Serving with Purpose, Passion and Pride for

Value Excellence Team

Southern Arizona VA Health Care System

May 2023 SAVAHCS Director's Report

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Director

Hot Topics

- **The PACT Act created new windows of VA health care eligibility for Post-9/11 combat Veterans.** The first window of eligibility—a one-year special enrollment period that began on October 1, 2022—now only has six months remaining, visit www.va.gov/PACT to learn more
- **Beneficiary Travel Over 30 Day Filing Claim Rule will expire on June 9, 2023.** Starting Friday, June 9, 2023, the 30-day timely filing for Beneficiary Travel claims rule will resume for all travel claims as prescribed in 28 CFR Part 70, VHA Beneficiary Travel Under 38 U.S.C. 111. The congressional COVID Pandemic Emergency, which has allowed Beneficiary Travel to evaluate and pay travel claims for more than 30 days, **is set to expire on Friday, June 9, 2023**. Any travel claims filed 30 days after an appointment will be denied. **All Veterans have until Thursday, June 8, 2023**, to file any outstanding travel claims for appointments more than 30 days past the filing date since March 20, 2020. For more information, please reach out to SAVAHCS Beneficiary Travel Office at 520-629-4713
- **VA waives copayments for eligible Native American/Alaskan Native Veterans.** On April 3, the VA announced all eligible American Indian and Alaskan Native Veterans are no longer required to make copayments for health care and urgent care received through VA. Also, under the new policy VA will reimburse copayments made on/ or after January 5, 2022, for more information, visit https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=5870
- **The SAVAHCS continues to put the safety and health of our Veterans, their families, and staff first. To comply with the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) guidelines, face masks are currently required due to local community transmission levels.** We encourage all Veterans, their family members, and visitors to bring a face mask when you visit a VA health care facility. If you do not have a face mask, we can provide one for you. If you are hearing impaired and need to read lips, please let a VA staff member know, and we can accommodate
- The SAVAHCS has spent the better part of the past few months implementing provisions of the PACT Act. As of April 25, 2023, The SAVAHCS has completed over 27,265 Toxic Exposure Screenings and has followed up with over 12,495 Veterans
- **SAVAHCS Inspections & Surveys by Date:**
  - **Radiology (Women's Clinic)-** Department of Health & Human Services Food and Drug Administration - Mammography Quality Standards Act (MQSA) Inspection - Wednesday, April 12
  - **Mental Health Service-** Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) - April 19 - 21
  - **Quality Safety Value-** Joint Commission Survey - Monday, April 24 -28
  - **Supply Chain Management-** Quality Control Review - Tuesday, April 25 - 27
  - **Pathology and Laboratory Service-** American Association of Blood Banks - Thursday, April 27 - 28

Community Engagements & Partnerships

March Community Engagements and Partnerships

- The SAVAHCS received a donation from the Southern Arizona Wood Turners and Desert Woodcrafters of handmade pens that were crafted from Purpleheart wood and will be given to Purple Heart recipient Veterans - Wednesday, April 5
- Football Club (FC) Tucson Professional Soccer Club staff visited the Tucson VA Medical Center and donated t-shirts and hoodies for our Veteran patient programs - Wednesday, April 12
- The SAVAHCS held its first ever Yom HaShoah Holocaust Remembrance Day Ceremony in the Rose Garden Courtyard at the Tucson VA Medical Center. The ceremony featured WWII Holocaust survivor and U.S. Air Force Veteran, Andrew Schot, who shared his Holocaust survival story - Monday, April 17
- The SAVAHCS Fisher House received donations from the following community partners:
  - American Legion Post Riders from Post 39 (Tucson), Post 36 (Tucson), Post 39 (Gilbert), Post 109 (Corona De Tucson) donated $30,000 - Saturday, April 15
  - Charities Helping American Military Patriots (CHAMPS) donated $2,500 - Saturday, April 15
  - American Legion Auxiliary donated $600 worth of quilts - Saturday, April 15
  - Daughters of the American Revolution provided sandwiches for all the donors of the SAVAHCS Fisher House during a special event on - Saturday, April 15
  - The Old Pueblo Mustang Club donated $8,000 to the SAVAHCS Fisher House. Their generous donation will be used to support the ongoing daily needs of the Fisher House as well as to enhance the stay of guests - Monday, April 17
- The SAVAHCS, in partnership with Southern Arizona Adaptive Sports, held its first ever Adaptive Recreation Clinic at the Tucson VA Medical Center Sports Park. The clinic taught Veterans with physical challenges how to play adaptive tennis, basketball, and cycling - Tuesday, April 18
- The SAVAHCS Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE) recognized the dedicated SAVAHCS volunteers during National Volunteer Week, April 16-22. SAVAHCS Volunteers were treated to special treats and recognition to thank them for their service to our Veterans
- Arizona Be Connected Statewide Symposium- the SAVAHCS Director provided remarks during a round table discussion, and several SAVAHCS resources were on hand providing information on VA resources to attendees - Wednesday, April 19-20
- The SAVAHCS Director met with the Sierra Vista Mayor Clea McCaa to discuss Veteran opportunities and VA partnerships in the Sierra Vista community - Thursday, April 20
- 2023 Team Red, White and Blue Old Glory Relay Runners/Cyclist stopped by the Tucson VA Medical Center - Wednesday April 26

SAVAHCS Construction Updates

- **Exterior building painting completed for buildings 94 and 90:** This project includes a total of 10 buildings - 2, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 57, 90, and 94
- **Bed Tower #1 will be solicited for construction in the third quarter of FY23:** Radiology has resubmitted an MRI and CT lease package to Contracting
- **Upgrade controls and mixer boxes in buildings 38 (1st floor), 50 (2nd floor), and 57 (1st floor):** Work is taking place above the ceilings during nights and weekends
- **Expanding the Mental Health Clinic in building 90 (13,000 square feet):** Due to supply chain issues, the activation of first phase has been delayed to November 2023. The second phase, which will convert existing administrative space into clinical space, is scheduled to complete by April 2024
- **Mental Health building 90 renovation project will start in September 2023 to convert the Agave clinic into a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) compliant layout:** This project will also renovate the lobby and common hallway
- **Emergency Department Expansion:** The design has been completed. Construction funding has been tentatively approved for FY24
- We expect the renovation of our inpatient acute care unit, 2S, to be awarded at the end of May. We anticipate starting construction in August 2023
- Three FY23 Non-Recurring Maintenance (NRM) projects are in the process of being transferred to the Army Corps of Engineering – construct perimeter fence, renovate Community Living Center building 60 and repair the roofs of buildings 50, 60, 78, and 90

Recurring Each Month

- Sierra Vista United Veterans Council Meeting - First Saturday of each month
- Unified Arizona Veterans (UAV) Monthly Membership Meeting - First Saturday of each month
- City of Tucson Veterans Affairs Committee Meeting - Second Wednesday of each month
- Yuma Military Affairs Committee (MAC) Meeting - Last Wednesday of each month

Veteran Health Care Information

- **The PACT Act-** The PACT Act is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. The new law empowers VA to provide generations of Veterans and their survivors with the care and benefits they have earned. Key components of the PACT Act can be located at the following www.va.gov/PACT The PACT Act will bring these changes:
    - Expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and post-9/11 eras.
    - Adds 20+ more presumptive conditions for burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic exposures.
    - Adds more presumptive-exposure locations for Agent Orange and radiation.
    - Requires VA to provide a toxic exposure screening to every Veteran enrolled in VA health care.
    - Helps us improve research, staff education, and treatment related to toxic exposures.
    - If you're a Veteran or survivor, you can file claims now to apply for PACT Act-related benefits be either visiting https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/ or calling 1-800-698-2411 for more information.

- **COMPACT Act of 2020-** Starting January 17, 2023, Veterans in acute suicidal crisis will be able to go to any VA or non-VA health care facility for emergency health care at no cost – including inpatient or crisis residential care for up to 30 days and outpatient care for up to 90 days. Veterans do not need to be enrolled in the VA system to use this benefit, for more information click **HERE**.
- **The SERVICE Act** requires that VA ensures that any Veteran who was deployed during active-duty military service to an identified area where they may have had a toxic exposure, such as burn pits is eligible for a breast cancer risk assessment by a VHA healthcare provider and a clinically appropriate mammogram either within the VA or in the community.
    - March 2023- Veterans that are already enrolled in VA Health Care and assigned to a primary care may have a breast cancer risk assessment and clinically appropriate mammogram completed by their provider.
    - May 2023- SERVICE Act eligible Veterans who are not enrolled in VA or not utilizing primary care will also require a breast cancer assessment and clinically appropriate mammogram.
- **New Veterans Crisis Line New Number: Dial 988, then Press 1-** Veterans in crisis or those concerned about a Veteran can call to reach trained responders 24 hours a day, seven days a week to receive confidential crisis support.
    - Veterans can still call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online at Chat (veteranscrisisline.net) and text 838255 to reach trained crisis responders.
- **VA Mobile Check-In for Appointments-** Veterans can now check in to their appointments at the SAVAHCS with their smart phones by scanning a QR code on the mobile check-in poster in the clinic lobby or text "check-in" to 53079 and a link to complete the check-in process will be sent.
    - Veterans can learn more at How to check in with your smartphone for some VA appointments
    - If Veterans do not have a smart phone or need help checking in for an appointment, staff at the front desk will check in Veterans to their appointments and answer any questions.
- **The COVID-19 Spread Rate Within the SAVAHCS Catchment Area is High-** Masks are required and physical distancing is necessary at all the SAVAHCS facilities
    - Use the VA medical center locator to find the facility's current level and learn more about VHA Health Protection Levels.

- **Veterans can still use the latest technology to connect with their health care teams-** Please have Veterans who have questions on how to use the virtual technology options reach out to their primary care team.

- **Telephone or Video Appointments-** Veterans may receive care at home, either over the phone or via video using VA Video Connect on their computers, smartphones, or tablets. Visit mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect or call your primary care team to learn more.
- **Veterans can save time by using *MyHealtheVet*** for all their routine healthcare needs. Veterans can make medical appointments, contact providers, and request prescription refills. To learn more, contact the SAVAHCS MyHealth*e*Vet Coordinator at 520-792-1450, extension 1-6889.
- **Prescription Refills-** Veterans may request prescription refills, order, and have medications mailed to their homes using My HealtheVet or the Rx Refill mobile app. Download the app at va.gov/app/rx-refill, or call 1-800-470-8262 and press 1.
- **VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network (VISN 22) Nurse Advice Line at 1-877-252-4866-** Veterans can call 24/7 to connect with a registered nurse for any routine health care questions or concerns over the phone.

DID YOU KNOW?

- **Veterans can see how VA Hospitals rank on patient satisfaction in comparison to community hospitals through Medicare's Care Compare Website.** On the Care Compare website, you can search and compare VA and non-VA medical care facilities. To view the Care Compare website, click **HERE**.
- **Primary Care, Mental Health, and Specialty Care appointment wait times** by VHA facility can be found at the newly updated Access to Care website at https://www.accesstocare.va.gov/

SAVAHCS Local Contacts:

- Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS) Main Line 520-792-1450 or 1-800-470-8262
- Caregiver Support Program 520-792-1450 extension 5390
- Care in the Community 520-792-1450 extension 6555
- Compensation and Pension 520-629-4662
- Eligibility and Enrollment Section 520-792-1450 extension 6572 or 1740
- Homeless Program Coordinator 520-792-1540 extension 1839
- Medication Automated Refill Line (Toll Free) 1-800-470-8262, Press 1, then press 1 again to use the automated line to refill/renew a prescription
- Mental Health Clinic 520-629-4884
- My HealtheVet 520-792-1450 extension 6889
- Native American Program 520-792-1450 extension 6622
- Patient Advocate Office 520-629-4933
- Public Affairs 520-629-1819
- Release of Information Office 520-792-1450 extension 4665
- Suicide Prevention Coordinator 520-792-1450 extension 6415
- Post-9/11 M2VA Case Management for Veterans recently separated from military 520-269-1684
- Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE) (formerly Voluntary Services) 520-629-1822
- Women's Health Clinic 520-629-4885

VA National Contacts

- 1-800-MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411) for all VA related questions about care, benefits, and services
- General VA Billing Questions 1-866-400-1238
- National Caregiver support line 1-855-260-3274
- National Memorial Cemetery Phoenix 480-513-1412
- Phoenix Regional Office (VBA) 1-800-827-1000
- VA Billing and collections Consolidated Patient Account Center (CPAC) 866-802-6819
- VA Health Care 877-222-8387 (VETS)
- VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network Nurse Advice Line 1-877-252-4866