

PHILADELPHIA

Volume 3.  
2019



# Choose **VA**

Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center Veteran Newsletter

Introducing Our  
New Medical Center Director

**BEST Vet Study**



## Director's Corner

### Introducing Our New Medical Center Director

The Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center (CMCVAMC) is pleased to welcome **Rear Admiral Karen Flaherty-Oxler (RET), MSN, RN** as the new Director of the Medical Center.

You may have noticed a petite woman walking throughout the facility greeting staff and patients alike with a huge smile and a reassuring welcome; that is the Director, and her enthusiasm and love of her job is infectious. She knows the layout of the CMCVAMC very well. As Ms. Flaherty-Oxler is no stranger to this facility, having previously led the Patient Care Services division as its Associate Director from 2001 to 2007. She exudes compassion, warmth and a genuine love of her fellow Veterans, staff and everyone that walks through these doors. A dynamic leader and powerhouse speaker, she is also humble and can frequently be seen personally escorting patients and directing new hires around the facility. Though busy, she always has a kind word or smile for everyone she meets.

Ms. Flaherty-Oxler has had an exemplary career. She served with distinction in the United States Navy and has extensive experience in health care, including working as senior vice president, chief nurse, and patient experience executive of the Atlantic Health System in Morristown, New Jersey from 2016 through 2018. Prior to taking on that role, she spent several years in various progressive positions at the Lancaster General Health System in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Ms. Flaherty-Oxler spent more than two years as the deputy surgeon general and deputy chief for the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery in the United States Navy. She received a master's degree in nursing administration and a certificate of administration from the University of Pennsylvania.



# VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration  
Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center

3900 Woodland Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19104  
(215) 823-5800  
(800) 949-1001

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**Karen Flaherty-Oxler, MSN, RN**  
*Medical Center Director*

**Patricia O'Kane, MSS**  
*Associate Director for Finance/Operations*

**Latriece R. Prince-Wheeler, MBA**  
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*Associate Director for Nursing/  
Patient Care Services*

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**Rita D. Chappelle**  
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**Jonathan Hodges**  
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**Harry Maxwell**  
*Photography*

**Fern Billet**  
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# BEST Vet Study



Teddy Hampton

For nearly a year Teddy Hampton, 61, tended to some of the oldest and most recognized monuments in American history. As an employee of the National Park Service working in Independence National Historical Park, Teddy not only helped to prepare some of Philadelphia's most storied sites for throngs of tourists, but he did it with vigor and pride.

However, this wasn't always the case. You see, Teddy suffered from health complications related to renal disease which caused him to stop working back in 2007. In 2017, Teddy was referred to the **Building Employment Skills through Therapy (BEST) Vet Program**, a program designed to help Veterans get back into the workplace. But at the time, Teddy wasn't too optimistic about his prospects. "I was in a dark place, almost to the point where I didn't care, and I was ready to throw my hands up," he said. Teddy worried that 10 years out of the work force meant he might be left behind. He worried about the use of computers in the job search and was also concerned about managing his medical and mental health issues, including his weekly dialysis appointments, continuing recovery from addiction, and depression. He felt discouraged and inadequate. But something remained – a spark! "I felt I had something left in me that I could contribute to someone, to something. Something told me not to give up, there has to be a way out, keep trying," he added.

Teddy, after joining the BEST Vet Study for supported employment services, was assigned a trained supported employment specialist (SES). Teddy and his SES partnered to explore his background and experiences, prioritizing his current interests while maximizing his skills and abilities. Working together over the spring and summer, the two explored various employers and opportunities. And then one day, they found the right opportunity--a full time position at the National Park Service helping to maintain

national monuments and park grounds. Teddy's SES helped him talk with his employer about his medical needs, creating a schedule that allowed him to excel in his job, while also receiving necessary treatment.

Today, the Philadelphia native, travels the grounds of the Park, making sure its facilities are clean and welcoming. "I look at the guests as company coming to visit MY house, MY home city, and I have to make sure that I got things right for them. I take it personal. I can't have dust around! I realize the job I do is vital for the guests to enjoy the Park and learn about its history," he said. Work has transformed Teddy's self-image too as he is well-known by many of the local hotel and horse and buggy operators who often ask him for an assessment of tourist traffic. "They all ask me, 'Is it busy today? What are we going to get today?' They see the insignia of the National Park Service, they know my name and they depend on me. And I say 'Wow, I'm part of this.' I feel respected, part of this other world now, the work world. I'm back in society, and I feel part of the community. I feel like I belong. Within those buildings, there's community."

And how is he doing now? Teddy recently completed his seasonal position at the National Park Service, and over those last eleven months he learned the park's rhythms, routines and groups. He knows what equipment and materials are needed for each group or event being held there. The extra money has been helpful with his bills, but work is more than just a paycheck to Teddy. "Work changed how I feel about myself, helps me maintain a sense of balance. Even though I have a disability, it doesn't hold me back, I can still work with a disability. I wasn't sure I could do it, but through working and the BEST Vet program, I realized I could do it." Teddy is now pondering his next steps—whether it be returning to the National Park Service or searching for a new position that interests him.

When Teddy reflects on the past year, he is optimistic and motivated. "I thought the lid was closed on my potential at my age, but now I feel like it's wide open again." In fact, Teddy now spends time encouraging others. Teddy regularly attends 12-step meetings where he talks with other Veterans, community members, and neighbors. "From a year ago until now, I feel great! I feel better than I have in a long time. I'm charged up! What's the next challenge? What this program did for me was took some weight off my back and let me stand up straight and I'm constantly moving forward toward my goals. There is a place for me and my experience. This is a good formula and I'm glad I sought it out."

## The Moral Injury Group Presents

# COMMUNITY HEALING CEREMONY

Remember • Reconnect • Reconcile • Return



**4:30 PM • Monday • 2 December 2019**

**Heroes' Chapel • 3FL • The Corporal Michael J Crescenz VA Medical Center  
3900 Woodland Avenue Philadelphia, PA 19104**

Register via [Eventbrite](#) keyword "moral injury"

Register by Phone: (215) 823-4392

**VA**



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration

Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center



# CHERP

CENTER FOR HEALTH EQUITY  
RESEARCH AND PROMOTION

VA HSR&D CENTER OF INNOVATION

## Participating in research is important

**Research is the backbone of medical innovation. Here at the VA's Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion (CHERP), our Veterans Community Advisory Board is working to bridge the gaps between our medical study needs, our researchers, and you the patient....**

### **VA Research**

VA Research is unique because it focuses on health issues that affect Veterans. Nested within the Veterans Health Administration, the nation's largest health care system, VA Research is viewed by many experts as a model for rigorous, impactful research.

From developing new drugs and prosthetic devices to studying the delivery of health care, VA researchers across the nation address a wide range of issues that affects the daily lives of Veterans and their families.

The groundbreaking achievements of VA investigators, most of whom also provide direct patient care to Veterans, have resulted in three Nobel prizes, seven Lasker awards, and many other distinctions within the medical and scientific communities.

*"It was a great relief to share some of those things. I thought it would be hard, but, no, it has actually been a relief. I think it was helpful. And it makes me think about seeking more help"*

*-Research Participant*

### **About the CHERP Veterans Community Advisory Board**

The Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center CHERP Veterans Community Advisory Board (VCAB) was formed in May 2017 to advance Veteran perspectives and engagement in VA Research. Through influencing the design of VA Research studies, the CHERP VCAB seeks to improve the design of patient-relevant research, increase uptake of research into practice, build Veteran support for research, and restore trust in VA.

### **Some of the things we do:**

- Offer Veteran perspectives, preferences and priorities about care experiences at the VA
- Strategize to make research Veteran-centered
- Compose letters of support for Veteran focused projects
- Provide advice for recruitment and study info materials, and identification of research partners
- Assist with dissemination to the Veteran community.

The Board is designed to represent the vulnerable communities central to CHERP's health equity research mission (e.g. Veterans from ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ Veterans, Women Veterans, Homeless Veterans, Veterans with stigmatizing social, mental and physical conditions, etc.)

**How do I get involved?** <https://www.cherp.research.va.gov/www.prefresearch.org>



Whole Health 

## Approach to Chronic Pain

### What is Whole Health?

Whole Health is an approach to health care that empowers and equips people to take charge of their health and well-being, and to live their life to the fullest. The Whole Health approach partners with Veterans to improve their whole health, which is particularly critical when dealing with complex issues such as pain. Our focus is to empower you to create a personal health plan, equip you with skills to manage chronic pain, and provide more intensive and integrated treatment when needed.

### What is Behavioral Pain Management?

A service that offers both individual and group treatments for Veterans with chronic stable pain conditions. Medical interventions, while helpful for many, do not always address the whole issue of chronic pain. Chronic pain is complex and addressing it from only one perspective is not the most effective treatment. The other part of managing chronic pain is something called behavioral pain management. These are a set of skills that patients can learn to use day to day to reduce the negative impact of chronic pain.

## EMPOWER: Beginners Classes

### Whole Health Education for Chronic Pain

This drop-in course empowers you with education around active chronic pain management, provides a foundation for our other classes, and helps you identify what matters to you. At the end of this class, with the assistance of the facilitator, you will create a plan for moving forward with your health and chronic pain management goals.

*Time: Thursdays 1-3pm*

*Location: Module A Conference Room, 1st Floor*

*Contact Behavioral Pain Management for start date*

### Intro to Gentle Yoga

Restorative, alignment-based hatha yoga movements, specifically designed to foster a healthy back and help decrease fear of movement.

*Time: Tuesdays 12:30 -1:30pm*

### Tai Chi with Marcus

Balance, strength, flexibility, mobility and stress reduction. Discover what is known as the supreme ultimate martial art as you find balance and harmony, physically and mentally, through the practice of Tai Chi.

*Time: Mondays 11:30am – 1:00pm*

*Location: Multipurpose Room, 3rd floor*





## **EQUIP: Intermediate Classes**

### **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Chronic Pain (CBT-CP)**

An evidence-based treatment designed to help improve your overall functioning and quality of life by learning effective skills for managing chronic pain. CBT-CP focuses on your thoughts, feelings, and expectations about chronic pain and how these may stand in the way of managing it. CBT-CP helps you learn specific actions to respond to pain in more adaptive ways.

### **Biofeedback Class**

An 8-week class for Veterans who want to learn how to improve their physical and emotional health, especially for chronic physical pain, muscle tension or migraine headaches, high blood pressure, anxiety, and stress management. Biofeedback involves the use of electronic monitoring to help people self-regulate and improve control of their nervous system. Biofeedback training allows Veterans to become more aware of what is happening inside their body to gain more control over their emotional and physiological responses to stress.



### **Mindfulness-Oriented Recovery Enhancement for Chronic Pain**

An 8-week group for Veterans who have been using prescription opioids, alcohol, or marijuana to cope with chronic pain. Group members will learn skills and tools to cope with and reduce pain and stress.

### **Rehab Skills for Chronic Pain (RSCP)**

Led by a physical and occupational therapist, this drop-in class focuses on active skills for the self-management of chronic pain. This is a 4-week class that will focus on learning and enhancing pain management. Feel free to attend 1 week or all 4.

*Time: Thursdays, 10:30 – 12 pm*

*Location: 2nd Floor, Physical Rehab Waiting Area*



# RESPECT

## She Defended Our Freedom

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is focused on ensuring all women Veterans are treated with dignity and respect. Women who served in our country's military deserve to be treated with honor, just as their male counterparts. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) continues to promote respect for women Veterans and has recently expanded efforts to also address the issue of harassment. Harassment is disruptive to both access to care and the overall Veteran experience. Through action and accountability, we can make a significant impact on Veterans' experiences when they visit VA sites of care.

In VA, we have noted that 1 in 4 women Veterans experience harassment by other Veterans when they visit VA health care facilities. This causes delays in care, increased missed appointments, and negative Veteran experiences.

VA defines patient harassment as unwelcome physical, non-verbal, or verbal behavior that interferes with a Veteran's access to, and sustained engagement, with VA health care and/or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive healthcare environment, e.g., "You're too pretty to be a Veteran" or "Hey baby come sit next to me."

Our research has shown that the most prevalent types of harassment are "gender harassment" and "sexual harassment." Gender harassment is at the core when women

are not recognized as Veterans. They are often asked if they are accompanying their husband to an appointment, or simply accused of lying about being a Veteran, e.g., when a female Veteran wears a piece of clothing that identifies a branch of service or era and a fellow Veteran or staff member questions if they are a Veteran.

VA has designed and implemented a program to address this issue through increased Awareness, Education, Reporting, and Accountability. VA efforts hinge on awareness and education, followed by accountability. We have launched messaging including "It's not a compliment, it's harassment" directed primarily at educating male Veterans that these actions are harmful and unacceptable. Employees are being trained on these culture change efforts, including (1) an awareness of the experiences of women Veterans; and (2) ways to intervene and respond.

We also acknowledge that other patients, as well as staff are subject to harassment. This could be based on sexual orientation (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual); gender identity or expression (e.g., transgender); race; ethnicity; etc.; and none of it is okay. VA is combining its efforts to address harassment across the spectrum.



# Enhanced VA Options Under the MISSION Act:

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR VETERANS

### This Covers Six Topics

#### 1 HEALTH CARE ELIGIBILITY

VA provides a comprehensive medical benefits package to all Veterans who are enrolled through an annual patient enrollment system that categorizes Veterans based on different priority groups. Eligible Veterans can use VA health care services nationwide, including through mobile health clinics that serve rural areas and via telehealth (care through a phone or computer) in your home or on the go.

#### 2 COMMUNITY CARE ELIGIBILITY

You may be able to receive care from a provider in your local community if you meet specific criteria. Generally, Veterans must be enrolled with VA to receive care, although some Veterans are not required to enroll to receive care. Eligibility further depends upon your individual health care needs or circumstances. It is important to remember that under the Veterans Community Care Program, in most instances VA must authorize your care before you receive it.

Under the MISSION Act, there are six different eligibility criteria for community care. Meeting any one of these criteria for the specific care you need means you are eligible to elect to receive that care either through direct VA care or a community provider in VA's network:

- ▶ The specific care you need is not provided by VA at any facility
- ▶ You reside in a U.S. state (AK, HI, or NH) or territory (Guam, American Samoa, Northern Mariana Islands, or U.S. Virgin Islands) that does not have a full-service VA medical facility
- ▶ "Grandfathered" eligibility based on residence and the 40-mile eligibility criterion from the Choice program
- ▶ The specific care you need is not available within designated access standards
- ▶ You and your referring clinician decide it is in your best medical interest to receive the specific care you need in the community
- ▶ VA has designated the VA medical service line delivering the specific care you need as not providing care that complies with VA's standards for quality



#### 3 URGENT/WALK-IN CARE

VA will offer an urgent/walk-in care benefit for minor injuries and illnesses, such as pink eye or ear infections. To be covered by this benefit, you must be enrolled in the VA health care system and have received care from VA within the 24 months prior to seeking this care to be eligible for this benefit. Eligible Veterans can seek this care from an urgent care facility or walk-in retail health clinic that is part of VA's community provider network, but not all urgent care facilities or walk-in retail health clinics are in VA's network. VA will provide additional information on this benefit.

#### 4 COPAYMENTS AND INSURANCE

Like other health care providers, VA may charge a copayment for health care. The copayment amount may be based on your enrollment priority group, the type of health care service you receive, and your financial situation. If a VA copayment applies, you are responsible for that amount whether your care is furnished directly by VA or through a community provider.

VA may bill your health insurance for medical care, supplies, and prescriptions. As a result of the MISSION Act, VA no longer requires your permission to bill your health insurance carrier for health care related to a sensitive diagnosis. If you would like to submit a request to restrict this process, please contact your local VA facility's privacy officer.

If you have other forms of health care coverage (such as Medicare, Medicaid, TRICARE, Indian Health Service, and tribal health), you can use VA health care benefits along with these plans.

To learn more, contact your local VA medical center or visit [www.missionact.VA.gov](http://www.missionact.VA.gov) and click:

- ▶ VA Health Care and Other Insurance
- ▶ Indian Health Service/Tribal Health Program (IHS/THP)

#### 5 ACCESS STANDARDS AND STANDARDS FOR QUALITY

VA is establishing designated access standards based on the type of care you need, how long you have to wait to receive that care, and your average driving time to receive that care. We are also establishing standards for quality that focus on domains such as timely care, effective care, safe care, and Veteran-centered care. Within each of these domains are specific quality measures. VA is applying both access standards and standards for quality of care it furnishes in VA facilities and is working to ensure quality of care in the community also meets applicable standards. As VA continues to develop and refine these standards, we will provide additional information.

#### 6 COMPLAINT AND APPEALS PROCESS

VA is committed to delivering an excellent care experience every time. We know that concerns arise, and we're here for you. Patient advocates at your facility can assist with almost any problem you may experience. VA has different processes for clinical and non-clinical appeals, and the patient advocate can ensure your concern is handled appropriately.

# TW

## Transitional Work

### What is TW

Compensated Work Therapy/Transitional Work Experience (CWT/TW) Programs provide rehabilitation for Veterans through a combination of work experience and therapy. The program is provided at no cost to the Veteran and prepares those interested in obtaining employment by providing a supportive team and necessary resources to aid in the transition back into the workforce.

The TW program is a six month tenure in which each Veteran will be compensated with a small stipend.

### Program Design

Within the CWT/TW Program participants have an opportunity to practice and acquire workplace skills needed in competitive employment. CWT/TW functions like a “real” job, supervised by a work site supervisor, allowing for the Veterans to identify and address work related challenges, and places the same job expectations and demands on the Veteran that are experienced by non-CWT workers in the workplace.

### How to Participate

- Veterans must be assigned and actively engaged in Behavioral Health Services, ARU or OTP.
- Be physically cleared to participate in the program by their Primary Care Provider.
- Receive consult from their Behavioral Health provider.



### Services Provided in TW

- Job Club - Held monthly/participation is mandatory
- Employment Computer Lab - Held weekly
- Employment Readiness Groups
- Problem Solving Group

### CWT/TW Position Locations:

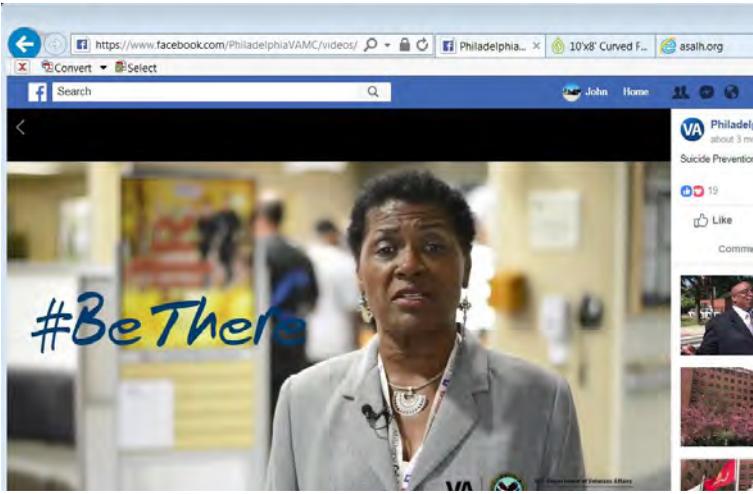
- Warehouse
- Chaplain Services
- Facilities Management
- Housekeeping
- Nutrition and Food Services
- Sterile Processing Services
- Supply Processing and Distribution (Logistics)
- Rehabilitation Physical Therapy
- National Cemetary Administration
- National Archives Records Administration

### How do I apply?

If interested in participating in TW, please see your Behavioral Health Provider for additional information. Or attend the Information Group in 7A138, from Noon - 1 p.m. on any Wednesday.

**Shanice Porter, MSW**  
shanice.porter@va.gov

**Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist, TW**  
Phone (215) 823-5800 ext. 5944



# #BeThere

The Veteran's Crisis Line has had over **3.9 million calls**, 123,000 texts, 467,000 chat room sessions, and 651,000 referrals since 2008. These have resulted in more than 119,000 dispatches of emergency services.

The CMCVAMC Suicide Prevention Team (Iris Roundtree and Leslye Rucker) have **responded to over 7,800 consults** and dispatched over 1,100 emergency services.

You don't need to have special training to support the fellow Veteran in your life. We all can do something to help a Veteran going through a difficult time. Small actions can have a huge impact, join us at the CMCVAMC and pledge to #BeThere for Veterans.

We can stand up together and face the challenge of working to prevent suicide, because "Suicide Prevention is Everybody's Business."

# Be there for someone in your life.

Connect fellow Veterans and Service members in crisis with support.

VeteransCrisisLine.net



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs





# Smoke free VHA

## Better starts today

Join the VHA as we go smoke free on  
**OCTOBER 1st**

VHA cares about your health and is going smoke free.

### Resources:

#### VETERANS:

- Stop Smoking Clinic: (215) 222-7483
- Stop Smoking Class: Fridays 10 a.m. via video telehealth
- 1-855-QUIT VET (1-855-784-8838)

**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# CAMP LEJEUNE HEALTH *and* DISABILITY BENEFITS

Benefits for Camp Lejeune Veterans and family members include health care for 15 conditions listed in the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012.

Veterans can receive disability and health care benefits for eight presumptive disease conditions associated with contaminants in the water at Camp Lejeune.

## HEALTH

Health care and health care funding assistance to Veterans and family members who lived on Camp Lejeune and have one of the covered conditions.

### Qualifying health conditions include:

- Bladder cancer
- Breast cancer
- Esophageal cancer
- Female infertility
- Hepatic steatosis
- Kidney cancer
- Leukemia
- Lung cancer
- Miscarriage
- Multiple myeloma
- Myelodysplastic syndromes
- Neurobehavioral effects
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Renal toxicity
- Scleroderma

## FOR INFORMATION

VA Health Care 1-877-222-8387

VA Benefits 1-800-827-1000

CL Family Health Care 1-866-372-1144

[www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/)

<https://explore.va.gov/disability-compensation>

[www.clfamilymembers.fsc.va.gov/](http://www.clfamilymembers.fsc.va.gov/)

## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Stationed at/lived on Camp Lejeune for at least 30 days between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987.

## DISABILITY

The presumption applies to active duty, reserve, and National Guard members exposed to contaminants in the water supply at Camp Lejeune who later developed one or more of the following eight conditions:

- Adult leukemia
- Aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes
- Bladder cancer
- Kidney cancer
- Liver cancer
- Multiple myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Parkinson's disease

**Family members are not eligible for disability benefits.**

## CAMP LEJEUNE DISABILITY BENEFIT COVERAGE AREA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



# VETERANS:

**Choose VA and be a part of your health care team by providing current and correct information.**

PLEASE review and update your home address, telephone contact information, insurance information and email address. We need to know how to contact you, where to send your medications, and how to bill your insurance company to provide you with the best care.

**You can update your information in any of these convenient ways:**

- Directly on the kiosks
- By speaking with the clerk at the outpatient clinics
- At the Enrollment/Eligibility desks
- When you call the Call Center (215-823-4014) to schedule an appointment
- Through [My HealthVet](#) follow the instructions on how to send a secure message to request an update to demographic information

Billing private insurance companies for non-service connected care helps VA control costs and that benefits ALL Veterans.

Veterans, when you check in for your appointments, PLEASE review and update your home address, telephone contact information, insurance information and email address.

**WHY is this information important?** Updated contact information is important so we know how to contact you, where to send your medication, where to send beneficiary travel checks, and for any other reason in case we need to reach out to you.

VA asks you to provide insurance information so we can bill your insurance provider for any care, supplies or medicines we provide to treat non-service connected conditions. By law we do not bill Medicare or Medicaid, but we may bill Medicare supplemental health insurance for covered services.

**How does it help me to give VA my health insurance information?** Funds received from your private health insurer for non-service connected care will be used to offset part—or all—of your VA copayment.

Also, your private insurer may apply your VA health care charges toward your annual deductible (the amount of money you pay toward your care each year before your insurance starts paying for care).





VA MEDICAL CENTER



VA

**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration  
*Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center*

**3900 Woodland Avenue  
Philadelphia PA 19104  
(215) 823-5800  
(800) 949-1001**

Burlington County VA Outpatient Clinic  
3000 Lincoln Drive East, Suite E  
Marlton, NJ 08053  
(844) 441-5499

West Philadelphia VA Outpatient Clinic  
6232 Market Street, Suite 100  
Philadelphia, PA 19139-2922  
(215) 222-7540

Camden VA Outpatient Clinic  
300 South Broadway, Suite 103  
Camden, NJ 08104  
(877) 232-5240

Gloucester County VA Outpatient Clinic  
211 County House Road  
Sewell, NJ 08080-2525  
(877) 823-5230

Victor J. Saracini VA Outpatient Clinic  
433 Caredean Dr.  
Horsham, PA 19044  
(215) 823-6050



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