



February 2023 SAVAHCs Director's Report

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Community Engagement & Partnerships

Reoccurring 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- Third Wednesday of each month

Resource Fairs and Outreach Events

- Quarterly Southern Arizona Military Leadership/SAVAHCS Executive Leadership Meeting at the Tucson VA Medical Center- Wednesday, January 11
- Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Claims Representative provides claims assistance to Veterans in Quarters 13 at the Tucson VA Medical Center- Tuesday, January 17
- 33rd Annual Diversity Career Fair at Desert Diamond Casino- January 18
- 2023 Arizona Statewide DAV Midterm Conference- Saturday, January 21
- Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 549 donation to the Patriot Pantry- Monday, January 23
- Yuma Veteran Resource Fair and Town Hall at American Legion Post 19- Wednesday, January 25
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection Family Day at the Pima County Fairgrounds - Saturday, January 28
- Point in Time (PIT) Count Pima and Yuma County- SAVAHCs director participated in Yuma & SAVAHCs staff participated in Pima County, January 25-26





- **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](#).
- **PACT ACT Claims Processing began on January 1, 2023**
- **On January 4, 2023, one million Veterans screened nationally for Toxic Exposures as part of the PACT Act-** As of January 28, 2023, the SAVAHCS has screened 14,108 Veterans for toxic exposures.

SAVAHCS Construction Updates

- **Exterior building painting completed for buildings 94 and 90. Building 57 will be next.** 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 second quarter of FY23.** Radiology has resubmitted 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 will take place above the ceilings during nights and weekends. This project is on hold. The contractor is waiting for construction materials to arrive.
- **Expanding the Mental Health Clinic in building 90 (13,000 square feet):** Activation of first phase will begin on May 6, 2023. The second phase, which will convert existing administrative space into clinical space, is scheduled to complete by November 2023.
- **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. We will submit for FY24 construction funding approval.
- We expect the renovation of our inpatient acute care unit, 2S, to be awarded the end of March. We anticipate starting construction in May 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 CLC Building 60 and Repair Roofs Building 50, 60, 78, and 90.

Top VHA News Stories January 2023

- **Military Times:** [VA helped house more than 40K Vets last year](#), January 26, 2023
 “There are thousands of formerly homeless Veterans who are going to sleep tonight in good, safe, stable homes — and there’s nothing more important than that,” said SECVA McDonough. “This is great progress, but it’s just the beginning. We at VA will not rest until the phrase ‘homeless Veteran’ is a thing of the past.”
- **Military Times:** [Enrollments in VA care spiked after PACT Act passage](#), January 26, 2023
 “We need to hire more providers, more clinicians and schedulers, folks from top to bottom in this organization,” said VA Undersecretary Dr. Shereef Elnahal. “And as we do that, we’re making sure we’re holding ourselves to efficiency and productivity standards that our Veterans deserve.”
- **The Wall Street Journal:** [VA Waives Copays for Native Veterans](#), January 11, 2023
 “It’s no mystery to a lot of people that healthcare is sometimes hard to come by in many Native American communities,” said VA Director of Tribal Health Travis Trueblood. “This rule makes healthcare more accessible and allows us to better deliver to these Veterans the care and health benefits that they have earned.”
- **Military Times:** [Calls to Veterans suicide hotline spiked over holiday](#), January 6, 2023
 “We want all Veterans to know that caring, qualified responders are always here for them and ready to help — even in times of particularly high stress and high demand like the holiday season,” said SECVA McDonough. “You can reach the Veterans Crisis Line at any time by calling 988, then press 1. Don’t wait, reach out.”
- **Military Times:** [40% of Vets worry about military toxic exposure injuries](#), January 4, 2023
 “These screenings are paramount to improving the health outcomes for Veterans and providing them with the health care and benefits they’ve earned as quickly as possible,” VA Undersecretary Elnahal. “Our health care teams reached an incredible breakthrough in a short length of time ... This is among the first steps we have taken for Veterans who have been exposed to toxins during their service.”

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 link <https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/>.
- **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.
- **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](tel:1-800-273-8255) and Press 1, chat online at [Chat \(veteranscrisisline.net\)](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net) and text 838255 to reach trained crisis responders.
- **VA Mobile Check-In for Appointments-** Veterans can now check in for 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, screenings are conducted at all entrances, 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 [MyHealthVet](#)** for all their routine healthcare needs. Veterans can make medical appointments, contact providers, and request prescription refills. To learn more, contact the SAVAHCS MyHealthVet 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 HealthVet 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 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 Desert Pacific Healthcare Network Nurse Advice Line 1-877-252-4866
- VA Health Care 877-222-8387 (VETS)

