

LOCAL UPDATE

SAVAHCS/VA Updates

- **New Veterans Crisis Line New Number: Dial 988, then Press 1-** Even though the number has changed, the Veterans Crisis Line's dedicated service remains the same. 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. The new, shorter number will help ease of access and clarity for both Veterans and non-Veterans alike.
 - Veterans can still call [1-800-273-8255](tel:1-800-273-8255) and [Press 1](#), chat online at [Chat \(veteranscrisisline.net\)](https://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](#) weblink.
 - 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.
- **Access to Care Website Update-** The VA Access to Care website at <https://www.accesstocare.va.gov/> was updated July 18 to help Veterans and their families make informed decisions about their health care. The site has updated wait time calculations, Veteran experience information, increased details on timeliness of care within healthcare subspecialties, and the ability to easily view relevant medical center information.
- **Get Reimbursed for Travel Through MyhealthVet-** Eligible Veterans can be reimbursed for travel costs related to VA health care services through the Beneficiary Travel program. The eligibility requirements can be found at [the VA travel pay reimbursement](#) webpage.
 - Eligible Veterans can now use [MyhealthVet](#) credentials to apply for travel pay reimbursements. The step-by-step instructions can be found at the [Travel Pay: How to Apply](#) website. The site will guide you on how to apply for a travel claim related to VA health care services.
- **VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network (VISN 22) Clinical Contact Center-** On July 15 the VISN 22 Clinical Contact Center launched 24/7 scheduling services at all VISN 22 facilities for Veterans. No matter when you call, you will reach VA staff either from your local facility (during regular operating hours) or our VISN 22 Clinical Contact Center (during nights and weekends) to assist you. The phone number for the SAVAHCS has not changed.
 - The following services will be offered for the 24/7 Clinical Contact Center:
 - VA prescription refills and tracking
 - Scheduling return to clinic orders for Primary Care appointments
 - Common medical questions and concerns
- **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 its current level and learn more about [VHA Health Protection Levels](#).

- **The Tucson VA Medical Center Emergency Department (ED) Recently Received a Level 3 Accreditation from the American College of Emergency Physicians for Geriatric Emergency Care-** Only 34 VAs across the U.S. have this accreditation. For more information about the Geriatric Emergency Department Accreditation Program visit the [Geriatric Emergency Department Accreditation Program](#) website.
- **41st National Wheelchair Games in Tempe, Arizona Took Place on July 7-12, 2022-** The SAVAHCS had several athletes participate in the games, and we also had several staff volunteer their time to help and provide support to Veteran athletes. The games featured over 300 Veterans from 39 states, Puerto Rico, and Great Britain took part in the games. There were over 22 events including adaptive fitness, air pistol, archery, basketball, boccia, rugby, power soccer, softball and more. The games focus on a competitive sports experience for Veterans who use wheelchairs because of spinal cord injury, amputations, MS, and other neurological conditions.
- **SAVAHCS is Seeking Dedicated Volunteer Drivers from Yuma, Casa Grande, and Tucson to Transport Veterans to VA Medical Appointments at the Tucson VA Medical Center-**
 - We are looking for volunteers who have flexible schedules, safe driving records, and can commit to volunteering for a minimum of one year.
 - The SAVAHCS will provide all required training, as well as the vehicles used for transportation. Volunteer drivers are required to have a valid state issued driver's license, proof of personal auto insurance, COVID-19 vaccinations, and pass a physical provided by the Tucson VA Medical Center. All volunteer drivers working a minimum of four hours, or more are eligible for a free meal at the Tucson VA Medical Center.
 - For more information on becoming a volunteer driver, please contact the SAVAHCS Center for Development and Civic Engagement/Voluntary Service at (520) 629-1822.
- **Traveling Veterans Services- Did you know?** Nationally, every VA facility has at least one Traveling Veteran Coordinator (TVC) that can coordinate routine care between VA's while a Veteran is temporarily traveling to another VA catchment area. Traveling Veteran Coordinator roles include the following:
 - Communicate completion of care back to preferred (home) VA facility.
 - Contact referred Veterans to discuss needs/travel/contact information.
 - Educate Veterans regarding pre/during/post travel responsibilities.
 - Facilitate the entry of orders or referrals for the provision of care at alternate (away) VA sites.
 - For more information about Traveling Veteran Services, call (520)-792-1450, extension 1-6621 or 1-1248.
- **We are Hiring-** The SAVAHCS is hiring! We provide Veterans with health care services at 10 locations in Southern Arizona. Facilities include our Tucson VA Medical Center and VA Community Clinics in Casa Grande, Green Valley, Safford, Sierra Vista, Tucson, and Yuma. We are currently hiring for a variety of health care and administrative positions such as physicians, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, supply technicians, social workers, diagnostic radiologic technicians, medical support assistants, housekeeping aids, registered respiratory therapists, food service workers, and more! For more information on current employment opportunities within the SAVAHCS, please visit [USAJOBS](#).
- **The SAVAHCS Outreach Team is Supporting Face-to-Face Outreach Events-** The trigger point for the SAVAHCS to pull back on participation in face-to-face outreach events will be a greater than 8% COVID-19 positivity rate as indicated in the online CDC COVID Data Tracker at <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/>. Please contact the SAVAHCS Public Affairs Office at 520-629-1819 if you have any questions on the SAVAHCS participation in outreach events.

- **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 newly updated Access to Care website at <https://www.accesstocare.va.gov/>.

SAVAHCS COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Completed July Events, Resource Fairs & Town Halls

- SAVAHCS Homeless Summit (virtual) - Thursday, July, 28
- SAVAHCS Women Veteran Tele-Town Hall (virtual) - Thursday, July 28

August Events, Resource Fairs & Town Halls

- Sierra Vista Veterans Council (in-person) - Saturday, August 6
- Cochise Veterans Serving Veterans Stand Down (in-person)- Thursday, August 19

SAVAHCS RESEARCH PROGRAM

- SAVAHCS has a small and growing research program with 46 active projects.
- SAVAHCS is proud to be a high enrollment site for the VA Million Veteran Program (MVP) and to participate in three other VA Cooperative Studies Program (CSP) studies.
- SAVAHCS was selected to participate in and will soon launch two other VA CSP studies.
- SAVAHCS serves as a biorepository site for three VA biorepositories. These biorepositories are specialized secure facilities designed to store various types of patient samples in a form that is biologically stable so that these samples can be a resource for current and future research to help understand current and future ailments that impact Veterans. Through established protocols, the SAVAHCS staff distributes samples from these biorepositories for research to help Veterans.

- Gulf War Veteran's Illnesses Biorepository: A resource that can be used to help understand causes of Gulf War Illnesses
- VA Biorepository Brain Bank: A resource for understanding amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease
- VA Science and Health Initiative to Combat Infectious and Life-Threatening Diseases (VA SHIELD): A resource of specimens to advance scientific understanding in support of developing diagnostic, therapeutic, and preventative strategies for COVID-19, and other emerging diseases
- VA SHIELD Sweep project collects discarded samples from COVID-19 positive Veterans (and negative controls). A prospective portion of the project will follow the Veterans prospectively to contribute to knowledge on post-COVID syndromes.
- In addition to research protocols supported by VA funds, other protocols are supported by funds administered by our VA-affiliated non-profit corporation, including several aiming to find treatments for COVID-19.
- We are proud to be a site for a National Institutes of Health-funded clinical trial that will investigate the important question of whether Atorvastatin, an established medication that reduces heart disease outcomes in younger individuals, will reduce heart disease, dementia, and persistent disability in community dwelling older individuals without heart disease or dementia at study entry.
- Our facility has three investigators funded by VA Merit Reviews, one by a VA Career Development Award (CDA) and is proud to have one Research Career Scientist.
- We are collaborating with the University of Arizona (UA), our academic affiliate, on a VA-funded pilot project to involve UA medical students in VA research and have other collaborations with UA under development.

CONSTRUCTION UPDATES

- Bed Tower #1 will be solicited for construction in the second quarter of FY23. Expect the construction start in May of 2023. The MRI and CT in T-38 will need to be removed before the construction start.
- August 2022 Construction Start: Upgrade controls and mixer boxes in buildings 38, 50 & 57. Work will take place above the ceilings during nights and weekends.
- Expanding the Mental Health Clinic in building 90 (13,000 square feet): Activation of first phase is delayed to February 30, 2023.
 - Remodel Agave Clinic into a PACT model – will start construction after the expansion area is complete.
 - The activation of the interior remodeled spaces will be July 28, 2023
 - Remodel entry into MH Clinic and create a common waiting area will begin September 2023.
- Emergency Department in building 50 expansion and remodel is completing the design phase and will be completed in October 2022. We are not funded in FY23 for construction.
 - Adding a CT and X-Ray suite
- Tucson VA has been funded in FY23 for 4 designs and 4 construction projects.

LOCAL CONTACT INFORMATION

- 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
- Voluntary Services 520-629-1822
- Women's Health Clinic 520-629-4885

VA NATIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

- 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)



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