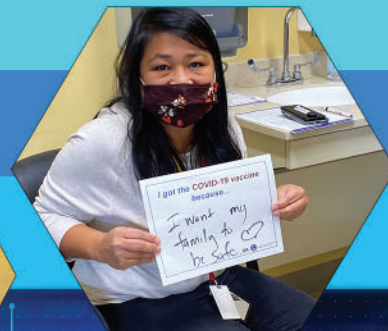


# 2021 Annual Report

Adapting Care in Challenging Times



VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration  
Wilmington VA Medical Center

# A Message from the Director

Flexibility and innovation were in high demand for the Wilmington VA Medical Center throughout 2021. As we continued our journey to becoming a high reliability organization, our focus was on patient safety, zero harm and providing access to COVID-19 vaccines. The mission continued as we cared for those impacted by the virus while also providing routine, essential, and urgent care to Veterans. VA priorities related to suicide prevention, responding to the opioid crisis, and expanding community partnerships were also paramount. As a team we learned new lessons, advanced innovation, and found opportunities to grow and improve care delivery to Veterans. I want to thank the Veterans who come to Wilmington VA Medical Center and our five Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) in Delaware and southern New Jersey for their understanding, support and cooperation throughout the year, as we expand services partnered to promote safety, timely access and an improved Veteran experience.

In 2022, we will continue to promote and prioritize a *Veteran First* approach to care; offering more services closer to where Veterans call home. Significant growth in the number of Veterans that have signed up for VA care in FY21 is a huge accomplishment. We demonstrated a 19.5% growth over the previous year and added 6,451 new Veterans unique to VA care. Most notably is the number of Women Veterans enrolled with Wilmington. Significantly higher

numbers of Women Veterans engaged in Wilmington with 11% of the Veterans served within the WVAMC services than national average around 8%.

Amid battling the pandemic, Veterans continued to enroll and seek services at the VA. We must continue to grow our numbers and highlight the new state of the art community-based outpatient clinics in Cape May County and Kent County were opened. The new clinics are not only larger but also provide more services including physical therapy and various specialty care services. Continued plans include the addition of radiology services inclusive of CT capabilities in the new Kent County clinic. The medical center began planning and awarding a new clinic in Atlantic County, located in Northfield, adjacent to the existing clinic. The new clinic will be double in size and include radiology services bringing additional services to where Veterans call home. The long-awaited parking garage opened on the main campus in the spring, while we also broke ground on a new building that will be focused on Whole Health and promoting the wellbeing of Veterans. This new 25,000 square foot facility is targeted for a grand opening in late 2022.

Priorities during 2022 will focus on expanding services at CBOCs, promoting COVID-19 vaccination efforts for Veterans, spouses, and caregivers. Additionally, attention to expanding surgical capacity and implementing a more robust

geriatric program as the Veteran population continues to age. 58% of Veterans are 60 years and older. Key priorities also include expanding mental health services at all locations. As our focus on innovation continues, we are emphasizing our partnerships with Rowan University and the University of Delaware to incorporate continuous learning while promoting research and improvements to the care we provide to Veterans today and into the future.

*Vince Kane*







**Providing exceptional care to promote the health and well-being of Veterans**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

2 - A Message from the Director

5 - COVID Timeline

7 - A Shot of Hope

9 - Virtual Care

10 - Carper's Summit

12 - Operating Statistics

15 - Moving Towards the Future

17 - Keeping Veterans Informed

19 - Diversity & Inclusion Among Staff

20 - Changing Minds

21 - Suicide Prevention Efforts

22 - Incorporating Whole Health in Veteran Care

23 - The Anonymous Responders

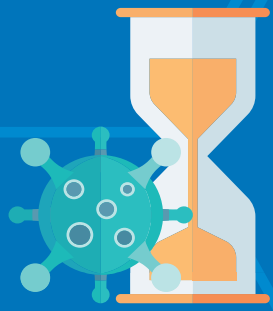
24 - Homeless & Caregiver Support Programs

25 - A Career of Longevity

26 - VA Employee Supports Wheelchair Games

27 - WVAMC Police Training





# COVID TIMELINE



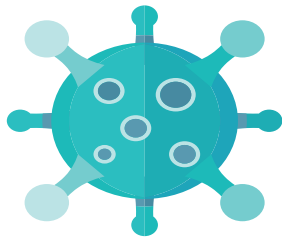
## December 2020



**12/22/20** – Vaccines arrive at Medical Center

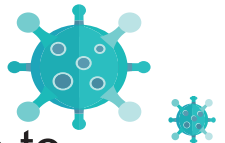
**12/22/20** – Moderna vaccine available for vaccination at main campus

**12/22/20** – CLC residents, staff among first to receive among Veterans with high-risk conditions

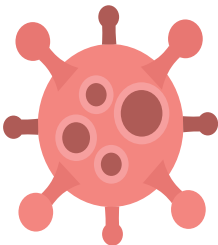


**12/30/20** – Vaccines available at all CBOCs during mass Vaccination Clinic events

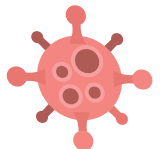
## January 2021



**1/25/21** – Vaccine becomes available to Veterans 75+

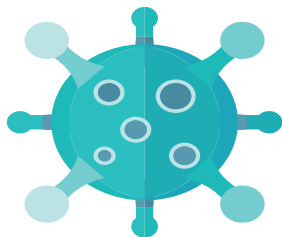


**1/21/21** – Pfizer vaccine available at Wilmington VA Medical Center



## February 2021

**2/1/21** – Vaccines available for eligible Veterans 65+





## March 2021

**3/6/21** – J&J vaccine available for Veterans

**3/3/21** – All vaccines available for 55+

**3/15/21** – All Veterans enrolled in care become eligible for vaccine

**3/26/21** – Save Lives Act (All Veterans, spouses and caregivers).

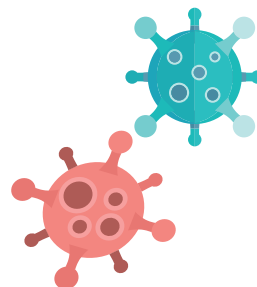
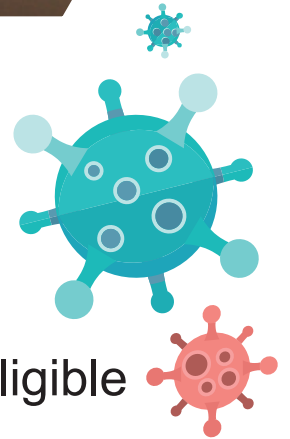
## June 2021

**6/7/2021** – Eligible adolescents can now receive the vaccination at Medical Center.

## September 2021

Booster Dose efforts began for immunocompromised Veterans.

**9/17/2021** - Drive-Thru vaccination tent opened.



# COVID TIMELINE CONT.



# A Shot of Hope

## COVID-19 Vaccine



The Wilmington VA Medical Center began offering the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to staff and the most vulnerable Veterans on December 22, 2020, following the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Emergency Use Authorization.

The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine was 94 percent effective in clinical trials in preventing the disease. The vaccine is administered initially in two doses, 28 days apart. The side effects are minimal and short-lived. We wanted to ensure easy access to the vaccine through walk-in clinics.

On February 1, 2021 we offered the vaccine to Veterans over 65 without an appointment.

As availability of the vaccine increased, we rapidly began expanding vaccine administration to Veterans of all age groups in March by expanding walk-in clinics to all locations and all enrolled Veterans. We also realized that it was important to make the vaccine easily accessible to Veterans who could not make the trip to the Medical Center.

Vaccine Clinics in key areas were setup throughout the 5 Community Based Outpatient Clinics that we serve throughout the months of March, April and May.

*continued on next page*

### October 2021

**10/25/2021-** Booster dose available for Veterans, caregivers and staff

### December 2021

**12/22/2021** - One year since vaccination efforts began in Wilmington.



# 36,404

Total number of  
vaccinations thru  
9/30/21

Our mobile team traveled from Southern Delaware to the Shore of New Jersey to administer COVID-19 vaccines to Veterans in some of the more remote areas across the state.

With the help of community partners on February 20, 2021 we were able to vaccinate 755 Veterans in one day at the Cape May County CBOC. On March 6, 2021, we added the use of the one dose Janssen vaccine, following the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Emergency Use Authorization for this vaccine.

On March 26, 2021, we began providing COVID-19 vaccinations to anyone who served in the military, their caregivers, spouses, and some other beneficiaries under the authority granted by

the Save Lives Act, signed by President Joe Biden March 24, 2021.

The Wilmington VA Medical Center focused on vaccinating as many Veterans as possible, and we were excited to multiply our efforts thanks to the SAVE LIVES Act.

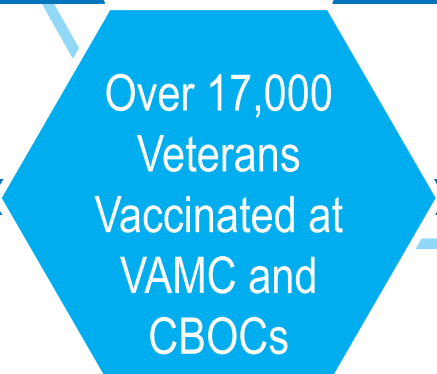
While the vaccination efforts are still on-going, tremendous effort was made to inform and vaccinate Veterans quickly and easily.

In Fiscal Year 2021, we vaccinated over 17,000 Veterans. We also know that many were able to be vaccinated in the community once the vaccine became more widely available. We encourage all Veterans to

get the COVID-19 vaccine and booster to protect themselves and their community.

If you need more information about the vaccine, talk to your PACT team.

*Thank you*





# Virtural Care

## Tele Urgent Care

**Veterans are now able to participate in a secure video or phone appointment with a VA tele urgent care provider.**

A registered nurse will give you advice and guide your care for prompt service if tele urgent care is right for you.

**1-833-TELE-URGENT**  
**(1-833-835-3874)**

*Or dial the main number of your local VISN 4 VA medical center and press option #3*

Available to Veterans receiving care at VA medical centers in VISN 4 including Altoona, Butler, Coatesville, Erie, Lebanon, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Wilkes-Barre and Wilmington.

 Learn more at [www.visn4.va.gov/tele-urgent](http://www.visn4.va.gov/tele-urgent)



**Choose VA**

Tele Urgent Care may be an option if:

- You live far from your VA facility
- You have health conditions that make traveling to the VA difficult
- You lack time to attend in-person appointments
- You don't require a hands-on physical examination

Tele Urgent Care uses the VA Video Connect app. To learn more and test your device, visit [mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect](http://mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect).



 **Save time!**

*No need to travel to a VA facility!*



**Save money!**

*No co-pay needed!*



The Wilmington VA Medical Center is committed to providing high-quality care when and where it is needed. We have learned that many Veterans prefer to receive care from the comfort of their home or other convenient locations using their phone, tablet, or computer. We continue to use feedback from Veterans to develop and enhance virtual care services where they make sense to achieve safe, effective, and convenient care.

During the pandemic, VA's telehealth services have been of critical importance, enhancing options for Veterans in Delaware and southern New Jersey to connect Veterans with the high-quality care they deserve. The Telehealth services assisted qualifying Veterans who do not have the internet or technology needed to access telehealth services from home by loaning them internet-connected devices or helping them apply for federal subsidies for their needed technology.

While not all clinical care can be done virtually, using virtual appointments, groups, and classes has proven to be easy and convenient for many types of care. Through VA's virtual care tools, we are able to leverage available technology to make sure that our patients are able to get the care that they need when and where they want it.



*Scan me*

**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Wilmington VA Medical Center

Wilmington VA Medical Center Director, Vince Kane, welcomed U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary, The Honorable Denis McDonough, for a tour of the medical center ahead of the annual Veterans Summit hosted by Senator Tom Carper (D-Del) held on campus.

Secretary McDonough greeted and talked with Veterans awaiting care to hear their stories. He was greeted by Air Force Veteran, Franklin Terrey, who shared he has been receiving his care at Wilmington for 8 years and stated he knows he's in the right place.

Part of the tour included Wilmington's drive thru COVID clinic, where Secretary McDonough and Senator Carper spoke with Veterans waiting in line to receive their vaccine. Both leaders also engaged in discussion with pharmacy staff about how the clinic is going. "Splendid work done today by the staff and volunteers at the Wilmington VAMC COVID vaccine drive-through clinic, 73% of Veterans enrolled here are fully vaccinated," said Secretary McDonough.

Delaware Senator Tom Carper held his annual Veterans Summit at the Wilmington VA Medical Center on Monday October 25, 2021 for a discussion on Veteran Suicide Prevention and mental health awareness. Carper's summit helps to bring together representatives from Veteran Service Organizations (VSO's) to meet with legislative leaders to discuss the best ways to meet the Veterans' needs. Among those in attendance were Senator Chris Coons, and Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester (all D-Del.), Delaware Lt. Governor Bethany Hall Long, VISN 4 Network Director Tim Liezert, and Wilmington VA Medical Center Director Vince Kane along with other VSO members.



Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States, and the 11th in Delaware. The VA estimates that Veterans die from suicide every day. Mental health and crisis support services are critical for people showing signs of suicide risk in their thoughts or behavior. The VA's Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has partnered with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) through a call to action for state and local communities to implement the 2018-2028 National Strategy for the Prevention of Veteran Suicide. The aim of the National Strategy is to prevent suicide among at-risk Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) using a comprehensive public health approach. The National Strategy provides a framework for identifying priorities, organizing efforts, and contributing to a national focus on preventing and ending suicide among Veterans.



“Suicide prevention remains a top priority for me. It is reassuring to work alongside Delaware’s leadership at today’s Veterans Summit to further collaborate on ways to tackle this very challenging and important matter in hopes of ending Veteran suicide,” said Secretary McDonough. “The number one takeaway today is that suicide is preventable. For any Veteran who is in crisis, please reach out to us. We are here for you and have the resources and tools to help immediately.”



“Today I was honored to join the congressional delegation and U.S Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and leaders in Delaware and across the nation to discuss the importance of ensuring our Veterans and families have the services that they need,” said Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long. “Our service members often bring home scars that are not visible and suffer in silence.... have been honored to launch with Governor Carney and the Wilmington VA the Governors Challenge which aims to end suicide among our Veterans. Thank you to the partners including the Behavioral Health consortium who are actively taking steps to ensure our Veterans and their families are taken care of.”

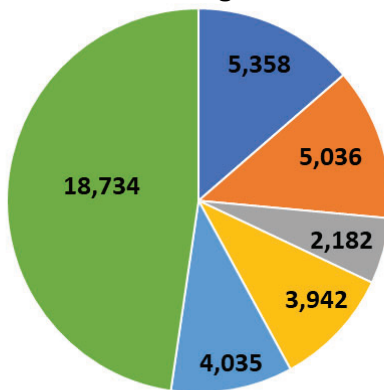
“The Wilmington VA is proud of the outstanding work of our staff to provide essential mental health care to our Veterans,” said Director Kane. “We are excited for our innovative partnership with the Governor and Lieutenant Governor to work together to raise awareness and prevent suicide among Veterans.”



VHA leads the Nation in telehealth Services. Using the VA Video Connect platform, Wilmington VAMC increased telehealth by 1,220% during the pandemic.



Veterans treated at Wilmington VAMC and CBOC'

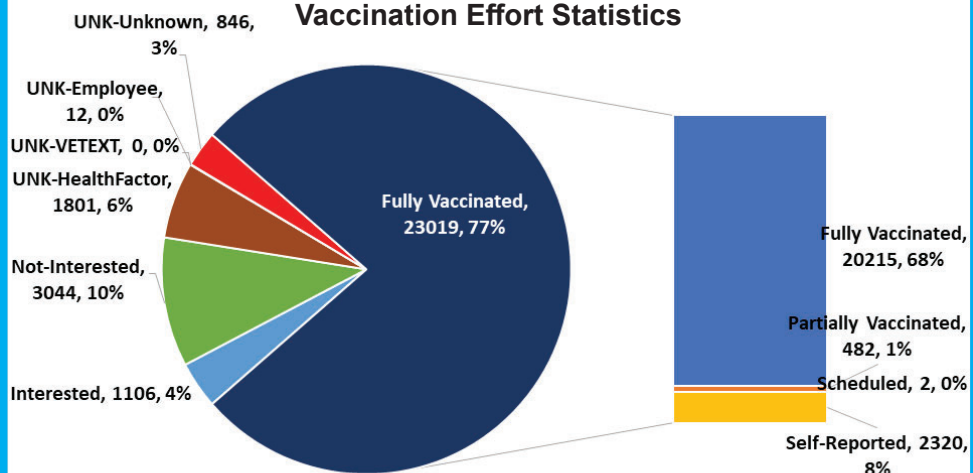


52% of Veterans receive care at CBOCs

■ Sussex ■ Kent ■ Cape May ■ Atlantic ■ Cumberland ■ Main Campus



Vaccination Effort Statistics





# By the Numbers

## Total Unique Patients

Male:  
34,345

Female:  
5,247

Total:  
39,593

For fiscal year 2021,  
Wilmington VA  
Medical Center had  
an operating budget  
of \$234,432,411.22

## Hospital Beds

40 – CLC

16 – 4E

10 – 4W

8 – ICUA

74 - Total

Outpatient  
Visits:  
233,247

Admissions:  
789

Surgical  
Procedures:  
1305 cases

## Virtual Care

Encounters  
Completed via  
Telehealth:  
47,711.5

VVC  
Appointments:  
31,948

Tele-Mental  
Health  
Encounters:  
18,702

Emergency  
Department:  
7,364 Visits  
during 2021

## Essential Healthcare Workers by the Numbers:

Physicians:  
93

Employees who  
are Veterans:  
241

Nurses:  
355

1250 total staff  
across the  
Medical Center  
and CBOC's  
1000 Non Veterans  
Employees

Wilmington VA Medical Center  
has 114 regularly scheduled  
volunteers.  
In FY 21, they gave 16,543 hours.  
During FY21, Wilmington VAMC's  
Center for Development & Civic  
Engagement received \$76,610.50  
in monetary and non-monetary  
donations.



# Moving Towards the Future

Throughout FY21 several renovations and facility upgrades occurred. The Dover CBOC relocated to a much larger state of the art facility on November 1, 2020. The new clinic size from 9,000 square feet to over 29,000 square feet. The new site will continue to provide Veterans with the same services that were available at the former site, and the additional space will allow for the expansion of services such as: primary care, behavioral health, specialty services and telehealth.

## Dover CBOC

The new clinic also includes:

- 18 primary care exam rooms
- 5 specialty exam rooms
- optometry rooms
- phlebotomy lab
- telehealth rooms
- conference/group meeting rooms
- staging area for home-based primary care
- physical medicine and rehabilitation suite
- offices for care coordinators
- requisite waiting, check-in, storage and medication rooms
- offices for Veteran Service Organizations
- 12 mental health rooms
- 3 women's health rooms
- audiology suite
- procedure rooms



## Cape May County CBOC

Dec. 4, 2020, Veterans in Cape May County and southern New Jersey were welcomed to the new location to access health care with the opening of the new Cape May County CBOC in Rio Grande.

The new clinic moved off the U.S. Coast Guard Base in Cape May to the new 11,000 square foot facility in Rio Grande. The new clinic expanded telehealth capabilities to bring more specialists to Veterans and will provide hearing aid maintenance and repair, prescription drug benefits, physical therapy and optometry services. The new site will continue to provide Veterans with the same services that were available at the former site, including:

- Primary care
- Women's health
- Podiatry
- Preventative care
- Laboratory services
- Social work services
- Mental health care

Expanding Services to include:

- Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation
- Optometry
- Phlebotomy
- Specialty Care





# Construction Continued

In July of 2020 Wilmington Veterans Affairs Medical Center announced it will be relocating its Atlantic County Community Based Outpatient Clinic to a new facility to be built in Northfield, NJ. in 2023. The new Northfield-based clinic is slated to be a new construction building with 22,500 square feet compared to current size which is roughly 10,000 square feet.

**The new clinic**, which is expected to open late 2023 will be located at 2101 New Road, Northfield, NJ. Construction is expected to commence late spring 2022. Services will continue at the current location until the new clinic is available.

The new Atlantic County CBOC will continue to provide primary care, women's health, phlebotomy, specialty care, optometry, physical medicine & rehabilitation, telehealth, radiology, home-based primary care and care in the community. Expanded services will include nutrition, pharmacy, radiology, podiatry, dermatology, prosthetics, mental health services, and homeless program.



**Rendering of Atlantic County CBOC**



The Parking Garage at WVAMC opened in April of 2021, with four stories of 370 spacious parking spots for Veterans, Staff and Visitors. This project opened ahead of schedule and provides easy access for all.

## Building 13

Building 13 at WVAMC began a complete internal renovation in mid-2020. Renovation is moving along. Once completed, it will house:

- Veteran Benefits Administration offices
- Veteran Service Officers
- Medical Center administrative offices
- Anticipated opening late spring 2022.

### Clinical Support Building

A new Clinical Support Space began initial construction March 2021. Anticipated completion Winter 2023. This project will consolidate administrative services into one location to include:

- Veteran centered meeting spaces
- Whole Health
- PT/OT Department
- Behavioral Health Department
- Compensated work therapy
- Care in the Community
- Social Work
- Home Based Primary Care



# Keeping Veterans Informed Throughout the Year

Utilizing technology has become important to reach the widest possible audience. Our goal is to keep Veterans informed about healthcare, current events, and medical center updates. While continuing to use bulletin boards, flyers, and other brochures to distribute information on campus, we have also increased the use of social media and e-mail to widely distribute information on events, healthy living topics, and other key information for Veterans.

Veterans can look for a monthly newsletter, feature stories, and other key information in their e-mail inbox, or follow our social media for regular updates and information about the Medical Center. Caregivers and other supporters of Veterans can also follow our social media and sign up for e-mail updates. We encourage people to read the information and to share it with Veterans who may not have access. We continue to use feedback to enhance communication and look for the best way to deliver information to the diverse group of Veterans that we serve.

continued on next page.

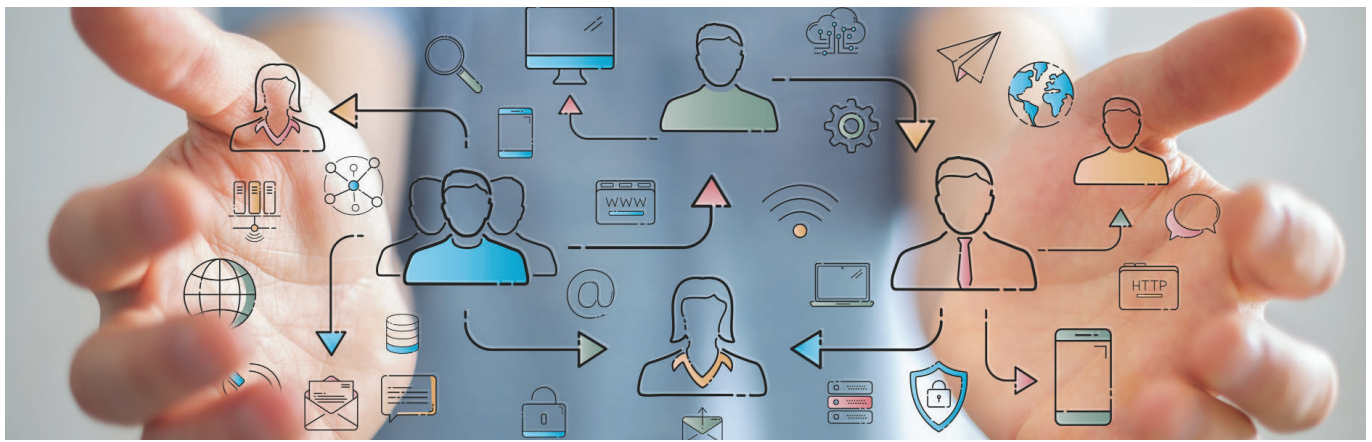
30,976 Subscribers  
58% Response rate  
297 Bulletins sent

3,648 Followers  
15,067 Check-ins  
169,755 Page Reach

582 Followers  
1333 Posts  
2437 Page Reach

894 Followers  
2980 Posts





Keeping up-to-date with changes about key information is always important, but it became an even bigger priority during the pandemic. We quickly adapted and delivered messages in a variety of formats including e-mail, Town Halls, social media, text messaging, website, and regular mail reminders. Veterans and other stakeholders can join our e-mail newsletter list on the right hand side of our homepage, [www.va.gov/wilmington-health-care/](http://www.va.gov/wilmington-health-care/) to receive monthly newsletters and other critical updates as needed. You can like us on Facebook @WilmingtonVAMC or follow us on Twitter @WilmingtonVAMC to find out about events, classes, and other key information.

We also distribute key information through postings and handouts throughout the Medical Center. Our goal is to keep everyone informed about current events and important information. It is our honor to be your choice for healthcare.

**Want to keep updated on everything at Wilmington VAMC?**  
**Head on over to**  
**[www.va.gov/wilmington-health-care/](http://www.va.gov/wilmington-health-care/)**

The mission of VA Outreach Live continues to advocate the three words that guide the Wilmington VA Medical Center Outreach Team forward in their objective to "ENGAGE, EDUCATE and ENROLL" eligible Veterans into the VA health care system. Listen live at [987thecoast.com](http://987thecoast.com)

EMAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO:  
[VHAWIMOUTREACHTEAM@VA.GOV](mailto:VHAWIMOUTREACHTEAM@VA.GOV)



Outreach Live Q & A every last Wednesday of the month from 10:10 a.m. - 11 a.m. on 92.7 WGMD talk radio.

**WILMINGTON VA OUTREACH LIVE**  
 Boots on the Ground, Voices on Air

**VA Health Chat App**

The VA Health Chat app provides easy online access to chat with VA staff when you have minor health questions. Learn more on our [Health Chat webpage](#) or watch a [demonstration video on YouTube](#).

[Get updates on affected services and facilities](#)

VA Wilmington health care

SERVICES AND LOCATIONS

Health services

Locations

NEWS AND EVENTS

Events

News releases

Stories

**VA Wilmington health care**

[Make an appointment](#) [View all health services](#) [Register for care](#)

**Option 1**

Scroll to bottom & Click Subscribe

[See all stories >](#)

Get updates from VA Wilmington health care

- Subscribe to VA Wilmington health care news and announcements
- Subscribe to VA Wilmington health care emergency notifications
- VA Wilmington health care operating status

- VA Wilmington Healthcare System Facebook page
- VA Wilmington Healthcare System at Twitter
- VA Wilmington Healthcare System at Instagram

**Option 2**

SCAN ME

**VA** U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
 Wilmington VA Medical Center

# Welcoming our New Chief of Staff

Dr. LeDeaux became the Chief of Staff at the Wilmington VAMC in August 2021. Dr. LeDeaux has B.A. in Biology and M.S. in Environmental Science. She received her medical degree from Rutgers University – Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. She is board certified in Family Medicine and comes from a background of private primary care practice, integrated health care system experience, and academic family medicine. She has been employed by the Veteran's Health Administration (VHA) since 2010, first at VA New Jersey Healthcare System. Prior to joining us in Wilmington she served for 7 years as the Associate Chief of Staff for the Ambulatory Care and then became the Chief of Staff in 2018. Dr. LeDeaux has held various leadership positions and has practiced Women's Health throughout her entire medical career. She has a special interest in initiatives that involve practice innovations, preventive health, whole health, and performance Improvement.



## DIVERSITY and INCLUSION

The WVAMC's journey to becoming a High Reliability Organization is through a diverse work culture that constantly uses personal reflection to assure we are continuously working toward eliminating inequality, bias and disparities while promoting a culture of inclusion and continuous learning.

During FY21 Wilmington stood up its first ever Diversity and Inclusion Council. The council conducts research and provides briefings to senior leadership quarterly. This council has championed the inclusion of Equal Employment Opportunity assessments being included our annual performance appraisals. This council was the driving force behind the creation of a facility wide anti-discrimination policy statement. This statement encourages and reminds staff that we are an institution dedicated to eliminating harassment and discrimination while also fostering an environment where Veterans know they are receiving world-class health care regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, page, and employees can address and report issues without fear of retribution.

In August we held several Diversity and Inclusion events in Wilmington and at each of the CBOCs. While also promoting camaraderie and inclusiveness, events focused on presenting information about the newly formed Diversity and Inclusion Council and increasing participation in our Special Emphasis Programs. Our EEO Office worked in conjunction with the Diversity and Inclusion Council to create a Diversity and Inclusion Survey which was offered to our employees at each of these sessions in August. We look forward to more Diversity and Inclusion Council Events in 2022 to further educate staff and provide resources to all.





# Changing Minds: Vietnam Veteran Shares His Experience Using VA Health Care

May 6, 2021

All Veterans have their own unique experiences from their time in the military. After their service, each Veteran has decisions to make on where to get health care. For different reasons, some Veterans may choose not to get their care through the Veterans Health Administration.

One Marine Corps Veteran, who was injured in Vietnam, would say it was having a talk with a doctor at a VA facility that helped him change his mind. VA's motto is to fulfill President Lincoln's promise, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan," by serving and honoring the men and women who are American's Veterans. The motto means a lot to retired Marine Corps 2nd Lt. John "Jack" Rine.

"I moved to Delaware 20 years ago and didn't use the VA for my medical care, instead used my civilian medical care, as I was having trouble getting my medical supplies," he said. "The Georgetown VA clinic (Sussex County Community Based Outpatient Clinic [CBOC]) was available to me, and I met with Dr. Romina Thomas. And she turned the tide for me in my thinking of the VA and managed to help me get all my supplies with no issues."

Every Veteran has a different journey during their health care. By providing a whole health approach to their visit the Veterans receive the level of respect they

earned.

"So much of medical care is about the intangibles. Am I listened to? Does someone care about what happens to me? The best way to gain confidence in your care is to deliver it properly, with genuine care and concern. The VA can help so many people by maintaining a culture of respect for Veterans that Veterans can recognize and be helped by. Displaying this message, keeping this culture alive is the best way to help our patients," stated Dr. Romina Thomas, Primary Care Physician at the Sussex County CBOC.

Rine, who has been in a wheelchair since 1967 when he was wounded in Vietnam, explained establishing a relationship with a provider and getting care through VA has been so important to him.

"I've been a patient of hers ever since she has been there, and she has even taken over most of my primary care now," he said. "She said if I ever had any issues to give her a call and she has changed my way of thinking. She is a top-notch doctor. The staff she has working with her, are fantastic and very cordial. I have been converted and it's been good."

These kind words were not lost on Dr. Thomas and she attributes it to the culture VA fosters the people who are hired, and the Veterans who come for care.

"In the VA, there are so many caring and compassionate people who work here

because they get to meet people like Mr. Rine. It is so easy to talk with him and immediately see what a great contribution he has made to fellow Veterans and for our country. The VA attracts people who are motivated and moved by the wonderful and brave patients like Mr. Rine. Serving Veterans elevates our goals of care. We want to help and do our best for heroes like him," said Dr. Thomas.

In the 21st Century, there are still many Veterans who are in need and haven't taken advantage of services offered by VA. They either have outside insurance and use that or are unaware they may qualify for VA benefits. When Veterans do not speak up regarding their health, they remain camouflaged in the community. There are many ways for the Veteran to receive quality of care especially during the pandemic, from tele-health, video chats to in-person visits. Offering options for health care is paramount.

"I can understand someone's apprehensive about the VA, I've experienced the good and the bad," Rine stated. "I'm a positive person, I like to think, or I wouldn't be here today. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, give it a try if it's not for you then try other means. But I've been converted, and I have Dr. Thomas and the staff at Georgetown to thank for that. And I'm sure there are others like that throughout our country."



# Veterans Affairs and Community Partners Highlight Veteran Suicide Prevention Efforts in Southern New Jersey

July 13, 2021



Matt Jacobs, VA Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinator encouraged everyone to use the #BeThere, “Be there for Veterans, be there for their families, and simply be there in their time of need. We want to be there before the crisis providing services, providing jobs, providing houses, and providing resources that are so needed.”

Jacobs called on everyone in attendance to help with areas that need improvement: identifying service members, Veterans, and their families, promoting connectedness and improving care, and increase lethal means safety.

NORTHFIELD, N.J. — The Veteran community of southern New Jersey came together to call attention to joint efforts to end Veteran suicide July 13 outside of the Veterans Affairs Atlantic County Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Northfield, N.J.

The joint event was backdropped by the display of the Flags of Forgotten Soldiers which is meant to serve as a visual reminder of those who we lost to suicide. For the last 30 days, 600 flags have flown at the site of the event to memorialize the approximately 17 Veterans whose lives end daily across the nation because of suicide.



“Our purpose for creating these displays is to inspire someone to reach out and help a Veteran in need,” stated John Demarco of the Knights of Columbus of South New Jersey.

According to the VA’s Veteran Suicide Data and Reporting Mental Health, there were 370 Veteran suicides between 2014 and 2018 (2018 is the most recent data available). And in 2018, the New Jersey Veteran suicide rate was nearly seven points higher than the New Jersey non-Veteran suicide rate (17.4 vs. 10.9 per 100,000).



# Incorporating Whole Health in Veteran Care

February 8, 2022

VHA is leading the way in Veteran-centered care by integrating and promoting whole health services into practice. To focus on Veterans and their well-being, the Wilmington VA Medical Center (WVAMC) uses a Whole Health approach to advance the Veterans health care into the future. Whole Health practices are more than positive thinking, they include clinical evidenced-based practices that can lead to improved physical, mental, social and spiritual health.

The VA's Whole Health approach functions on three core characteristics: to provide personalized, proactive, patient-driven health care to Veterans. Whole Health is a transformational method to healthcare that embraces each unique Veteran's mission, aspiration, and purpose. Whole health seeks to understand what matters most to the Veterans we work with and to collaboratively create healthcare plans that assist veterans to meet their goals. This approach is a commitment to empowering and equipping the Veteran's we serve with the skills they need to be successful to improve their health and quality of life.

"Here at WVAMC we offer several Whole Health offerings to help Veterans explore what matters most to them and build skills to assist them to reach their

healthcare goals. We offer most of our offerings via VA Video Connect - so they are open to any enrolled Veteran that receives their care at Wilmington VAMC or our associated CBOCs," stated Tori Moskovciak, Psy.D., Whole Health Clinical Director.

Veterans can attend whole health programs whether they are either in-person or virtually which allows for more timely care. Veterans can plan virtual whole health visits while healing in comfortable, peaceful safe spaces.

WVAMC Whole Health team offers Veteran Peer Led Classes that include Introduction sessions, Taking Charge of My Life and Health Groups, Mindful Movement Classes including Yoga, and Tai Chi, and Wellness Classes such as CALM Mindfulness Group, Guided Imagery Group, Whole Health for Pain Group Education, and Battlefield Acupuncture.

As WVAMC and Outpatient Clinics move to expand Whole Health services, there are many challenges that arise when treating the Veterans. The one main hurdle is reaching the Veterans, but the Whole Health team has a few tools at their disposal to help accomplish this.

"Any of the above wellness classes are available by referral via the Whole Health consult- the Veteran's care team

can place a Whole Health Consult to get connected. Interested Veterans can also self-refer by outreaching to myself. There are also numerous opportunities to access Whole Health virtually including the Live Whole Health App and the #livewholehealth blog," stated Moskovciak.

One of the other challenges facing this transformation is the fundamental gap in health care education for staff. To achieve this approach staff are offered education in a collaborative effort to support the patient-driven model and promote access to integrative therapies. Moskovciak is hopeful that as staff continue to grow their knowledge, Veteran's participation in Whole Health services will increase.

"Hoping to continue to embrace the new normal and offer hybrid wellness programming. Additionally, we are working hard to train front line staff in Primary Care and Mental Health in Whole Health principles to ensure Veterans are experiencing holistic and patient centered healthcare each time they interact with our facility. We hope to continue to grow to offer more wellness modalities and self-management support for our veterans."

Ask your provider about whole health services or make a self-referral to Dr. Moskovciak.



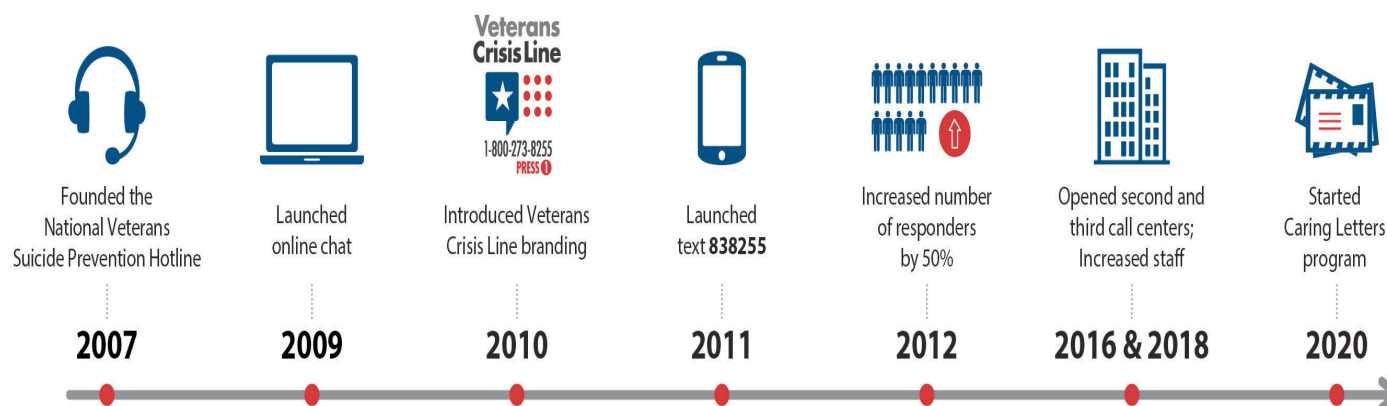
DISCOVER  
WHAT MATTERS  
Live Whole Health.



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

LEARN MORE

## Veteran Crisis Line Time Line



## The Anonymous Responders

August 4, 2021

The mission of caring for the nation's heroes is what unites Veterans Affairs as the nation's largest, integrated health care system. But what happens when one of our heroes or family members calls in for help or is in distress is where our mission comes full circle in an instant.

During an early morning shift at the Wilmington VA Medical Center, Beth Smith, an Advanced Medical Support Assistant (Behavioral Health), received a call from a Veteran who was in crisis.

The Veteran sounded very distressed on the phone and was adamant that he couldn't take it anymore and he needed help, said Smith. Responders are trained to keep the Veteran talking and reassuring them that they care about them and will listen as long as needed.

"This was my chance to let the Veteran know that I was here, and I was going to help him, but also listen to him," Smith said. "The only thing in my mind was to be there for the

Veteran and listen, sympathize with him and let him know I was here for him and I am listening."

She was able to keep the Veteran engaged in conversation by asking who was in the house with the Veteran at the time, if there were any weapons in the house.

"I wanted to make sure I did everything I could to keep that Veteran on the phone with me and focused on our call," she said.

Responders are not alone when talking with Veterans in times of crisis, they are a team working to help. Staff work together to either contact local emergency personnel or VA Police to help as one responder stays on the line with the Veteran. The contact with the Veteran is never broken to ensure they keep talking until help arrives.

Keysha Medley, another Advanced Medical Support Assistant (Behavioral Health) at Wilmington VA Medical Center, jumped on the

other line to reach out to the Crisis Line, local authorities, and the VA Police who could send for a welfare check.

"While she [Smith] was keeping him on the phone and ensuring him we were getting help, I was able to get in touch with someone to do a welfare check and she stayed on the line with him and kept him calm and let the Veteran know someone was reaching out to him," remarked Medley.

Once the Crisis Line clicks into the call, they take over the with Veteran and ensure a warm handoff to local authorities. Success means keeping the caller engaged on the phone until they are out of danger.

"We did find out later that the Veteran was admitted for help and that made us feel a lot better about the situation," Medley said.



Keysha Medley



Beth Smith

70,271 calls  
were received  
in FY21



# Homeless and Caregiver Programs

Program of General Caregiver Support Services Eligibility requirements:

Veterans must have a serious injury, which is a single or combined service-connected disability rating of 70% or more, and meet the following eligibility requirements to participate in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers.

- The individual is in need of in-person personal care services for a minimum of six (6) continuous months based on any one of the following:
- An inability to perform an activity of daily living; or a need for supervision, protection, or instruction. It is in the best interest of the individual to participate in the program.
- The individual receives ongoing care from a Primary Care Team or will do so if VA designates a Family Caregiver.

Program of General Caregiver Support Services Offers:

- Training and education
- Diagnosis specific programs for Caregivers
- Caregiver Support Program website
- Caregiver Support Line (CSL)
- CSL Education Calls
- Self-Care Courses
- Email list for monthly newsletters and updates

Caregiver Support Program

If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to call the Wilmington VA Medical Center Caregiver Support Team by calling, 302-994-2511 ext. 4764 Monday – Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 pm.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted a need for Veteran housing in America. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2020 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress found that on a single night in January 2020, there were 37,252 Veterans experiencing homelessness in America.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are committed in its partnership in a mission of ending Veteran homelessness by:

- \* MAKE ENDING VETERAN HOMELESSNESS A TOP PRIORITY
- \* LEAD WITH AN EVIDENCE-BASED HOUSING FIRST APPROACH
- \* RE-ENGAGE UNDERSERVED VETERANS
- \* ENSURE THE DELIVERY OF QUALITY SUPPORTIVE SERVICES
- \* INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF AND ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HOUSING

## Ending Veteran Homelessness, Increasing Access to Affordable Housing



**Veteran Homeless Services Program  
Homeless Outreach Coordinator:  
302-588-3290**

During this year, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) commemorates 75 years of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Here at the Wilmington VA, one employee celebrates a milestone of his own.

HVAC Supervisor Robert (Bob) Minner, has been with the Wilmington VA Medical Center since 1982, when he started as a Boiler Operator on March 15th. If you're doing the math, 2022 will be his 40th anniversary. He has spent his career making sure the heating and cooling ventilation as well as the steam plant are in tip top shape for all the employees and Veterans.

Minner says the secret to longevity is to try to not let the negative get to you – stay positive as best as you can, because if you let that get to you, you're not going to survive. "I spent 20 years as the leader of the boiler plant and when the supervisor job came open, I filled that and have been here ever since. I was at the right place at the right time in 1982. I was looking to get out of the chemical industry, as I previously worked for Wilmington Chemical Corporation as a maintenance boiler plant operator."



Minner who is a native of Elsmere, a suburb of Wilmington, grew up within ear shot of the Wilmington VA Medical Center and has seen it prosper throughout the years.

"I've seen a lot of changes here, when I came here the hospital was old, it was a 15-bed ward hospital and when projects did happen, they were few and far between as the money just wasn't there."

When Minner made the transition from boiler plant to the supervisor things were starting to change around the VA, including more focus on infrastructure changes to the facilities to provide better care for Veterans.

"I've never seen project money continue to flow, but the facilities needed it badly, this place was built in 1948. I watched everything go from mechanical to digitally controlled now. It was tough for me because I'm an old mechanical guy and the conversion was a challenge to me but staying positive helped keep up with that."

During the past 74 years, Wilmington VA Medical Center has been an integral part of VHA's rich 75-year history to improve the health of Veterans and the entire nation by providing services and technologies that have changed the way health care providers across the country practice medicine.

"It's 100% better now; we're constantly making improvements. If something goes wrong, even if I'm home, I can bring it up on the computer and see what the issue is or if everything is running. So that is big change instead of sending someone into check the machines. The digital transition has made a really big difference for Veteran care. We just don't have all the issues we had when everything was mechanical, now we can be ahead of the issues."

When someone retires or leaves reflection comes to mind and Minner said his fondest memory would have to be the people he's worked with throughout the years.

"There are a lot of really good people here and I've had a lot of good experiences and good relationships with the people here."

Minner is looking forward to retirement, and says it is time to turn it over to someone younger and more agile than he is. "It is a lot of demand to get in those tight spots. I'm 68 so climbing up ladders and out windows or into ceilings is past my prime. My wife and I will do some traveling and spend some time at the beach. My grandkids keep me busy. I've had a good career here."

We speak for all those at Wilmington VA, employee and Veteran alike, in saying you will be greatly missed, Bob. We wish a long, joyful retirement.

# Air Force Veteran, VA employee honored to support Wheelchair Games

August 24, 2021

Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System (DEMPS) Program volunteers from across Veterans Affairs helped with the 40th National Veterans Wheelchair Games during in-person competition in New York City for the first feel good event held in-person since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jimmy Sanford, a United States Air Force Veteran and CDL Driver from Facilities and Engineering services was just one volunteer from the Wilmington VA Medical Center to lend his hand at helping the make the games a success. He learned of the deployment via his manager who constantly receives emails for all possible opportunities.

"Being a member of the Wheelchair Olympic deployment was such an honor! My specific role as a driver was to deliver supplies and equipment to each event site in and around New York City, which was not an easy task in NYC," laughed Sanford.

Sanford works behind the scenes of Wilmington VA Medical Center by assisting Veterans and staff while performing a variety of responsibilities. One day he could be driving Veterans to events, delivering vaccines to local CBOC's, or maintaining the facility grounds. Logistics plays a crucial part for the games. Specialty wheelchairs are needed for different games like basketball, softball, and baseball for Veterans. Staff also needed items like tables, chairs, and tents to complete their portion of the games.

Transporting items allowed Sanford the chance to meet with Veterans competing in the games. "I had several interactions, and all were very positive," he remarked.

"I took a picture with one Veteran and his service dog, he was very upbeat, as were his caretakers. During the loading and unloading of Veterans, I

would often have conversations with them about their service, where they live, and any topic they may bring up."

The DEMPS Program is the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) main program for deployment of clinical and non-clinical staff to an emergency or disaster, and the assignments vary in skillsets, locations, and length of time.

DEMPS may be used for internal VHA missions, as well as supporting external missions identified under the VA's 4th Mission and in direct support of the National Response Framework Emergency Support Function #6 (Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing, and Human Services) and/or #8 (Public Health and Medical Services).

## 4th Mission

NJ State Veterans home –  
5 staff deployed

Delaware Long Term Care locations –  
12 staff supported 83 facilities

NJ FEMA and Vaccination Mega Sites –  
43 staff supported 5 sites

DEMPS – 14 staff deployed to  
25 locations





# WVAMC Police Train, Stay Sharp with New Technology Amid COVID -19

April 5, 2021

The Wilmington Veterans Affairs Medical Center (WVAMC) has its own Police Force. The team of Police Officers stays up-to-date with the help of new technology that allows for improved training with less time spent in the field. The Multiple Interactive Learning Objectives system (MILO), allows for training on several tasks in the same location at once while adding hands-on firearms and use of force training exercises and scenarios.

Before the WVAMC received the MILO system, they were conducting training activities off site for a wide range of activities. Although actual weapon range time is still conducted off site, now the officers can crawl, walk and run through the gamut of exercises and scenarios all while preparing for the challenges they may face.

"It allows officers to come through virtual based training, and allows us as trainers to create an environment that the officers would be familiar with working in the medical center and give them an opportunity to go through active threat training," stated Lt. David Stroup, Wilmington VA Police.

The range system is completely customizable to fit any situation our VA Police may encounter at the medical center or one of the five community based outpatient clinics. It allows the use of interactive weapons with feedback as to recoil on weapons and heart-rate monitors.

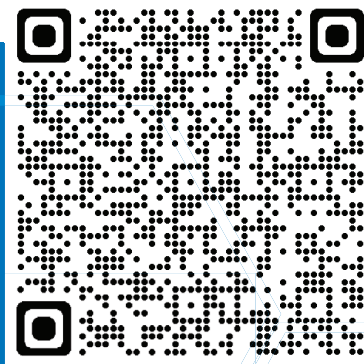
"In the past we conducted a lot of table-top exercises with simulated weapons, and this system allows the officers to hold all the weapons they

would actually deploy to a call with and allows them to engage with the targets on the screen with a laser system and subjects on screen will react," said Stroup.

The benefits of the system are already paying off in the new environment of COVID with interactive training and instant feedback to save lives.

The VA police force is made up of more than 5,000 officers nationwide. They are responsible for ensuring a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment for employees and Veterans alike. They maintain order through voluntary compliance and law enforcement as needed and are integrated into the patient care team through a variety of relationships and committee memberships.

## Informational QR Code for First Responders



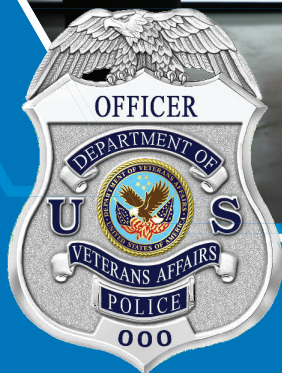
Phone numbers and links to assist Veterans in crisis

Scan me

75% of our team are also Veterans

35 Officers, who receive 8hr of Simulator Training

2 Officers named VA National Police Officer of the Year



# IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO CLIP AND SAVE

**Veterans Crisis Line**  
(800) 273-8255 (Press 1)  
**Appointment Scheduling Center**  
(800) 461-8262, press 2  
**Nurse Call Center**  
(800) 461-8262, press 3

## **Community Based Outpatient Clinics -DELAWARE**

**Kent County CBOC**  
655 South Bay Road, Suite 3C  
Dover, DE 19901-4659  
**Sussex County CBOC**  
21748 Roth Avenue  
Georgetown, DE 19947

## **Community Based Outpatient Clinics - NEW JERSEY**

**Atlantic County CBOC**  
1909 New Rd., Northfield, NJ 08225  
**Cape May County CBOC**  
3801 US 9 South, Unit 2  
Rio Grande, NJ 08242  
**Cumberland County CBOC**  
79 W. Landis Ave, Vineland, NJ 08360

**Beneficiary Travel**  
(800) 461-8262, ext. 5212/4000  
**Billing Information**  
(800) 461-8262, ext. 5130  
**Community Care Billing Department**  
(877) 881-7618

(302) 633-5353  
(302) 994-2511, ext. 7576  
**Medical Records/Release of Information**  
(800) 461-8262, ext. 4133/5242

**MyHealtheVet Coordinator**  
(800) 461-8262, ext. 5849  
**Patient Advocate**  
(800) 461-8262, ext. 5556  
**Prescription Refill Line**  
(800) 450-8262  
**Returning Veterans**  
(800) 461-8262, ext. 4763/4576  
**VA Benefits**  
(800) 827-1000  
**Vet Centers**  
**Sussex Vet Center**  
(302) 225-9110 or  
(877) 927-8387  
**South Jersey Vet Center**  
(609) 487-8387  
**Wilmington Vet Center**  
(302) 994-1660 or  
(877) 927-8387



**VA**



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

Veterans Health Administration  
Wilmington VA Medical Center

**Choose** 