

PATIENT

HANDBOOK

VA GREATER LOS ANGELES
HEALTHCARE SYSTEM



*A Division of VA Desert Pacific
Healthcare Network*



Department of
Veterans Affairs

Patient
Centered
Care



Welcome to the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System. We thank you for choosing us to be your partner in wellness and health.

We have provided this handbook for you and your family to become familiar with the patient and health care services we offer. Enclosed, you will also find other important information about our programs, important phone numbers, discharge information, and much more.

We honor your service to our country and thank you. Your satisfaction is a measure of our success, and we continue to strive to provide you with the highest quality health care.

Our Mission: Honor America's veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

Our Vision: To be a patient-centered integrated health care organization for veterans providing excellent health care, research, and education; an organization where people choose to work; an active community partner; and a back-up for national emergencies.

We Value: Trust, respect, excellence, commitment, and compassion.

Sincerely,

Donna M. Beiter, RN, MSN

Director

**Welcome from
the Director**



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Patient Services

Agent Cashier

The Agent Cashier is available to veterans wishing to make co-payments or receive reimbursement for eligible travel. The Agent Cashier is open as follows unless otherwise posted:

West Los Angeles Medical Center	Monday - Friday	8:30 a.m. - 4:00p.m.
Los Angeles Ambulatory Care Center	Monday - Friday	8:30 a.m. - 4:00p.m.
Sepulveda Ambulatory Care Center	Monday - Friday	8:30 a.m. - 4:00p.m.

Canteen

The canteen/cafeteria/retail stores offer a varied daily menu at a reasonable, tax-free prices. Stores offer retail sales and a wide range of other services for your convenience. The canteen/retailstore hours vary by location. Ask a member of your health care team for specific hours at your medical center.

Chaplain Services

Upon request, VA chaplains are available to provide religious care to any patient and his/her family. VA care utilizes a holistic approach that offers pastoral support for the seriously ill, the terminally ill, as well as bereavement counseling. Let a member of your health care team know if you would like to speak with/meet one of our chaplains, or call them directly at 310-478-3177 ext. 83391.

Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

Volunteer Transportation Network (VTN)

The DAV VTN provides transportation to ambulatory veterans in need of medical care at a VA facility. This program is available due to the willingness and availability of volunteer drivers.

To use these services, veterans must be ambulatory; this means a veteran must be able to get from their home to the vehicle and into the vehicle and medical center/clinic without assistance. DAV cannot transport veterans who use a wheelchair or oxygen.

The need for DAV transport is based primarily on a veteran's inability to pay for the cost of public transportation. Please contact the DAV at 310-478-3711 x49062. They are located in building 500 in room 1613.

Veterans are transported for scheduled appointments only.



Interpreter Services

Interpreter services are available for deaf, speech impaired, and non-English speaking veterans and their family members. Please contact your health care team or the Patient Advocate to arrange for interpreter assistance.

Patient Education Resource Center (PERC)

Health information is available for inpatients, outpatients, and their families. The PERC coordinators at WLA, SACC, and LAACC can provide reading material and assistance. Also, general reading material (books and magazines) are available throughout medical centers. Please see GLA PERC locations and contact numbers.

WLA Building 500 Room 1606 310-478-3711 x 43964

LAACC Room A336 213-253-2677 x 4573

SACC Building 200 Room 2500 818-895-9569



Patient Services (continued)

Lost and Found

If you lose any personal items while at a VA facility, tell your health care team by calling 310-478-3711 ext. 83322. If needed, contact VA police. Please take any items you find while at the facility to your health care team or VA police.

Minority Veterans Program

This program assures that minority veterans receive all of their benefits and services regardless of race, origin, religion, or gender and that they encounter no barriers or impediments in their attempts to access these services. Contact a member of your health care team if you need assistance.

My HealtheVet

My HealtheVet is a Web-based application designed for veterans and their families. Registered veterans can find health information, maintain their own health record and even refill VA prescriptions. Visit the website at the following: <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

Parking

Parking areas are designated for visitors, employees, volunteers, outpatients, and the handicapped. Please obey the posted signs and ground painted symbols. Inpatients are requested to keep their cars at home. If this is not possible, VA police should be notified. Domiciliary patients need clearance through their treatment team to have a vehicle at the medical center. The speed limit on medical center grounds is posted. VA police enforce all regulations and will issue warnings and tickets to drivers who violate the rules. Parking for VA outpatients and visitors is free of charge at all of our facilities.

Patient Advocate

Every VA Medical Center has a Patient Advocate who can assist you with questions and concerns regarding VA care, policy or procedures. Also, if you are not happy with the service provided by our staff, assistance is available through our Patient Advocates office. If you have not been able to resolve important issues related to the VA through other means of communications, please contact the Patient Advocates at the following VA facilities:

West Los Angeles Medical Center (310)268-3068

Los Angeles Ambulatory Care Center (213)253-2677 ext.4111

Sepulveda Ambulatory Care Center (818) 895-9564



Release of Information

If you need copies of your medical record, lab results, X-rays, disability and/or insurance forms, etc. contact the Release of Information (ROI). Prior to releasing any information, you will need to sign a consent form allowing us to copy and release your medical records. Please go to your nearest ROI office for additional information and assistance.

Veterans Benefits Counselors

Veterans Benefits Counselors are assigned to VA medical centers and community based outpatient clinics with specific office hours. They can help you with your VA benefits (compensation, pension, government insurance, education, GI loans, vocational rehabilitation, etc.). If you need information or assistance, contact Veterans Benefits at the national toll free number at 1-800-827-1000.

Veterans Service Center (VSC)

The VSC provides one-stop services for veterans who need to update their insurance, home address, complete a financial assessment or ask billing questions.

The VSC can also assist with enrollment and eligibility questions. You can visit the VSC at your local medical center or call the Veterans Service Contact Center toll free at 1-888-823-9656.

Co-Payments

A VA co-payment may be charged for prescriptions, inpatient care and/or outpatient visits. Contact you local VSC or call the Veterans Service Contact Center toll free at 1-888-823-9656 for current information about co-payments.

Health Insurance

VA is required to bill your private health insurance company for medical treatment provided for nonservice connected conditions. Payment received from private insurance is applied to VA co-payment charges.

Pre-Registration Program

You may receive a call from a VA employee working in the Veteran Service Contact Center. The person calling will say they work for the Veteran Service Contact Center and that they are calling to update some of your information. The caller will also remind you of

your upcoming appointments. Other callers would not have this type of information. If at any point you are not comfortable with the phone call, you may hang up. You can also call the Veteran Service Contact Center's toll free number at **1-888-823-9656** to verify the program and provide your updated information.

You will need to provide:

- Your address
- Phone numbers (home, cell and work)
- Insurance information
- Next of kin
- Emergency contacts
- Place of employment

You will not be asked for your:

- Social Security number
- Mother's maiden name
- Date of birth
- Place of birth

Visual Impairment Services

Patients with visual impairments are referred to the Visual Impairment Services Coordinator for information about special services. Visually impaired patients who are hospitalized are entitled to visually impaired prosthetics. The coordinator also provides follow-up for visually impaired patients after discharge.

Volunteers

Our voluntary service program provides opportunities for individuals and community groups to voluntarily give of their time and resources. Volunteers often assist with special events, activities, clerical tasks, and transporting patients to appointments. Please contact Voluntary Services at 310-478-3711 x40560 if you have questions.

Women Veterans Program

The Women Veterans Program ensures that all female veterans have access to VA benefits and services on par with male veterans. It also ensures that VA programs are responsive to the gender-specific needs of women veterans. Each medical center has a Women Veterans Program Manager who can help coordinate services including medical services, mental health care, and sexual abuse counseling.

Health Care Information

Health Care Information



Co-Managed Care

If you are receiving care from both a VA provider and a private community provider, it is important for your health and safety that your care be coordinated into one treatment plan. Your VA and private community providers should communicate about your health status, medications, treatments, and diagnostic tests.

In order to facilitate this, you need to supply your VA provider the following information about your private community provider's care—especially if you want your VA provider to write a prescription for medication that your non-VA provider recommends:

- Name, address, and phone number of your community provider
- Any prescriptions(s) written by your community provider
- Office visit notes supporting the prescription(s)
- Blood work results
- Test results

This information should be brought with you to your VA appointment. Any questions, call your VA health care provider prior to coming in for your visit to make sure you have the proper information. Please understand that it is the responsibility of your VA provider to use their own clinical judgment to decide what medical treatment, prescriptions and test(s) are appropriate and necessary.

Do Not Resuscitate (DNR)

DNR means cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and/or other heroic health or life saving measures will not be started when cardiac or respiratory arrest occurs. After talking with your doctor, you can make the DNR decision. If you are too ill to make that decision, your family, or health care proxy/power of attorney can make that decision with your doctor. The order is not permanent and may be stopped at any time.

Emergency Care

Emergency care is available at the West Los Angeles Medical Center and the Sepulveda Ambulatory Care Center. If you need emergency care for a medical or mental health condition and there is no VA medical center close to you—call 911 or go to the nearest community hospital that has an emergency room.

When you are admitted to a community hospital for emergency care a family member, friend, or hospital staff member must contact VA within 72 hours to provide VA information about your emergency care. In limited circumstances, VA may authorize payment for care provided in a non-VA facility.



TelCare

1-888-838-7890

TelCare is a toll free medical advice line for veterans. It is a program with qualified professionals who will speak to you directly to answer your health care questions 24 hours per day, 7 days per week (including weekends and holidays.) When possible, please call TelCare before you go to the emergency room. If you are in the midst of an emergency, hang up and dial 911.

TelCare can:

- Assist you and your family members with questions and concerns about your health.
- Advise the proper course of treatment based on the urgency of your symptoms using VA- approved clinical/health care guidelines.
- Provide education regarding diseases and medications.
- Clarify pre- and post-procedure treatment (or clinical procedure) instructions.
- Clarify/explain inpatient hospitalization discharge instructions.
- Cancel appointment.

TelCare cannot:

- Give lab, X-ray or other test results to you. Your provider will give you that information via phone or letter.
- Transfer calls to other hospital departments, inpatient rooms or your primary care provider.
- Give out telephone extensions/numbers.
- Schedule specialty appointments (cardiology, orthopedics, audiology, etc.).
- Enroll patients in primary care.
- Provide authorization for payment of services provided by non-VA facilities (including ambulance transportation).
- Provide or fax patient records to non-VA facilities.

Ethics Advisory Committee

The Ethics Advisory Committee is a group of VA staff who can provide guidance if you are having trouble making choices about care (i.e. performing heroic measures at the end-of-life, feeding tube, etc.). If you or your family have questions about the ethics of any treatment or other issues, talk to your health care team. If you still have concerns you may ask for a review of those issues with the Ethics Advisory Committee. To request this review, ask your health care team for a referral.

Pain Management

We are committed to helping you get the best possible pain relief. Only you can describe your pain. You will be asked to rate the amount of pain you have on a "0 to 10" scale. Zero means no pain and ten describes the worst pain you could imagine having.



Health Care Programs

Acupuncture

Acupuncture is about healing, energy, and balance. An ancient Chinese healing art, acupuncture employs the insertion of fine needles into specific points on the body to manipulate the flow of energy and restore the body's balance. An essentially painless technique, acupuncture is widely used to treat illness, relieve pain, and to maintain good health. It is now available at several of our medical centers. Talk to your health care team to see if acupuncture should be part of your treatment plan.

Palliative Care

Facing an illness that is not getting better and cannot be cured can be very hard. You may have many questions about your illness and the choices you must make. A member of the Advanced Illness/Palliative Care Consultation Team can meet with you and your family to talk about your concerns. They can help you obtain information, offer support and guidance, help you with your choices, coordinate your care, work with your health care team, and help you and your loved ones deal with issues of advanced illness. This team can help you sort out the details to give you choices, dignity, and peace of mind. You may initiate this consultation or ask a member of the health care team to contact them for you.

Ambulatory Surgery

Surgery or other diagnostic tests will be completed on an outpatient basis whenever possible. Your health care team determines the decision for outpatient service. The ambulatory surgery staff will manage your surgical care, pre-operative teaching, and post-operative follow-up.

Blood Donor Program

If you are having surgery at a VA medical center, you may be able to pre-donate your own blood for the procedure. If you have questions about blood donation, speak with your health care team at least two weeks prior to your surgery.

Chiropractic Care

VA medical centers and community based outpatient clinics may offer chiropractic therapy. Eligible veterans may receive chiropractic care after receiving a referral from their primary care provider. Many people find relief for back pain with chiropractic therapy, a form of manual massage that corrects bone and joint misalignments. Ask your VA primary care provider if chiropractic therapy is right for you.

Community Living Centers/Long Term Care

VA community living centers/long term care units provide compassionate care to veterans with chronic, stable conditions (including dementia). It also provides care for veterans who need rehabilitation or short term specialized services (such as respite, intravenous therapy, or comfort and care at the end-of-life). To find out if you are eligible for VA community living center/long term care, contact your local Veterans Service Center or call the Veteran Service Contact Center's toll free number at 1-888-823-9656 for more information.

Dental

There are special eligibility requirements that must be met in order to receive dental care. Please talk to your local Veterans Service Center or call the Veteran Service Contact Center's toll free number at 1-888-823-9656 for more information about dental eligibility.





Domiciliary

Veterans who are in need of acute psychiatric programs and have chronic problems related to substance use, homelessness and/or vocational rehabilitation can benefit from a residential program like domiciliary care. The program provides each veteran with a comprehensive individualized assessment and treatment plan that addresses substance use, vocational skills, daily living skills, medication management, and intrapersonal skill building. Staff works with the veteran to develop and practice behaviors to replace the dysfunctional habits causing the veteran's chronic problems in maintaining independent living. The average length of stay for veterans in the domiciliary programs is three to six months. Talk to your health care team to see if you are a candidate for domiciliary care.

Home Based Primary Care (HBPC)

HBPC is a special program that provides health care in the home. The program is for severely disabled patients with a chronic illness or patients who are terminally ill. Health care providers visit patients in their own home to deliver care. HBPC may also use technology to assist in providing at-home care. This secure, easy-to-use technology lets patients send daily progress reports to their VA care provider. Providers are able to work closely with the patient through interactive systems such as videophones, telemonitoring devices, in-home messaging devices, telephone, etc. Ask a member of your health care team if you would benefit from HBPC.

Hospice Care

Hospice care is for veterans who are nearing the end of their life due to an illness. Since a cure is not possible, the goal is to reduce the patient's pain and discomfort as much as possible. It strives to help patients stay as comfortable as possible in a home-like setting. The patient's and family's personal choices are supported to help enrich the time the patient has as they near the end of their life. Talk to your health care team for more information and locations.

Mental Health Care Services

VA offers a variety of mental health care programs and services for veterans. The programs help veterans work toward a healthy and productive life. Services include inpatient and/or outpatient care for:

- Medication management
- Individual psychotherapy
- Group therapy
- Couple's and family therapy
- Psychological and neuro-psychological testing
- Crisis intervention
- Case management
- Supportive therapy
- Weight management
- Stress management
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Alternative treatment for chronic pain
- Substance abuse programs
- Smoking cessation
- Suicide Crisis Program

MOVE! Program

MOVE! (Managing Overweight/Obesity for Veterans Everywhere), is a national weight management program designed by VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP), a part of the Office of Patient Care Services to help veterans lose weight, keep it off, and improve their health. The MOVE! Program is designed for veterans who want assistance with managing their weight. Typically, the program is offered to veterans who are overweight or obese. The program combines nutritional counseling with exercise and ongoing support. It assesses a veteran's personal eating habits, physical activity and behavioral health. Most important, it addresses a patient's medical conditions to develop a safe and helpful program. Talk with your health care team about MOVE!

Help is only a phone call away.

VA has established a 24-hour National Suicide Crisis Line where you can get understanding, compassion, and help from trained mental health professionals. Reach out and call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for help.

Preventive Health Care

Prevention is the best medicine. As your health care provider, we are very interested in your health and well-being. Please partner with us by staying up-to-date on your health care screening exams, tests, and lab work. Together we can help insure a better quality of life for you in the future.

Screening Exams/Tests

- Blood Pressure Screen (yearly)
- Colon Cancer Screen (over 50)
 - Tobacco Screen (yearly)
 - Hepatitis C Screening
- Cholesterol Screening (every 3 years if results are acceptable)
- Depression Screening (yearly)

For Men

- Prostate Cancer Education (annually)
- Prostate Screening if appropriate (over 50)

For Women

- Self Breast Exam (monthly)
- Mammogram (yearly over age 40)
- Pelvic Exam (yearly)

Immunizations

- Influenza "Flu Shot" (yearly over 50 or high risk)
- Pneumovax (once at 65 or before if high risk)
- td Toxoid "Tetanus" (every 10 years if under 65, a booster shot may be needed against Pertussis)





Primary Care

Your health care team will arrange for outpatient care based on your specific needs. All patients are encouraged to enroll in primary care to benefit from a wide array of outpatient health services. Your care is coordinated in primary care, including referrals to specialists.

Polytrauma

Polytrauma care is for veterans with injuries to more than one physical region or organ system, one of which may be life threatening, and which results in physical, cognitive, psychological, or psychosocial impairments and functional disability. Some examples of Polytrauma include:

- Traumatic brain injury (TBI)
- Hearing loss
- Amputations
- Fractures
- Burns
- Visual impairment

Teams of physicians from every relevant field administer an individually tailored rehabilitation plan to help the patient recover as much as possible.

Prescriptions/Pharmacy

As a veteran enrolled in VA Health Care, you are eligible for prescription medications. You may be required to make a co-payment for prescriptions not related to a service-connected condition. VA prescriptions must be written by a VA provider and filled at a VA pharmacy. VA health care providers will work closely with your private physician to provide you with continuity of care. It is important for you to supply your VA provider with your medical records from your private physician. Under certain conditions, you may be prescribed a drug that does not appear on the formulary. Your VA provider may request this non-formulary medication for you by completing a special request form. The non-formulary medication request must be approved by a committee. Your VA provider will inform you of a disapproval of a non-formulary medication request and discuss the use of alternative medications with you.

New Prescriptions

Newly prescribed formulary medication(s) can be picked up at the VA pharmacy. Prescriptions that are mailed come from a centralized pharmacy affiliated with your VA facility. Prescriptions that are mailed usually arrive within 14 days.

Refills

Refills are processed through the mail and not for pickup at the pharmacy window. They should be requested at least three weeks before you run out of medication. Maintenance medication should be re-ordered as soon as it is received. This will allow ample time for processing and delivery. Please be sure to keep VA informed of any changes in your address that would result in your medications being delayed or shipped incorrectly.

Health Care Programs (continued)

Prescriptions/Pharmacy

(continued)

You can order refills by:

- Completing and mailing the refill request slip that comes with each prescription
- Leaving the refill slip with the pharmacy
- Utilizing My HealtheVet at

www.myhealth.va.gov

Veterans who want to order prescriptions online need to be registered users and verified in person (see the Web site for further information.)

- When ordering by phone, you will need your social security number and the prescription number(s) (Rx #). Using a touch-tone phone, call our automated refill request system: (800)-952-4852

If you do not have any refills remaining, and need to continue the medication, please contact your provider as early as possible for a renewal.

If you have questions about your medication, call the outpatient pharmacy and ask to speak to a pharmacist during regular business hours. The telephone number of the pharmacy can be found on your prescription bottle.

Social Work

Social workers are assigned to all inpatient units and outpatient teams. Our social workers have valuable information regarding community agencies and resources that may be of help to you and your family. The social worker can also help with long term care/eligibility, post-hospital care, community services, and preparation for discharge.

Suicide Crisis Line 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Help is only a phone call away. VA has established a 24-hour National Suicide Crisis Line where you can get understanding, compassion, and help from trained mental health professionals. Reach out and call 1-800-273-TALK (8255). You can call for yourself or someone you care about. Your call is free and confidential.

Vocational Rehabilitation

Vocational Rehabilitation can help you obtain employment or assist in re-training that could lead to a new career or employment. Vocational counselors help you identify your strengths and skills as they relate to the current job market and can assist you in identifying any accommodations necessary to obtain and maintain employment. We work with the Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits Office as well as the State Vocational Rehabilitation Program. If you have a disability or illness that interferes with working, ask for a referral for Vocational Rehabilitation from your primary care physician.



Safety

Cell Phones, Cameras, Video, Tape Recorders

For reasons of patient privacy, visitors and patients should restrict their use of cell phones in patient care areas. Please do not use cameras, video equipment, tape recorders, in patient care areas of the medical centers. If your family or friends wish to bring in one of these items, special arrangements can be made with your health care team.

Fire/Disaster Drills

For the protection of patients and staff, each medical center has its own fire and disaster plan. If you discover a fire, tell a staff member right away. If you are in an area that needs to be evacuated, follow the instructions from the staff. Exit signs show the location of emergency exits. Fire alarms are near each exit.

Police

Our medical centers have VA police on duty 24 hours/day for your care and protection. If you need assistance, or your family/friends need an escort to their car, contact VA police.

Prohibited Items

Patients are not allowed to have alcoholic beverages, narcotics, firearms, ammunition, knives, other weapons, lighter fluid, non-safety matches, straight edge razors, or any medication from home. Cellular telephones, televisions, radios, and personal computers are also not permitted. If a patient has any of these items, they will need to be left with VA Police or sent home with a family member.

Smoking

All VA facilities are smoke-free. Staff, visitors, volunteers, and patients may not smoke anywhere indoors or within any exits or entranceways. Please be considerate of non-smokers and only smoke outside or in designated areas. VA police may issue fines if the smoking policy is not obeyed. Follow the signage posted at each facility. There are four designated smoking shelter areas available. See staff for details.

Zero Tolerance

To maintain a safe environment for patients, staff, visitors, and volunteers, our medical centers have a zero tolerance for violence. Behavior that is disruptive, threatening or violent will result in immediate action.

Outpatient Information

Appointments

Outpatient visits are pre-scheduled clinic appointments. You should make every effort to keep your scheduled appointment time. If you must reschedule your appointment, please call as soon as possible so we can fill that appointment slot with another patient. Please call 310-478-3711 x83366 to schedule or reschedule an appointment.

To get the most from your appointment, try some of these tips:

Before Your Appointment

- Complete all the paperwork that is given to you or mailed to you.
- Think about what you want to know about your health. Write down the questions you want to ask. List one or two of your most pressing concerns.
- Write down the answers to the following questions:
 - Describe the problem or symptoms. Where is it? When did it start?
 - Does anyone else at home have the same problem?
 - What do you think is causing it? What have you tried? Did it work?
 - Do you have any pain? If so, where and what type of pain? How long does it last?
 - Have you recently begun a diet or started exercising? Have you lost weight?
 - Be as accurate as possible. Do not exaggerate, understate or leave facts out.

The Day of Your Appointment

- Follow any instructions you are given—especially if you are told not to eat or drink before your appointment.
- Bring a list of all your medications, including any herbs and nutritional supplements you may be taking. Include the name, strength or dose amount, and number of pills you take each time and what time(s) of day you take them.
- Bring any logs, diaries or records of your symptoms that you have kept.
- Wear clothing that is easy to take off and put on.
- Be on time and be sure to check in.
- Bring something to do or read while in the waiting room.
- Bring a paper and pen to take notes. Remember to bring/wear your glasses and/or hearing aid(s).

At the Appointment

- If you think you might have trouble understanding or hearing, consider bringing a relative or friend to help you ask questions.
- Repeat what the provider says to you in your own words to be sure you understand.
- Keep the conversation on track. Focus on the questions that matter to you.
- Tell the provider if you don't understand. It's okay to say, "wait a minute, I don't get it," or ask what a word means.

Closing the Visit

- What is the next step in your care? Let the provider know if you can not or will not do what is suggested.
- Ask for written information about your medication(s), condition, illness and treatment. Make sure you know exactly how to take your medication(s), including the time of day you should take it/them.
- If you have more to discuss with your provider than time permits, ask for another appointment.
- Make sure you know who to call if you have questions or concerns. Call your provider if you think of something you forgot to ask during your appointment.
- Don't leave without understanding what to do to be as healthy as possible.

Inpatient Information



Admission

You should bring the following items with you when you check in:

- toothbrush
- toiletries
- toothpaste
- glasses
- shaving kit
- dentures
- deodorant
- canes

We encourage you to label all of your personal belongings.

Clothing

All patients are expected to wear pajamas, robe, slippers or shoes. A robe is provided in case you need to leave your room. Patients are asked to keep one set of clothing and footwear for discharge. Community Living Center/Long Term Care patients are encouraged to wear their own clothing. Domiciliary and transitional care patients wear their own clothes and are responsible for personal laundry needs. Washing machines and dryers are available for domiciliary patients.

Identification

Upon admission, you will be given an identification wristband. Wristbands are to be worn at all times. Lost wristbands should be reported to your health care team. Domiciliary patients will be provided with photo identification upon admission.

Mail

Mail will be delivered to you. All mail received after you are discharged will be forwarded to your home address. Please be sure that we have your current address.

Domiciliary patients will receive mail in their sections. Mailboxes are available for each domiciliary patient. Stamps may be purchased at most canteen/retail stores.

Inpatient Information (continued)

Medications

Please do not bring medications from home. Instead, make a list of all the medications you are taking (prescription and over-the-counter.) Medications brought to the medical center will be mailed to your home or sent home with your family. Your doctor will order the medication you need during your stay and upon discharge.

Exception: If you are taking part in a research project and are on special research medication, please bring it to the hospital and tell your health care team.

Please tell a member of your health care team if you are allergic to any medication.

Off Unit/Floor Notification

Please tell a member of your health care team before you leave the unit/floor. Ask if you need to sign out; if so, remember to sign back in when you return. Domiciliary patients need to carry their photo identification and display it when requesting services or assistance.

Patient Funds

For safekeeping, inpatients are advised to leave cash at home. The Medical Center is not responsible for money brought in and stored in patient rooms. Patients with cash on hand may deposit their money with the Agent Cashier. However, arrangements need to be made to obtain patient funds if discharge takes place outside the posted hours of the Agent Cashier. In lieu of cash, families are encouraged to obtain coupon books at the canteen/retail store for patient use. Inpatients in extended care programs can open a patient fund account through the Veterans Service Center.



Pharmacy

VA has its own pharmacy and pharmacists. They work with the hospital staff as part of your health care team. Only prescriptions written by VA doctors can be filled at the VA pharmacy. You will be given drug information about any new medication. Pharmacists also provide you with information about dosage and possible side effects. They are available to review your medications with you before discharge. Any medication you are going to take home will be filled in the pharmacy. Your nurse will tell you where to pick-up your medications before you leave.

Restraints

We strive to keep our medical centers free of restraints. Occasionally, restraints may be necessary. The least restrictive method will be used to ensure that your needs, rights, and dignity are maintained. If you have any questions, please talk to your health care team.

Telephones

Pay phones are available throughout the medical center. Outside callers may call the switchboard operator (main hospital phone number) and ask for you by name and floor/unit. You can call long distance by calling collect or using a calling card.

Valuables

For safekeeping, you are asked to keep your valuables at home. The medical center is not responsible for personal property and valuables that you keep in your room. Any money should be deposited with the Agent Cashier. Coupon books and phone cards may be purchased at the canteen/retail store. Domiciliary patients are advised to lock valuables in their locker.

Visiting Hours

Your family and friends are welcome to visit you at the medical center. Visiting hours are typically open. Please look for posted signs for specific/recommended visiting hours on your unit/floor. Special arrangements can be made with staff as needed. When visiting patients who are seriously ill, visits are permitted and limited only by the patient's health condition.

- Lounge areas are available throughout the medical centers. Please ask staff for the nearest location. Televisions and reading materials have been placed in these areas for your enjoyment.
- Some precautions may be necessary because of risk of infection to both you and your visitors. We ask that you follow posted signs.
- Visits may need to be kept short. We ask that guests are respectful of all our patients. Patients in the Intensive Care Unit may be limited to one or two visitors for up to 15 minutes at a time depending on the patient's condition.
- Visitors should not bring food or beverages to patients without permission from staff members. Visitors are asked not to eat in patient rooms.
- Domiciliary patients may have visitors in common areas such as section lounges. Visitations should not interfere with programming/appointments.
- If you have a child who would like to come visit you, let a member of your health care team know so that special arrangements can be made, if necessary.



WLA Fisher House

a home away from home

Located at the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center the Fisher House provides a “home away from home” so that America’s military families can be together during extended treatment for a serious illness, lengthy physical or occupational therapy.

The Fisher House creates a warm, compassionate environment where families find support and encouragement with others in similar circumstances. A family’s love is always the best medicine. When a loved one is injured or ill, a Fisher House unites families and relieves the financial and emotional strain of being away from home.

Guests must be self-sufficient and able to independently care for themselves or be accompanied by a caregiver. Guests must be able to stay in an unsupervised setting.

There is no fee for families staying at the Fisher House. The home is a 16,000 square foot facility with 21 private guest suites. Each room is professionally decorated and beautifully furnished.

For additional information about the WLA Fisher House, please contact: the Fisher House Manager at 310.268.4457



Discharge Information

Early in your stay, your health care team should talk to you about your after hospitalization care, your anticipated discharge date, and any needed follow-up with your primary care doctor. Your social worker will assist you if you need counseling or assistance with aftercare facilities such as long term care, residential care, or boarding facility.

If medication or other supplies are prescribed, they will be discussed with you prior to discharge. Check with your nurse when you get your discharge instructions to make sure that you have everything you will need before you leave the hospital.

We will work with you to have all of your discharge arrangements made at least one day prior to your discharge. If you require help in arranging transportation home or other special needs, your social worker can assist you.

48-Hour Discharge Survey

You may be contacted for feedback about your stay once you are discharged. Your comments will help us continue to improve our services. It is important that we have your correct phone number at time of discharge.

Collecting your Personal Belongings

Make sure you have collected everything from your bedside area and are completely ready to leave. If you have any money on deposit at the Agent Cashier, plan to withdraw your balance. If you have funds and are not physically able to get to the Agent Cashier, tell a member of your health care team. Remember: If you are being discharged on a weekend, you will need to do this ahead of time.



Patient & Community Living Center

Resident Rights and Responsibilities

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is pleased you have selected us to provide your health care. We want to improve your health and well-being. We will make your visit or stay as pleasant for you as possible. As part of our service to you, to other veterans and to the Nation, we are committed to improving health care quality. We also train future health care professionals, conduct research, and support our country in times of national emergency. In all of these activities, our employees will respect and support your rights as a patient. Your basic rights and responsibilities are outlined below. Please talk with VA treatment team members or a patient advocate if you have any questions or would like more information about your rights.

I. 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 values.
- You or someone you choose has the right to keep and spend your money. You have the right to receive an accounting of any 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 Community Living Center resident, you may wear your own clothes. You may keep personal items. This will depend on your medical condition.
- As an inpatient or Community Living Center 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 to participate in these activities. You may decide whether or not to perform tasks in or for the Medical Center.

- As an inpatient or Community Living Center resident, you have the right to communicate freely and privately. You may have or refuse visitors. You will have access to public telephones. You may participate in civic rights, such as voting and free speech.
- As a Community Living Center 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 or residents and staff, you are expected to respect other patients, residents 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.

II. Information Disclosure and Confidentiality

- You will be given information about the health benefits 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 any 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 (an example of this is State public health reporting). You have the right to information in your medical record and may request a copy of your medical records. This

will be provided except in rare situations when your VA physician feels the information will be harmful to you. In that case, you have the right to have this discussed with you by your VA provider.

- You will be informed of all outcomes of care, including any potential injuries. You will be informed about how to request compensation for any injuries.

III. Participation in Treatment Decisions

- You, and any persons you choose, will be involved in all 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. You will be told what is likely to happen to you if you refuse treatment. Refusing treatment will not affect your rights to future care but you take responsibility for the possible results to your health.

Patient & Community Living Center (continue)

Resident Rights and Responsibilities

- Tell your provider about your current condition, medicines (including over-the-counter and herbals), and medical history. Also, share any other information that affects your health. You should ask questions when you do not understand something about your care. Being involved is very important for you to get the best possible results.
- You will be given, in writing, the name and title of the provider in charge of your care. As our partner in health care, you have the right to be involved in choosing your provider. You also have the right to know the names and titles of those who provide you care.

This includes students, residents and trainees. Providers will properly introduce themselves when they take part in your care.

- You will be educated about your role and responsibilities as a patient or resident. This includes your participation in decision-making and care at the end of life.
- If you believe you cannot follow the treatment plan, you have a responsibility to notify your provider or treatment team.
- 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.

- As an inpatient or Community Living Center resident, you will be provided any transportation necessary for your treatment plan.
- You have the right to choose whether 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.
- You will be included in resolving any ethical issues about your care. You may consult with the Medical Center's Ethics Consultation Service 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.

IV. Complaints

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

VA 10-88
P91985
September 2006

Advanced Directive

VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System uses the latest methods to support life. Thanks to the many advances in medical knowledge we are able to help patients live longer.

But, this brings up a very difficult issue:

Who should make decisions about using machines to keep someone alive longer than they would be if the technology were not used?

These decisions should not be up to the doctor, the hospital, or the courts. You have the final say in what type of medical care is the best for you. The following pages explain your right to make legal documents called Advance Directives. These documents can assist you in telling your family and our staff how you feel about these difficult issues.

By completing these documents you can put your wishes regarding your health care in writing before you become seriously ill.

The doctors and staff at our Medical Center are dedicated to providing comfort and humane care while following your wishes about your care. We believe that all patients have the right to direct their own health care, including the right to “die with dignity.”

Hospitals and health care providers are required to ask all patients who are admitted if they have an Advance Directive. This information must be recorded in their medical record.

We hope that it will assist you in making decisions that are right for you and your family. We suggest that you share the information with your family and loved ones. The following are some definitions we want you to know.

Advance Directives. As a patient, you have the right to prepare legal documents called Advance Directives. This will guide the medical team in treating you if you are unable to make medical decisions for yourself. Two commonly used types of Advance Directives are the Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care (DPAHC) and the Living Will.

The Durable Power of Attorney (DPAHC) is a legal document that lets you name another person to act on your behalf. If you are no longer able to speak for yourself, this person will decide for you. This person is called proxy or surrogate decision-maker. You can also appoint an alternative agent.

A Living Will is a legal document that allows you to state in advance your wishes regarding the use of life-sustaining procedures or treatment. The Living Will is used only when

you are terminally ill and you cannot make treatment decisions. In any event, the staff will continue to do everything possible to make you comfortable and keep you free from pain. This document will allow you to die naturally.

Attending Physician refers to the staff doctor who has responsibility for your treatment.

Decision-making capacity refers to the ability to make an informed decision about health care. Adult patients may be considered to lack decision-making capacity if they are unable to think clearly or communicate their decisions. An example would be the unconscious or severely confused patient. Only a judge can rule a patient incompetent to make a health care decision. The court can appoint a guardian or the legal equivalent.

Health Care Providers are the people who provide health care such as doctor, nurses, social workers, therapists, etc... Health Care Agent is a person chosen to make decisions for someone else, such as a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care.

Terminal illness refers to a condition from which a patient cannot expect to recover and which will eventually cause death. Terminal illness can include conditions where death

is certain or chronic conditions where there is no hope for recovery. Examples are persistent coma or irreversible brain damage.

A Witness must personally be present during the signing of your Advance Directive.

You cannot have as your witness a person who is:

- Related to you by blood or marriage
- Named in your will
- Entitled to your estate
- Appointed by you as health care agent.
- A healthcare provider.
- Financially responsible for your care

Life-Sustaining treatment for a patient with terminal illness means medical care that can prolong life when there is little or no chance of recovery. This life-sustaining treatment can delay the time of death, but the disease cannot be cured.

Life-sustaining treatment does not include medical procedures to provide comfort care, such as oxygen for shortness of breath, morphine for pain, etc. . . Life-sustaining treatment can include such procedures as:

- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) - is an emergency procedure that tries to restart your breathing and/or heartbeat that has stopped.
- Mechanical ventilation- is using a machine that breathes for you when you cannot breathe on your own.
- Artificial nutrition- is feeding by a tube placed into the stomach or vein if you cannot eat on your own.
- Artificial hydration- is the use of a tube attached to a needle in a vein to give fluids if you can no longer eat or drink enough.
- Dialysis- is a method of cleaning your blood by a machine when your kidneys are no longer working correctly.
- Antibiotics- are medications used to fight infections.
- Blood Pressure Medicines- are medicine that keeps the blood pressure up.

Treatment Preferences is a section on page two of the Advance Directives form where you can state your wishes for specific situations. The following are examples of situations that can be used for Treatment Preference:

- Permanent unconsciousness
- Terminal illness without expectation of recovery
- Permanently lacking decision-making capacity
- Brain damage—unable to communicate
- Life support including food and fluids
- Trial of therapy
- Other comments, restrictions, or instructions

Advanced Directive (continue)

The Treatment Preferences section gives you greater flexibility. It also enables you to be very specific about health care issues. You may stop or change your Advance Directives (Living Will, DPAHC) at any time by one of the following methods:

- By canceling or destroying your Advance Directive. A person acting by your wishes and in your presence can also do this.
- By writing a signed and a dated statement that expresses your wish to revoke the Advance Directive.
- By making an oral statement that expresses your desire to revoke the Advance Directives.

The patient may decide on executing both, the Durable Power of Attorney (DPAHC) and a Living Will. In this event, the proxy or surrogate decision-maker will be guided by the decisions of the Living Will.

END OF LIFE PLANNING

If your provider has told you that your condition is terminal or that you have limited life expectancy, you may want to engage in "End of Life Planning."

In addition to preparing Advance Directives, you may want to talk with the treatment team about:

- What types of treatment options are available?
- What can be done if I need pain control?
- What will make me feel more comfortable?
- What kind of service can be provided to me at home?
- What are hospice services and how can I arrange for them?
- What burial benefits am I eligible for?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of an autopsy?
- Can donate any of my organs?
- What support can be provided to my family or caregiver?

Each of us will need this type of assistance at some point in our lives. If you are concerned about these or similar issues, speak to your doctor, nurse, social worker, or chaplain. Let them know you have such questions. They will be more than willing to help you.

THE ETHICS COMMITTEE

Ethics is an interdisciplinary activity concerned with the issues in this booklet. The Ethics Committee also provides consultation and educational activities for staff and consultative services for patients and their families.

The Ethics Committee is concerned with:

- The use of advance directives or living wills.
- Capacity and competency for the patient to consent to treatment or to stop treatment.
- Differences or conflicts of opinion among patients, their families, and staff, which arise in treatment or in using advance directives.
- Withdrawing or withholding food, fluids, or other treatment.
- Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders.

Medical Center policy states that patients or their families may ask for an Ethics consultation. They also can participate in discussions, if they wish. The Ethics Committee welcomes patient and family participation.

If you have any questions about any ethical issues regarding your care, contact the Ethics Committee. You may do this through your nurse, chaplain, social worker, or doctor. These caregivers may also contact the Ethics Committee if they think an ethical issue needs to be discussed. Consultations are done as fast as your medical condition and ethical issues require. The Ethics Committee does not make decisions or write orders. However, it does try to help you, your family and/or caregiver to make decisions that are best for everyone.

Expansion of Eligibility for Combat Veterans

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) of 2008 was signed by President Bush on January 28, 2008. This Act extends the period of enhanced health care eligibility provided a veteran who served in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998 (commonly referred to as combat veterans or OEF/OIF veterans) as follows:

- Currently enrolled veterans and new enrollees who were discharged from active duty on or after January 28, 2003 are eligible for the enhanced benefits, for 5 years post discharge.
- Veterans discharged from active duty before January 28, 2003, who apply for enrollment on or after January 28, 2008, are eligible for the enhanced benefit until January 27, 2011.

Combat Veterans Have Enhanced Health Care Eligibility

Veterans, including activated Reservists and National Guard members are eligible for cost-free health care services, including medications and long term care for conditions possibly related to their combat service if they served on active duty in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998 and have been discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.

As before, veterans enrolling under this “Combat Veteran” enhanced enrollment authority are assigned to Priority Group 6, unless eligible for a higher Priority Group. Combat veterans are not required to disclose their income information but may do so to determine their eligibility for a higher priority, beneficiary travel benefits, and exemption of co-payments for care unrelated to their military service. Once enrolled, combat veterans are provided full access to VA’s medical benefits package.

National Guard and Reserve personnel who were activated and served in a theater of combat operations after November 11, 1998, may qualify if they were discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable; and served the period they were called to duty.

Important Phone Numbers (for California)



Vet Centers

East Los Angeles
5400 E. Olympic Boulevard, Suite 140
Commerce, CA 90022
323.728.9966

Culver City
5730 Uplander Way, Suite 100
Culver City, CA 90230
310.641.0326

Gardena
1045 W. Redondo Beach Boulevard, Suite 150
Gardena, CA 90247
310.767.1221

Sepulveda
9737 Haskell Street
Sepulveda, CA 91343
818.892.9227

Ventura
790 E. Santa Clara Street, Suite 100
Ventura, CA 93001
805.585.1860

VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System Facilities

VA Medical Center West Los Angeles
11301 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90073
310.478.3711

Sepulveda Ambulatory Care Center
16111 Plummer Street
North Hills, CA 91343
818.891.7711

Los Angeles Ambulatory Care Center
351 East Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
213.253.2677

Santa Maria Community Clinic
1550 East Main Street
Santa Maria, CA 93454
805.354.6000

Bakersfield Community Clinic
1801 Westwind Drive
Bakersfield, CA 93301
661.632.1800

East Los Angeles Community Clinic
5426 East Olympic Blvd. Suite 150
Commerce, CA 90040
323.725.7557

Gardena Community Clinic
1251 Redondo Beach Blvd.
3rd Floor Gardena, CA 90247
310.851.4705

Lancaster Community Clinic
547 West Lancaster Blvd.
Lancaster, CA 93534
661.729.8655

Oxnard Community Clinic
2000 Outlet Center Drive, Suite 225,
Oxnard, CA 93036
805.604.6960

Pasadena Community Clinic
420 W. Las Tunas Drive,
San Gabriel, CA 91776
626.289.5973

San Luis Obispo Community Clinic
1288 Morro Street, Suite 200
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
805.543.1233

Santa Barbara Community Clinic
4440 Calle Real
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
805.683.1491



Thank you for choosing the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System for your healthcare needs.