

## LOCAL UPDATE

### SAVAHCS/VA Updates

- **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 include:
  - Expands VA health care eligibility for toxic-exposed Veterans and extends enhanced eligibility for Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 combat Veterans
  - Adds more than 20 burn pit and toxic-exposure-related conditions to VA's service presumption list
  - Improves VA's decision-making process for determining what medical conditions will be considered for presumptive status
  - Every enrolled Veteran will receive an initial toxic exposure screening and a follow-up screening at least every 5 years. Veterans who are not enrolled, but who meet eligibility requirements, will have an opportunity to enroll and receive the screening
  - VA health care and benefits personnel will receive toxic exposure-related education and training
  - Requires research studies on mortality of Veterans who served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War, Post-9/11 Veteran health trends, and Veteran cancer rates
  - Helps VA build a stronger, more skilled workforce to meet the growing demand for benefits and services
  - Authorizes 31 new medical facilities across the country, providing greater access to VA health care
  - For additional information on the PACT Act, visit <https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/>
- **The SAVAHCS Patriot Pantry is seeking donations-** The Patriot Pantry, which is run by SAVAHCS Nutrition and Food Services, provides SAVAHCS Veteran patients that are identified with food insecurity an emergency food supply and connects them with community resources. The Patriot Pantry is looking for donations and volunteers. If your organization is interested in donating or volunteering, please contact the SAVAHCS Center for Development and Civic Engagement Office at 520-629-1822. The Patriot Pantry needs the following items below:
  - Low-sodium canned vegetables
  - Sugar free canned fruit
  - Canned meat
  - Pasta sauce
  - Noodles
  - Canned fish
  - Peanut butter
  - Dried fruit
  - Single serving cereal
  - \$15 to \$20 grocery gift cards

- **The Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS) will be hosting a job fair at the Tucson VA Medical Center on Saturday, September 17 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.** To learn more about some of the employment opportunities at the SAVAHCS, please visit <https://www.usajobs.gov/> and search Tucson VA Medical Center. We are currently hiring for a variety of health care clinical and administrative positions.
- **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.
  - 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](#) 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](#).

- **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.
- **The SAVAHCS Outreach Team is Supporting Face-to-Face Outreach Events in the Community-** Please contact the SAVAHCS Public Affairs Office at 520-629-1819 if you have any questions on the SAVAHCS participation in community 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](https://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](https://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 August Events, Resource Fairs & Town Halls*

- Sierra Vista Veterans Council (in-person) - Saturday, August 6
- SAVAHCS Quarterly Virtual Veteran Resource Fair- Thursday, August 18
- Cochise Veterans Serving Veterans Stand Down (in-person)- Friday, August 19

## **September Events, Resource Fairs & Town Halls**

- Sierra Vista Veterans Council (in-person) - Saturday, September 3
- UAV Membership Meeting (Virtual)- Saturday, September 3
- SAVAHCS Quarterly VSO, Congressional, Community Partner Update- Wednesday, September 7
- Be Connected Quarterly Meeting (Virtual)- Friday, September 9
- City of Tucson Veterans Affairs Committee Meeting- Wednesday, September 14
- Davis Monthan AFB POW MIA Ceremony- (Pima Air & Space Museum) Friday, September 16
- Be Connected Mental Health Summit (Virtual)- Wednesday, September 21
- Safford Veterans Resource Fair (In-person)- Friday, September 30

## **CONSTRUCTION UPDATES**

- Bed Tower #1 will be solicited for construction in the second quarter of FY23. The temporary MRI and CT SOW is being resubmitted to Contracting. The current MRI and CT located in T-38 will need to be removed before the construction start.
- November 2022 Construction Start: Upgrade controls and mixer boxes in buildings 38 (1<sup>st</sup> floor), 50 (2<sup>nd</sup> floor), & 57 (1<sup>st</sup> floor). 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. Once this CT is installed in the new ED (2025), the temporary CT from the Bed Tower build can be returned.
- 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 HealthVet (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 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)