

St. Cloud VA

# UPDATE

August 20, 2020



*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](mailto:barry.venable@va.gov)*

## **Change of Seasons Ahead**

Over the last few months, from the spring and through the summer, we have taken many steps to keep our Veterans and staff safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you for all the support during these challenging times. School, in some form or fashion, will soon start and we'll move quickly through fall and into the season Minnesota is best known for---winter! As I've said before, this is a marathon and not a sprint, so we must continually prepare ourselves for the road ahead. With that view in mind, as we continue to gradually increase services, we've been planning some adjustments for the way forward and I want to provide an overview of these adjustments.

The week of Aug. 17 we started a process of transitioning external screening point responsibilities from VA staff to a contracted security firm. We've been using the contractors for evening and night shifts, but they will soon operate the external screening points 24 hours a day.

We are in the process of obtaining hardened shelters for the three external

screening points, which will include heat and electricity.

We are also working to undertake a series of construction projects to better facilitate operations during a pandemic. These include:

- Reducing the footprint of the Acute Respiratory Clinic in Bldg. 1A to just a few rooms and physically isolating this space and the HVAC system from other clinic space. This will allow us to return most of the clinic space to PACTs 4 and 5 while continuing to operate the ARC as a primary COVID-19 assessment and testing center.
- Erecting walls in the Dental Clinic and adding air exchanges and filtration systems to allow routine dental activities to resume.
- Identifying overflow waiting room spaces in the medical center so we can accommodate increased numbers of face-to-face visits while maintaining social distancing requirements.

- Adding security features to exterior doorways to ensure safe entry and exit pathways to support our operations.
- Additionally, Bldg. 92, currently used for level 2 screening, is slated for demolition in support of the construction project to build a patient parking garage. To meet the continuing need for level 2 screening space, we are working to establish a temporary trailer as a replacement for Bldg. 92. This trailer will contain four (4) exam rooms, staff and patient bathrooms, intake area, and a work room, and be in proximity to the patient parking lot on the west side of Building 1.

Finally, we are developing a drive-thru immunization clinic concept to potentially deliver COVID-19 vaccines when they are developed and available and will test this concept during the flu shot campaign this fall.

As a reminder, the cornerstones of staying safe during the pandemic, whether here, at home or in the community, include social distancing, universal masking, and good hand hygiene--please stay safe!

Thank you all again for the support and patience during these challenging times. I encourage everyone to stay engaged because the pandemic is far from over and we do not know what lies ahead.

Respectfully,  
Brent

**BRENT A. THELEN, PhD**  
Health Care System Director

## **Veterans Tele-Town Hall Meeting Planned in Montevideo**

The Veterans town hall meeting for Veterans served by the Montevideo VA Clinic, originally scheduled for Aug. 11, 2020, is rescheduled for Aug. 24, 2020 at 2:30 p.m., via telephone.

The tele-town hall meeting provides Veterans the chance to hear from and have concerns addressed by St. Cloud VA officials while observing social distancing guidelines.

Veterans enrolled for VA health care in the Montevideo VA Clinic area will receive an automated phone call at 2:30 p.m. inviting them to join the town hall. Callers desiring to ask a question via telephone will be placed in queue. If some questions can't be addressed during the event, VA staff will contact callers with questions following the event. Veterans who do not desire to participate can simply hang up the phone.

## **Caregiver Support Program Expansion**

Eligibility for the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) is expanding under the new, final regulation which goes into effect on October 1, 2020

PCAFC expansion will occur in two phases, once the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has certified to Congress that VA's new caregiver information technology system is fully implemented. The first phase will include eligible Veterans who incurred or aggravated a serious injury in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service on or before May 7, 1975. WWII, Korea and Vietnam Veterans will be able to

apply after the official launch date, which will be announced by VA in late August.

The final phase will occur two years following the first date of expansion and will expand PCAFC eligibility to include eligible Veterans from all eras regardless of when an eligible Veteran's serious injury was incurred or aggravated in the line of duty in the active military, naval, or air service.

## Caregiver Support Resource Fair, Summit and Training for Veterans and Caregivers

A virtual Caregiver Support Resource Fair is scheduled for Aug. 24, from 9 a.m. to noon and a Caregiver Support Summit and Training is scheduled on the same day from 1 to 4 p.m. Participants can join via phone, computer or most hand-held devices. The Veteran Caregiver Resource Fair includes the include the following topics:

- 9 a.m. Welcome and Caregiver Support Introductions
- 9:15 a.m. VA Local Recovery Coordinator
- 9:45 a.m. Veterans Justice Outreach
- 10:15 a.m. Intimate Partner Violence & Military Sexual Trauma Programs
- 10:45 a.m. Spinal Cord Injury & Disorder Clinic
- 11:00 a.m. Vision Impairment Services Team
- 11:15 a.m. Minnesota Senior Linkage Line

To register for the Resource Fair go to: <https://tinyurl.com/yyltstco> or contact Alicia at 320-255-6323 for assistance.

The Caregiver Support Summit and Training is intended to increase awareness about VA Caregiver Support services and provide education on critical caregiver issues. Training times and topics include:

- 1 p.m. Leadership welcome
- 1:15 p.m. Overview and updates for VA's Caregiver Support Program
- 2 to 4 p.m. Education Offering: Suicide Prevention for Caregivers

To register for the Summit & Training go to: <https://tinyurl.com/yx9gh18> or contact Alicia at 320-255-6323 for assistance.

## Virtual Intro to Whole Health

Monthly virtual classes allow you to learn about the Whole Health approach to healthcare, discover what matters to you and how you can be at the center of your own care.

Call 1-320-255-6339 to schedule.



Discover what matters to you!  
#Live Whole Health  
Virtual Intro to Whole Health  
Sept. 2, 2020  
Oct. 7, 2020  
Nov. 4, 2020  
2 to 4 p.m.  
Call 320-255-6339 to schedule

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
St. Cloud VA Health Care System

## **Urgent Care in Community Care Network Region 2 Transitions Sept. 1, 2020**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) [urgent care](#) benefit has upcoming third-party administrator and contract vehicle changes for [Community Care Network \(CCN\) Region 2](#), which serves Veterans enrolled at the St. Cloud VA HCS.

VA will transition its urgent care network TPA in CCN [Regions 2](#) on Sept. 1, 2020, from TriWest Healthcare Alliance (TriWest) to Optum Public Sector Solutions, Inc., (Optum), part of UnitedHealth Group, Inc.,

These changes will result in new urgent care providers being added to VA's contracted network while some that were available before Sept. 1 in the respective regions will be removed.

The change in TPA in Region 2 will also affect pharmacies. Veterans who require [urgent care prescriptions](#) of 14 days or less can find an authorized in-network provider at <https://www.va.gov/find-locations> or contact their local VA medical facility to identify a VA network pharmacy to avoid paying out-of-pocket costs. Opioids will be limited to prescriptions of seven days or less, consistent with the pharmacy location's state law.

To make accessing available locations as simple as possible, VA's online facility

locator (<https://www.va.gov/find-locations>) will be updated with this new information. Veterans can access it themselves or may contact VA staff for assistance locating an urgent care provider. To search for an available provider by city, state or zip code, go to the locator online, select the "Urgent Care" facility type, and then "Community Urgent Care Providers (in VA's network)" from the "Choose a service type" drop-down menu.

VA is also updating information about the urgent care benefit on the Office of Community Care's [Urgent Care website](#). The new content will go live on Sept. 1.

As part of the [VA MISSION Act](#), Veterans have the option for [urgent care treatment](#) of minor injuries and illnesses such as colds, sore throats and minor skin infections at in-network non-VA urgent care or retail clinics. Veterans can still receive same-day urgent care treatment at VA medical centers.

VA can only pay for urgent care services if the provider is part of VA's contracted network. If Veterans go to an out-of-network urgent care provider, they will be required to pay the full cost of care.

## Construction Update

Construction of the Outpatient Mental Health Clinic, the Optometry Clinic and the new courtyard for Rehabilitation is moving forward. Completion of each of these projects will increase space for the growing demand for services.



*The courtyard adjacent to Bldg. 116 is for Veterans participating in rehabilitation therapy and is close to completion. The courtyard includes a pathway with different surface textures, slanted surfaces and curbing that Veterans will navigate either walking or in wheelchairs with the assistance of therapy staff. The surfaces prepare patients for discharge on surfaces like those found in the community.*





*The Mental Health Outpatient Clinic (Bldg. 111) at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center now has the second floor bricked in and the attic is being framed. The additional second floor will create 26 additional counseling rooms and expanded group rooms. The Mental Health Outpatient Clinic is open during construction.*



*The new Optometry Clinic site at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center now has an exterior wall formed and poured and piers in place. The "infill" of the north side of Bldg. 29 will create an additional 3,800 square feet of state-of-the-art clinical space to accommodate the growing need for optometry services.*

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **Virtual Veteran Caregiver Resource Fair**

Monday, August 24 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

WebEx Virtual

Caregivers of Veterans, community partners, and the public are invited to attend a virtual resource fair! Stop in “virtually” any time during the fair to learn about how services work together to help support caregivers.

To register visit

<https://tinyurl.com/yyltstco>

Or contact Alicia at 320-255-6323 for assistance.

### **First Annual VA Caregiver Support Summit & Training**

Monday, August 24 1 -4 p.m.

WebEx Virtual

As the VA’s Caregiver Support Program prepares to expand under the VA MISSION Act of 2018, VA is hosting the first Annual Caregiver Summit to increase awareness about VA Caregiver Support services and provide education on critical caregiver issues. To register visit:

<https://tinyurl.com/yx9g9hl8>

Or contact Alicia at 320-255-6323 for assistance.

### **Veterans Tele-Town Hall**

Monday, August 24 2:30 -3:30 p.m.

Veterans enrolled for VA health care in the Montevideo VA Clinic area will receive an automated phone call at 2:30 p.m. inviting them to join the town hall. Callers desiring to ask a question via telephone will be placed in queue. If some questions can’t be addressed during the event, VA staff will contact callers with questions following the event. Veterans who do not desire to participate can simply hang up the phone.

### **Appointments by phone only: Veteran’s Law Clinic**

Tuesday, September 1 Noon -2 p.m.

Free legal consultation for Veterans by appointment only. This clinic is not for criminal issues. For more information or to schedule an appointment please contact Central Minnesota Legal Services at 320-257-4855 or 800-622-7773.

### **Virtual Intro to Whole Health Class**

Wednesday, September 2 2-4 p.m.

Learn about the Whole Health approach to healthcare, discover what matters to you and how you can be at the center of your own care.

Call: 1-320-255-6339 to schedule.

### **Federal Holiday**

Monday September 7

Outpatient clinics and administrative offices, including VA Clinics in Brainerd, Montevideo and Alexandria will be closed. Urgent Care at the St. Cloud VA will be open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

### **Appointments by phone only: Veteran’s Law Clinic**

Tuesday, September 15 Noon -2 p.m.

Free legal consultation for Veterans by appointment only. This clinic is not for criminal issues. For more information or to schedule an appointment please contact Central Minnesota Legal Services at 320-257-4855 or 800-622-7773.

### **Voices for Veterans Radio Show**

Wednesday, September 16 8:10-830 a.m.

WJON AM 1240

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



# Quick Reference Phone List

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

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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.