

# Veterans Healthcare Benefits Handbook

---

- Enrollment
- Primary Care
- Services
- Costs
- Quality
- Answers



Veterans Integrated Service Network 20  
VA Northwest Health Network  
Serving Alaska, Oregon, Washington and Western Idaho  
2nd Edition, Effective May 2002  
VISN 20 on the web: <http://www.visn20.med.va.gov>



## MISSION

**We provide excellence in health care value to the veterans under our care**

Health care research and education activities are critical to meeting our primary mission; we also serve as a resource in national emergencies.

## VALUES

Trust, Respect, Excellence,  
Commitment, Compassion



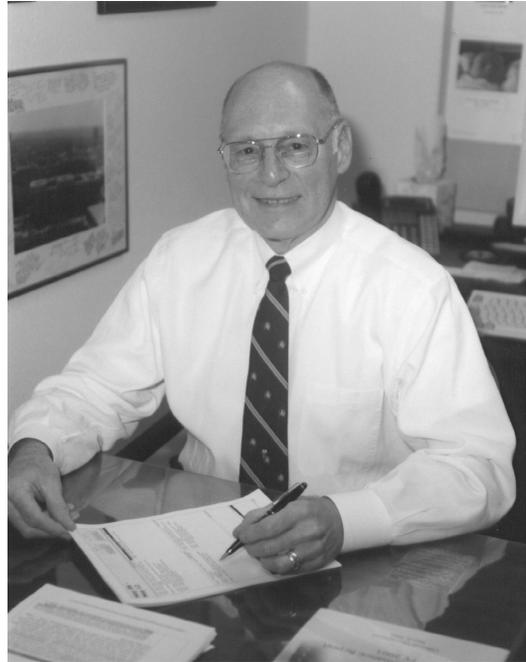
# Welcome and Overview

On behalf of Veterans Integrated Service Network 20 (VISN 20), I welcome you to our Network.

VISN 20 is one of twenty-one VISN's in the Veterans Health Administration and cares for veterans in the states of Alaska, Oregon, Washington, most of the state of Idaho and one county each in Montana and California. There are over 1 million veterans living within VISN 20 and more than 200,000 enroll for VA health care each year.

VISN 20, also known as the VA Northwest Health Network, is committed to providing you high quality health care in an atmosphere where your needs and concerns are met and your rights and interests are protected. We were recognized as the 1999 and 2000 Kenneth W. Kizer Quality Achievement Recognition Award recipient for outstanding quality and performance from among all VISNs. In 2001, VISN 20 was awarded a 3-year network accreditation by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations, an independent organization that evaluates and accredits nearly 20,000 health care organizations and programs in the United States.

Our eight VA facilities and seventeen Community Based Outpatient Clinics across Alaska, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho are responsible for delivering the full range of health services to you. More than 7,000 employees across the Network work together to meet your needs.



*Leslie M. Burger, MD, FACP  
Network Director, VISN 20*

The VA Northwest Health Network has a highly trained staff of qualified health professionals including Physicians in both Primary and Specialty medical care, Nurse Practitioners, Physician Assistants, Registered Nurses, and a wide range of other skilled medical personnel such as Social Workers and Pharmacists. Our staff works to meet your medical care needs and to help you improve your overall health. To assure high quality care, clinical decisions, including tests, treatments, and other interventions, are based on your individual health care needs.

We are pleased you have chosen VISN 20 as your health care provider and trust that you will find the information in this handbook useful for understanding your benefits and how to access them in the VA Northwest Health Network.



Leslie M. Burger, MD, FACP  
Network Director, VISN 20  
VA Northwest Health Network  
P.O. Box 1035, Portland, OR 97207

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## ELIGIBILITY AND ENROLLMENT ..... 5-8

- Am I eligible for the VA Health Benefits Package?
- What about other VA benefits?
- How do I enroll in the VA Health Benefits Package?
- How do I begin to receive VA health benefits and medical services?
- How does enrolling in the VA Health Benefits Package affect my Medicare and/or private insurance?
- Once enrolled, do I need to enroll each year?
- If I enroll in VA, can I receive care anywhere in the VA system?
- What are the VA Priority Groups?

## PRIMARY CARE ..... 9-12

- How can I receive the full range of services covered by the VA Health Benefits Package?
- What is Primary Care?
- Can VA fill my prescriptions from a private provider?
- How can Primary Care help me stay healthy?
- How do I access my Primary Care Provider between visits?
- How do I find out about my test results?
- How do I obtain medication refills?
- How do I schedule, reschedule, and cancel my appointments?
- How can I make the most of my health care appointments?
- Help Us Help You
- What if I need to change Primary Care Providers?

## BENEFITS AND SERVICES ..... 13-19

- Your VA Health Care Services
- What About Dental Care?
- What if I need Chiropractic Care?
- What if the closest VA Medical Center does not have the services I need?
- Are there any limits on days of care or the number of outpatient visits VA will provide?
- How do I get care in an emergency?
- What should I do if I have a health question or problem that isn't a life-threatening emergency?
- Where do I go for care in VISN 20?

What if I get sick while traveling?  
Can I get care outside the VA system at VA cost?

## CHARGES AND CO-PAYMENTS ..... 22-24

What charges could I be responsible for?  
If I am enrolled, what cost will there be for me?  
Will I have out of pocket expenses?  
I can't afford to make co-payments. What should I do?  
Do enrolled veterans have to pay the deductibles that their insurance carrier requires when treated at VA?

## QUALITY, SATISFACTION, AND SAFETY ..... 24-27

How can I be sure that I am getting high quality care?  
If I am not satisfied with some aspect of my care, whom do I contact?  
If I am not satisfied with the outcome of my contact with a Patient Advocate, what is the next step for resolving my concern?  
How can I tell the VA what I think about my healthcare experience?  
What can I do to help assure my care is safe?

## RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ..... 28-30

What are my rights and responsibilities as a patient?  
What are Advance Directives and why would I need one?

## SPECIAL SERVICES AND BENEFITS ..... 31

If I am hearing or speech impaired are there services to assist me?  
What if I need a translator?. . . . .  
Does VA provide lodging when I have to go to another VA for care?

## APPENDIX ..... 32-37

VISN 20 VA Health Care Locations

## Am I eligible for the VA Health Benefits Package?

Any person who was honorably discharged from the military prior to September 1980 is an eligible veteran. If you were discharged after September 1980, you must meet the following criteria:

- You were honorably discharged; and
- You completed at least 24 consecutive months of active duty (exceptions include discharges for medical reasons, or discharges for hardship) or completed the full period for which you were called or ordered to active duty.

For further information, contact the VA Health Benefits Service Center toll free at 1-877-222-VETS or your local VA Medical Center Enrollment Office.

## What about other VA benefits? \_\_\_\_\_

For all non-medical related VA Benefits, use the phone numbers or website below for more information:

Burial Benefits	1-800-827-1000
Compensation & Pension Benefits	1-800-827-1000
Disability	1-800-827-1000
Education Benefits (GI Bill)	1-888-442-4551
Life Insurance	1-800-669-8477
Home Loans	1-800-827-1000
Income Verification and Means Testing	1-800-929-8387
Sexual Trauma	1-800-827-1000
Survivor Benefits	1-800-827-1000
Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Services	1-800-827-1000
Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)	1-800-829-4833

You may also visit the VA Web Page at <http://www.va.gov> for additional information.

## How do I enroll in the VA Health Benefits Package? \_\_\_\_\_

You can apply for enrollment any time. You need to complete a one-page application called the 10-10EZ. You can get this form at any VA healthcare facility, VA Regional Office, Veterans Service Office, or by calling toll-free 1-877-222-VETS. You can also find the VA form 10-10EZ on the VA website <http://www.va.gov/health/enroll>.

We will need a copy of your DD214 or Military Discharge Certificate to verify your eligibility. If you do not have a copy of your discharge certificate, your local VA Medical Center Enrollment Office can assist you.

You will receive a letter confirming your enrollment from the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, that identifies your assigned Priority Group. Congress requires VA to manage its health care system using seven priority groups. These priority groups determine who will be eligible to receive health care benefits each year. Congress decides what the priority groups are and based on funding which priority groups will receive health care benefits. The higher priority groups will receive priority consideration to receive health care benefits. (See “What are the VA Priority Groups?”)

## How do I begin to receive VA health benefits and medical services? \_\_\_\_\_

When you enroll for the VA Health Benefits Package, you will be asked if you are interested in receiving care through the VA Primary Care Program. The full range of the VA Health Benefits Package is delivered through our comprehensive Primary Care Program. (See “What is Primary Care?”)

If you are interested in receiving Primary Care, contact your local VA facility to have a Primary Care Provider assigned to you and to arrange an initial appointment.

Due to a large number of requests for our health care services and a high volume of enrollment applications, we have reached full patient capacity at many VISN 20 sites. We now find ourselves in the difficult position of having to identify and first schedule those veterans who are most medically in need of VA Primary Care. It might take some time to schedule your first appointment, but please be assured we will do this as soon as we can.

In the meantime, if you are currently under the care of a non-VA health care provider, please continue until you receive an appointment from VA. If you do not have a physician and/or require urgent medical care, please contact us.

At your first appointment, your VA Primary Care provider will conduct a thorough physical examination, obtain a complete medical history, review your current medications, and arrange for any laboratory or diagnostic tests required. This appointment is very important. To make the most of it, we request that you bring copies of your medical records from your private provider.

## How does enrolling in the VA Health Benefits Package affect my Medicare and/or private insurance? \_\_\_\_\_

If you have health insurance, or eligibility for other programs such as Medicare, Medicaid, or CHAMPUS, you may continue to use services under those programs. You are not required to use VA as your exclusive health care provider. Veterans with private insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid, may find VA enrollment to be a complement to their other coverage. VA encourages veterans to maintain their Medicare and/or private insurance coverage to provide options and flexibility in the future.

The VA may be able to bill your private insurance for the care we provide to you. The money collected from health insurance companies is returned to the VA to fund veterans' health care.

## Once enrolled, do I need to enroll each year? \_\_\_\_\_

Enrollments are renewed annually and many veterans will stay enrolled each year without any action on their part. Veterans who are not receiving monthly compensation or pension checks from VA, however, must complete an annual financial statement known as a Means Test. Completing a Means Test allows the VA to place you in the correct Priority Group for determination of co-payments. It also ensures that your local VA receives reimbursement from our Central Office for the healthcare we provide to you. We would be glad to help you with the forms. If you need assistance, please contact your local VA facility Enrollment Office.

## If I enroll in VA, can I receive care anywhere in the VA system? \_\_\_\_\_

Yes. Once enrolled, you are part of a national health care system with more than 1,000 locations of care. Generally, you will receive your preventive and primary care at the VA location you have selected as your *Preferred Facility* during the enrollment process.

## What are the VA Priority Groups?

---

Priority Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 50% or above</li> </ul>
Priority Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 30-40%</li> </ul>
Priority Group 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veterans who are former Prisoners of War</li> <li>• Veterans who received a Purple Heart</li> <li>• Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 10-20%</li> <li>• Veterans discharged from active duty for a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty</li> <li>• Veterans awarded special eligibility classification under 38 U.S.C., Section 1151</li> </ul>
Priority Group 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veterans who are receiving special benefits for Aid and Attendance or housebound status</li> <li>• Veterans who have been determined by VA to be catastrophically disabled (this determination will be made by VA doctors)</li> </ul>
Priority Group 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 0% percent service-connected veterans and nonservice-connected veterans, whose income and net worth are below the established dollar threshold (as determined by the Means Test)</li> </ul>
Priority Group 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World War I and Mexican Border War veterans</li> <li>• Veterans solely seeking care for disorders associated with exposure to a toxic substance, radiation, or for disorders associated with service in the Gulf War, or;</li> <li>• For any illness associated with service in combat in a war after the Gulf War or during a period of hostility after November 11, 1998</li> <li>• 0% percent service-connected veterans who receive VA compensation</li> </ul>
Priority Group 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonservice-connected veterans and 0% percent non-compensable service-connected veterans with income and net worth above the established threshold and who agree to pay specified co-payments</li> </ul>

## How can I receive the full range of services covered by the VA Health Benefits package? \_\_\_\_\_

The full range of the VA health benefits package is delivered through a comprehensive Primary Care program.

## What is Primary Care? \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Care means having one provider in charge of your health care. Primary Care Providers are Family Practice or Internal Medicine Physicians, Nurse Practitioners, or Physician Assistants. The Primary Care Provider is supported by a team of nurses, clerks, social workers, pharmacists, and other skilled professionals who assure you receive well-coordinated high quality care.

Your Primary Care Provider is responsible for:

- Managing any acute and chronic health problems you may have,
- Health promotion and prevention services,
- Immunizations,
- Coordination of your health care,
- Women's health services (you may elect to receive this care at a VA Women's Health Clinic),
- Referrals for VA specialty care and services,
- Management of your medications,
- Office visits for acute and chronic medical illnesses and periodic physical exams.

If you need to be hospitalized, your care will be managed by VA medical staff during your admission.

## Can VA fill my prescriptions from a private provider? \_\_\_\_\_

The VA will provide medications that are prescribed by VA providers in conjunction with VA medical care. Medications are prescribed from an approved list of medications called a formulary. (Feel free to access the VISN 20 Formulary at the following website: <http://www.visn20.med.va.gov/formulary/index.html>) VA will not simply fill or rewrite prescriptions prescribed by your private physician.

Medications are an important part of your health care. Managing medications is **SERIOUS** business. Medications need to be monitored and some require ongoing laboratory tests. Medications taken together can cause dangerous side effects or become ineffective because of the combination of drugs. Some medications can cause

side effects even without other medications being involved. Because of these risks, a VA provider must manage your health care or “co-manage” your care with a community provider so long as that care is provided in a safe and appropriate manner.

If you see a non-VA provider and want to have prescriptions filled by VA, all of the following criteria must be met:

- You must be enrolled in VA healthcare.
- You need to have an assigned Primary Care Provider.
- It is your responsibility to provide your VA healthcare provider with your medical records from your non-VA provider.
- Your VA healthcare provider has to agree with the medication prescribed by your non-VA provider.

Your VA healthcare provider is under no obligation to prescribe a medication recommended by a non-VA provider.

Remember, to get the most benefit from your medications it is important to understand:

- The purpose of your medication
- How to take your medication
- What to expect from your medication, including side effects
- How to get prescription refills

## How can Primary Care help me stay healthy? —

VA and your Primary Care Provider are committed to take care of you when you are ill or injured. We also want to help you stay healthy. Eating right, exercising, and seeing your Primary Care Provider for regular health exams are ways you can stay healthy. Your Primary Care Provider will also give you information about special prevention and health promotion programs or classes available to you.

Helping you stay healthy requires you and your Primary Care Provider to work together and communicate openly about your health needs and status. To promote good health, your Primary Care Provider will also make sure that you are current with immunizations, and that you are counseled and/or screened as appropriate for colorectal, breast, cervical, or prostate cancer, and for tobacco and alcohol use, as well as the benefits of good nutrition and exercise.

To maintain your good health, your Primary Care Provider will assess you for chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and pulmonary disease, and develop a plan to monitor your health status on an ongoing basis.

## How do I access my Primary Care Provider between visits? \_\_\_\_\_

Your Primary Care Provider will give you instructions about how to contact the clinic during your first appointment. If you are experiencing an urgent health care issue that is not an emergency, or need health advice that cannot wait for your next scheduled appointment, you are encouraged to contact your Primary Care Provider. You also have the option to call your local facility's telephone care program, also called VA Telehealth. Our telephone care staff can access your electronic medical record and consult with your Primary Care Provider as necessary to resolve your urgent issues. Information about VA Telehealth will also be provided during your first appointment.

## How do I find out about my test results? \_\_\_\_\_

If you have labwork and/or x-rays during your primary care visit, we will contact you if the lab or x-ray results indicate a need to change your treatment. We will also notify you about biopsy, Pap smear, and mammogram results. Otherwise, we will discuss test results at your next primary care visit.

## How do I obtain medication refills? \_\_\_\_\_

Medication refills must be requested by mailing the refill notice provided to you at the time of your original fill. Your order will be processed through our Pharmacy mail-out program. Routine refills can not be processed at the Pharmacy windows (unless there are special circumstances). To ensure you receive your medication promptly, please order refills at least 20 calendar days before you run out of medication.

Some of our Pharmacies have toll-free automated telephone refill systems. See the phone number listing for your local VA facility provided in the supplement to this Handbook. If your facility has a telephone refill system, it will be listed under "Pharmacy Telephone Refill System."

## How do I schedule, reschedule, and cancel my appointments? \_\_\_\_\_

To make a follow up appointment, reschedule, or cancel an appointment, see the phone number listing for your local VA facility provided along with this handbook. You will find your specific clinic number listed under "Scheduling." If you make an appointment and then find out you cannot keep it, be sure to cancel by calling the "Scheduling" phone number for your clinic at least 24 hours in advance. Another patient may be able to use your appointment if we receive advance notification of your cancellation.

## How can I make the most of my health care appointments? \_\_\_\_\_

- Arrive on time
- Bring a written list of your most important concerns and questions
- Be prepared to talk about any changes in your health. Tell your provider about any unusual symptoms or lifestyle changes
- Ask about recent test results
- Bring a list of your current medications from all VA and private providers or bring all of your medications with you to your first appointment. Be sure to include non-prescription medications and herbal products you are taking too
- Ask about your treatment options
- Tell your provider if you have had any recent medical care elsewhere
- Tell your provider if you think you need help from other members of the Primary Care team (nurse, social worker, dietitian, pharmacist)
- If possible, bring copies of recent medical records including laboratory results from any non-VA health care provider you are seeing in your community

## Help Us Help You \_\_\_\_\_

It is very important that we have your current address and phone number. This ensures that your Primary Care Provider can contact you if necessary and that your medications will be sent to the right address. If you have a change of address or phone number, please notify the receptionist when you check in or contact the VA Enrollment Office by phone. You may be contacted occasionally before your scheduled appointments to update your contact and insurance information.

If you move, contact your Primary Care Provider or care team. Options will be discussed with you about health services in your new location.

## What if I need to change Primary Care Providers? \_\_\_\_\_

You have the right to change health care provider(s). Discuss any problems or concerns you have with your current provider and try to reach an agreement. If you cannot reach an agreement, ask your assigned care team or the Patient Advocate to assist you in making a change.

## Your VA Health Care Services

Service	Covered	Covered Under Special Authorities	Not Covered	Comments
Abortions & Abortion Counseling			✓	If you require these services you will need to obtain them through your private health insurer or other non-VA means.
Adult Day Health Care		✓		Coverage is limited. Check with your local VA Enrollment Office to determine if you are eligible.
Chiropractic Care	✓			You may be eligible for spinal manipulative therapy if you have uncomplicated spine pain of less than 6 weeks duration & meet other criteria. See “What if I need Chiropractic Care?”
Cosmetic Surgery			✓	If you require these services you will need to obtain them through your private health insurer or other non-VA means.
Dental Care		✓		Coverage is limited. See “What about Dental Care?”
Domiciliary Care		✓		May be available for veterans who do not require hospital or nursing home care, but are unable to live independently due to medical or psychiatric disabilities. Check with your local VA Enrollment Office to determine if you are eligible.
Drugs & Medical Devices approved by the FDA	✓			

Service	Covered	Covered Under Special Authorities	Not Covered	Comments
Drugs & Medical Devices NOT approved by the FDA			✓	Except in rare cases when the facility is conducting special clinical trials or if prescribed under a compassionate use exemption.
Elective Sterilization	✓			Tubal ligation or vasectomy.
Emergency Care in VA facilities	✓			
Emergency Care in non-VA facilities		✓		Coverage is limited, please see “How do I get care in an emergency?”
Eyeglasses & Hearing Aids		✓		Requires 10% or higher service-connection. Not provided for non-service connected veterans with naturally occurring hearing or vision loss. Check with your local VA Enrollment Office to determine if you are eligible.
Gender Alteration			✓	If you require these services you will need to obtain them through your private health insurer or other non-VA means.
Home Health Care	✓			
Homeless Programs		✓		Check with your local VA Enrollment Office to determine if you are eligible.
In-vitro fertilization			✓	Unless related to a service-connected disability.

Service	Covered	Covered Under Special Authorities	Not Covered	Comments
Maternity Care	✓			Covers confirmation of pregnancy through the post-partum visit. VA does not provide care to the newborn infant of the veteran.
Medical & Surgical Care	✓			If medically necessary as deemed by VA.
Membership in Health Clubs & Spas			✓	If you require these services you will need to obtain them through your private health insurer or other non-VA means.
Mental Health Care	✓			If medically necessary as deemed by VA.
Non-VA Care		✓		May be provided in some circumstances. See “Can I get care outside the VA system at VA cost?”
Nursing Home Care		✓		If a service-connected disability requires nursing home care or if you have a service-connected disability of 70% or higher. Some veterans may need to agree to make co-payments to receive nursing home care, unless it is for a service-connected disability.
Palliative Care	✓			
Preventive Care & Services	✓			
Private Duty Nursing			✓	If you require these services you will need to obtain them through your private health insurer or other non-VA means.

Service	Covered	Covered Under Special Authorities	Not Covered	Comments
Prosthetics & Orthotics (Durable Medical Equipment)	✓			You no longer need to be hospitalized to receive prosthetic devices and equipment.
Readjustment Counseling Service (Vet Centers)		✓		Available to any veteran who served in combat operations during any period of war, or any other area during a period when hostilities occurred.
Rehabilitative Care & Services	✓			If medically necessary as deemed by VA.
Respite Care	✓			
Sexual Trauma		✓		Counseling and treatment to help veterans overcome psychological trauma resulting from sexual trauma during active military service.
Substance Abuse Services	✓			If medically necessary as deemed by VA.

## What About Dental Care? \_\_\_\_\_

Dental benefits are limited to:

- Veterans who have service connected dental conditions
- Prisoners of War who were detained or interned for 90 or more days
- Veterans who have a service-connected disability rated permanent and total
- Veterans with a service-connected disability rated as total individual unemployability

Contact your local VA Enrollment Office to determine if you are eligible for dental care.

## What if I need Chiropractic Care? \_\_\_\_\_

Manual spinal manipulative therapy may be provided to veterans enrolled in VISN 20. You are eligible to receive this care if you have uncomplicated spine pain of less than 6 weeks duration and meet other specified clinical criteria. If your Primary Care Provider decides this care is necessary for you, he or she can authorize treatment for a maximum of six visits to be completed in one month. This care is not available in VA facilities, therefore, you have to be pre-approved for treatment and then you will be referred to a community provider at VA expense. The community Chiropractic Care provider is required to submit treatment notes with billing so that records of your treatment can be placed in your VA medical record.

## What if the closest VA facility does not have services I need? \_\_\_\_\_

If you are enrolled in the VA Health Benefits package and have an assigned VA health care provider, we will provide you a full range of services. These services will generally be provided through your Primary Care Provider at our medical centers or outpatient clinics. Other services will be provided at the nearest VA facility that can provide the care you need. By law, VA has to provide care within the VA system.

## Are there any limits on days of care or the number of outpatient visits VA will provide? \_\_\_\_\_

No. Your treating physician or Primary Care Provider will determine what is appropriate and necessary based on your individual needs and will provide care consistent with current medical practice.

## How do I get care in an emergency? \_\_\_\_\_

In any serious emergency, call 911 immediately. For urgent, but not life-threatening, healthcare needs, contact your Primary Care Provider or VA Telehealth (See next section).

If taking the time to contact your Primary Care Provider might endanger your life, call 911, or go directly to the closest hospital emergency room.

Emergency services at non-VA medical facilities may not be covered by your VA enrollment. If you are admitted to a non-VA hospital in an emergency, you must notify your local VA Admitting Office within 72 hours so we can coordinate your transfer to a VA facility when your medical condition has stabilized. The Veterans Millennium Health Care Act authorizes the VA to pay for emergency care in non-VA facilities when VA facilities are not feasibly available and if you are both enrolled in the VA Health Benefits package and received care in a VA facility within the last 24 months. If you meet these criteria, VA is the “payer of last resort” and will only pay if you have no other health care coverage or eligibility.

## What should I do if I have a health question or problem that isn't a life-threatening emergency?

VISN 20 now offers telephone health advice services to veterans 24 hours a day, seven days a week, including weekends and holidays. The name of this program is VA Telehealth. If you have symptoms, questions, or need advice about any health care problem, the VA Telehealth nurse is available to offer you advice and help you decide whether you can be treated at home or not. For details about how to contact a VA Telehealth nurse, please refer to the supplement to this handbook.

When you call the VA Telehealth Nurse, be ready to provide some important information so the Nurse can help you. The Nurse will need to know:

- Your full name
- Your social security number
- Your current address
- Your phone number including area code
- The VA medical center or clinic where you usually receive care
- A list of the medications you are currently taking including over-the-counter products, herbal products and dietary supplements
- And a complete description of your current medical problem. Be sure to tell the Nurse what the problem is, when it started, what you have tried for treatment and if there is anything that makes it feel worse or better.

## Where do I go for VA health care in VISN 20? \_\_\_\_\_

Specific location and contact information is listed in the Appendix and in the supplements to this Handbook.

## What if I get sick while traveling? \_\_\_\_\_

You may receive health care at any VA health care facility in the country. Many of our community based clinics see patients by appointment only so it is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the location of VA Medical Centers in the area in which you are traveling. Our Enrollment Office staff will be glad to assist you with VA Medical Center locations outside of VISN 20.

## Can I get care outside of the VA system at VA cost? \_\_\_\_\_

Usually not. By law, the VA has to provide care within the VA system. If you meet specific eligibility criteria, VA may be able to pay for care you receive for a service connected disability in your community. This is called Fee Basis care. We may authorize you to receive Fee Basis care only if we cannot provide the medical services you need or if we determine that you aren't physically able to travel to our facilities because of your health.

## Will I have out of pocket expenses? \_\_\_\_\_

You may be responsible for making copayments in some cases. Copayments are determined according to the seven VA priority groups (See "What are the VA Priority Groups?") The dollar amounts of copayments are updated annually and are set by Congress.

For the most current copayment rates and to have your specific copayment questions answered, contact your VA Medical Center Enrollment Office or Revenue Coordinator.

## What charges could I be responsible for? \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Care	Who must Pay a Copayment	Copayment Amount
<b>Inpatient Hospital Care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nonservice-connected disability (except WWII veterans, former POWs and veterans with a Purple Heart) <b>and</b></li><li>• Income <u>above</u> the Means Test threshold based on veteran family's income and net worth (higher income veterans).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• \$10 for each day of care plus.</li><li>• \$812 (the Medicare deductible) for the first 90 days of care and \$406 for subsequent 90-day periods of care. This amount changes annually.</li></ul>

Type of Care	Who must Pay a Copayment	Copayment Amount
<b>Outpatient Care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonservice-connected disability (except WWII veterans, former POWs and veterans with a Purple Heart) <b>and</b></li> <li>• Income <u>above</u> the Means Test threshold based on veteran family's income and net worth (higher income veterans).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$15 for each basic care outpatient visit.</li> <li>• \$50 for each specialty care outpatient visit.</li> <li>• \$0 for preventive screenings, immunizations, lab tests, flat film radiology and EKGs.</li> </ul>
<b>Medications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veterans in Priority Groups 2 through 7 must pay this copayment whenever they obtain medication from VA on an <u>outpatient</u> basis for treatment of a <u>nonservice-connected</u> disability.</li> <li>• Priority Group 1 veterans and veterans on a VA pension are <u>not</u> required to make medication copayments.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$7 for each 30-day (or less) supply of medication, including over-the-counter medications.</li> <li>• The total amount of copayments payable in a calendar year is capped at \$840 for Priority Groups 2 through 6. There is currently no cap for Priority Group 7.</li> </ul>
<b>Extended Care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonservice-connected disability, <b>and</b></li> <li>• Income <u>above</u> the threshold for the VA Form 10-10EC (higher income veterans).</li> <li>• If you have a compensable service connected disability or are receiving care related to exposure or experience, you will not have to make copayments for Extended Care.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended care copayments vary from veteran to veteran and are based on ability to pay.</li> <li>• Up to \$97 for each day of nursing home care, institutional geriatric evaluation.</li> <li>• Up to \$15 for each day of adult day health care, non-institutional respite care, or non-institutional geriatric evaluation.</li> <li>• Up to \$5 for each day of domiciliary care.</li> </ul>

For more information about copayments and whether or not they apply to you, please contact the Revenue Coordinator at the VA medical facility where you receive health care or call toll-free 1-877-222-VETS (1-877-222-8387).

## If I am enrolled, what cost will there be for me?

There is no monthly premium required to use VA care. You may, however, have to agree to pay some co-payments. If you have insurance, it may cover the cost of the co-payments. (See “What charges could I be responsible for?”)

## I can't afford to make co-payments.

### What should I do? \_\_\_\_\_

There are two options:

- The first option is to request a waiver for paying the co-payments you currently owe. If you request a waiver, you must submit proof that you can't financially afford to make payment to the VA. This process could take several months. Please contact the Revenue Coordinator at the VA health care facility where you receive care for more information.
- The second option is to request a hardship determination so we won't charge you in the future. If you request a hardship, you are asking VA to change your Priority Group status. You will need to submit current financial information and a decision will be made based on the information you provide.

## Do enrolled veterans have to pay the deductibles that their insurance carrier requires when treated at VA? \_\_\_\_\_

No. VA does not require veterans to pay those charges. In fact, many insurance companies will apply VA co-payment charges toward their annual deductible.

## How can I be sure that I am getting high quality care? \_\_\_\_\_

VISN 20 is committed to providing you high quality medical care. We base medical decisions, including what tests, treatments, and other interventions to provide to you, on your health care needs. We meet or exceed the same standards for quality and safety that private healthcare facilities do. For example, VISN 20 as well as all facilities in VISN 20 are accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. Accreditation by the Joint Commission is recognized nationwide as a symbol of healthcare quality. We have an on-site survey by a Joint Commission survey team at least every three years to make sure we are meeting their standards. To learn more about the Joint Commission visit <http://www.jcaho.org>.

The quality of care we provide is also reviewed every month by auditors from outside the VA. The auditors give us reports on how well we are providing preventive care and care for chronic diseases. Your local VA facility in VISN 20 will be happy to share these reports with you.

## If I am not satisfied with some aspect of my care, whom do I contact? \_\_\_\_\_

VISN 20 supports your right to present concerns, unmet needs, or complaints to us without fear of reprisal or having your access to care compromised. A Patient Advocacy Program is in place to ensure that your concerns are addressed in a convenient and timely manner.

Patient Advocates are highly trained professionals who help resolve your concerns about any aspect of your health care experience, particularly those concerns that cannot be resolved at the point of care. Each Patient Advocate is empowered to ensure that you receive the maximum benefits you are entitled to by law. Patient Advocates act as VA representatives to listen to any questions, problems, or special needs you may have. They will refer your concerns to the appropriate Medical Center staff for resolution and act on your behalf to assist in explaining your point of view.

Patient Advocates can be reached through the nursing or support staff in any clinical area or by calling the phone number listed in the supplement to this Handbook. You may also e-mail a Patient Advocate directly through the VISN 20 Internet Website at <http://www.visn20.med.va.gov>

## If I am not satisfied with the outcome of my contact with a Patient Advocate, what is the next step for resolving my concern? \_\_\_\_\_

We try to resolve your concern at the lowest possible level for your convenience. However, if you are not satisfied with the outcome of your contact with the Patient Advocate, you may contact the Director of the involved VA facility. The preferred method of contact is a written document outlining your concerns in detail. This will allow the Director to assess your concerns and make a final decision. The decision will be provided by phone or in writing. See the supplement to this Handbook for the address.

If you are not satisfied with the assistance provided by the medical facility Director, you may contact the VISN 20 Network Director in writing. Please mail your letter to the following address: VISN 20 Network Director, P.O. Box 1035, Portland, OR 97207. You may also FAX your letter to the VISN 20 Director at (360)737-1405.

You also have the right to appeal decisions made by a VA medical facility to the Board of Veterans' Appeals. Typical issues that are appealed include medication co-

payment debts and reimbursement for medical services received outside of VA that were not authorized by us. Decisions concerning clinical care such as whether or not medical care is needed, the type of medical treatment needed, a provider's decision to prescribe (or not to prescribe) a particular drug, or whether to order a specific type of treatment, are not within the Board's jurisdiction.

You have one year from the time you are notified of a decision to file an appeal. For more information, or to receive a booklet explaining the appeals process in detail, contact the Department of Veterans Affairs, Board of Veterans' Appeals, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Washington D.C. 20420. You may also view additional information via the Internet at <http://www.va.gov/vbs/bva>

## How can I tell the VA what I think about my healthcare experience? \_\_\_\_\_

We want to provide you with the best care possible and encourage you to let us know when you think we are doing a good job. We also want to know if you have problems or concerns about your health care.

- If you have a problem with your Primary Care Provider, you are encouraged to discuss it directly with him/her. If you do not feel that your problem was resolved, contact the Patient Advocate.
- If you have a problem about VA, contact the Patient Advocate. The Patient Advocate is generally able to solve problems quickly by contacting the necessary VA staff. They also share your compliments with the staff involved and their supervisors.
- If you have a question about eligibility, contact the Enrollment or Business Office at your local VA healthcare facility.

## What can I do to help assure my care is safe? \_\_\_\_\_

Everyone has a role in making health care safe and your VA health care team makes your safety a priority. You, the patient, also play a vital role in making your care safe by becoming an active, involved and informed member of your health care team. Here are some tips you can use to get involved:

- Speak up if you have questions or concerns, and if you don't understand, ask again. It's your body and you have a right to know.
- Your health is too important to worry about being embarrassed if you don't understand something that any health care professional tells you.

- Don't hesitate to tell any health care professional if you think he or she has confused you with another patient.
- Understand that more tests or medications may not always be better. Ask your Provider what a new test or medication is likely to do for you.
- Know who will be taking care of you, how long the treatment will last, and how you should feel.

### Safety: Medication

- Know what medications you take and why you take them. Medication errors are the most common health care mistakes.
- It's a good idea to keep a list of all of your medicines, what they do and when you must take them.
- Bring all your medications or a list of them to your next appointment. You should include any drug store medications, herbal products and dietary supplements you use. Review them with your Provider to make sure they work well and safely together.

### When a new medication is prescribed

- Explain all of your medicine allergies to your Provider.
- Be sure the nurse, pharmacist or doctor explains the purpose and side effects of the medicine, as well as how to take it.

### Safety: For Outpatient Appointments

- Bring a family member or friend if you need help in giving important health history to the nurses and doctors.
- If tests are done, ask when the results will be ready and how you will learn the test results.

### Safety: Before Surgery

- Ask questions if you don't understand what the procedure is.
- If you are going to have surgery, the staff may mark or ask you to mark the side of your body to be operated on with an "X" so there is no confusion in the operating room.

## Safety: While in the hospital

- Make sure your nurse or doctor confirms your identity, that is, checks your wristband or asks your name, before he or she administers any medication or treatment.
- If you've never received a medication before – ask what it is.
- If you feel strange after receiving a new medicine – let your doctor or nurse know.
- Expect health care workers to introduce themselves when they enter your room and look for their identification badges.
- Expect that hospital staff wash their hands before giving you treatment.
- When you are ready to go home be sure you understand your home care instructions. Get a copy in writing.

## What are my rights and responsibilities as a patient?

---

VISN 20 employees will respect and support your rights as a patient. We plan to make your visit or stay as pleasant as possible. Your basic rights and responsibilities are outlined below. Please talk with your VA treatment team members or a patient advocate if you have questions or would like more information about your rights.

### Respect and Nondiscrimination

- You will be treated with dignity, compassion and respect as an individual. Your privacy will be protected. You will receive care in a safe environment. We will seek to honor your personal and religious beliefs and values regardless of race, creed, sex, religion, national origin, or handicap.
- You have the right to keep and spend your own money and the right to request and receive an accounting of VA held funds.
- Treatment will respect your personal freedoms. In rare cases, the use of medication and physical restraints may be used if all other efforts to keep you or others free from harm have not worked.
- As an inpatient or long-term care resident, you may wear your own clothes and keep personal items. This depends on your medical condition.
- As an inpatient or long-term care resident, you have the right to social interaction and regular exercise. You will have the opportunity for religious worship and spiritual support. You may decide whether or not to participate in these activities. You may decide whether or not to perform tasks in or for the Medical Center.

- As an inpatient or long-term care resident, you have the right to communicate freely and privately with persons outside the facility. You may have or refuse visitors. You will have access to public telephones to make and receive calls.
- As a long-term care resident, you can organize and take part in resident groups in the facility. Your family also can meet with the families of other residents.
- In order to provide a safe treatment environment for all patients and staff you are asked to respect other patients and staff and to follow the facility's rules. Avoid unsafe acts that place others at risk for accidents or injuries. Please immediately report any condition you believe to be unsafe.
- As an inpatient or long-term care resident, you will retain your legal rights while hospitalized except where State law provides otherwise.
- If there is reason to believe that your mail may contain illegal materials, you will have to open the mail in the presence of an appropriate person.

### Information Disclosure and Confidentiality

- You will be given information about the health benefits that you can receive. The information will be provided in a way you can understand.
- You will receive information about the costs of your care, if any, before you are treated. You are responsible for paying your portion of the costs associated with your care.
- Your medical record will be kept confidential. Information about you will not be released without your consent unless authorized by law (i.e. State public health reporting.) You have the right to information in your medical record and may request a copy of your records. This will be provided except in rare situations where your VA physician feels the information will be harmful to you. In that situation, you have the right to this discussed with you by your VA provider. Data about your care may be grouped with data from other patients, excluding your name and personal information, to allow us to study the quality of care we provide.
- You will be informed of any injuries caused by your medical care. You will be informed about how to request compensation for injuries.

### Participation in Treatment Decisions

- You, and any persons you choose, will be involved in decisions about your care. You will be given information you can understand about the benefits and risks of treatment. You will be given other options. You can agree to or refuse treatment, and refusing treatment will not affect your rights to future care. If you refuse treatment or choose not to follow your treatment plan, you are responsible for the outcome.

- You will be given in writing, the name and professional title of the provider in charge of your care. As a partner in the healthcare process, you have the right to be educated about your role and responsibilities as a patient, for the safe delivery of care. This includes care at the end of life.
- Tell your provider about your current condition, medicines you are taking (including over the counter and herbals) and medical history. Also, share any other information that affects your health. You should ask questions when you don't understand something about your care. This will help in providing you the best care possible.
- You have the right to have your pain assessed and to receive treatment to manage your pain. You and your treatment team will develop a pain management plan together. You are expected to help the treatment team by telling them if you have pain and if the treatment is working.
- You have the right to choose whether or not you will participate in any research project. Any research will be clearly identified. Potential risks of the research will be identified and there will be no pressure on you to participate. If you choose to participate, you will be made aware of how any information collected about you will be used.
- You will be included in resolving any ethical issues about your care. You may consult with the Medical Center's Ethics Committee and/or other staff knowledgeable about health care ethics
- If you or the Medical Center believes that you have been neglected, abused or exploited, you will receive help.
- You have the right to complete advance directives (to plan and decide in advance what your wishes would be if faced with a life/death situation, an unexpected death, or a terminal illness) if you wish. You may name someone else to make health care decisions for you.

## Complaints

- You are encouraged and expected to seek help from your treatment team and/or a patient advocate if you have problems or complaints. You will be given understandable information about the complaint process available to you. You may complain verbally or in writing without fear of retaliation.

## What are Advance Directives and why would I need one? \_\_\_\_\_

You have the right to make decisions regarding your medical care. This includes the right to accept or refuse medical treatment. An Advance Directive is a written statement about medical decisions you want made for you in the event you can no longer speak for yourself. The two most common forms of Advance Directives are:

- Living Will: a document in which you state in writing your wishes about medical care.
- Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care: a document giving a person you appoint, such as a relative or friend, the authority to speak for you about your treatment, should you be unable to do this for yourself.

These documents are maintained as part of your medical record and are periodically reviewed with you. Talk to your Primary Care Provider if you have questions about Advance Directives or wish to complete one.

## If I am hearing or speech impaired are there services to assist me? What if I need a translator? \_\_\_\_\_

VA facilities provide assistive devices, interpreters, translators, and TDD services to help you and your loved ones communicate with your Primary Care Provider and health care team or other staff. Ask your nurse or administrative staff in clinic or the Patient Advocate for help and they will coordinate any needed services for you.

## Does VA provide lodging when I have to go to another VA for care? \_\_\_\_\_

Lodging may be available at another VA facility when you are referred there for care and live some distance away. Your local facility must submit a request for lodging in advance of your visit to try and reserve space for you. Lodging is a courtesy to you based on our space availability and is not a guaranteed benefit.

Lodging may be provided to you if you live some distance away and you:

- Are scheduled for admission or a specialty outpatient visit or treatment
- Are able to care for yourself without assistance

For additional information about lodging, check with your local VA Enrollment Office.

## APPENDIX - VISN 20 VA Health Care Locations

Please see the supplements to this Handbook for specific telephone numbers.

### ALASKA

---

#### **Alaska VA Healthcare System and Regional Office**

2925 DeBarr Rd.

Anchorage, AK 99508

(907)257-4700

1-888-353-7574

Community Based Outpatient Clinics of the Alaska VA Healthcare System and Regional Office include:

#### **Fort Wainwright VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic**

Bassett Army Community Hospital

Gaffney Rd. 4065, Rooms 169-176

Fort Wainwright , AK 99703

1-888-353-5242

#### **Kenai VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic**

11355 Frontage Road, Suite 130

Kenai, Alaska 99611

(907) 283-2231

#### **Vet Centers**

---

#### **Anchorage Veterans Readjustment Center**

201 Tudor Centre Drive Suite 115

Anchorage, AK 99508

(907) 563-6966

#### **Fairbanks Veterans Readjustment Center**

529 5th Avenue Suite 102

Fairbanks, AK 99701

(907) 456-4238

#### **Kenai Veterans Readjustment Center**

Bldg. F Suite 4, Red Diamond Ctr, 43335 K-Beach Rd

Soldotna, AK 99669

(907) 260-7640

**Wasila Veterans Readjustment Center**

851 E. Westpoint Ave., Suite 109  
Wasila, AK 99654  
(907) 376-4318

## IDAHO

---

**Boise VA Medical Center**

500 West Fort Street  
Boise, ID 83702  
(208) 422-1000

Community Based Outpatient Clinics of the Boise VA Medical Center include:

**Twin Falls VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic**

676 Shoup Ave West, #12  
Twin Falls, Idaho 83301  
(208) 422-7200

**Vet Centers** 

---

**Boise Veterans Readjustment Center**

5440 Franklin Road, Suite 100  
Boise, ID 83705  
(208) 342-3612

## OREGON AND SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

---

**Portland VA Medical Center**

3710 U.S. Veterans Hospital Rd SW  
Portland, OR 97207  
(503) 220-8262  
1-800-949-1004

Community Based Outpatient Clinics of the Portland VA Medical Center include:

**Longview VA Mental Health Clinic**

River Suites  
1801 1st Ave, Suite 4C  
Longview, WA 98632  
1-800-949-1004

**North Coast (Camp Rilea) VA Primary Care/Mental Health Clinic**

91400 Rilea Neocoxie Rd., Bldg. 7315  
Warrenton, OR 97146  
1-800-949-1004

**Salem VA Primary Care/Mental Health Clinic**

1660 Oak Street SE  
Salem, OR 97301  
1-800-949-1004

**VA Central Oregon Primary Care/Mental Health Clinic - Bend**

Morningside Medical Building  
2115 Wyatt Court, Suite 201  
Bend, OR 97701  
1-800-949-1004

**Vancouver VA Outpatient Clinic**

1601 E. Fourth Plain Blvd.  
Vancouver, WA 98661  
(360) 696-4061

**Roseburg VA Healthcare System**

913 NW Garden Valley Blvd.  
Roseburg, OR 97470  
(541) 440-1000  
1-800-549-8387

Community Based Outpatient Clinics or facilities of the Roseburg VA Health Care System include:

**Bandon VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic**

1010 1st Street, Suite 100,  
Bandon, OR 97411  
(541) 347-4736  
1-800-549-8387 extension 42060

**Brookings VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic**

555 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Brookings, OR 97415  
(541) 412-1152

**Eugene VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic**

100 River Ave.  
Eugene, OR 97404

**Eugene Community Reintegration Service Center**

95 N. Bertelson  
Eugene, OR 97404

**White City VA Domiciliary**

8495 Crater Lake Hwy.  
White City, OR 97503  
(541) 826-2111  
1-800-809-8725

Community Based Outpatient Clinics of the White City VA Domiciliary include:

**Klamath Falls VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic**

2819 Dahlia St.  
Klamath Falls, OR 97601

**Vet Centers**

---

**Eugene Veterans Readjustment Center**

1255 Pearl St., Suite 200  
Eugene, OR 97401  
(541) 465-6918

**Grants Pass Veterans Readjustment Center**

211 SE 10th Street,  
Grants Pass, OR 97526  
(541) 479-6912

**Portland Veterans Readjustment Center**

8383 NE Sandy Blvd., Suite 101  
Portland, OR 97220  
(503) 273-5370

**Salem Veterans Readjustment Center**

318 Church Street, NE  
Salem, OR 97301  
(503) 362-9911

## WASHINGTON

---

### **Spokane VA Medical Center**

4815 N. Assembly  
Spokane, WA 99205  
(509) 434-7000  
1-800-325-7940

### **Walla Walla Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VA Medical Center**

77 Wainwright Dr.  
Walla Walla, WA 99362  
(509) 525-5200  
1-888-687-8863

Community Based Outpatient Clinics of the Walla Walla VA Medical Center include:

#### **Lewiston Follow-up Primary Care Clinic**

710 Southway  
Lewiston, ID 83501  
(208)798-8651

#### **Tri-Cities VA Clinic (Richland)**

946 Stevens Drive, Suite C  
Richland, WA 99352  
(509) 946-1020

#### **Yakima VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic**

102 N 56th St.  
Yakima, WA 99908  
(509) 966-0199

### **VA Puget Sound Health Care System**

American Lake Division  
9600 Veterans Drive SW  
Tacoma, WA 98398

Seattle Division  
1660 S. Columbian Way  
Seattle, WA 98108

Community Based Outpatient Clinics of VA Puget Sound Health Care System include:

**Bremerton VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic**

925 Adele Avenue  
Bremerton, WA 98312  
(360) 782-0129

**UW Physicians Shoreline Clinic-VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic**

1355 N. 205th Street  
Shoreline, WA 98133  
(206) 542-5656

**UW Physicians Federal Way Clinic-VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic**

32018 23rd Ave South  
Federal Way, WA 98003  
(253) 839-3030

**Vet Centers**

---

**Seattle Veterans Readjustment Center**

2030 - 9th Avenue; Suite 210  
Seattle, WA 98121  
(206) 553-2706

**Spokane Veterans Readjustment Center**

100 N. Mullan Road, Suite 102  
Spokane, WA 99206  
(509) 444-8387

**Tacoma Veterans Readjustment Center**

4916 Center St., Suite E  
Tacoma, WA 98409  
(253) 565-7038

**Yakima Veterans Readjustment Center**

310 North Fifth Avenue  
Yakima, WA 99908  
(509) 457-2736



# Acknowledgement

This Handbook is dedicated to Peggy S. Hall, a 35-year employee of the Veterans Health Administration, and long-time leader in Primary Care Management. Her involvement in this project is one of her many accomplishments and contributions to our veterans and co-workers.

Thank you to Peggy and the following individuals who helped author and design this Handbook: Alisa Bradrick, Susan Chauvie, Susan Cox, Anna Diehl, Molly Kok, Barbara Riley, Wendy Riverman, Roxanne Sisemore, Scott Walker, and Rachel Wiebe Smith.

## Customer Service Standards Guiding Our Care to You

- Staff Courtesy** ..... VISN 20 will design and maintain a health care environment where you, your family, and your significant others are treated with courtesy and dignity throughout every aspect of their treatment.
- Timeliness** ..... VISN 20 will provide you with timely and convenient access to health care.
- One Provider** ..... One health care team will be in charge of your care.
- Decisions** ..... VISN 20 will involve you, your family and your significant others in decisions about their health care.
- Physical Comfort** ..... VISN 20 will strive to meet your pain management and physical comfort needs.
- Emotional Needs** ..... VISN 20 will provide support to meet your emotional needs.
- Coordination of Care** ..... VISN 20 will take responsibility for providing seamless coordination of your care within other VA offices, as well as in non-VA facilities and organizations.
- Patient Education** ..... VISN 20 will provide written and oral information and education about your health care that you, your family and your significant others will understand.
- Family Involvement** .. VISN 20 will provide the opportunity to involve veterans' families and significant others in their care when appropriate.
- Transition** ..... VISN 20 will provide a smooth transition between veterans' inpatient and outpatient care.



