

St. Cloud VA

UPDATE

April 16, 2021



*A monthly newsletter for Veterans served by the St. Cloud VA Health Care System, and for those who serve them.
Send news items and comments to St. Cloud VA Health Care System, Attn: Public Affairs Officer, 4801 Veterans
Drive, St. Cloud, MN 56303, or via email to barry.venable@va.gov*

Vaccination Update

We've now reached a point where we need to transition the St. Cloud VA program into a longer-term effort.

Our mass vaccination effort has been successful. With the engagement and participation of our Veterans we have now provided over 25,000 vaccine doses and just over 66% of Veterans seen in the last year have received at least one dose. Within the various risk groups, at least one vaccine dose has been provided to:

- 85% of Veterans over age 85
- 79% of Veterans between 75-84
- 70% of Veterans aged 65-74.

Older Veterans understand the risks of COVID-19 and have gotten their vaccine.

We are now working to vaccinate as many of the under 65 age group as possible. To date approximately 50% of our Veterans aged 50-64, and about 29% of our Veterans below age 50 have received at least one dose of vaccine.

We highly encourage those Veterans 64 years of age and younger to think seriously about getting vaccinated.

- Being young and healthy does not protect you from COVID-19 infection, nor from spreading it to those whom you care about.
- If you've already had COVID-19, a vaccination can help ensure you don't get it again, as rates of reinfection among those who have been vaccinated are very low.

Vaccination is having an impact! Vaccination efforts have shown a measurable impact in reducing COVID-19 case rates in our Veteran population as compared to our communities.

Transitioning the Vaccination Model

We will continue to provide COVID-19 vaccinations for as long as they are needed, but decreased demand for vaccine and efficient operations means we need to transition our centralized, mass vaccination effort to a model that is sustainable into the future.

Over the next 2 weeks we will transition to closing the mass vaccination operation in the Auditorium for first doses and implement a model where Veterans will get their shots where they get their health care.

So, for the mass vaccination effort in the Auditorium, this is the last call. Call 320-252-1670 and select Option 8 to get scheduled.

Over the next two weeks we will begin offering vaccines to Veterans in concert with their PACT appointments or in their PACT locations, or, if you are only seen in Mental Health or the Surgical Specialty Clinic, in those areas. As we bridge into this new model, Veterans can continue to call 320-252-1670 and select Option 8 to get scheduled. We will continue to provide vaccines on a pre-scheduled basis to facilitate safe vaccine storage and handling. It's very important that those interested in the vaccine call to schedule a vaccine.

For those individuals seeking a vaccination under the SAVE LIVES Act, including all Veterans not enrolled for VA care, caregivers and spouses, and CHAMPVA beneficiaries, please continue to use the Keep Me Informed tool at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/>.

We'll then contact you about scheduling an appointment.

For individuals without computer access, please call 320-252-1670 and select Option 8 for assistance in filling out the Keep Me Informed tool.

We recommend that everyone discusses the risks and benefits of vaccines with your medical provider and encourage everyone who can get a vaccine to do so—it's important for your health and well-being, and for your family and the community.

White Ribbon VA Pledge

As part of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, VA Secretary Denis McDonough and senior leadership teams from across the Department, including the St. Cloud VA Quad and Military Sexual Trauma/Intimate Partner Violence Coordinator Joy Finkelson, took the White Ribbon VA pledge on Wednesday, April 14, 2021.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month and is an annual observance for advocates to raise awareness about sexual violence and educate communities about preventing sexual harassment and assault. It is an excellent opportunity for employees, Veterans, and VA partners to pledge personally, publicly, and collectively to never excuse, remain silent, or commit harassment and sexual violence against others. It is also an opportunity for the VA to underscore its zero-tolerance of gender-based harassment and sexual assault.

Everyone is invited to make the pledge today!

"I, (your name), pledge to never commit, excuse or stay silent about sexual harassment, sexual assault or domestic violence against others."

After the pledge, each person can record their commitment and receive a virtual white ribbon by clicking on the following link:

<https://www.whiteribbonusa.org/whiteribbon-va-pledge>

Veteran Copayment Cancellations and Refunds, March 2021

Q1. Why is my copayment balance being canceled?

A1. With the passage of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) in March 2021, all Veteran copayments for medical care and pharmacy services provided April 6, 2020 through September 30, 2021 will be canceled.

Q2. I've already paid on my balance over the last few months. Will I get a refund? When?

A2. Yes. You will receive a refund. Due to the passage of the ARP, Veterans who have paid copayments for medical care and pharmacy services provided April 6, 2020 to present will receive a refund from VA. Our staff is working on a timeline for issuing those refunds.

Q3. When will I start to receive statements again?

A3. As soon as VA cancels copayments for medical care and pharmacy services incurred from April 6, 2020 to present, VA will resume mailing patient statements for informational purposes only. Veterans are not required to make payments on these statements. Collection will remain suspended until October 1, 2021.

Q4. I had collection actions taken prior to when statements stopped in April 2020. Will those go away?

A4. All collection actions have been suspended from April 6, 2020 and will resume until October 1, 2021. You will be notified prior to collection actions resuming.

Q5. I had to balance on my account prior to April 6, 2020. What if I can't pay the balance due to financial matters?

A5. Payments are not due or expected until after October 1, 2021. Veterans who are experiencing financial hardship are encouraged to enroll in one of VA's debt relief programs. For more information, visit https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/revinue_ops/Financial_Hardship.asp

If you have a balance for care received prior to April 6, 2020, you may voluntarily make payments on your account by doing one of the following:

- Mail: Include the payment coupon for the patient statement.
- www.pay.gov (patient account number is needed)
- Telephone: 888-827-4817 (patient account number is needed)
- To locate an account number, check your statement, visit <https://eauth.va.gov/accessva/?cspSelectFor=vbs> or call 866-400-1238

Veteran Receives Medical Advice on the Go with VA Health Chat



“VA Health Chat increases access to care for many Veterans like me,” said U.S. Army Veteran Josef Mendez Lopez. “I was surprised at how efficient, convenient, and friendly the whole experience was.”

Through the VA Health Chat app, Veterans may chat online with VISN 23 Clinical Contact Center staff to ask nonurgent health questions, schedule appointments, refill prescriptions, and more. For Mendez, VA Health Chat is a convenient way to fit care into his busy schedule. He recommends it to all Veterans who are enrolled for care in VISN 23 seeking to receive high-quality care.

“The VA Health Chat app is my first choice for scheduling appointments or asking a question I forgot to bring up in my appointment,” Mendez said. “I know that I can receive care easily and effectively and then get on with my day.”



To download the app, [visit the VA Health Chat page](#) on the VA App Store.

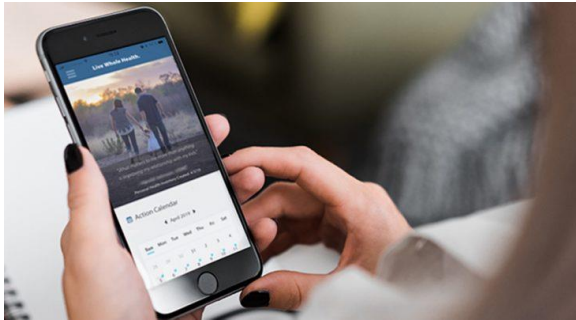
Learn how to use the Beneficiary Travel Self Service System (BTSSS)

Several new videos are available on the Veteran Portal You Tube.

Visit the playlist “Beneficiary Travel Self-Service System(BTSSS) at:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3AQ_JVoBEyzJnt68Eq_mPBdyZfkvg0Wu

VA's Whole Health App



Whole Health is VA's holistic health approach that puts your values, aspirations and well-being at the center of your health care.

Retired Marine Corp Veteran Theresa Larson says, "What I like the most is that it allows you to begin where you are. You set goals and take accountability. It helps you create your own goals. Whole Health is about taking ownership."

Larson is not only a VA patient and a user of the mobile app; she is a health and fitness enthusiast who began her own wellness journey shortly after leaving the Marine Corp in 2007.

Larson earned a Ph.D. in physical therapy and has been working with Veterans and the adaptive community for the last decade, providing physical therapy coaching through her own private practice. The Whole Health App is a tool that she highly values and uses in her own personal and professional life.

Set Whole Health goals in eight areas

The new app is a free, easy-to-use tool created for Veterans and others interested in taking charge of their health. The app

invites you to learn more about Whole Health and identify areas to set goals in eight areas such as relationships, mindfulness, food and drink or moving your body.

With customizable features and a user-friendly design, you can easily access your overall health and well-being goals whenever you want, wherever you want.

"Experiencing the app as a Veteran and a health professional allowed me to really evaluate the framework," Larson said. "It saves the data and you can go back to see how far you've come. All your information is stored and it's sort of like journaling."

With this tool you can develop a personalized plan, fill out your personal health inventory and get tools to achieve your health goals and learn more about whole health. The app guides and supports you on your journey.

App helps you live your best life

The Live Whole Health app resources are available 24/7 and provide access to videos and articles on topics including yoga, tai chi, meditation, mindful breathing and more. The next step in personal health planning is taking actionable steps.

"Life is not someday, it's now. If you're looking for a specific time to get better, you put life on hold," said Larson. "Why not start now?"

The app is available for download on both Android and Apple devices. Visit the VA App Store to download the [Live Whole Health](#) app today.

Coffee Talks

Coffee Talks are informal conversations intended to provide Veterans an opportunity to have their questions about VA health care answered.

Coffee Talks



Topics to be covered:

- *Enroll for health care*
- *VA health care benefits*
- *Using VA health services*
- *VA wellness programs*
- *Get started on your Whole Health journey*

Apr. 9, May 14, and June 11
2021

2—4 p.m.

St. Cloud VAMC

Bldg. 29, Rm. 20E

To attend in-person call the Health Hub at
320-252-1670 ext. 7271 to reserve a spot!

Limit 6 for in-person attendance,
reservations are required.

Not able to attend in person? A Call-in
phone line is available:

Call 1-800-767-1750, Code 11242#

Not enrolled?

- Learn how to apply for VA health care.
- Bring your DD214!



Virtual Baby Shower!

Virtual Baby Shower!

Celebrating babies born to or expected by
Veterans (moms, dads & adoptive parents)
in 2021.

*Join us online for an evening games and information as we increase
awareness of VA benefits for maternity care and support Veterans
and their pregnancies and babies.*

**Wednesday, May 19, 2021
5 to 6 p.m.**

To attend this event, use the following link or QR code:
<https://tinyurl.com/4z6umjhi>

For questions call: (320) 252-1670, Ext. 6655



VA health care enrollment provides valuable benefits to Veterans and their families. Non-enrolled Veterans, Veterans new to the VA health care system, and enrolled Veterans who want to learn how to most effectively use VA systems of care are encouraged to attend a Coffee Talk.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Voices for Veterans Radio Show

Wednesday, April 21 8-8:30 a.m.
WJON AM 1240

2nd Annual Virtual Veteran Caregiver Resource Fair

Thursday, April 29 12:30-4 p.m.
<https://tinyurl.com/CSPResourceFair2021>
Caregivers of Veterans, community partners, and the public are invited to attend a virtual resource fair!

Veterans Affairs Radio Show

Monday, May 3 8:10-8:30 a.m.
KNSI AM 1450/FM 103.3

Caregivers FIRST

Thursday, May 6 11:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m.
Caregivers FIRST is a training program for friend or family Caregivers of Veterans with physical or cognitive impairments. Please contact St. Cloud VA Caregiver Support 320-252-1670 Ext. 7283 to register.

Caregivers FIRST

Thursday, May 13 11:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m.
Caregivers FIRST is a training program for friend or family Caregivers of Veterans with physical or cognitive impairments. Please contact St. Cloud VA Caregiver Support 320-252-1670 Ext. 7283 to register.

Coffee Talks

Friday, May 14 2-4 p.m.
St. Cloud VA, Bldg. 29, Rm. 20E, or virtually
Coffee Talks are informal conversations intended to provide Veterans an opportunity to have their questions about VA health care answered. To attend, call the Health Hub at 320-252-1670 ext. 7271 to reserve a spot! Limit 6 for in-person attendance, reservations are required.

Voices for Veterans Radio Show

Wednesday, May 19 8-8:30 a.m.
WJON AM 1240

Caregivers FIRST

Thursday, May 20 11:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m.
Caregivers FIRST is a training program for friend or family Caregivers of Veterans with physical or cognitive impairments. Please contact St. Cloud VA Caregiver Support 320-252-1670 Ext. 7283 to register.

For a complete Calendar of Events, go to
<https://www.stcloud.va.gov/calendar.asp>

Quick Reference Phone List

Main St. Cloud VA HCS Phone Number	320-252-1670 or 800-247-1739
TDD User	320-255-6450
Max J. Beilke VA Clinic, Alexandria	320-759-2640
Brainerd VA Clinic	218-855-1115
Montevideo VA Clinic	320-269-2222
Veterans Crisis Line	800-273-8255 Press 1
Homeless Veteran Hotline	877- 424-3838

Billing:

• VA Care	866-347-2352
• Care in the Community (non-VA care)	877-881-7618
Caregiver Support Team	Ext. 7283
Chaplain Service	Ext. 6386
Community Care Referrals	Ext. 6401
Discrimination Complaints	Ext. 6304
Eligibility	Ext. 6340
Nutrition Clinic	Ext. 6376
Transition & Care Management Program	Ext. 6453
Patient Advocate	Ext. 6353
Pharmacy Refill Line	855-560-1724
Privacy Officer	Ext. 6408
Public Affairs Office	Ext. 6353
Release of Information (Medical Records)	Ext. 6336
Transportation	Ext. 7622
TRICARE	844-866-9378
Voluntary Service	Ext. 6365
VA Police	Ext. 6355

Stay in Touch

Visit our Website: www.stcloud.va.gov

Like us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/StCloudVAHCS

Visit us on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/stcloudvahcs/>

Sign up for our automated email service. Visit the St. Cloud VA Website at: <http://www.stcloud.va.gov> and on the right-hand side of the page is a request to sign up for email updates. Enter your email address and you are automatically signed up to receive email updates from our web page.