



Live Whole Health

Official news from VA Puget Sound Health Care System



2021 Winter | Issue 3



Message from our Director

COVID-19 Vaccine Update

Your care and safety remains our #1 priority during the unprecedented pandemic. And we appreciate your continued trust in VA Puget Sound as we partner with you to meet your health care needs.

VA Puget Sound is now providing Pfizer (<https://www.fda.gov/media/144414/download>) and

Moderna (<https://www.fda.gov/media/144638/download>) vaccines depending on the site, which include: Seattle, American Lake, Silverdale and Mount Vernon.

We continue to proactively contact Veterans to make vaccine appointments when it is their turn. No walk-in vaccines, by appointment only. Eligible Veterans can call 206-716-5716 to schedule, or contact their primary care team.

"Each vaccine brings hope!"

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine adds one more layer of protection against infection for you, your families, your friends, your fellow Veterans, and our staff who care for you. We continue to follow VA's Vaccination Plan—<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/docs/n-coronavirus/VHA-COVID-Vaccine-Plan-14Dec2020.pdf> (page 27 is the risk stratification). We receive limited amounts of the vaccine each week. Our ability to expand vaccines is dependent on the amount we receive.

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Observances

February:

- Black History Month
- American Heart Month
- 5: National Wear Red Day

March:

- Women's History Month
- Brain Injury Awareness Month
- Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month
- National Nutrition Month
- 14-20: National Patient Safety Awareness Week

Message from our Director *(continued from page 1)*

If you are receiving a second dose vaccine, please bring in your COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card. And for your own safety, please don't take selfies featuring the card as it features your full name and birth date.

Veterans 65+ years or older are being actively scheduled now for the vaccine.

Our next priority group will be Veterans 65 years and older. Your VA health care team will contact you for scheduling when you're eligible to get a vaccine. Veterans must be health care eligible to be scheduled for vaccination, but do not need to be enrolled in primary care/Patient Aligned Care Team.

On January 22, 2021, VHA announced that health care facilities will begin offering COVID-19 testing and vaccinations to designated family caregivers of Veterans participating in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. VA Puget Sound, like all VHA care facilities, will determine the start date for vaccines for eligible Caregivers based on our site-specific resources, needs and vaccine availability.

If you are eligible to get a vaccine earlier than what we can offer, through Washington State Department of Health, you are encouraged to do so. Washington currently vaccinates Tier 1 residents including health care workers, first responders, residents and staff who live or work in long-term-care facilities, anyone aged 65 or older, and all people 50 and older who

also live in a multigenerational household. Here's the link to the Washington state Department of Health website—<https://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/VaccineLocations>. The state offers residents a "phase finder" tool to determine eligibility and be notified when residents become eligible.

Veterans are encouraged to check out the VA's new Community Care Customer Service Guide—www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/docs/programs/OCC-Customer-Service-Guide.pdf—to assist eligible Veterans referred to a community provider for services. The two-page guide is a roadmap describing eight key points in the Veteran's community care customer experience: from being referred to a community provider, all the way to billing at the end of the cycle. This guide will improve the Veteran's experience by providing a high-level "what to expect" guide to VA community care.

We also now have a local Veteran COVID Vaccine Hotline that we update daily with current vaccine scheduling eligibility. Veterans are encouraged to call 206-277-4040 for up-to-date information!

Sincerely,



Michael Tadych, FACHE
VA Puget Sound Health Care System Director

Did you know many patient education classes are available virtually, such as meditation, stress management, cancer support, and even an exercise program? Scan the QR codes below to see a full listing of programs.



[Veterans Health Library](http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov/)
www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov/



[Healthy Living Resource Guide](http://www.pugetsound.va.gov/docs/VAPugetSoundPatientEducationClassBrochure-508c.pdf)
www.pugetsound.va.gov/docs/VAPugetSoundPatientEducationClassBrochure-508c.pdf



VETERAN TOWN HALL

SAVE THE DATE:

March 2, 2021 | 2 to 3 p.m.
JOIN EARLY, SPACE IS LIMITED!

Please join us for our Veteran Town Hall. All are welcome to join. We'll be presenting information about our continued COVID-19 response and our vaccine rollout.

- Call: 404.397.1596 | Access Code: 199 672 0491. While you will be asked for an ID#, it is not needed. Hit # to bypass it
- Computer access: <https://veteransaffairs.webex.com/veteransaffairs/onstage/g.php?MTID=ec3cb790e3957d2150ef12038c2f1fd81>, and click "Join Now"

Submit your questions in advance to
PublicAffairsPugetSound@va.gov

High Reliability

High Reliability Organizations, or HROs, are organizations with systems in place that are exceptionally consistent in accomplishing their goals and avoiding potentially catastrophic errors. The HRO concept was pioneered in industries like aviation and nuclear power, that were able to reduce accidents in their complex environments. Research shows high reliability organizations experience fewer accidents despite being high-risk environments where small errors can produce catastrophic results. HROs put procedures and protocols in place that maximize safety and minimize harm.

VA has been a leader in patient safety for years. VA's journey is consistent with [National Patient Safety Goals](#) set forth by [The Joint Commission](#), an independent, nonprofit organization that accredits and certifies approximately 21,000 health care organizations and programs.

Adopting high reliability principles more formally represents the next step for delivering the best health care to Veterans.

By striving for high reliability in a workplace where harm prevention and process improvement are second nature to all employees, we will improve the way care is delivered to our Veterans.



My VA Health

Changes to the Patient Portal Experience at Puget Sound

Beginning in fall 2021, Veterans receiving care at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Puget Sound Health Care System will have access to a new online health management experience tool, called My VA Health, to refill prescriptions, schedule appointments, message VA health care providers and review VA health records.

How You Can Prepare:

To access My VA Health, you will need a My HealtheVet **Premium** account. There are two ways to upgrade your account to **Premium**:

Option 1: You can use your DS Logon or ID.me account to upgrade your account online by visiting <http://www.myhealth.va.gov/premium> and following the steps listed to get a **Premium** account.

Option 2: You can also upgrade your account using a video conference from home, or in person at a local VA facility. Check with your local facility for hours and operation before coming in and visit <http://www.myhealth.va.gov/premium> for a list of what is required to upgrade in person.

Veterans will use My VA Health for their patient portal for care received at VA Puget Sound Health Care System (starting fall 2021) and Mann-Grandstaff VA Medical Center (live now). For care received at other VA facilities, Veterans will continue to use My HealtheVet.



Patient and staff safety remain paramount

Patient and staff safety remain paramount, and our rigorous safety measures remain in place:

- **100%** screening for signs of COVID-19 infection.
- **100%** use of approved face masks for everyone entering and inside any of our care sites (if you don't have one, we will provide you with one; no medical waivers).
- **100%** physical distancing.
- **No walk-in patients** outside of emergent care needs.
- **No routine visitors**
 - **Inpatient Visits:**
 - ⇒ Exceptions must be coordinated with your care team in advance.
 - ⇒ Visits 30 minutes or less unless care team believes a longer visit is in the best interest of the patient.
 - **Outpatient Visits:**
 - ⇒ Patients can bring one person as an escort for navigation assistance or to provide care support.
 - ⇒ Visitor must stay with the patient throughout their visit unless specified otherwise by the health care team.
 - **Approved Visitors:**
 - ⇒ Must be approved by care team in advance of visit.
 - ⇒ Must be at least 18-years-old.
 - ⇒ Must adhere to all safety measures.
 - ⇒ Must use hand sanitizer when entering and exiting a care area.
 - ⇒ Are not allowed in the room during aerosol-generating procedures.
- **No visitors under 18 allowed**, with one exception: American Lake's Child Care Center.
- **Do not leave unaccompanied minors** outside during your visit.
- **100%** environmental cleaning recommendations as outlined by the CDC.

**Safe Care is our
Mission**

Need to find Urgent Care? www.va.gov/find-locations/

Need Community Care referral? Call 206-277-4545 or 206-764-2876



Expanding our primary care footprint

VA Puget Sound is excited to share our plans to expand our primary care footprint in Western Washington to better serve you at locations that are more convenient for you.

On December 4, 2020, we announced plans to open three new Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) in Edmonds, Olympia and Puyallup by late Spring this year and one in Everett before the end of 2021. We have also submitted a request for proposal to site a CBOC in the Auburn area but do not yet have a firm schedule. We are also exploring a new site in the Woodinville area as well.

To support this change, VA Puget Sound did not renew its contract with Valor Healthcare and closed clinics in Lake City, Federal Way and Bellevue on January 31, 2021. During the period from February 1 through the opening of our new CBOCs, VA Puget Sound will have virtual teams with primary care, social work, pharmacy, nutrition and mental health ready to go for Veterans who receive care at one of the three Valor Healthcare-operated clinics.

Veterans who received care at the closed clinics were transferred to new locations based on their zip code and proximity to the nearest VA Puget Sound care site. There is limited availability in the new Edmonds clinic, so some Veterans were assigned care in Seattle until our Everett location opens in late 2021. Our clinics do offer video care appointments, so it is not necessary to travel to Seattle to receive care. We would also like to remind you of the MISSION Act urgent care options. You can find a full list of those options at www.va.gov/find-locations.

The new CBOCs are part of a larger system redesign to better serve Western Washington over the next four years. In addition to the new CBOCs in Edmonds, Olympia and Puyallup, we are exploring new Community Based Outpatient Clinics in the Auburn/Kent, North King County and the Olympia areas. Together, the new clinical footprint will allow VA Puget Sound to directly serve Everett and Olympia, two major metropolitan areas in Western Washington with no VA facilities currently. Additionally, it will create new capacity for our areas of highest growth in South King and Pierce counties as well as provide better outreach to rural Veterans in North King County. Immediately, the shift from Federal Way to Puyallup and Lake City to Edmonds will largely overlap coverage. The closed Bellevue location will be served by VA Puget Sound's Seattle Campus and future clinics in Auburn and Woodinville.

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Did you know?

- March is National Colorectal Cancer Month:** With the August 2020 passing of 43-year-old Actor Chadwick Boseman, you may be thinking a little more about colon cancer. While a healthy diet, exercise and other changes like quitting smoking can lower your risk, getting screened is one of the best ways to find cancer early. The earlier it's found, the more treatment options there are and the more likely it can be cured. Colon cancer screening can also prevent cancer by finding and removing precancerous polyps. Contact your health care provider to learn more.
- March is National Nutrition Month.** From cowboy caviar and pesto veggies wraps to Thai veggie peanut noodles and chocolate zucchini muffins, you can learn how to prepare meals to help you take control of your health. A complete library of video recipes can be found on VA's Healthy Teaching Kitchen YouTube Channel—https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=itjZOe0dvwA&list=PL3AQ_JVoBEyWA0DxUr5WalEVR6iGcnjYf. And be sure to check-out our free VHA cookbooks—<https://www.nutrition.va.gov/Recipes.asp>.

Acupressure for tension, pain relief



Acupressure is a method of self-care similar to acupuncture but without needles. It's the application of pressure to specific points on the body to help relieve tension and pain. It has been used for thousands of years to provide comfort and help our bodies heal.

Rubbing our temples during a headache or stressful moment is an example of how we naturally choose to place our hands on specific areas of our body for relief. Acupressure helps the body heal the local tissue you're pressing or massaging and can affect the meridian system on which the acupressure point is located.

From an Eastern Medicine perspective, this may mean balancing and influencing the "qi", "chi" or energy of the body that flows in that meridian. From a Western Medicine perspective, it improves circulation, relaxes tight muscles and releases pain-relieving endorphins.

You can learn specific acupressure points as a self-care method to be used at home. When using acupressure, simply press or massage the acupressure point for about 30 seconds. Use an amount of pressure that feels comfortable without being painful. When several points are grouped together to increase effectiveness of the treatment it is called an "acupressure prescription."

Acupressure prescriptions can be individualized to help a person with a specific complaint like low back pain or headaches or can focus on general wellness. Acupressure can be used to increase energy, calm a stressful moment, or relax the body for sleep. Acupressure can be used many times per day.

Frequently Asked Questions

How can we call this an expansion of primary care if we are closing three clinics?

Our three new Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Edmonds, Olympia and Puyallup are all larger in capacity than the now closed Bellevue CBOC. Expansion refers to our regional ability to serve more Veterans with more services and modalities. The new footprint for VA Puget Sound will have more clinical sites serving more total patients, but the specific locations are shifting.

What steps is VA Puget Sound taking to transition Veterans to new providers without disruption in any courses of treatment?

Delivering outstanding care to the Veterans we are honored to serve is our #1 priority. VA Puget Sound has already

hired the new staff necessary to support a smooth transition to VA care from the contracted services. Those teams are in orientation and will be ready to activate as "virtual clinics" while our new care sites in Edmonds, Olympia and Puyallup complete their final tenant improvement upgrades to meet VA standards for IT security. During the gap period all Veterans will be assigned to their new permanent Patient Aligned Care Team locations. These will include virtual access to pharmacy, primary care mental health integration, social work, and nutrition services. In addition, all Veterans will have access to same-day services for laboratory, imaging, and other clinical needs at the American Lake, Seattle, and Mount Vernon campuses. Existing orders, medications, and consults will all flow from their prior assignments to their new primary care teams.

When will Veterans receive detailed information about how to receive ongoing care and who to contact for questions?

We've been proactively contacting the approximately 11,000 Veterans who had been receiving care across

(continued on next page)



the three clinics that closed to ensure a smooth transition of care. Veterans were transferred to new locations based on their zip codes and proximity to the nearest VA Puget Sound site. New primary care team assignments should have been received by January 31, 2021 (either through email address on record or mailing address). If you did not receive yours, please contact our call center at 800-329-8387, extension 71234, and they will let you know your new clinic location.

Where can I receive care now that the Bellevue, Federal Way and Lake City clinics have closed?

There are many options for Veterans who were enrolled with primary care at one of the clinics that closed:

- Seattle and American Lake Campuses
- Our Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Mount Vernon, Port Angeles and Silverdale
- Our new CBOCs opening late Spring: Edmonds Clinic (21616 76th Ave. West, Suites 107 and 112), Puyallup Clinic (Sunrise Medical Center, 11216 Sunrise Blvd. East, Bldg. 3, Suites 204 and 209) and Olympia Clinic (Olympia Medical Center, 500 Lilly Rd. NE, Suites 201 and 204A)
- Everett CBOC (220 Olympic Boulevard), which is expected to open by the end of 2021
- Enrolled Veterans also have extensive Community Care options available under the MISSION Act, which include urgent care at locations such as Indigo, Concentra, Immediate Clinic, SeaMar, University of Washington Neighborhood clinics, Evergreen and Supertrack Walk-In Clinic. Veterans can find a VA location or in-network community care provider at www.va.gov/find-locations/
- We also continue to maximize personalized virtual care options. We know these services have been a valuable link to our Veterans during this challenging time, providing increased access to care regardless of where you live.

What happens when a Veteran needs specialty services that the new clinics cannot provide?

Referrals are sent to the specialty service to determine the best modality for care based on the needs of the Veteran. Care may be delivered via phone, telehealth or face-to-face. Veterans may also call our Community Care team at 206-277-4545 or 206-764-2876. If the first one is busy, be sure to use second one.

Where do we go for labs such as A1C blood work?

There are labs at each of our new clinics. The labs can draw blood, collect urine samples and provide screening for SARS, COVID-19, flu and various others to include A1C blood work.

Who do we seek out to renew expiring prescriptions?

While there is one clinical pharmacist on-site at each of the new CBOCs, there is no on-site pharmacy so no medications will be dispensed. Veterans can request prescription refills, order and ship medications home using My HealthVet or Rx Refill mobile app.

How will the VA support transportation needs?

VA Puget Sound provides transportation services to VA appointments for eligible Veterans living in our service area which includes Puyallup. Veterans may access the VA Transportation program through their VA provider or by calling our Travel office at 206-764-2120.

If I currently have a Primary Care Mental Health Integration provider at one the closed clinics, will I still be able to see that provider if my primary care moves?

Yes. You will be able to complete the episode of care with your current Primary Care Mental Health Integration provider.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Puget Sound Health Care System

Official news from:

VA Puget Sound Health Care System
Office of Public Affairs, MS S-00-PA
1660 S. Columbian Way
Seattle, WA 98108
206-762-1010

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American Lake
Lakewood
9600 Veterans Dr.
Tacoma, WA 98493
253-582-8440



Main Campuses



Seattle
1660 S. Columbian
Way
Seattle, WA 98108
206-762-1010

Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)

Mount Vernon
307 S. 13th St.
Suite 200
Mount Vernon, WA
98274
360-848-8500



North Olympic
Port Angeles
1114 Georgiana St.
Port Angeles, WA
98362
360-565-7420



South Sound Chehalis
151 NE Hampe Way
Chehalis, WA 98532
360-748-3049

Silverdale
9177 Ridgeway Blvd. NW
Silverdale, WA 98383
360-307-6920



Opening late Spring 2021

Edmonds: 21616 76th Ave. West, Suites 107 and 112, Edmonds, WA 98026
Olympia: Olympia Medical Center, 500 Lilly Rd. NE, Suites 201 and 204A, Olympia, WA 98506
Puyallup: Sunrise Medical Center, 11102 Sunrise Blvd. East, Bldg. 3, Suites 204 and 209, Puyallup, WA

Opening by end of 2021

Everett: 220 Olympic Blvd., Everett, WA 98203

Community Resource & Referral Center

Community Resource
& Referral Center
305 S. Lucile St.
Seattle, WA 98108
206-764-5149



Have story ideas?

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