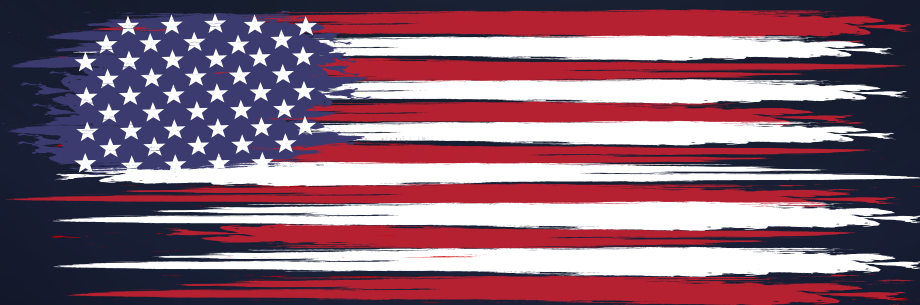




Choose **VA**

Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center Veteran Newsletter

VETERANS DAY



— Honoring All Who Served —





DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Karen Flaherty-Oxler, MSN, RN
Medical Center Director

As 2020 winds down, I wanted to take a few minutes to reflect on this past year. This year we have experienced one of the most challenging and impactful years for our Veterans, our staff, our nation and the world. The onset of the Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), the first global pandemic in over 100 years, has caused us all to alter our daily lives. To continue to meet our mission to serve those who have served, we have increased our use of telehealth medicine throughout all areas of clinical care. I encourage you to sign up for and use our telehealth and virtual services. We have implemented safety protocols, redesigned areas, and staggered in-person visits to reduce the numbers of persons in the building to minimize the potential for exposure. We have expanded our medication delivery program and encourage each of you to sign up to have your medications safely delivered to your home.

I recognize that this may have been a very trying and stressful time for all of you. Yet our days serving in the military at times needed us to change and rise above these temporary setbacks. From requiring face masks and social distancing when on property, we thank you for your continued compliance and understanding that these critical steps protect not only you, your fellow Veterans, our staff and those with underlying health conditions, but the general public at large. Just as you so willingly offered to serve our nation and your fellow Americans, properly wearing your masks so that they cover both your nose and mouth, frequent handwashing and social distancing of at least six feet, are some of the most effective steps we have to date to fight this invisible enemy. So, I call upon you as a fellow Veteran, to serve this nation once again by adhering to these important guidelines.

We will have a viable vaccine for COVID-19 that is safe and effective, and when one is available our frontline workers, military and Veterans have been identified as some of the first to receive it. We will keep you posted as we learn more about a future vaccine. Now, however, we are in the midst of the flu season. We do have a safe and effective vaccine for the flu and have been providing immunizations to help protect you from contracting the flu. Our Walk-In Flu vaccination clinic is available to Veterans Monday-Friday between 8am and 4pm without a medical appointment. You can receive your immunization in the community as well. A card was sent to you with the instructions. We can all do our part to stay safe and stay well. Join me on this journey; we all can make the difference. Stay safe!

Warmest regards,
Karen Flaherty-Oxler





VA

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

Corporal Michael J. Crescenzo VA Medical Center

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

Karen Flaherty-Oxler, MSN, RN
Medical Center Director

John Kelly, MD, MBA, FACP
Chief of Staff

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

Coy Smith, ND, RN, MSN, NEA-BC, FACHE, CPHQ
*Associate Director for Nursing/
Patient Care Services*

Robert Askey, MBA, AAS, CC
Associate Director for Support Services

Veronica Gamble MPA, LCSW
Interim Assistant Director

Rita D. Chappelle
*Executive Editor &
Writer*

Harry "Chuck" Maxwell
Photography

Jonathan Hodges
Writer & Editor

John E. Bowser Jr.
Content Placement

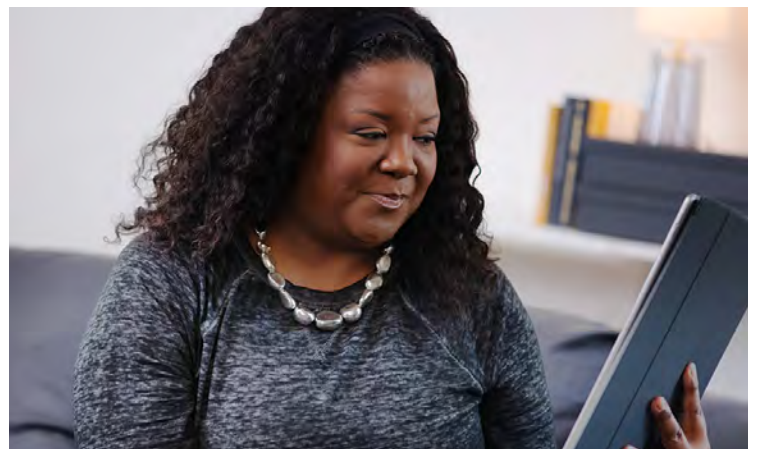


www.philadelphia.va.gov
www.facebook.com/PhiladelphiaVAMC
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We Need You

VA NEEDS YOU! Share widely with those you know! Retired VA clinicians and Federal health care providers: WE NEED YOU! We need your help in the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic. We're especially looking for health care professionals with interest and expertise in Tele/Virtual Care, National Call Center, Travel Nurse Corps and Direct Patient Care/Support (at VA Medical Centers). Be on the front line of defense against the spread of the #coronavirus at our medical centers, outpatient clinics, community living centers and call centers. Consider #VA re-employment. Dual compensation waivers will be available. You can partner in our efforts to maximize quality, safety and care during this national emergency. To learn more, email vacareers@va.gov apply at www.vacareers.va.gov. #WorkAtVA.



Have an upcoming VA mental health appointment? You can change your routine in-person appointments to telehealth visits. Learn how: www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/#what-should-i-do-if-i-have-an



**Veterans
Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

VETERANS DAY

NOVEMBER 11, 2020

The background of the lower half of the poster is a vibrant, painterly sunset sky in shades of orange, yellow, and red. Silhouetted against this sky are several figures on a dark, grassy hill. In the foreground, a young girl stands on the left, and a small child next to her holds a small American flag. Further up the hill, a group of people are gathered; one person is helping another climb. On the right side of the hill, two more figures are visible, one sitting in a chair and another standing. The overall mood is one of honor and remembrance.

HONORING
ALL WHO
SERVED

Why I Choose VA



Never Say Never – A Veteran's Story of Triumph!

When you first meet Air Force Veteran Frank Sean Johnson, you are immediately struck by his huge smile and engaging personality. He is a walking, talking welcoming party to everyone he meets. It's clearly in his DNA, coupled with an optimism that would make a pessimist blush. Follow that up with a drive, determination and confidence to overcome any of life's challenges, and you have an outline of Sean, as he is known around the hospital.

"I grew up poor, the youngest of five children," Johnson said. "My parents worked hard and raised us to do the same. Faith in God and a belief we can do anything if we put God first, was the foundation that I built my life around. I never knew that one day my faith would be the only thing I could depend on," he added.

That foundation his parents instilled in him would be pivotal attributes he would need to carry him through some of the darkest days of his life. After high school Sean enlisted in the Air Force Reserves where he trained as a Psychiatric Technician. He did several tours during the Gulf War, counseling soldiers who would later be diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. "I remember working with fellow soldiers who were the same age, 19, as me, who had lost

limbs, were suffering from Gulf War Syndrome, depression, anxiety, and fear. My job was to get them emotionally stable enough to go back out into battle. We stabilized them and patched up the physical wounds, but not the battle within. I never truly knew how they felt about losing a limb, until one day I found myself in their shoes."

Sean was home on leave awaiting the birth of his first child when tragedy struck.

"I was walking to the corner store with several buddies in North Philly. As we crossed the street, a car was racing down the street behind us in reverse and nearly hit us. The driver was a 15-year old and his friends. We yelled at them to watch out and kept walking. The next thing I felt was searing pain. The teen and his friends had hopped out of their car and ran up behind us and began shooting. I was shot at point blank range, twice in the back. One of my friends was shot too. Then the shooters ran off."

Johnson's uninjured friends ran for help and he and his friend were rushed to the hospital. He awoke to the news that he was paralyzed and doctors told his family that he would never walk again, but Johnson had other ideas.

"My mother told me that no matter what the doctors said, God had the final word. I started to pray, drawing on my faith and that same advice I had given to my brothers and sisters in uniform while in the Gulf. I called out to God and vowed I would prove the doctors wrong."

After two years of grueling and intensive therapy, Sean was back on his feet and walking once more. Having recovered from that grim prognosis, Sean never could have imagined life would throw him yet another curve ball. In 2015, he developed an infection in his leg requiring amputation below the knee.

"I couldn't imagine why I had to undergo another trial, but then I thought, God pulled me through the first time, He will do it again!"

With the help of the Crescenzo clinical staff from primary care to Occupational and Physical Therapy and Prosthetics Sean once again overcame his physical challenges, while his faith carried him through mentally.

"I couldn't have rebounded as well and as quickly as I did without the VA and the love and support of family and friends," he said. "The VA launched my professional adaptive sports career and I have been blessed to medal and excel in a number of sports from wheelchair basketball, to swimming, car racing and more. My self-confidence grew and has led to my acting career and appearances in shows like 'Madam Secretary,' and movies with stars like Danny Glover. The encouragement and superior medical care I received here continues to this day and it's why I continue to Choose VA!"

Coronavirus and You!

As COVID-19 continues to spread across the country and the world, we all must remain vigilant. The changes we have had to make to routines and daily life are extremely hard, but these changes are even more important now and in the future. We must stop the spread of this new and dangerous virus. The more steps you and your family can take to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the safer you will be.

Three Important Ways to Slow the Spread

- Wear a [mask](#) to help stop the spread of COVID-19 to others and to protect yourself. We also recommend you wear goggles or a face shield to protect your eyes from the virus.
- [Stay at least 6 feet \(about two arm lengths\)](#) from others who don't live with you, particularly in crowded areas. Also avoid large gatherings of 10 people or more.
- [Wash your hands](#) frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.



How to Protect Yourself When Going Out

- Wear [a mask that covers your nose and mouth](#) to help protect yourself and others. Also wear goggles or a face mask to protect your eyes from exposure to the virus.
 - [Choose a mask](#) with two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric that fits snugly against the sides of your face.
- Stay at a minimum of 6 feet apart, avoid crowds and gatherings of 10 people or more.
 - The more people you are in contact with, the more likely you are to be exposed to COVID-19.
- Avoid indoor spaces as much as possible, particularly ones that aren't well ventilated.
 - You may find it harder to stay 6 feet apart in indoor spaces.
- [Wash your hands often](#).
 - Use soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place or hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available.

VA COVID-19 screening tool

A digital tool to help you protect patients and
employees at your VA health facility



GET THE SCREENING FAST PASS USE THE COVID-19 SCREENING MOBILE APP

For Easy Daily Access
Save the COVID-19 Screening app to your home screen



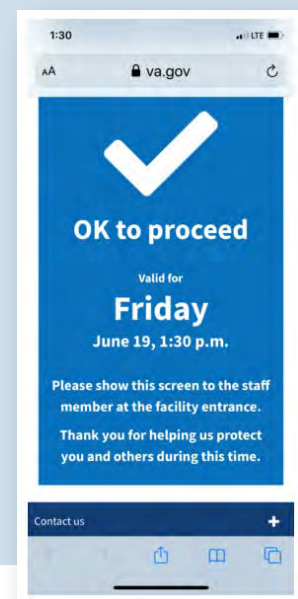
iPhone

- Launch Safari: go to www.va.gov/covid19screen
- Click the share icon on the bottom (middle) of screen
- Scroll down and tap "Add to Home Screen"
- Click "Add" in the top right corner



Android

- Launch Chrome: go to www.va.gov/covid19screen
- Click the menu icon (3 dots in upper right-hand corner) and tap "Add" to homescreen"



Annie Messages Can Advise You About Coronavirus



If the new coronavirus (COVID-19) is causing you concern, Annie may be able to help. Annie is VA's automated text messaging app that sends health information and reminders to Veterans. Any cellphone with texting capabilities can receive Annie messages.

Annie's **Coronavirus Precautions** protocol messages can help you monitor viral symptoms and know when to contact your VA care team or a nurse triage line for additional care. The messages also provide general wellness tips and education on precautions you can take to help prevent the contraction of coronavirus.

How to Set Up Annie

Follow these steps to get started. If you already receive Annie messages for other protocols, skip to Step 6.



Step 1: Go to the Website
veteran.mobile.va.gov/annie-vet



Step 2: Log In
Log in using your My Health eVet Premium, DS Logon Level 2, or ID.me account. Find out how to get a secure login account at mobile.va.gov/login-information.



Step 3: Consent to Participate
Read the consent information. Scroll to the end and select the consent box.



Step 4: Set Up Your Annie Account
Complete the fields under the **Information Messages, Preferences**, and **Patient Info** tabs. Select **Submit**, which will take you to a screen saying your registration was a success.



Step 5: Confirm Participation
You will receive a message from Annie asking you to confirm your participation. Reply to the message with the word **Start**.



Step 6: Subscribe
To subscribe to the Coronavirus Precautions protocol, text Annie (75338) the words **SUB COVID**.



Taking charge of your health — one text at a time.

For detailed instructions, visit Annie online:

mobile.va.gov/annie



To all of the Veterans of the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VAMC

Today, November 11th, we mark the 102nd Anniversary of the end of World War I and more importantly, remember the sacrifices of our military women and men who fought to protect our freedom and sustain our example of freedom for the world. Many gave their lives or suffered physical or mental injuries which burdened the rest of their lives. It is our great honor to care for the Veterans of our nation and to keep them well.

It is fitting, therefore, that we share some history from 1918. In 1918, the U.S lost roughly 116,000 personnel in WWI. Of that number, 53,000 were killed as a consequence of combat and 63,000 died from disease, largely influenza, in this era before vaccines were available for this viral infection. During this same period on the home front, influenza was spreading across the U.S. In the 1918-1919 pandemic, 675,000 Americans perished due to the "Spanish flu." This was, and is, a staggering loss of lives. Yet our country is now facing a similarly frightening viral infection -- COVID-19. Despite all the miraculous advances in medicine, to date we have lost almost 250,000 individuals in our country. This is more than double the number lost in WWI and close to 1/3 of the number lost to the Spanish Flu after only 8 months since the virus entered the USA.

We must remain vigilant in our efforts to minimize our personal risk for COVID-19 as well as that of our loved ones and our colleagues as we await the availability of vaccines and better therapies. We all want to get back to a more 'normal' existence. To do this, it is critical that everyone wears a mask that covers both your mouth and nose. Also,

wash your hands frequently or use hand sanitizer, practice social distancing of no less than 6 feet and avoid large gatherings of 10 or more. This is challenging but essential guidance. There is one more step that you and your family can take which is simple, safe and effective in the effort to keep you well in the coming cold weather/indoor season -- GET YOUR FLU SHOT Now! We do not want you to be at risk of contracting both COVID-19 and the flu at the same time or being weakened by Influenza so that you are more susceptible to getting COVID-19.

Flu vaccination is already underway. You may walk into the Main Campus hospital or go to your local CBOC to receive your flu shot. We also mailed out Flu Pharmacy cards that enable you to get a free flu shot at the participating community pharmacies listed. I urge you to get your flu shot as soon as possible and in advance of the coming family holidays. My best wishes to you and your family for your continued well-being and safety. I know we will get to the other side of the darkness that is COVID-19 through our collective efforts as a community.

Warmest regards,
John "Jack" Kelly, M.D.
Chief of Staff



MEET THE PROVIDER



A Calling To Serve

For more than 30 years, 77-year-old Chaplain Lucy Pierre has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to Veterans and staff that can best be described as more of a calling, than a duty!

At just 4'7" tall, Chaplain Lucy is a tour de force with a passion to serve that has seen her persevere through the most difficult of situations. A native of New Orleans, she rarely takes a day off, and since the outbreak of coronavirus, has not missed one single day at work, not even on weekends.

An institutional treasure, she was the first African American female minister ordained in the United Methodist Church in Philadelphia in 1975, and the first female Chaplain here at the hospital. A Captain in the Civil Air Patrol, she proudly wears the Air Force uniform. She is both lyricist and writer and developed the "Values for Living" curriculum for clinical staff and teaches it monthly.

Daily, Chaplain Lucy ministers to Veterans both face-to-face, and virtually to those Veterans battling COVID-19, along with staff.

"There was a lot of fear and anxiety here due to the pandemic and Veterans and staff needed Chaplain Services to help them through these challenging times, so missing work and not being here physically in the hospital to help, was never an option," she said. "My faith gives me the strength to keep going despite my age. Now, more than ever, people need hope, encouragement and God's message of Love."

Chaplain Lucy, who recently had total knee replacements, never feared contracting the virus. Her only hurdle was navigating public transportation to get to work.

"When public transportation was reduced, that became a big problem for me," said the Chaplain. She relies on busses with a wheelchair lift to get into the bus as the steps are too high for her to reach. When services were cut back, the wheelchair bus on her line was stopped and all passengers had to enter the bus from the rear.

Undaunted, she stood outside each day waiting for a bus to work, starting out early to ensure she would not be late. Her determination and prayers were rewarded.

"Each day, God made a way for me to get to work sending angels in the form of men who would lift me up and place me in the bus, both coming and going back home, even weekends," she exclaimed with a big smile. "They would ask where I was going in the pandemic, likely worried that I was more vulnerable due to my age, but I would tell them to do the Lord's work and minister to Veterans at the VA Hospital. Some were Veterans themselves and thanked me for my service," she added.

Once at work, she shares Scripture and prays for Veterans, and staff and stands in for family members unable to visit their loved ones. She comforted a staff member who lost her 18-year-old daughter to COVID-19. Among Veteran patients, she recalls the story of a Veteran, suffering with COVID-19 and on a ventilator. "His condition was quite dire, so much so that he asked me to baptize him because he didn't believe he would make it," she recalled. "With the help of an ICU nurse and Health Technician, I baptized him virtually."

She prayed for him daily and her prayers were answered as he has now fully recovered. Chaplain Lucy has since visited him face-to-face and presented him with his Baptismal certificate.

A tireless advocate for our Veterans, truly her mission is a calling that won't end until she transitions to her final assignment. *Footnote: Chaplain Pierre turns 78 on Dec. 10th and we wish her long life, grace and happiness!*



At Home

Meet with VA providers virtually and send important health data from the comfort of your home, using your computer or mobile device.

Note: Certain telehealth programs may not be available in all locations. To learn about telehealth options in your area, reach out to your provider at the nearest VA Medical Center.

To find your nearest VA Medical Center using the VA facility locator, enter your city, state, or ZIP code and select "VA Health" from the facility drop-down menu. VA Telehealth is based out of your nearest VA Medical Center, not CBOC or Vet Center.

Care That Fits Your Life

Having easy access to your VA care team is important for your health. But scheduling appointments and traveling to your provider's office can be difficult. Telehealth at home offers services that work with your current care plan, fit your lifestyle and help you stay healthy and independent.

Remote Patient Monitoring

Telehealth technologies can collect and send your health data, like vital signs, to your care team. Providers get the information they need to manage your care, while you are in a more comfortable environment. Health data will not be collected without your informed consent.

How it works:

You are assessed for Home Telehealth remote monitoring services.

If deemed appropriate, VA provides a device to fit your needs and gives you training on how to use it.

VA assigns you a Home Telehealth remote monitoring care coordinator.

Your care coordinator contacts VA hospitals and providers and helps you arrange treatment changes, clinic appointments and hospital admissions.

Video Appointments

With VA Video Connect, you can meet providers in virtual medical rooms using the camera on a smartphone, computer or tablet. You and your provider work together to schedule online video appointments. You can even invite family members and caretakers to join the sessions.

How it works:

Talk to your doctor to see whether VA Video Connect could become a part of your care plan.

Receive an email link for your VA Video Connect session once it's scheduled.

At the time of your appointment, simply click on the link, enter your information and launch the session. (If you are using an Apple device, you must download the VA Video Connect app to connect.)

For more information, visit the VA Video Connect page on the VA App Store.

Or you may call the Office of Connected Care's Help Desk at (866) 651-3180 24-hours a day, 7 days a week.

***The Chaplain Service & Suicide Prevention Team
Invites***

**Friends, Family, & Providers
of Veterans who have died by suicide
*to Commemorate***

**International
Survivors *of*
Suicide Loss Day**

Virtual Candlelight Vigil & Fellowship

November 21, 2020 • 2pm

Register on Eventbrite [here](#) to receive the link.

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration

Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center



Solemn Ceremony of Remembrance

Veterans Month began with a solemn ceremony of remembrance and a laying of a wreath at the grave of Captain William F. Guilfoyle, M.D. who served our nation in the Medical Corps until his untimely death in 1918 during the Spanish Flu Pandemic. The ceremony was led by our head Chaplain Fredi Eckhardt who was joined by our Medical Center Director Karen Flaherty-Oxler, RADM, U.S. Congressman Dwight Evans, Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney, Philadelphia City Council President Darrell L. Clarke, Philadelphia City Councilman David Oh, and City of Philadelphia Director of Veterans Affairs Carlo Aragoncillo.



Fond Farewell

Dear Veterans, we wanted to let you know that we recently bid a humble retirement farewell to a jewel amongst leaders, providers and scholars here at the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center (CMCVMC). Dr. Ann Danoff, Chief of Medicine was both an outstanding clinician and a tremendous ball of energy that many of you have interacted with during your appointments here at the Medical Center. It goes without saying that she will truly be missed here. Her leadership, guidance and impact will continue to be felt through some of the numerous educational opportunities she enacted, the streamlining and improvement of services, creating a welcoming environment for all Veterans who served, developing future leaders and modeling the importance of humanizing and personalizing each interaction with both Veterans and staff that has helped make us a High Reliability Organization. Thank you Dr. Danoff for your many years of service to our national treasures, our Veterans, and to this hospital. Your presence will be sorely missed as we continue to expand upon your legacy.



The Philadelphia Eagles and Toyota Swoop in for a Virtual Chat with Veterans

A number of our Veterans had the opportunity for Veterans Day to have one-on-one, private virtual visits with several members of our hometown Philadelphia Eagles and Toyota's 'Hiring Our Heroes' Veterans Ambassador. Veterans at Snyder House, our rehabilitation in-patient facility spent time with Eagles starter and powerhouse right tackle Lane Johnson, 2018 West Point graduate and offensive tackle Brett Toth and Retired Command Sergeant Major John W. Troxell who served as the third Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and is Toyota's Ambassador for Hire Our Heroes. Veterans shared their personal stories from their military days as well as some of their personal struggles and demons that caused them to seek help from CMCVAMC's clinical and behavioral health

teams. All the Veterans said that the Snyder House program and the VA were a lifesaver for them. The conversations were moving and uplifting. Our Veterans that live permanently at our Community Living Center (CLC) spent time with Philadelphia Eagles safety Will Parks and his teammate running back Boston Scott. For some of these Veterans, unable to walk, talk or in the latter days of their lives, these players lifted their spirits and brought smiles to their faces as they thanked them for their service, encouraged them and discussed the current season. All of our Veterans received a gift that included a winter knit Eagles hat, Eagles pennant and Eagles nation flag. We love our Veterans and our Philadelphia Eagles for remembering these brave men and women who served our nation.



Subaru Donation

The Philadelphia Community continues to reach out to support our Veterans and hospital. During Veterans Month, Subaru Armed Forces Resource Group for Employees (SARGE) collected donations from various parts of Subaru of America and donated knit caps, gloves, mugs, blankets, and Starbucks gift cards. These items will support our Homeless Veterans Outreach program and HUD-VASH to help Veterans stay warm during cold weather. This is not the first time SARGE has worked with our Voluntary Service and CMCVAMC to support Veterans. Just before COVID-19 hit, the Subaru team dropped off Valentine cards in February. As November is Veterans Month, they did not want Veteran's Day to go by without supporting and recognizing those who served in the military. Thank you SARGE and SOA for supporting our Veterans.



103-year old WWII Blind Veteran

For Veterans Day, we delivered over 100 meals to our blind Veterans and their caretakers. One special Veteran we had the pleasure to meet and thank him for his service, was 103-year old U.S. Army WWII Veteran Sam Wiseman of Cherry Hill, NJ. Mr. Wiseman, who turned 103 on September 10th, was born in 1917 and lives with his daughter Bina Wiseman. He served stateside during the war and shared many photos, life antidotes and advice. This centenarian truly is a "wise man" who always has a kind word and sage advice for anyone he meets. Thank you Mr. Wiseman for your service and may you have many more years to pass on your knowledge to us all.



Crescenz Helps Homeless Veteran With Housing; Progressive Insurance Gives Him A New Car As He Makes A Fresh Start

We don't always know why life takes different twists and turns, but here at the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center, we are here to help our Veterans that so honorably served this country, get back on track.

After leaving the military in 1982 following six years of service, U.S. Army Veteran El Toro Datts sought out a new life in private industry. Datts, who was a 2nd Lieutenant, worked at first as an engineer for 20 years with Lotz Engineers. He then embarked on yet another career when, after obtaining his Commercial Driver's License (CDL), he began work as a commercial truck driver for 25 years driving long hauls across the nation. Unfortunately, his beloved trucking career abruptly ended in 2019 when he sustained a serious back injury in a tractor trailer accident in which he was a passenger in a student-operated vehicle. After losing his employment, Mr. Datts quickly fell into homelessness. That is when our Homeless team stepped in. Mr. Datts received immediate support from our Homeless Support team and he was connected to transitional housing (Fresh Start LDSH). Crescenz staff was able to place Mr. Datts into permanent housing via the HUD-VASH program.

Mr. Datts comeback story was shared with Progressive Insurance's nonprofit organization, Keys to Progress. We helped him complete an application to the program. Out of all the applications, he was selected based on his outstanding military record and his need for a vehicle. On Wednesday, Nov. 5, 2020 in Malvern, PA, Progressive Insurance's Keys to Progress donated a 2019 Ford Fusion to Mr. Datts to help him in his comeback. "I believe that his car is going to greatly improve Mr. Datts quality of life, financial status and give him the helping hand he needed," said Nathan B. Weiss, Northeast PA MRR Supervisor for Progressive. Mr. Datts plans to use his new car to be able to gain employment with Lyft and Uber as driving has always been his passion.

In eight years, Progressive's Keys to Progress has donated over 750 vehicles to persons in need and paid for car insurance for the first year. Progressive is a proud supporter of the men and women of the US military and their families and employs over 1,300 Veterans and participates in numerous military-based initiatives.

Research News

CMCVAMC has been growing in cancer research that can ultimately benefit our Veterans through scientific knowledge and precision oncology.

- CMCVAMC was named a VA Prostate Cancer Foundation Precision Oncology Center of Excellence. Drs. Kyle Robinson, MD and Yu-Ning Wong, MD will lead our Center, along with additional members VA and Penn oncologists.
- Not just one, but TWO of our VA staff -- Drs. Kara N. Maxwell, MD/PhD and Ravi B. Parikh, MD/MPP in Heme/Onc were named 2020 Prostate Cancer Foundation Young Investigator Awardees! This award recognizes rising stars in the field, and also provides 3-year funding support for their work relevant to prostate cancer research.
- Dr. Maxwell, an expert in cancer genetics, is launching a Cancer Genetics clinic at the CMCVAMC. She was also awarded funding from VA-PCF Nursing Initiative and is an active investigator in the VA Million Veteran Program (MVP) Prostate Cancer Return of Result Project.
- Dr. Parikh, an expert in health services research, will be examining racial disparities across the prostate cancer care continuum and the impact of high-quality survivorship care on patient outcomes. He has already developed and leads highly fruitful collaborations in a recently funded VA Merit Award with Dr. Amol Navathe.
- Dr. Wong received notification that she has been awarded the Southwest Oncology Group (SWOG) VA Integration grant to help CMCVAMC join the SWOG and help our VA enroll in the National Cancer Institute's Central IRB to enable access to cancer clinical trials for our Veterans.



Our Research arm is actively engaged in two important funded studies in the battle against COVID-19:

- CMCVAMC was selected as a Vanguard site for a multi-center VA COVID-19 observational study to examine Veterans with COVID-19 and to better understand their natural history, immune response and viral outcomes. The study, entitled "Epidemiology, Immunology and Clinical Characteristics of COVID-19 (EPIC3)" is based within the Veterans Health Administration. This study is led by the Local Site Investigator (LSI) Dr. Stuart Isaacs, an Infectious

Disease physician, along with Co-LSI's Drs. Joshua Baker and Kyong-Mi Chang, with clinical champions from inpatient--Dr. Katherine Gardner, outpatient--Dr. David Stern, pathology/laboratory medicine--Dr. Darshana Jhala and the Community Living Center's Drs. Mary Hofmann and Jeffrey Doyon. Critical support is provided by clinical research coordinators Lizbeth Novelo, Marianna Olave and Mary Valiga, RN. Enrollment has already begun in Philadelphia, as well as Palo Alto, CA, Durham, NC and West Haven, CT, with additional VA centers joining in this critical study.

- Drs. Kyle Robinson and Yu-Ning Wong received approval for a COVID-19 clinical trial entitled "Hormonal intervention for the Treatment in Veterans with COVID-19 Requiring Hospitalization" (HITCH). This multi-center, phase 2, randomized controlled trial of best supportive care (BSC) vs BSC plus Degarelix". This work is supported by the VA/Prostate Cancer Foundation Center of Excellence.



Leave cigarettes behind! Prepare for the Great American Smokeout on November 19th by joining us for this important virtual meeting and creating a personal quit plan with your VA care team to help you quit!

Great American Smokeout: Voices and Faces

Thursday 11/19/2020, noon-1 pm

Virtual Webex event for Veterans and staff featuring Q & A interviews with Veterans and employees, and resources for both Veterans and VA staff.

Join by video:

[Crescenz VAMC Great American Smokeout Virtual Webex Event Join Link](#)

Webex Meeting number (access code): 199 820 5179

Meeting password: UCANQUIT2!

Join by telephone: +1 404 397-1596, access code 199 820 5179##



The Estate at Monroe, 1351 North Black Horse Pike, Williamstown, NJ Plus a Special Message from the Philadelphia Eagles

Veterans, bring your family to our next veterans town hall to be followed by a free, holiday movie and special message from the Philadelphia Eagles. You can pre-register at the Facebook link below.

<https://fb.me/e/bbprFU5N2>



Yoga Online

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center are pleased to provide Veterans, members of the Military and their families with FREE Online Yoga and Meditation programs effective immediately.

Through the service provider OMPRACTICE, the VA is offering unlimited access to virtual yoga and meditation to Veterans, and Military members and their families from the comfort and privacy of their home. If you are interested, please speak to your VA care provider. Your provider will then give you an access code to use to register. Follow the link below to sign up online: <https://www.ompractice.com/veteransaffairs/>



Major Expansion Changes – Big Wins for Veterans!

Previously: VA required a connection between the need for personal care services and the qualifying serious injury.

Expansion Changes: In addition to expanding to pre-1975 era Veterans, the enhanced PCAFC eliminates the need for a connection between personal care services and the qualifying serious injury. It also redefines serious injury to now include any service-connected disability — regardless of whether it resulted from an injury, illness or disease. Both these changes greatly expand program eligibility.

Why This is Important: In most cases, the eligible Veteran has multiple conditions that may warrant a need for personal care services. A Veteran's needs may be so complex that it can be difficult to determine what specific condition, out of many, causes the need for personal care services.



Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers Benefits

Benefits for eligible caregivers include:



Education and training



Access to healthcare insurance
(If caregiver is otherwise uninsured)



Mental health counseling



Financial stipend



Respite care



Wellness contact



Travel and per diem compensation
(when traveling for a Veteran's VA healthcare appointment)

How to Contact a Caregiver Support Coordinator:

Veterans and caregivers can find their local Caregiver Support Coordinator by...



Calling the Caregiver Support Line at **1-855-260-3274** - Toll free - Expanded Hours
(Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. ET; Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. ET)



Using the Caregiver Support Coordinator locator tool at www.caregiver.va.gov/support/New_CSC_Page.asp

Online application available
<https://www.va.gov/family-member-benefits/comprehensive-assistance-for-family-caregivers>

Released 10/1/2020



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

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 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.

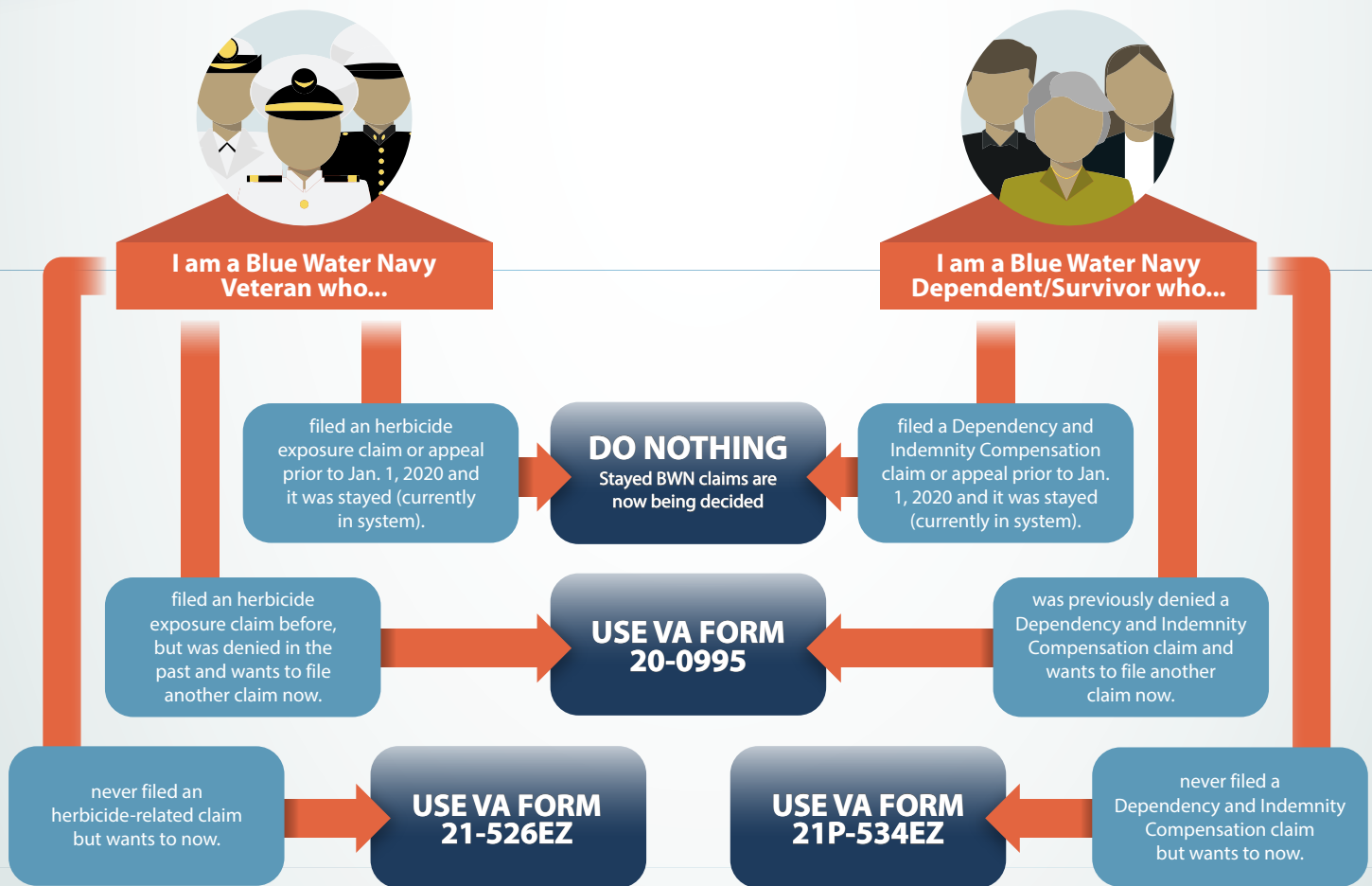
6 COMPLAINT AND APPEALS PROCESS

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.

BLUE WATER NAVY ACT TOOK EFFECT ON JANUARY 1, 2020

NAVIGATING THE BLUE WATER NAVY CLAIMS PROCESS

The Blue Water Navy (BWN) Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019 extended the presumption of herbicide exposure, such as Agent Orange, to Veterans who served in the offshore waters of the Republic of Vietnam between Jan. 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) encourages BWN Veterans, dependents, and survivors to file a claim for disability compensation if they believe they are entitled.



WAYS TO FILE A CLAIM

- ▶ If you are a Veteran, apply using the guidance at <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim>
- ▶ If you are a dependent or survivor of a Veteran, apply using the guidance at <https://www.va.gov/disability/dependency-indemnity-compensation>
- ▶ Contact VA-accredited Veterans Service Organization Representative or claims agent by searching here: <https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp>
- ▶ Go to a VA regional office and have a VA employee assist you. You can find your regional office on our Facility Locator page at <https://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/offices.asp>

Additional information and resources about the Blue Water Navy Act, eligibility requirements and how to file an initial or supplemental claim can be found online at <https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/blue-water-navy.asp>



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/

[https://explore.va.gov/
disability-compensation](https://explore.va.gov/disability-compensation)

www.clfamilymembers.fsc.va.gov/

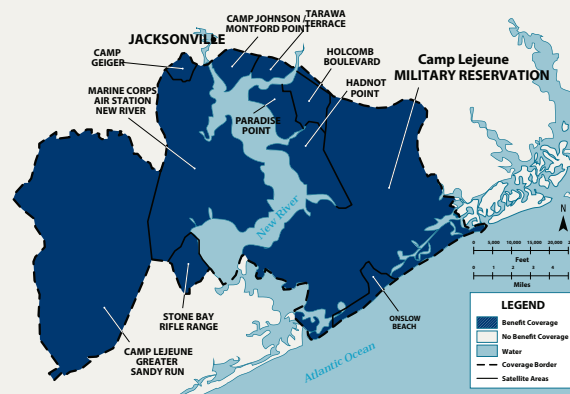
DISABILITY

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



ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

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



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



TALKING WITH A VETERAN IN CRISIS

You don't have to be an expert to ask if someone is going through a difficult time or having thoughts of suicide. If you notice changes in a Veteran's behavior or moods and you think they might be in crisis, it's time to respond. The simple act of having a conversation can help save a life.

Here are some ways to approach a conversation with a Veteran who may be suicidal.

First, assess the situation to determine if the Veteran may be in **imminent danger**. Check to see if there are any harmful objects in the area, such as firearms, sharp objects, or lethal drugs. Those at the highest risk for suicide often have a specific suicide plan, the means to carry out the plan, a time set for doing it, and an intention of following through with it.

Asking whether a Veteran is having thoughts of self-harm or suicide may seem extreme, but it is important. Although many people may not show clear signs of intent to harm themselves before doing so, they will likely answer direct questions about their intentions when asked. **Remember, asking if someone is having suicidal thoughts will not give them the idea or increase their risk.**

However, some of those who are at risk may not admit that they plan to attempt suicide. In case the Veteran won't talk about it, be sure to look for warning signs in the box to the right.

Safety Issues:

If you believe a Veteran is at high risk and has already harmed himself or herself, you need to call local emergency services at 911.

- **Never** negotiate with someone who has a gun. Get to safety and **call 911**.
- If the Veteran has taken pills or harmed himself or herself in some way, **call 911**.

Veterans who are in emotional distress and are showing warning signs for suicide can be connected to the 24-hour **Veterans Crisis Line**: Call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, use the **online chat**, or **text to 838255**. Caring, specially trained responders are available to provide free, **confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year**. Responders are available to speak to Veterans and their caregivers, family members, or friends.

Warning Signs of Imminent Suicide Risk

Acting recklessly or engaging in risky activities that could lead to death, such as driving fast or running red lights — seemingly without thinking

Showing violent behavior such as punching holes in walls, getting into fights, or engaging in self-destructive violence; feeling rage or uncontrolled anger; or seeking revenge

Giving away prized possessions, putting affairs in order, tying up loose ends, and/or making out a will

Seeking access to firearms, pills, or other means of harming oneself

If you and/or the Veteran are not in imminent danger, start a conversation to help the Veteran open up and to find out how you might be able to help. You can ask questions such as:

- "When did you first start feeling like this?"
- "Did something happen that made you begin to feel this way?"

When responding to answers from a Veteran, remember that simple, encouraging feedback goes a long way in showing support and encouraging help-seeking:

- "You're not alone, even if you feel like you are. I'm here for you, and I want to help you in any way I can."
- "It may not seem possible right now, but the way you're feeling will change."
- "I might not be able to understand exactly what you're going through or how you feel, but I care about you and want to help."

Even for Veterans who do not appear to be suicidal, it is important to direct them to resources to help them face mental health challenges and more.

For more information about the Veterans Crisis Line, visit [VeteransCrisisLine.net](https://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net)

For more information about VA's mental health resources, visit www.mentalhealth.va.gov

For access to more than 400 stories of strength and recovery from Veterans and their family members, visit [MakeTheConnection.net](https://www.MakeTheConnection.net)



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).

The Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center (CMCVAMC) has established the Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) Veteran Town Hall schedule to provide the Medical Center and Veterans an opportunity to share information. We will be publishing the schedule of the upcoming Town Halls in each edition of Choose VA Magazine.

Upcoming CMCVAMC Veteran Town Hall Meetings:

November 21, 2020 - 1 p.m.

Gloucester CBOC (invitation to all NJ CBOCs)
Town Hall and Free Drive-In Family Holiday Movie Night
Plus a Special Message from the Philadelphia Eagles
The Estate at Monroe, 1351 North Black Horse Pike,
Williamstown, NJ

January 23, 2021 - 2 p.m.

Camden CBOC Virtual Town Hall Event

February 27, 2021 - 11 a.m.

CMCVAMC Veteran Town Hall and Virtual
Black History Month Program



VETERAN

Town Hall



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



www.philadelphia.va.gov
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