specialist
(415) 750-6650

Telephone Linked Care
(800) 733-0502

