

Pregnancy and Postpartum Mental Health Toolkit

Perinatal Mental Health

[Postpartum Support International \(PSI\)](#)

This organization offers over **50** different free virtual support groups, including pregnancy groups, post-abortion groups, parenting groups, Spanish-speaking groups, BIPOC groups, and loss and grief groups.

You can register online, email groups@postpartum.net, or call 1.800.944.4773.

[National Maternal Mental Health Hotline](#)

This is a 24/7, free, confidential hotline for pregnant and new mothers in English and Spanish.

To connect, call 1-833-TLC-MAMA (1-833-852-6262).

[March of Dimes](#)

An organization devoted to fighting for the health of all moms and babies.

Helpful resources found on this website include:

[Support Finder](#)

[Webinars](#)

[Compass App for Pregnancy through Postpartum](#)

[Resource Library](#) (topics include Planning for a Baby, Pregnancy, Birth, NICU, Postpartum, Parenthood, Miscarriage and Loss)

During Pregnancy

[Lamaze International](#)

This organization offers both virtual and in-person classes, as well as multiple pregnancy-related decisions guides.

Information regarding classes can be found here: [Classes & Tools \(lamaze.org\)](#)

Decision guides can be found here: [Pregnancy and Birth Decision Guides \(lamaze.org\)](#)

Postpartum

[Postpartum Progress](#)

This is a comprehensive website dedicated to maternal mental illness.

Helpful resources found on the website include:

The New Mom Mental Health Checklist (downloadable) [Postpartum Progress Downloadables](#)

Treatment finder for postpartum depression [Postpartum Support Charleston](#)

[Postpartum Support Charleston | \(postpartumsupportchs.org\)](#)

This organization supports mothers across the Charleston Tri-county area who are struggling with maternal mental illnesses, including postpartum depression and anxiety.

Helpful resources include:

Multiple support groups (both virtual and in-person) [Events from April 2 – March 13 – Postpartum Support Charleston \(postpartumsupportchs.org\)](#)

Beyond Delivery Service provides new moms with meals, care packages, and support [About Beyond Delivery | Postpartum Support Charleston \(postpartumsupportchs.org\)](#)

Mom Mentor program (both phone and in-person mentorship opportunities available) [Mom Mentors | Postpartum Support Charleston \(postpartumsupportchs.org\)](#)

Perinatal Loss

[Return to Zero: H.O.P.E.](#)

This organization provides support for anyone who has experienced loss during their journey to parenthood.

They host multiple virtual support groups.

Learn more about the groups and/or enroll here: [Virtual Support Groups — Return to Zero: H.O.P.E. \(rtzhope.org\)](#)

[Share Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support \(nationalshare.org\)](#)

Share is a national community for anyone who experiences the death of a baby. Their services include bed-side companions, phone support, face-to-face and online support group meetings, resource packets, and more.

Online support can be accessed here: [Online Support - Share Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support \(nationalshare.org\)](#)

Monthly Zoom Support Meeting 3rd Monday of the month at 11 AM CST. Join the Zoom meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87612067639?pwd=7Oe3Hkm2Kydy4snX76aTkUZs0jCErU.1>

Meeting ID: 876 1206 7639 Passcode: 102563

[The Harper Project - Hospice Care of the Lowcountry](#)

Organization devoted to helping families through the process of pregnancy and newborn loss through biweekly grief support services, burial resources, and more.

Contact: info@hospicecarelc.org 843-706-2296

[The Compassionate Friends Non-Profit Organization for Grief](#)

Organization devoted to supporting families after the loss of a child.

Search for a meeting in your area here [Chapter Meeting Locator - Compassionate Friends](#)

Request a grief resource packet here [Packet Request - Compassionate Friends](#)

[Hinesville Pregnancy Loss Support Group](#)

Winn Army Community Hospital, 1061 Harmon Ave., Fort Stewart, GA 31314, phone: 912-435-6183

Infertility

[RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association](#)

This organization exists to provide access to care, advocacy, support and community, education, and awareness related to infertility.

The website includes tools for finding support groups and specialized reproductive health providers (reproductive endocrinologists, urologist, mental health therapists, etc.).

[Find a Support Group | RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association](#)

[Find a Professional | RESOLVE: The National Infertility Association](#)

Recommended Reading

[What No One Tells You: A Guide to Your Emotions from Pregnancy to Motherhood, Sacks & Birndorf \(2019\)](#)

[Good Moms Have Scary Thoughts: A Healing Guide to the Secret Fears of New Mothers. Kleiman \(2019\)](#)

[The Pregnancy Workbook: Manage Anxiety and Worry with CBT and Mindfulness Techniques: Kaeni \(2021\)](#)

[The Postpartum Depression Workbook: Strategies to Overcome Negative Thoughts, Calm Stress, and Improve Your Mood, Burd \(2020\)](#)

Name: _____

Mom's age: _____

I'd like to talk to you about the stress I've been having since I had my baby. Because I'm exhausted, overwhelmed & struggling, this is the best way for me to make sure you know what is going on with me, and that I might need your help. I think I might have (Mom, check any that may apply):

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Postpartum depression (PPD) | <input type="checkbox"/> Postpartum psychosis | <input type="checkbox"/> Bipolar disorder or mania |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Postpartum anxiety or OCD | <input type="checkbox"/> Postpartum PTSD (post-traumatic stress) | <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure; I just know something isn't right |

Here are some of the recognized symptoms of perinatal mood and anxiety disorders that I have been having (Mom, check any that apply to you):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I can't sleep, even when my baby is sleeping. | <input type="checkbox"/> My thoughts are racing. I can't sit still. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have lost my appetite. | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel like the only way to make myself feel better is by using alcohol, prescription drugs or other substances. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel sad. I have been crying a lot for no reason. | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes I wonder if my baby or my family would be better off without me. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am feeling worried or anxious most of the time. | <input type="checkbox"/> I've been having physical symptoms that are not normal for me (for example: migraines, back aches, stomach aches, shortness of breath, panic attacks) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am having anger or rage that is not normal for me. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have had serious thoughts of hurting myself. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel numb or disconnected from my life. I can't enjoy the things I used to. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have had thoughts that I should (not that I might or what if, but that <i>I should or need to</i>) hurt my baby or someone else. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't feel like I'm bonding with my baby. | <input type="checkbox"/> I am worried I'm seeing or hearing things that other people don't see or hear. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am having scary "what if" thoughts over & over about harm coming to me, my baby or others (also called intrusive thoughts, a sign of postpartum OCD). | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm afraid to be alone with my baby. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel a lot of guilt and shame. | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel very concerned or paranoid that other people might hurt me. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm worried that I'm not a good mother. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel overwhelmed with all of the things in my life. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I can't concentrate or stay focused on things. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I feel like I'm losing it. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I want to be alone all or most of the time. | |

I have had these symptoms for more than _____ weeks. I am _____ weeks/months (circle one) postpartum.

Here are some recognized risk factors for maternal mental illness that may help you understand my situation (Mom, check any that apply to you):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have had depression, anxiety/OCD or PPD before | <input type="checkbox"/> I have a lot of financial stress |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have a history of bipolar disorder or psychosis | <input type="checkbox"/> I have had infertility treatment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> My family has a history of mental illness | <input type="checkbox"/> My baby has colic, reflux or other health problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have a history of or am now going through trauma (for example: domestic violence, verbal abuse, sexual abuse, poverty, loss of a parent) | <input type="checkbox"/> I have had a previous miscarriage or stillbirth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have had a stressful event in the last year (for example: house move, job loss, divorce or relationship problems, or the death of a loved one) | <input type="checkbox"/> I have a history of diabetes, thyroid problems, or pre-menstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'm a single mom | <input type="checkbox"/> I delivered multiples |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't have much help or support at home from my partner or family members | <input type="checkbox"/> I'm away from my home country or culture |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> I or my baby had problems in pregnancy or childbirth (for example: baby in NICU, unplanned C-section, bed rest) |

This checklist is not intended to diagnose any mental illness. It is a discussion tool for moms to use with healthcare providers. It was created by Postpartum Progress, a national nonprofit supporting moms with maternal mental illness. For more free tools and support for perinatal mood & anxiety disorders, visit postpartumprogress.org.

POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION AND OTHER MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

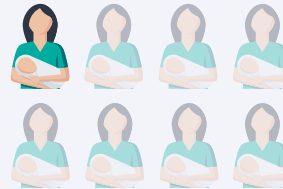


Postpartum depression (also called PPD) is a medical condition that many women get after having a baby. It's strong feelings of sadness, anxiety (worry) and tiredness that last for a long time after giving birth.

Postpartum depression is a common and treatable condition that should be taken seriously along with other mental health challenges, by healthcare providers and loved ones alike. All parents including fathers, partners, and adoptive parents can experience changes in mood when there is a new baby in the household. This is even more relevant when the parent's new baby has a birth defect or other reasons for a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) stay.

KEY FACTS AND STATISTICS

1 IN 8 WOMEN



REPORT SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION AFTER GIVING BIRTH

PDD feelings are more intense and last longer than those of "baby blues," a term used to describe the worry, sadness, and tiredness many women experience after having a baby.

20%

About 1 in 5 women were not asked about depression during a prenatal visit, so it is important to tell your healthcare provider how you feel.

ABOUT

3%

OF ALL BABIES BORN IN THE U.S. ARE BORN WITH A BIRTH DEFECT

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

The signs and symptoms of postpartum depression may be physical, but it could also include feelings of sadness, anxiety, and exhaustion that make it difficult to complete daily care activities for yourself, your baby or others.



Depressed most of the day every day



Severe mood swings



Shame, guilt or feeling like a failure



Panicked or scared a lot of the time



Trouble bonding with your baby



Thinking about hurting yourself or your baby



Little interest in things you normally like to do



Tired all the time



Eating a lot more or a lot less than is normal for you



Trouble concentrating or making decisions



Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much



Gaining or losing weight

KNOW YOUR RISKS



The risk of postpartum depression is higher for women with a history of mental health conditions or who have experienced depression or anxiety during pregnancy.

Untreated postpartum depression can have long-term effects on both the mother and child.

If you think you have symptoms of PPD call your provider right away. If you or your family/friends are worried about your safety, or think you might hurt yourself or your baby, call your provider or emergency services at 911 right away.

Options for getting free and confidential emotional support include:

- **National Alliance on Mental Illness:**
1-800-950-NAMI (6264)
- **National Maternal Health Hotline:**
1-833-TLC-MAMA (6262)
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- **Postpartum Support International Helpline:**
1-800-944-4773

Women at increased risk of maternal mental health conditions are those who:

- have a personal or family history of mental health conditions
- lack social support, especially from their partner
- experienced a traumatic birth or previous trauma in their lives
- experienced complications during pregnancy, like having a baby with a birth defect or having a [pregnancy loss](#)
- have a baby in the NICU

MANAGING DEPRESSION

Your healthcare provider may recommend:

- **Counseling**
- **Support groups to connect with** people who share their feelings and experiences
- **Medicine** such as antidepressants



If you are pregnant or gave birth within the last year, it's important to talk to your healthcare provider about anything that doesn't feel right.



Support from family and friends can be beneficial in helping to manage symptoms of postpartum depression.



Exercise, self-care, and getting enough sleep can also be helpful in managing postpartum depression.

RESOURCES

Postpartum Depression Overview:

<https://www.marchofdimes.org/find-support/topics/postpartum/postpartum-depression>

CDC Hear Her Campaign:

<https://www.cdc.gov/hearher/maternal-warning-signs/index.html>

IS IT THE BABY BLUES OR POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION?

HEALTHY
MOMS.
STRONG
BABIES.



Baby blues

Feeling restless or anxious

Being impatient or grumpy

Crying for no reason

Feeling like “I’m not myself today”

Finding it hard to concentrate

Mood changes

Sadness

Starts within a few days of giving birth;
goes away on its own within a couple of weeks

Postpartum depression

Feeling overpowering guilt, sadness or panic

Being afraid of staying alone

Crying, anxiety or worrying a lot

Feeling hopeless or like you’re not good enough

No energy and finding it hard to focus

Weight loss, weight gain or appetite changes

Scary thoughts about yourself or your baby

Usually starts within 1-3 weeks of giving birth
or anytime up to one year; needs treatment to
get better



If you’re ever worried about hurting yourself or your baby, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Chaplain's Office

The Chaplains' office is staffed by interfaith providers interested in helping women Veterans explore, enhance, and understand their spiritual needs in a non-judgmental and supportive way. To learn more about services offered, such as one-on-one meetings, pastoral care, and moral injury groups, please contact us 843-789-7235.

Veterans Justice Outreach Services (VJO)

The VJO program assists those with criminal offenses by introducing the courts to the VA services available. Veterans with non-criminal legal offenses may be assisted through referral to legal partners in the community. Walk-in clinics occur weekly. For more information contact Meredith Miller 843-297-0019.

Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Program

The HCHV program provides comprehensive health care and psychosocial services to promote, maintain, and restore health for the homeless Veteran. The Homeless Program has a full continuum of care in offering housing case management services to Veterans and includes transitional treatment beds; permanent community placement; and outreach. To learn more call the **National Center for Homeless Veterans** at 1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838); visit the local **Community Resource and Referral Center (CRRC)** at 2424 City Hall Lane, North Charleston, SC 29445; or ask a member of your VA treatment team to refer you.

Compensated Work Therapy (CWT)

CWT provides vocational rehabilitation services to Veterans currently receiving mental health treatment. Services include ongoing employment assistance, temporary paid work experience, and help with job searches in the community. Ask a member of your VA treatment team to talk with you about the referral process.

VA Vet Center

This community-based center provides a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services specifically tailored to the needs of combat Veterans and their families. Services may include individual and group counseling. All services are free and strictly confidential; you must be a combat Veteran or a Veteran who has experienced military sexual trauma to receive services.

The Vet Center works closely with the VA, but is a separate program, and is located at 3625 West Montague Avenue, North Charleston, SC 29418. To learn more call 843-789-7000 or 1-877-WAR-VETS (1-877-927-8387).

Primary Care Women Veterans Program

Establishing and maintaining good mental health goes hand-in-hand with good physical health. The Women's Program is dedicated to providing gender specific comprehensive health care for women Veterans. Each VA primary care clinic has at least one dedicated Women's Health Provider who has received specialized training in Women's Health. The Women Veteran's Program Manager works to ensure health care equality, access to care and patient satisfaction for Women Veterans. Call 843-308-8712.

Special thanks to Ashley Hatton, Ph.D., for creating this resource.

Helpful Local Numbers

Women's Mental Health Champion

Katie Rider Munday, Ph.D.
843.770.0444 ext. 302235

The Women's Mental Health Champion can also be reached by sending a secure message through myHealtheVet to Women Mental Health Champion

Women Veteran Program Manager

Dorothy Gouedy, RN
843.308.8690 ext. 424509

Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Coordinator

Ashley Hatton, PsyD
843.818.6996 ext. 343147

Suicide Prevention Coordinator

843.577.5011 ext. 207844



109 Bee Street | Charleston, SC 29401

Ph: 843-577-5011

www.charleston.va.gov

WOMEN VETERANS

Mental Health Services



The Ralph H. Johnson VA Health Care System is committed to provide comprehensive, gender sensitive mental health care to address a variety of emotional health needs throughout a woman's life span.



GETTING STARTED IN MENTAL HEALTH

The VA is dedicated to making services as accessible as possible. The main VA, Ralph H Johnson Medical Center, is located in downtown Charleston. There are a number of additional VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) in the surrounding region. Your introduction to mental health will likely start at the clinic where you receive your primary care, allowing for a smooth transition into mental health services. CBOCs include: Beaufort, Goose Creek, Hinesville, Myrtle Beach, Savannah, and Trident/North Charleston.

Primary Care Mental Health Integration Clinic (PCMHI)

Women Veterans new to this VA or to mental health will likely start their journey in PCMHI. We provide brief individual therapy and medication management to compliment the services you are receiving through your existing Primary Care Clinic. You can request to meet with PCMHI same day as your Primary Care appointment, or you can call/walk-in and request PCMHI services. If you and your PCMHI provider decide longer-term services would be beneficial, you may be referred to a General Mental Health Clinic or Specialty Mental Health Clinic.

General Mental Health Clinic (MHC) / Behavioral Health Interdisciplinary Program (BHIP)

Once referred to the Mental Health Clinic (MHC) by Primary Care or PCMHI, you will get an intake appointment to meet with a provider. Each MHC includes mental health professionals such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and nurses. Together you will discuss your goals and create a personalized treatment plan.

SPECIALTY CARE CLINICS

The VA has a number of specialty care mental health clinics with expertise in evidence-based therapies for female Veterans. Specialized mental health treatment is available in-person at the Ralph H Johnson VA and at many Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs).

Specialty mental health services are also available through **Telemental Health (TMH)**: live, interactive clinical video-conferencing which can be done either from a VA clinic or from a non-VA setting such as the comfort of your home. There are many benefits of TMH including decreased travel time and sooner availability. TMH is often a preferred way for women Veterans who do not want to come to the VA hospital in person. Research on the use of TMH consistently indicates that it is similar to face-to-face care. Be sure to discuss your options and preferences for treatment with your care team.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Clinic (CBT)

Counselors in the CBT Clinic can assist you in understanding, managing, and reducing symptoms caused by various mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, panic disorder, insomnia, anger, and difficulty coping with infertility, pregnancy loss, disordered eating, sexual issues, and postpartum adjustment. Treatment is often short-term, with an emphasis on teaching you specific skills and techniques. Group and individual therapy is available.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PCT)/ Military Sexual Trauma (MST)

The PCT is staffed by mental health professionals that are experts in helping people recover from traumatic life experiences. The treatment team understands the specific needs of female Veterans, whether they are working to overcome traumas experienced during childhood, military service, or civilian life. PCT therapies focus on the root of your PTSD symptoms - your traumatic event/s - and thus requires a willingness to talk about your trauma and do daily homework, all in the context of a supportive and encouraging therapeutic relationship.

Couple and Family Therapy

Veterans looking to resolve relationship and family issues will find experts in the Couple and Family Clinic excited to help. Therapy is conducted with both members of the couple and/ or members of the family. Common problems that

bring people to treatment include unhappiness, trust issues, communication difficulties, and/or parenting concerns. Treatment begins with a three-session assessment to allow for a comprehensive understanding of the underlying issues. Feedback and recommendations will be provided, followed by therapy if appropriate.

Substance Treatment and Recovery Program (STAR)

The STAR team is eager to work with female Veterans on their personalized recovery goals of abstinence and/or harm reduction, as well as self-sufficiency and improving quality of life. This multidisciplinary treatment team of psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, social workers, and peer support specialist provide individual and group psychotherapy, medication management services (including outpatient detox), and after-care groups.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT)

The Dialectical Behavior Therapy program offers treatment for women with Borderline Personality Disorder and other co-occurring disorders. Treatment consists of 6 months of 2 hour co-ed group sessions where Veterans learn skills to cope with distress, understand emotions, and improve relationships. Veterans will also participate in 1 month of weekly individual therapy sessions and phone coaching to help them apply group skills. The ultimate goal is to develop a life worth living.

Eating Disorder Treatment

The eating disorder treatment team helps female Veterans who are struggling with eating disorder symptoms, including food restriction, bingeing, and purging. The team involves psychologists, a psychiatrist, and a dietitian, which allows us to address your goals from a holistic perspective. This program is offered on an individual basis in addition to the services you receive through your primary mental health treatment team.

Psycho-Social Rehabilitation and Recovery (PRRC) Veteran's Enrichment Center (VEC)

The VEC is a transitional learning center designed to meet the needs of Veterans living with a diagnosis of Schizophrenia, Schizoaffective Disorder, Bipolar, Major Depressive Disorder, and/or Severe PTSD, and whose daily functional life is seriously limited as a result of their mental health challenges. The VEC empowers Veterans by teaching skills, offering support, and promoting community opportunities. The unique needs of women Veterans are addressed through individual sessions with a Recovery Advisor and/or a female Peer Support Specialist, as well as through groups relevant to women including Self-Esteem, Mindfulness, and Beyond Trauma.

Neuropsychology Clinic

Veterans faced with significant concerns about memory, attention, reasoning, or other areas of cognition may be referred to the neuropsychology clinic to assess for brain injury, neurological disease, psychiatric disorders, and other conditions. Evaluations usually take several hours over the course of one or two sessions. Veterans and their treatment team will be provided results and recommendations.





Women-Only Therapy Groups

These groups are available exclusively to women Veterans. At this time, all groups are offered virtually unless otherwise noted. Please contact your mental health provider to discuss participating.

If you have questions about these groups or ideas for other group topics, please contact the Women's Mental Health Champion, Dr. Katie Rider Munday, at: 843-770-0444, ext 302235.

The Women's Mental Health Champion can also be reached through My HealtheVet by sending a secure message to Women Mental Health Champion.

Women's Stress Management Group

Thursdays 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Who: All women Veterans are welcome.

This 9-week group includes a mix of skills-building and discussion. This group is focused on improving stress management techniques and connecting with other women.

Women's Health and Healing After Trauma Group

Thursdays 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Who: Any women Veteran with a history of sexual trauma.

This 15-week group is designed to enhance trauma recovery skills with an emphasis on overall health and wellbeing. Topics addressed include managing emotions, physical health, relationship and intimacy issues, boundary setting, and body image.

Women's Chronic Pain Management Group

Mondays 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Who: Any women Veteran struggling with chronic pain.

This 10-week group focuses on equipping women Veterans with strategies to improve their pain management using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Chronic Pain techniques. Pain management issues specific to women will be addressed, including the impact of hormones on chronic pain, care-giving with chronic pain, body image issues, and navigating gender treatment disparities.

Sexual Health and Empowerment Group

Wednesdays 11:00 pm - 12:00 pm

Who: All women Veterans are welcome.

This 8-week group is designed to assist women Veterans with developing or enhancing their ability to experience sexual independence, connection, safety, pleasure, and assertiveness. Topics addressed include factors that impact sexuality, developing

a healthy mindset about sex and intimacy, sexual rights and boundaries, increasing safety with sex and intimacy, assertive communication, and coping with difficult feelings and automatic reactions.

Beyond Trauma

Wednesdays 1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Who: Any women Veteran who is seen at the Savannah CBOC.

This group is offered in-person only.

This group is designed to assist women Veterans with building trauma recovery skills and achieving a meaningful life after trauma.

Women's Whole Health Group

Mondays 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Any women Veteran who is seen at the Myrtle Beach CBOC.

This group is offered in-person only.

This support group for women Veterans has a focus on striving for lifelong wellbeing and resilience.

"She served, she deserves the best care anywhere."

Women Veterans Call Center 1.855.VA.WOMEN

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Ralph H. Johnson VA Health Care System