



Veterans' Health[®]

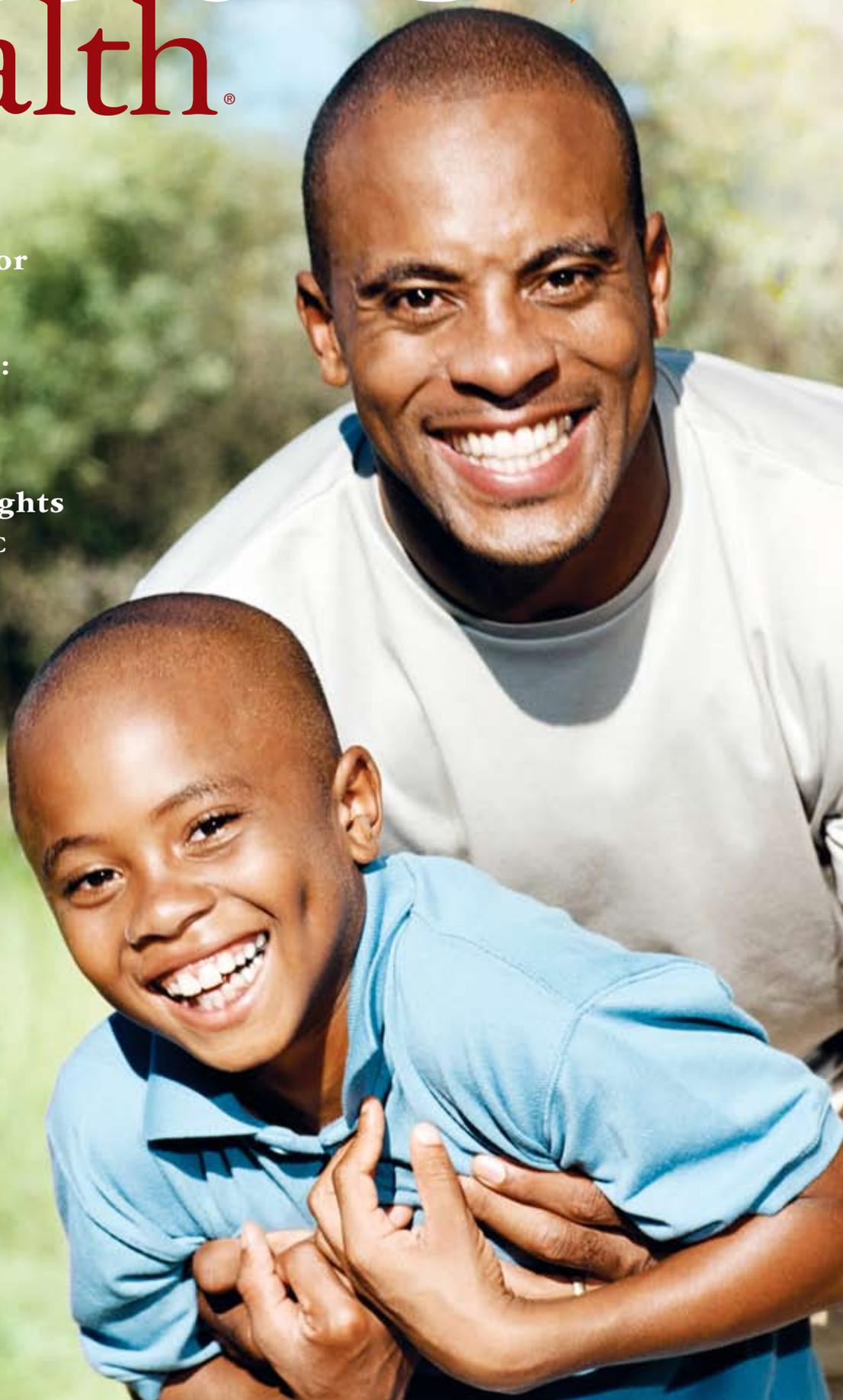


**Meet our new
Network Director**
page 2

**To our veterans:
We salute you!**
page 6

Network Highlights

- Washington DC VAMC
page 3
- VA Maryland Health
Care System
page 8
- Martinsburg VAMC
page 10



Meet our new Network Director



Sanford M.
Garfunkel, FACHE

I am truly honored to have been appointed to serve as the Network Director for VISN 5. I am approaching this assignment with a great sense of pride and determination.

As you may be aware, I have been with VA for almost 35 years, and the Director of the Washington DC VA Medical Center for 12 years. As such, I am familiar with VISN 5 and the wonderful employees and volunteers who have the privilege of serving you.

In my brief time as VISN 5 Network Director, I have set some general goals for myself and our VISN that I would like to share.

First of all, I plan to be very visible and interact with as many of you as possible, as often as possible. I have already, in my short time here, made several trips to each of the Medical Centers in our VISN. I greatly enjoy speaking with you and look forward to chatting with many of you as time goes on.

Over the next several months, I will also be working with the Medical Centers in our VISN to develop strategies that I hope will enhance the services we provide. We will be exploring opportunities to share and expand services that I believe will benefit you.

Finally, I expect to place major emphasis on access to care and your satisfaction. Our VISN has done extremely well in both of these areas, but I anticipate that by working together and developing new initiatives, we can do even better. My goal is to have even more of you believing and telling your families and friends that VA is the place to go for great health care. I know if you, our veteran patients, feel that way, we have done a good job.

I look forward to getting to know you in the near future.

Regards,

Sanford M. Garfunkel

Sanford M. Garfunkel, FACHE, Network Director
VA Capitol Health Care Network, VISN 5



Home health care, just in time

By Susan Jackson, R.N., M.S.N.

Do you want better control of your health and to have a nurse assigned to assist you? Would you like to have a nurse who knows your health and caregiving issues in detail? Would you like your nurse to make appointments and travel arrangements, troubleshoot getting medications and supplies, assist in reaching your health care provider and help with home care or relief for your caregivers? Then sign up for Care Coordination Home Telehealth (CCHT).

The Washington DC VA Medical Center started CCHT in 2002 to provide “Just in Time” care. Just in Time care is quick-response care to any change in symptoms in veterans with chronic diseases such as heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, diabetes, hypertension, multiple sclerosis, kidney failure, obesity and post-traumatic stress disorder.

How CCHT works

CCHT connects you electronically to your personal CCHT

nurse. You’re given a simple Telehealth device that attaches to your home telephone line. Measurements such as weight and blood pressure are sent to a special computer. Your data will be available for a nurse to view on a Telehealth website; within an hour, the information is part of your electronic medical record. The nurse will call you about any abnormal data and provide education and advice.

Telehealth devices are easy to use and can be customized for vision, hearing and reading problems. You’ll be given blood pressure devices, scales and pulse oximeter sensors as needed.

Helping you stay healthy

CCHT benefits VA by reducing clinic and ER visits and hospitalizations; more important, it benefits veterans by allowing them to closely monitor their health status and, in many cases, stay in their homes and be independent for a longer period of time. There’s no cost to participate in CCHT.

We’re currently recruiting veterans who:

- are motivated to change the quality of their lives
- are willing to learn more about their conditions and focus on exercise, diet and medication compliance
- are committed to using the Telehealth device regularly
- have a land-line telephone (the Telehealth device doesn’t work with a cell phone)
- have a caregiver to assist them if needed

To learn more, call the CCHT office at **(202) 745-2250**. ★



Monitor Nurse Donna Y. King, R.N., trains veteran Anderson Dews in the use of Telehealth equipment for his home.



Welcome home, veterans

The Washington DC VA Medical Center honored returning combat veterans with an outreach and education event at the hospital on Saturday, June 2.

The Welcome Home Celebration offered enrollment and eligibility services, health and mental health screenings, benefits advice and a wide variety of other services to military personnel and veterans residing in the metropolitan area who recently served in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF-Afghanistan) and Global War on Terrorism (GWT) combat theaters.

The celebration was designed to provide valuable information, education and support that will assist combat veterans and their families in transitioning to civilian life. A wide range

of community service agencies specializing in employment and housing assistance, vocational training, spiritual support, family counseling and recreation participated in the event, including: AmeriCorps, Troops for Teachers, University of the District of Columbia Upward Bound, Peoples Involvement Corps, Small Business Administration, Army Wounded Warrior, Access Housing and Team River Runners.

Marines from the Individual Ready Reserve in the local area attended the Welcome Home Celebration, which included the annual Marine Administrative Screen Muster. The total estimated participation exceeded 600 people, including family members.

The event was family friendly, with a variety of entertainment, music and arts and crafts

for people of all ages to enjoy. It also included a complimentary barbecue lunch and lots of terrific giveaways.

Fernando O. Rivera, Acting Medical Center Director, calls the Welcome Home Celebration a major step in providing these new veterans and their families with the full array of transition services available to them. "They have sacrificed much on our behalf," says Mr. Rivera. "They should be welcomed home with not only the services they need to get back into civilian life but the festivities they deserve to know how much we value and respect their contributions."

For additional information about services for OIF/OEF/GWT combat personnel, contact Jean Langbein, OIF/OEF Point of Contact, in the Social Work Service office at **(202) 745-8338**. ★





▲ Melissa Turner, M.D. (in blue shirt), Co-Chief of Ambulatory Care at DCVAMC, assists returning combat veterans with their health screenings during the Welcome Home Celebration.

1| The Welcome Home Celebration, an outreach and education event for combat veterans, was a great success.

2| Fernando O. Rivera, Acting Medical Center Director (left), Paula Gorman, Event Coordinator and Chief of Voluntary and Recreation Therapy Service (right), and Sanford M. Garfunkel, FACHE, Network Director, (center, back) escort James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs (center, front), through the Welcome Home stations.

3| Only two months back home and veterans were already signing up for VA benefits at the DCVAMC Welcome Home Celebration.



By Samuel Belkin, O.D.

Golden appointments

If you had a gold coin, would you throw it away? Of course not.

In VA, an appointment is as valuable as gold. Appointments may not seem valuable until you need one. So why do many patients throw their appointments away? Each day, hundreds of appointments are unused. In my 20 years of serving patients at the Washington DC VA Medical Center (DCVAMC), I have heard multiple reasons why patients don't come for their appointments.

No-shows create many problems—for patients, who may get sicker; for doctors, who must review the patients' medical records anyway; and for the clerks, who have to reschedule, print letters or make extra phone calls. First and foremost, missing an appointment puts your health at risk. Doctors and nurses would rather have healthier patients. Healthier patients are happier and have fewer emergency room visits and hospital admissions.

When you miss an appointment, other veterans may have to wait longer for their appointments. Imagine you're a doctor and can comfortably examine 10 patients a day. How many appointments should be scheduled for you? If everyone always keeps their appointments, then planning is easy—you would schedule



10 patients. But no-shows create uncertainty. Determining how many patients to schedule becomes harder.

If you schedule 10 patients and everyone comes, patients are seen efficiently, no one waits long for their appointment and an extra patient can be seen. Unfortunately, each no-show affects two patients—the scheduled patient doesn't get his or her care and another patient isn't likely to be seen because the health care provider is waiting for the original patient.

Remember, appointments are golden; don't throw them away. For your own health, keep all your appointments and don't waste them. However, if you aren't able to keep your appointment, call DCVAMC's Patient Service Center at **(202) 745-8577**. This way, another veteran will be able to use the appointment time. Help another vet, cancel early and don't forget. ★

To our veterans: We salute you!

By Jon-Nolan Paresa,
M.A., M.H.P., H.I.A.

In December of 2003, I was asked by my commander at the California National Guard to cover the coming home ceremony of an aviation unit of the California National Guard in Stockton.

During the ceremony, I saw a little boy about 3 or 4 years old standing off and away from the crowd, staring at the soldiers. I asked him if his Daddy was in the crowd and he said, "Yes, sir." I told him his Daddy would really like it if he saluted him.

I went on to ask, "Do you know how to salute?" He said, "Yes, sir, my Daddy taught me how." He raised his right hand and gave his Daddy and all the soldiers a salute I'll never forget. All at once, the soldiers in the hangar began to smile, laugh and then started clapping. It was such a priceless moment.

But, that's not the reason I'm writing this story. I decided it was time to prepare a poster using that image. I remember John F. Kennedy Jr. saluting his father's coffin that terrible day in November 1963. Years later, when that image is shown on TV, it brings back many of the same feelings I had the first time I saw it.

As a member of the military, I'm often approached by people thanking me for my service. It embarrasses me a little, because I

don't desire that sort of adoration. There are so many others who have done more to deserve praise. So, I thought it was time to remember my brothers and sisters in arms and develop a poster that would somehow thank "our most cherished citizens" for their service. I used the "John, John" photo as inspiration. They can never hear it enough: "Thank you for your service!"

Today, a VA operator called me and told me a patient was on the line and wanted to speak to the "guy who took the John, John" photo. I took the call; it was from Army SFC Calvin McCowan who served in Vietnam from 1967 to 1970. He said that the day he was admitted to the hospital, his family was with him and saw, as he called it, the "John, John" poster.

He told me it brought back many memories, and he especially liked the message of thanking our troops for their service. He asked if he could buy the photo from me. I told him no, but said I'd give him a copy.

I prepared a poster and delivered it to him in his room just prior to his discharge from the Sacramento VA Medical Center. His eyes filled with tears

and he shook my hand and said, "you've made me and my family very happy. I have a grandson who wanted this photo, and now we have the poster. It's a cherished gift."

It goes without saying that my heart was filled with emotion as well. As I was leaving, I said to SFC McCowan: "Thank you for your service."

I love this job and the work I'm so privileged to do. ★



**"Do you know how to salute?"
He said, "Yes, sir, my Daddy taught
me how." He raised his right hand
and gave his Daddy and all the
soldiers a salute I will never forget.**



THEY CAN NEVER
HEAR IT ENOUGH.

“THANK YOU
FOR YOUR SERVICE”

 Department of
Veterans Affairs
MEDICAL MEDIA
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

*Mommy I have grown so much since you
went overseas. I have learned a lot and
missed you very much. I am so proud of
you.*

FROM A GRATEFUL NATION,
WE HAVE MISSED YOU AS WELL.
SALUTING WOMEN IN THE MILITARY.

 Department of
Veterans Affairs

VA HEALTH CARE: The best in the nation

In the wake of negative publicity about Walter Reed Army Medical Center, VA health care facilities have been flooded with inquiries from media representatives about the quality of care they deliver to our nation's veterans.

VA officials are quick to point out that military hospitals such as Walter Reed are operated by the Department of Defense and not by VA, which is responsible for all of VA's health care facilities.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson said, “A variety of independent organizations have ranked the world-class health care provided by VA as the best in the United States.”

Bradley S. Barton, National Commander of Disabled American Veterans, said, “VA consistently sets the benchmark for patient satisfaction, according to the American Customer Satisfaction Index developed by the University of Michigan Business School.”

Throughout VISN 5, media coverage has been extensive—and very positive. Newspaper articles, along with numerous television and radio programs, have featured interviews with wounded veterans, who consistently speak highly of the care they've received.





Reaching out to returning veterans



Chris Buser, VA Maryland Health Care System Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom Coordinator, speaks to returning veterans at a Post Deployment Health Reassessment hosted at the Baltimore VA Medical Center. Baltimore became the first VA Medical Center in the nation to host a post-deployment event for service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. The VA Maryland Health Care System enjoys a unique partnership with local National Guard and Reserve units to address the needs of returning veterans.

With an increased national focus on veterans' health care services, VA has stepped up programs and services for veterans returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF). The VA Maryland Health Care System has successfully combined the Returning

Veterans Outreach, Education and Care and the Seamless Transition Programs with the Department of Defense's Post Deployment Health Reassessment to address the needs of these veterans. As a result, Maryland National Guard and Reservists have a better understanding of their VA health entitlements and of common

service-connected health issues. Additional enrollments are another key indicator of this successful outreach initiative. For information about programs and services available for returning veterans, contact Chris Buser, OIF/OEF Coordinator for the VA Maryland Health Care System, at **1-800-463-6295, ext. 7259.** ★

Building a healthy future

Veterans who receive their care at the Perry Point VA Medical Center are one step closer to getting a new nursing home from VA under the terms of a decision announced recently by Dennis H. Smith, Director of the VA Maryland Health Care System.

The decision to build a new nursing home and modernize existing facilities at Perry Point is a milestone in the ongoing

review of the campus. "New state-of-the-art facilities at Perry Point will ensure that Maryland's veterans will continue to receive world-class health care well into the 21st century," said Smith.

The new nursing home, which is still pending congressional funding, is part of a master plan that will include the replacement and renovation of facilities across the 365-acre campus. The VA plan will explore public and private

partnerships for leasing under-used portions of the campus. The income from the leases would be used for the planned modernization of the campus and other enhancements to veterans' services.

The Perry Point decision was made as a result of the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) review process, which began in 2004 to upgrade VA health care facilities across the country. ★

Stay in the loop: Get E-News



The VA Maryland Health Care System wants to keep you in the know with our free E-News subscription service. You'll receive e-mail messages about health care issues, VA eligibility changes, new programs and services, special events, educational programs and changes in clinic hours.

Your e-mail information will be kept private and won't be available to other Federal agencies or outside organizations. You can unsubscribe at any time.

Visit www.maryland.va.gov and click on the "VAMHCS

E-News" link at the lower right portion of the page to enroll. You can also enroll by mailing your first name, middle initial, last name and e-mail address to:

**Public & Community Relations (135)
Baltimore VAMC
10 N. Greene St.
Baltimore, MD 21201**

If you don't have e-mail, consider having a family member or friend enroll and ask them to share the information with you. To learn more, call **1-800-463-6295, ext. 7101.** ★



Fighting super germs

"Super" germs are germs that live on people and the things they touch.

Infections with super germs are difficult to treat because they don't respond to common antibiotics. Methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a super germ that can make a person extremely ill.

MRSA can easily spread from person to person and it can live on any surface or the skin for several days or even weeks. The most effective way to prevent a MRSA infection is by washing your hands using soap and water or a hand-sanitizing gel and

reminding others to do the same.

The VA Maryland Health Care System has measures in place to eliminate the spread of MRSA in our facilities. All patients are tested for MRSA infection upon admission. MRSA-positive patients are placed in private rooms or with other MRSA-positive patients. Signs are posted outside patients' rooms to remind every person to take necessary precautions, and VA staff members are teaching patients how to stop the spread of MRSA. VA health care staff members are washing their hands before and after caring for all patients



and wearing gloves and gowns when caring for MRSA-positive patients.

For more information about MRSA and how to prevent MRSA infection, contact Gail Heiss, R.N., M.S.N., the VA Maryland Health Care System MRSA Prevention Coordinator, at **1-800-463-6295, ext. 4884.** ★

Helping the smoke to clear

First, the bad news: Lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer death for American adults—and smoking is to blame for at least 85 percent of all lung cancer deaths.

Now, the good news: If you give up smoking, your health will start to improve in just a few weeks. If you quit forever, your risk of lung cancer—and dozens of other diseases and cancers—will drop significantly in the next few years.

The Martinsburg VA Medical Center is aggressively working to increase patient and staff awareness of the benefits of quitting smoking.

It's never too late

As soon as you stop smoking, your lungs, heart and circulatory system (the arteries and veins that blood flows through) start getting better. You're likely to add years to your life, breathe more easily and have more energy. You'll have extra money for spending or saving

and food will taste better. Read on for other benefits of quitting:

- Your risk of heart attack, stroke and other circulatory diseases begins to drop within the first year after you quit.
- Your chance of getting cancer from smoking also begins to shrink. Within 10 to 15 years after quitting smoking, your risk of cancer may become almost as

low as that of a nonsmoker.

- You'll have better blood circulation, especially to your hands and feet.
- You'll have a more sensitive sense of smell.
- You won't have smoke odor in your clothes and hair.
- You'll set a healthy example for your children and grandchildren and reduce their exposure to dangerous secondhand smoke.



Smoking cessation classes

Learn behavior changes to stop smoking.

WHEN: Second Friday of each month, 2 p.m. to 3 p.m., and fourth Friday of each month, 10 a.m. to 11 a.m.

WHERE: Room 2A-122C

For more information about Martinsburg VA Medical Center's smoking cessation classes and initiatives, contact John Sentell, M.D., Chief, Mental Health Service, at (304) 263-0811, ext. 3802 or 3810.

Breaking the addiction

Smoking is a strong addiction for both your body and mind. That's why it's so hard to stop. Don't give up. Since 1965, more than 40 million Americans who used to smoke have quit. Smoking cessation classes are held twice a month at Martinsburg VA Medical Center and patients are encouraged to talk with their primary care providers to request consults for the classes. ★

Lipid clinic now available

You can tell a lot about people by looking at their numbers—especially their cholesterol levels. To help prevent heart disease, your total cholesterol level should be less than 200 mg/dL.

To help you keep your cholesterol levels in check, a lipid clinic is now available at Martinsburg VA Medical Center. Your primary care provider may refer you to the clinic after testing your cholesterol levels. Prior to the initial group clinic meeting, you may be contacted by the clinical

pharmacist to discuss medication changes.

During the lipid clinic, a dietician will teach you how eating healthy foods can help control your cholesterol and a pharmacist will discuss cholesterol-lowering medications. You'll have opportunities to discuss your treatment needs and any medication concerns.

Once your cholesterol is well controlled, you'll be discharged from the lipid clinic. Contact your primary care provider for more information. ★



Call us toll-free

You can now call the Community Based Outpatient Clinics toll-free.

CUMBERLAND, MD
1-866-712-8084

HAGERSTOWN, MD
1-866-399-0117

STEPHENS CITY, VA
1-866-463-8532

Meet your service representative

Susan Jodoin is Martinsburg VA Medical Center's new veterans' service representative.

She's the primary contact for veterans and their representatives for information regarding:

- compensation and pension claims
- general benefits information
- benefit forms
- veterans' benefits and health information
- survivor benefits
- catastrophic disability

Jodoin is available Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., in Room 1A-171. For information, call (304) 263-0811, ext. 4784.

We're just a click away!

Go to Martinsburg VA Medical Center's new website at www.martinsburg.va.gov.

Visit the site for:

- visitor information
- available patient services
- My HealtheVet access
- volunteer opportunities
- employment opportunities
- medical center and community-based outpatient clinic information

Information at your fingertips

Through the My HealtheVet website at www.myhealth.va.gov, you can view key parts of your personal VA medical record. You can register online or at the Medical Center Library in Room 2A-150.

The My HealtheVet contact number at Martinsburg VA Medical Center is (304) 263-0811, ext. 3652 or 1305.



VA Capitol Health Care Network Veterans Integrated Service Network 5 (VISN 5)

Important Telephone Numbers

VA Maryland Health Care System

Baltimore VAMC
1-800-463-6295

VAMHCS Medical Advice Line
1-800-865-2441

Perry Point VAMC
1-800-949-1003

**Automated Prescription Refill and
Clinic Appointment System**
1-800-463-6295, ext. 7395

**Baltimore VA Rehabilitation
& Extended Care Center**
1-800-463-6295

Martinsburg VA Medical Center

Martinsburg VAMC
(304) 263-0811

Medical Advice Line
1-800-817-3807 or (304) 262-4855

Patient Eligibility
(304) 263-0811, ext. 3758/3757
Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
or ext. 3050 after 4:30 p.m.

Automated Prescription Refill System
(304) 263-0811, ext. 4870 (all hours)

Outreach Coordinator
(301) 665-1462

Washington DC VA Medical Center

General Information
(202) 745-8000

Patient Service Center
(202) 745-8577

VETS Information
(202) 745-4046

PTSD Clinic Number
(202) 745-8591

Outpatient Clinics

Cambridge, MD
(410) 228-6243

Charlotte Hall, MD
(301) 884-7102

Cumberland, MD
1-866-712-8084

Fort Howard, MD
(410) 477-1800

Glen Burnie, MD
(410) 590-4140

Greenbelt, MD
(301) 345-2463

Hagerstown, MD
1-866-399-0117

Loch Raven, MD
(410) 957-7651

Pocomoke City, MD
(410) 957-6718

Alexandria, VA
(703) 360-1442

Harrisonburg, VA
(540) 442-1773

Stephens City, VA
1-866-463-8532

Franklin, WV
(304) 358-2355

Petersburg, WV
(304) 257-5817

Washington, DC
(202) 745-8685

Vet Centers

Baltimore, MD
(410) 764-9400

Cambridge, MD
(410) 228-6305, ext. 4123

Elkton, MD
(410) 392-4485

Silver Spring, MD
(301) 589-1073

Washington, DC
(202) 543-8821

Martinsburg, WV
(304) 263-6776

Alexandria, VA
(703) 360-1442

Veterans Benefit Administration

1-800-827-1000

Education Information Hotline

1-800-442-4551

Visit us on our website at www.va.gov/visn5

Veterans' Health

Department of Veterans Affairs
849 International Drive
Suite 275
Linthicum, MD 21090

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LEBANON JUNCTION, KY
PERMIT NO. 19