



VA HEALTH CARE Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

Veteran Connection

VA Portland Health Care System Newsletter

Keeping the Promise - Advancing Excellence



VA Portland Health Care System

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Produced by the VAPORHCS Public Affairs Office

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS ??
Please email us at...
VHAPOR-PublicAffairs@med.va.gov
or call 503-402-2975

Lincoln's Promise (VA Mission Statement)

"To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans.

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For [VAPORHCS Events and Classes](#)—got to the VAPORHCS Web page...
www.portland.va.gov/calendar.asp

Message from the Director



Joanne M. Krumberger
Director, VA Portland Health Care System

As many of you may be aware, the [VA Budget and Choice Improvement Act](#) was passed and signed into law on July 31st. This legislation provides the VA the flexibility we need related to the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Choice Act) to help Veterans get the care they need and deserve when and where they want it.

The Department of Veterans Affairs, to include VA Portland Health Care System, has made significant progress in its implementation of the Choice Act. The VA has since leveraged this law to further efforts to enhance its health care system and improve service delivery to better serve Veterans.

Here are a few facts I'd like to share with you that help tell this story;

Across the VA, Veterans have completed 2.7 million more appointments inside the VA than in the previous twelve months.

- * This year - VAPORHCS outpatient visits are up by 30,740 visits or 4.6% over 2014.
- * VAPORHCS is one of the fastest growing VA facilities in the VA at more than 5% per year.
- * Surgical operating room cases are up by 500 cases or 9.1% over last year.
- * At VAPORHCS during 2015, 94% of total appointments are completed within 30 days; 87% are within 14 days; 80% within 0-7 days.
- * The VAPORHCS average wait time for completed appointments: Primary Care is 8.5 days; Specialty Care 8.4 days; Mental Health 1.3 days.

With regard to the [Choice Program](#) specifically, 10,945 Veterans served by VAPORHCS have personally been called by our staff to remind

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them of their option to use the Choice Program.

- * VAPORHCS has the highest number of unique Veterans of all VA medical centers in the nation utilizing the Choice Program.
- * We have 1,856 unique Veterans so far that have utilized Choice Program with...
- * 4,504 Choice Program appointments.

There are more details on the next page about some specific changes to Veteran eligibility to participate in the Choice Program. These changes to the law will allow expanded Veteran participation and flexibility to further allow us to improve access to care and options for the Veterans we serve.

On August 12, Senator Ron Wyden participated in panel at a VAPORHCS Mental Health Summit where he shared information related to the Choice Act from a congressional perspective. His valuable insight was incredibly helpful for our staff and partners who attended the event. We greatly appreciate his support and that of our partner organizations who attended.

We will continue to keep you informed of our progress in improving access and timeliness of the care VAPORHCS provides to our Veterans.

Thank you for your service to our county and it is an honor for us to care for you.

In Service to Veterans,
Joanne M. Krumberger



On August 12 Senator Ron Wyden shared information from a congressional perspective on the Choice Act during a VAPORHCS Mental Health Summit at Camp Withycombe, Oregon. The event brought together partner organizations to share information and collaborate on efforts to support Veterans.

Veterans Choice Program

Access health care closer to home



Update...

VA Budget and Choice Improvement Act passed on July 31 expands eligibility for Veterans ([hyperlink here](#))

Modifications of [Veterans Choice Program](#) includes five provisions to enhance the VA's implementation of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014 (Choice Act). The law provides 90 days for the VA to implement the new changes.

- The 60 day limitation for authorization under Choice Program has been removed.
- Now - all Veterans enrolled in the patient enrollment system are now eligible to receive care under the Choice Program.
- The new changes expand the ability for the VA to enter into agreements with providers that may not meet the original eligibility requirements.
- It amends the wait time language that allows care at non-VA facility if the Veteran cannot get care at the VA within the wait time goals set by VA or within the clinically necessary time if shorter than wait time goal.
- Changes include modifying the distance requirement from "40 miles as the crow flies" to read...
 - o "Veteran that resides more than 40 miles driving distance with respect to seeking primary care from VA medical facility to include our community-based outpatient clinics that is able to provide primary care by a full-time primary care provider or..."
 - o "To Veterans seeking other care and the care is not covered by the VA facility to include the community-based outpatient clinic that is closest to the Veterans residence.

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Call to Get Started



866-606-8198

If you have questions about other aspects of VA health care visit www.va.gov/health

Need Help?
Live Chat



Monday Thru Friday
8am — 8pm Eastern
[Click here](#)

How do I Sign Up?

To get started, you'll need to pick a health care provider, gather some information and give us a call in order to set up an appointment. We will work with you to ensure you are approved for care in your community and schedule you with a local care provider of your choice.

Step 1: Check if you are [eligible](#).

Step 2: Explore which [doctors](#) are participating in your area.

Step 3: Make sure you have information on hand about any other health insurance coverage you may have.

Step 4: Call 1-866-606-8198 to make sure you qualify and to schedule an appointment.

When you call, we will:

- Ask for your ZIP code.
- Ask for your address.
- Check to make sure you are eligible for this program.
- Check which of your needs are covered by the VA.

Ask for your preferred community provider. Unfortunately, not all providers will be eligible to participate so if your preferred provider is not available, we will recommend other providers in your area.



VAPORHCS Critical Care Unit is recognized nationally



VAPORHCS Critical Care Unit (CCU) was recognized recently by the American Association of Critical Care Nurses (AACN) with the Beacon Award for Excellence - Silver Level for 2015-2018. VAPORHCS was previously designated in 2011-2014 and re-designated in 2015.

Excellence in patient care, outcomes, systems, and processes are truly the backbone of our culture here and the Beacon award recognizes our comm...itment to these. The CCU distinguishes themselves by providing care that exceeds industry benchmarks in many areas.

Of special note, Beacon reviewers highlighted the importance of recognizing and honoring Veterans for their commitment to serving our country. This is evident in multiple CCU best practices and processes, including end-of-life care, which eventually spread throughout the facility.

VAPORHCS

OEF / OIF / OND Welcome Home event at Oregon Zoo on Sept. 13 — free admission to the zoo for Veterans and their families

VAPORHCS honors and shows its appreciation for service members by hosting a Welcome Home celebration for Veterans and their families in the Pacific Northwest.

With a focus of welcoming home Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation New Dawn (OND) Veterans and thanking them and heir family members for their service and sacrifice, the event is open to all Veterans and family members.

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Enjoy free, all day admission at the
[Oregon Zoo](#)
 4001 SW Canyon Road, Portland, Oregon
Registration
9 a.m. - 12 noon

Parking is limited and at own expense, please consider taking TriMet MAX: Red or Blue Line trains stop next to the Oregon Zoo at the Washington Park Station

- ☆ Free admission and food voucher at no cost to our Veterans and their guests!
- ☆ **RSVP by Friday, September 4, 2015**
- ☆ RSVP Contact: Welcomehome@va.gov; (503) 273-5075 or outside Portland, 1-800-949-1004, ext. 53062
- ☆ Come with your family and enjoy food, fun and learn about VA benefits and services

The VA is looking for Mental Health professionals so, together, we can help more Veterans get the mental health care they need.

As a mental health professional,

you have a new opportunity to volunteer your time and talents to help our Nation's Veterans. You will expand your professional network while providing care for our country's most rewarding cause. You can even earn continuing education credits and maintain clinical hours for licensure. This applies to professionals who meet the existing VA qualification standards.

Pursue your chance to make a positive impact on Veterans' lives — and on your career. To learn more, visit VACareers.va.gov/woc.

Care Enough to Share

Volunteer your time and talents as a mental health professional to serve our Nation's Veterans.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration

VACareers.va.gov/woc

**Licensed Professional Mental Health Counselors - Marriage and Family Therapists -
Mental Health Nurses - Psychiatrists - Psychologists—Social Workers**

Construction update around VAPORHCS

Fisher House on the Vancouver Campus



Expect to be operational in early 2016

Portland VAMC in-patient ward 9D remodel



Expect new patients in Nov. 2015; 20 new single-bed rooms.

Freedoms Path at Vancouver Campus



50- apartment for homeless and at-risk homeless; foundation in progress. Summer 2016 completion.

**New Vancouver Campus
Primary Care Clinic plus
46 additional parking spaces.**

Pending resolution of bid-process protests, construction is anticipated to be 18 months.



Construction update around VAPORHCS

Vancouver Campus Room Service Project



Expect to be operational in late 2015

New East CBOC (21600 NE Halsey St., Fairview, OR 97024)



Early August 2015 photo.

New East CBOC



Planning formal opening ceremony in December 2015 and to be fully operational by early 2016.

New Portland Division Emergency Department on north side of Portland VAMC

Construction is funded for fiscal year 2016 and the design is progress.





Registration now open for Savvy Caregiver Class

September and October classes are filling fast

This is a six-week educational series designed especially for unpaid caregivers caring for a loved one with a dementia diagnosis.

Class size is limited and participants must pre-register to reserve a space in a class.

Class Location	Class Dates & Times
Portland VA	Fridays 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon September 11, 18, 25, October 2, 9, 16
Center for 50+ 2615 Portland RD NE Sa- lem	Tuesdays 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon October 13, 20, 27, November 3, 10, 17

Sign-up is easy!

Contact Kristi Ketchum at (503) 220-8262 ext. 58594T

This class is offered and run by VAPORHCS staff.



"Powerful Tools for Caregivers" is coming to the Portland VA!

The **FREE 6 week series of 90 minute classes** are sponsored by VAPORHCS Caregiver Support and Chaplain Service

Caring for someone with a chronic illness can be stressful physically, emotionally, and financially. Loved ones caring for a Veteran, or a Veteran caring for a loved one is welcome at the class.

Participants will learn to:

- Reduce Stress
- Improve self confidence
- Better communicate your feelings
- Increase your ability to make tough decisions
- Locate helpful resources

See a full schedule of VAPORHCS class on our Web site [Events Calendar](#). Just go to the main VAPORHCS Web page at www.portland.va.gov.

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Sign-up is easy!

Dates of classes;

September 16, 23 & 30

October 7, 14 & 21

Wednesdays from 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon

For additional information and to register, please contact:

Amber Lynch

(503) 273-5210

amber.lynch@va.gov