

WELCOME TO DEPT. OF TEXAS VFW STATE SURGEON'S

Monthly Healthcare Newsletter

so glad you're here

GREETINGS COMRADES!

Healthcare Highlights



Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, a reminder that no veteran should feel alone. The VA's 'Be There' campaign encourages everyone to reach out and support veterans who may be struggling. Small acts of connection—like checking in with a buddy or offering a listening ear—can truly save lives.



If you or someone you know needs help, please remember:

☞ Veterans Crisis Line: Dial 988, then press 1
Available 24/7 via phone, text, or chat at
<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net>.

🍂 Fall Prevention & Safe Mobility

The transition into fall brings new hazards such as wet leaves, uneven sidewalks, and darker evenings. Preventing falls is critical for protecting independence and long-term health.



FALL PREVENTION & SAFE MOBILITY

THE TRANSITION INTO FALL BRINGS NEW HAZARDS SUCH AS WET LEAVES, UNEVEN SIDEWALKS, AND DARKER EVENINGS. PREVENTING FALLS IS CRITICAL FOR PROTECTING INDEPENDENCE AND LONG-TERM HEALTH.

TIPS TO REDUCE FALL RISK:

- WEAR SHOES WITH GOOD TRACTION AND SUPPORT.**
- USE MOBILITY AIDS LIKE CANES OR WALKERS WHEN RECOMMENDED.**
- KEEP HOME PATHWAYS WELL-LIT AND CLUTTER-FREE.**
- ASK YOUR VA PROVIDER ABOUT BALANCE OR MOBILITY SCREENINGS.**

VA PHYSICAL THERAPY AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROGRAMS CAN HELP VETERANS STRENGTHEN MUSCLES, IMPROVE BALANCE, AND FEEL MORE CONFIDENT MOVING SAFELY.

FLU SHOTS & IMMUNIZATION UPDATES

AS COOLER WEATHER APPROACHES, IT'S TIME TO PREPARE FOR FLU SEASON. THE VA RECOMMENDS ALL VETERANS RECEIVE THEIR ANNUAL FLU SHOT, AS WELL AS UPDATED COVID-19 BOOSTERS. OLDER VETERANS MAY ALSO BENEFIT FROM PNEUMONIA AND SHINGLES VACCINES.

HOW TO GET VACCINATED:

- SCHEDULE AT YOUR LOCAL VA MEDICAL CENTER OR CLINIC**
- USE A COMMUNITY PHARMACY PARTNERED WITH THE VA**
- REQUEST AN APPOINTMENT THROUGH THE MY HEALTHVET PORTAL**

PROTECT YOURSELF EARLY THIS FALL SO YOU CAN STAY HEALTHY ALL SEASON.

PAIN MANAGEMENT & WHOLE HEALTH APPROACHES

CHRONIC PAIN IS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON CHALLENGES VETERANS FACE. THE VA'S WHOLE HEALTH APPROACH OFFERS ALTERNATIVES THAT GO BEYOND MEDICATION.

OPTIONS INCLUDE:

- ACUPUNCTURE AND CHIROPRACTIC CARE**
- YOGA, TAI CHI, AND MINDFULNESS PRACTICES**
- NUTRITION COUNSELING AND STRESS REDUCTION PROGRAMS**

TALK WITH YOUR VA CARE TEAM ABOUT PERSONALIZED PAIN MANAGEMENT PLANS THAT ADDRESS BOTH PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING WHILE REDUCING RELIANCE ON OPIOIDS.

PACT ACT & TOXIC EXPOSURE SCREENINGS

THE PACT ACT EXPANDS HEALTHCARE AND BENEFITS FOR VETERANS EXPOSED TO BURN PITS, AGENT ORANGE, AND OTHER TOXIC SUBSTANCES. SEPTEMBER IS A GREAT TIME TO SCHEDULE YOUR TOXIC EXPOSURE SCREENING IF YOU HAVEN'T YET.

WHAT TO KNOW:

- SCREENINGS ARE QUICK, EASY, AND OFFERED AT NO COST.**
- ELIGIBILITY HAS EXPANDED TO INCLUDE MILLIONS MORE VETERANS.**
- FILING A CLAIM SOON CAN HELP ENSURE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND BENEFITS.**

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL VA OR VISIT

[HTTPS://WWW.VA.GOV/PACT](https://www.va.gov/pact) FOR MORE INFORMATION.

CAREGIVER & FAMILY SUPPORT

VETERANS' FAMILIES ARE VITAL TO THEIR HEALTH JOURNEY. SEPTEMBER INCLUDES NATIONAL FAMILY HEALTH & FITNESS DAY (SEPT 28)—A REMINDER TO PRIORITIZE FAMILY WELLNESS TOGETHER.

WAYS TO SUPPORT FAMILY & CAREGIVERS:

- EXPLORE VA'S CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM, WHICH PROVIDES TRAINING, PEER SUPPORT, AND RESPITE CARE.**
- ENGAGE IN SIMPLE FAMILY FITNESS ACTIVITIES LIKE EVENING WALKS OR OUTDOOR GAMES.**
- TAKE ADVANTAGE OF VA'S RESOURCES FOR MANAGING STRESS, CAREGIVING, AND SELF-CARE.**

WHEN CAREGIVERS ARE SUPPORTED, VETERANS THRIVE.

HEALTHY EATING THIS FALL

FALL IS THE PERFECT SEASON TO ENJOY NUTRIENT-RICH PRODUCE AND WARM, COMFORTING MEALS.

MAKING SMALL CHOICES CAN HELP VETERANS MANAGE WEIGHT, DIABETES, AND HEART HEALTH.

HEALTHY FALL EATING TIPS:

- CHOOSE BROTH-BASED SOUPS PACKED WITH VEGETABLES AND LEAN PROTEIN.**
- ROAST SEASONAL VEGETABLES LIKE SQUASH, CARROTS, AND SWEET POTATOES.**
- REPLACE SUGARY DRINKS WITH WATER OR HERBAL TEAS.**
- JOIN VA'S HEALTHY TEACHING KITCHEN CLASSES FOR COOKING INSPIRATION.**

FUEL YOUR BODY WITH FOODS THAT SUPPORT ENERGY AND RESILIENCE THIS SEASON.

RESOURCE LIST

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS SERVICES - ENDEAVORS®

WE PROVIDE A RANGE OF TOOLS AND SERVICES AIMED AT ASSISTING VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN LEADING FULFILLING LIVES. OUR OFFERINGS INCLUDE FREE AND LOW-COST COUNSELING, MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT, LIFE SKILLS COURSES, FITNESS CLASSES, CASE MANAGEMENT, AND MUCH MORE.



HOME - VMHD

THE VETERANS MENTAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT (VMHD) IS FOCUSED ON ENSURING ACCESS TO COMPETENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR SERVICE MEMBERS, VETERANS, AND THEIR FAMILIES.



[HTTPS://WWW.MENTALHEALTH.VA.GOV/](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/)

VA HAS A VARIETY OF MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES, INFORMATION, TREATMENT OPTIONS AND MORE—ALL ACCESSIBLE TO VETERANS, VETERANS' SUPPORTERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC.



MILITARY COUNSELING FOR STRESS | MILITARY ONESOURCE

MILITARY ONESOURCE IS YOUR FREE 24/7 GATEWAY TO INFORMATION, ANSWERS AND SUPPORT. AS A DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE-FUNDED PROGRAM, WE PUT EXPERT CONFIDENTIAL HELP TO WORK FOR SERVICE MEMBERS, IMMEDIATE FAMILY AND SURVIVORS WHO NEED A LITTLE EXTRA GUIDANCE FOR ALL THINGS MILLIFE.



VETERAN MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

THROUGH OUR INTERACTIVE PROGRAMS, MENTAL HEALTH WORKSHOPS, AND A BROAD OFFERING OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, VETERANS CAN BUILD RESILIENCE TO HELP OVERCOME MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS, INCLUDING PTSD, MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA (MST), TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY (TBI), AND MORE.



FREE COUNSELING FOR VETERANS | INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP TREATMENT OPTIONS

U.S.VETS OFFERS FREE COUNSELING AND TREATMENT SERVICES DESIGNED TO ADDRESS THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF EACH CLIENT IN A SAFE AND CONFIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENT. PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOU NEED MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS SERVICES.



THE HEADSTRONG PROJECT - 501C3 NONPROFIT FOR VETERAN MENTAL HEALTH

THE HEADSTRONG PROJECT IS A NON-PROFIT MENTAL HEALTH ORGANIZATION PROVIDING CONFIDENTIAL, BARRIER-FREE, AND STIGMA-FREE PTSD TREATMENT TO OUR VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS, AND FAMILY CONNECTED TO THEIR CARE.



MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR SERVICE MEMBERS, VETERANS & FAMILY

ENTERSTONE'S MILITARY SERVICES EXISTS TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS TO CARE OFTEN EXPERIENCED BY OUR NATION'S SERVICE MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES. WE ARE COMMITTED TO PROVIDING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR OUR HEROES—INCLUDING ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS, MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD OR RESERVES, VETERANS, AND MILITARY FAMILY MEMBERS.



MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR MILITARY AND FAMILIES - GIVE AN HOUR

GIVE AN HOUR IS POISED TO STEP IN AND PROVIDE CONFIDENTIAL, NO-COST MENTAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES TO ACTIVE-DUTY MILITARY, RESERVISTS, GUARD, VETERANS, AND, IN CERTAIN CASES, SPOUSES AND CAREGIVERS.



Highlights

#TEXASVFWSTRONG

- VFW POST 6970 IN POTEET, TX HOSTED TWO MEDICARE 101 PRESENTATIONS DISCUSSING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CHAMPVA, TRICARE AND VA WHEN IT COMES TO MEDICARE.
- DISTRICT 29 COMMANDER NOLA SALDANA HOSTS MONTHLY WALKS AND SOCIAL OUTINGS TO COMBAT LONELINESS, ISOLATION AND PROMOTE GOOD HEALTH AMONGST MEMBERS.
- CALDWELL'S POST 4458, 17TH DISTRICT, HELD A RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE ON JULY 23RD. POST MEMBERS CHECKED IN DONORS AND DONATED AS WELL.
- DISTRICT 3 SURGEON JOHN DIGGS, VFW POST 2494 REPORT PLANNING IS IN MOTION FOR DALLAS COMMUNITY CARES' FIRST ANNUAL EVENT, WHICH WILL INCLUDE A LARGE-SCALE BOXING AND DISTRIBUTION OF 5,000 CARE PACKAGES TO FIRST RESPONDERS AND VETERANS ACROSS NORTH TEXAS. A RECENT TEAMS PLANNING SESSION BROUGHT TOGETHER NATIONAL AND REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES FROM OPERATION GRATITUDE ALONG WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS INCLUDING MEN'S WAREHOUSE AND SOUTHWEST AIRLINES, WHOSE VOLUNTEERS WILL HELP ASSEMBLE THE PACKAGES. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT WILL COME FROM THE DALLAS POLICE ASSOCIATION, SPOUSES BEHIND THE BADGE, AND OTHER LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS.



VAVS PROGRAM

VETERAN AFFAIRS VOLUNTARY SERVICE OR BETTER KNOWN AS VAVS, IS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S LARGEST VOLUNTEER PROGRAM AND VFW HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM SINCE ITS INCEPTION IN 1946.

AS A DEPARTMENT, WE ARE IN DIRE NEED OF VFW VAVS DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVES ACROSS THE STATE.

IF YOU ARE NOT ALREADY SIGNED UP AS A VAVS LEAD/DEPUTY REPRESENTATIVE, AND YOU ARE SERVING IN THE CAPACITY OF A POST SURGEON/DISTRICT SURGEON, PLEASE REACH OUT TO ME TO DISCUSS HOW WE CAN GET YOU INVOLVED.

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN SUPPORTING AND VOLUNTEERING AT THE VA, I ENCOURAGE YOU TO ALSO REACH OUT TO SEE HOW WE CAN BEST GET YOU INVOLVED.

- QUARTERLY FACILITY MEETINGS
- ANNUAL JOINT REVIEW (NOV)
- MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE
- STAYING UP TO DATE ON YOUR VA'S UPDATES
- ADVOCACY FOR CHANGE



VA VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS



VFW is seeking volunteers for VA Volunteer Service Programs

(VFW Membership not required)

Volunteer Opportunities

(In-person or Online) Compassionate

Contact Corps
Corporate Volunteerism
Physician Ambassador Program
Student Volunteer Program /
James H. Parke Memorial Scholarship
Volunteer Transportation Network
Voter Assistance

Join a Legacy of Service

Volunteer once, occasionally, or regularly — your assistance and time are priceless to the VFW, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and our Nations Veterans.

No Computer? No Problem.
Call 1-800-VFW-1899 for assistance today!



Coming Up

HEALTHCARE FOR HEROES HUDDLES

Join us via Zoom each month for informative presentations from subject matter experts from leading healthcare organizations who share resources and tools.

2nd Thursdays @6:30pm CST

Next huddle takes place on 9.11.25 with a special guest speaker!

Stay tuned for more information!

Meeting ID: 820 1717 6671

Passcode: 367120

[CLICK HERE FOR LINK!](#)



Free Resources

WOMAN VETERANS RESOURCE GUIDE

A comprehensive resource guide for woman Veterans encompassing a plethora of topics from healthcare to employment and more.

[INSTANT DOWNLOAD](#)

VA 2025 HANDBOOK

[INSTANT DOWNLOAD](#)

VA NEW LOGIN INSTRUCTIONS

[CLICK HERE FOR LINK!](#)

Important Contacts

DISTRICT 1 SURGEON: STEPHEN CARTAS|

STEPHEN.CARTAS@VETERAN.ME

DISTRICT 2 SURGEON: DAVID SNAPP| SMOUSE77632@ATT.NET

DISTRICT 3 SURGEON: JOHN DIGGS| JOHNDIGGSKR@HOTMAIL.COM

DISTRICT 4 SURGEON: ARDEN PETERSON| KENDALL@CONSULTANT.COM

DISTRICT 5 SURGEON: RENE GERBERS| RENE.M.GERBERS@GMAIL.COM

DISTRICT 6 SURGEON: AMY RICHARDSON|ALYNCH118@YAHOO.COM

DISTRICT 9 SURGEON: JOSHUA SULLINS| JSULLIN3@GMAIL.COM

DISTRICT 10 SURGEON: JOSE MUNOZ| EZEKIEL62@AOL.COM

DISTRICT 12 SURGEON: CARY MILLER| SFCMIL@GMAIL.COM

DISTRICT 13 SURGEON: WILLIAM ALLEN| FARMERSFIGHT@HOTMAIL.COM

DISTRICT 14 SURGEON: DAVID CARR| CARRMANN70@GMAIL.COM

DISTRICT 16 SURGEON: TED NUGENT| GPDOFC668@YAHOO.COM

DISTRICT 17 SURGEON: TINA SMITH| TINAMSMITH@DNTCOMPUTER.COM

DISTRICT 18 SURGEON: AL VILLAREAL | ACVACE29@YAHOO.COM

DISTRICT 19 SURGEON: RICHARD LUNDIE|

RICHARD.LUNDIE@YAHOO.COM

DISTRICT 20 SURGEON: AARON MIRELES| AMMIRELES1013@YAHOO.COM

DISTRICT 21 SURGEON: KOLTON KROTTER|

ANXIETHACKERS@GMAIL.COM

DISTRICT 24 SURGEON: GAIL HORN| GHORN1023@GMAIL.COM

DISTRICT 25 SURGEON: JOHN WOJTKUN| EVENTSBYJOHN@YAHOO.COM

DISTRICT 28 SURGEON: LEKA ROBINSON| LEKAROBINSON@GMAIL.COM

DISTRICT 29 SURGEON: BOBBY BAKER| CHIEF_1911@YAHOO.COM

DISTRICT 30 SURGEON: ELOY SANDOVAL| AIRSHIP2000@AOL.COM

Stay Connected!



andrea.ortiz.vfw@gmail.com



[@txvfwstatesurgeon](https://www.instagram.com/txvfwstatesurgeon)

[LET'S CHAT!](#)