COVID-19 Epidemic—
Evolving Health Care Delivery
Welcome to the Summer 2020 Edition of The Veterans Gazette.

We, as a nation, have been through quite an ordeal with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Because of it we have had to adapt and evolve to a new culture of health care delivery. Over the last few months, we have seen a significant increase in the use of telehealth services and it continues to rise. This has had a positive impact on Veterans, thus offering same-day, non-urgent medical attention, in the privacy of their own home and with the benefit of not having to drive anywhere.

Our VA team continues to offer a wide variety of virtual classes for health education, even including church services. We have received very positive feedback from our Veterans, specifically those in the MOVE! Program who utilize the virtual classes offered. We continue to strive to offer seamless health care and education to our Veterans with the use of telehealth and virtual classes.

Currently, as we move forward with our recovery process and are scheduling face-to-face medical appointments, we encourage those who don’t require this type of visit to continue using the telehealth options available. We look forward to seeing our Veterans again as we all move forward in this process.

I would like to take a moment to thank all our staff who voluntarily accepted frontline assignments at our Detroit VAMC and Ann Arbor Healthcare System to care for patients diagnosed with COVID-19. Not only did they sacrifice time away from their families, they helped fulfill VA’s fourth Mission. I am truly grateful for their dedication, service and excellent care they provided to our COVID positive Veterans and civilian patients.

-Dr. Barbara Bates
Medical Center Director

“Proudly Serving All Who Have Served”
Aleda E. Lutz VA Shares Important Information for Pregnant Women Veterans

The Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center provides women Veterans with tools, resources and information they need to feel their best mentally and physically. May is Maternal Mental Health Month and we want women Veterans to know that many women experience mental health issues during the perinatal period. Our medical center has a Women’s Veteran Program Coordinator and Maternity Care Coordinator on location. Our VA offers many additional programs specific to maternity care and many resources and mobile apps are available. Our Maternity Care Coordinator, Tresha Peake, RN, can be reached at 989-497-2500, extension 13972. She is in frequent contact with our perinatal Veterans and assists with navigating health care services, offering support for a successful pregnancy and ensuring any additional health care needs postpartum.

About one in seven women will experience depression after giving birth. For about half of these women, this is their first time dealing with depression. Anxiety symptoms during and after pregnancy are also common. Rates of perinatal depression may be even higher in women Veterans. Anyone can develop a mental health condition during or after pregnancy, however, women Veterans with a history of trauma may also find aspects of pregnancy, labor, breastfeeding and parenting upsetting because of increased trauma reminders.

Fortunately, these symptoms are treatable. Our VA providers understand how difficult talking about these symptoms can be. They can help women Veterans feel supported during these conversations and have the expertise in helping them with mental health symptoms during and after pregnancy. Asking for help is an important way for women Veterans to take care of themselves and their children.

There are many types of treatments which can ease mental health symptoms during and after pregnancy. These can include psychotherapy, light therapy, exercise and nutritional changes. In some cases, medication is also needed. VA providers can help women learn coping strategies. They can provide women Veterans with tools, resources and tailored treatment plans. To learn more about Women’s Health in the VA, please visit: https://www.va.gov/}

Aleda E. Lutz VA Shares Information on Plans to Increase Face-to-Face Visits

The Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center in Saginaw and Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) are working on a plan to begin providing increased face-to-face care appointments after they were minimized in response to COVID-19. The facility will begin to add back some in person appointments on June 1, 2020, while ensuring the safety of Veterans and staff at each of their locations.

Veterans who had previous appointments for laboratory, diagnostic testing, or primary/specialty care will be contacted by a VA employee to schedule an appointment or provided other instructions.

Any patient with a scheduled appointment should arrive as close to the scheduled time as possible to decrease the number of individuals in waiting rooms and practice social distancing.

Veterans who have a health care concern and do not already have a scheduled appointment, should call ahead to a number provided at the end of this article. This will allow a provider or nurse to better understand your health care needs and schedule the appropriate care, which may include telehealth.

Beginning June 15, Veterans who only require lab services will have the opportunity to get their lab work at the Aleda E. Lutz VA by driving to the north parking lot and going to the Sgt. Major Kenneth Rice Pavilion. This will decrease the amount of foot traffic within the medical center. Other diagnostic testing, such as general radiology, will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Several types of care and services will continue to be delivered by telehealth.

**Telephone or Video Appointments** – Veterans can receive care at home — either over the phone or via video using VA Video Connect on their computers, smartphones, or tablets. To set up telephone or video appointments, Veterans can send their provider a secure message on My HealtheVet by visiting myhealth.va.gov. Veterans may also call, but VA is requesting that Veterans only call with urgent needs at this time. To learn more about VA Video Connect, visit mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect.

(Article continued on page 4)
Features Articles/General Information

Face-to-Face Article Continued:

**Prescription Refills** – Veterans can request prescription refills and order and ship medications to their homes using My HealtheVet or the Rx Refill mobile app. Download the app at mobile.va.gov/app/rx-refill.

**Pharmacy Call Center** – 989-497-2500, Ext. 11705 (open during business hours)

**Automated Refill Line** – 989-497-2500, Ext. 13990 (requires SSN and prescription number on bottle or package.

**Text Message Reminders** – Veterans can use Annie's Coronavirus Precautions protocol to send automated text messages with information about COVID-19. This application helps Veterans monitor for symptoms and can assist if they need to contact their VA facility for care. Enroll at mobile.va.gov/annie.

**Secure Messaging** – With My HealtheVet, VA’s online patient portal, Veterans can send online secure messages to your VA health care team to ask them nonurgent health questions. Register at www.myhealth.va.gov.

Veterans can also call local tele-triage at 1-800-406-5143, Extension 11240 for general questions. For more information about VA’s Connected Care technologies, visit connected-care.va.gov.

All VA facilities will continue to screen Veterans, employees and visitors before they enter any VA building. All VA facilities require a face mask. If you do not have a mask, VA will provide one. Our “no visitor” policy will remain in place.

Our VA COVID 19 Hotline is available for additional information. You may call 989-497-2500, Ext. 14155 or direct dial to 989-321-4155.

Veteran Service Officers
Contact Information available on our web front page
www.saginaw.va.gov

Visitor Policy

Access will be determined on a case-by-case decision where the visitor is critical to the care of the Veteran. Only visitors without symptoms will be permitted to enter the Medical Center as dictated by the current situation. No visitors under the age of 18 are permitted, including infants. No Visitors will be allowed to wait in common areas (canteen areas, waiting rooms, vending areas, etc.). These restrictions apply to all care locations, including health care facilities, ambulatory care centers, urgent care centers, and emergency rooms.

Resources for Managing Stress and Anxiety Associated with COVID-19

The National Center for PTSD has developed several virtual resources for managing stress and anxiety associated with the COVID-19 virus outbreak. Learn strategies to help manage stress and reduce anxiety at https://www.ptsd.va.gov/covid/index.asp

COVID-19 screening is required

To get started quickly, use the COVID-19 screening tool on your phone

Text screen to 53079
or go to
va.gov/covid19screen

Answer the questions

Show your phone at the door

Thank you for helping us protect you and others during this time
Aleda E. Lutz VA Nurses Exercise VA’s Fourth Mission

COVID-19 creates civilian health care needs -- VA nurses help fulfill

Saginaw, Michigan – Nurses at the Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center, Saginaw, MI did their part to help Veteran and civilian patients fighting novel coronavirus by serving on the frontlines of care at the John D. Dingell VAMC in Detroit and the VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System.

Their efforts were part of VA’s national initiative to exercise its Fourth Mission of aiding local communities and health care facilities when called upon in times of national emergency. Where VA has the capacity and the resources, it will provide beds at VA medical centers and staff for community hospitals and nursing homes. VA’s decisions in supporting community health care are made after determining the actions would not negatively impact Veteran care. Many of the medical centers were converted into Intensive Care Units (ICU’s) and step-down units as both were 100% COVID positive facilities. “The loss of lives from COVID is like nothing I have experienced. Patients are speaking to you one minute and in respiratory distress the next. It’s unreal! I cared for one patient for a week straight. His brother had just died from COVID a few days prior to him getting it and he was so scared. One of the most troubling parts about this pandemic is with the isolation of the patient away from their loved ones. We are their family. We are there for them during their final hours and we celebrate with them through even their smallest triumphs. I couldn’t imagine a greater honor than to be here supporting our patients,” stated Kimberly Doxey, MSN, RN, Health Informatics Officer.

Misty Lauria, MSN, MDRO Prevention Coordinator/Ethics Consultation Coordinator stated, “This deployment has shown just how much death and disparity COVID-19 can cause. However, I was able to see my patient (80 years old) come off a ventilator after 20 days! He was fully alert and oriented!! I called his wife for him, at 1:00 a.m. She assumed we were calling to inform her of his death. Instead, she was able to hear her husband say ‘I love you’ on the other end of the phone!!! It was such an emotional moment for everyone! It felt like we may have succeeded a little. It is so difficult to be a nurse, wanting to heal, but only receiving death. It makes things even more difficult knowing how much they want to see their families but cannot. It has been a great privilege to take part in this and assist our VISN 10 partners.”

“We are so proud to be a part of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and our noble calling to care for Veterans and civilians during this Fourth Mission, no matter where they need us to be, stated Dr. Barbara Bates, Medical Center Director.”

States may request assistance from the Federal Government through their local Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Regional Emergency Coordinator (REC), as part of FEMA’s National Response Coordination Center. Counties, cities, and other municipalities should route all requests for Federal support through their respective states.

Release of Information (ROI)

Veterans can use any kiosk throughout the hospital, as well as at the CBOCs, to initiate a request for medical records. Forms to have records released to other agencies are available in the front lobby volunteer desk or by speaking with a clerk at the Annex or CBOCs. They should then be faxed to 989-321-4955, if no one is available in the ROI office, located in the Welcome Center. ROI staff have 20 days to process a routine request. If an urgent request for documents within 24-48 hours is required, Veterans may request to see an ROI clerk for records to be expedited.

Photography/Recording on VA Property

Family members and visitors may take photography/recordings with their own personal recording devise of their own family members who are patients with the patient’s verbal consent. However, photography/recordings cannot violate the privacy of other patients, visitors and staff, disclose proprietary or physical security information, are strictly prohibited in non-public areas intended to provide complete privacy (such as restrooms), may not interfere with patient care, and may not involve active administration of treatment.
To enroll for healthcare, we encourage you to visit www.vets.gov, visiting any one of our VA facilities, or calling Eligibility at 989-497-2500, Extension 13120 or 13121.

Smoking Cessation Available

**SMOKE-FREE**

**MAKE THE COMMITMENT**

Better health starts today.

Talk with your VA provider or healthcare team, as well as contacting Dr. Trevor Grice, for Smoking Cessation Classes at 989-497-2500, Extension 12454.

Veterans Health Information Exchange (VHIE) is a program that securely shares certain parts of your VA health record with community care providers. To learn more about the ‘OPT-OUT’ model of electronic health information sharing or to sign up, visit: www.va.gov/VLER.

Learn more by visiting https://www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Strive_for_a_Healthy_Weight.asp

VA’s new **Insomnia Coach** app is based upon scientific research about how you can change behaviors and thoughts and improve sleep. Learn how to use the app and other VA Mobile Apps at the link provided above.

Check with your PACT team and sign up today!
Special Events/Recognition

Nursing Deployments to Detroit VAMC During COVID-19

“This deployment has shown just how much death and disparity COVID-19 can cause. However, I was able to see my patient (80yrs old) come off a ventilator after 20 days!! He was fully alert and oriented!! I called his wife for him, at 1:00 a.m.; she assumed we were calling to inform her of his death. Instead, she was able to hear her husband say “I love you” on the other end of the phone!!! It was such an emotional moment for everyone! It felt like we may have succeeded a little. It is so difficult to be a nurse, wanting to heal, but only receiving death. It makes things even more difficult knowing how much they want to see their families but cannot. It has been a great privilege to take part in this and assist our VISN 10 partners. I just signed an extension to stay.” —Misty Lauria, RN

“I cared for one patient for a week straight. His brother had just died from COVID a few days prior to him getting it and he was so scared. One of the most troubling parts about this pandemic is with the isolation of the patient away from their loved ones. We are their family. We are there for them during their final hours and we celebrate with them through even their smallest triumphs. I couldn’t imagine a greater honor than to be here supporting our patients.”

-Kimberly Doxey, MSN, RN, Health Informatics Officer

“I was in the first wave of Saginaw VA nursing staff to go to the Detroit VA.

I was assigned to the ICU nursing staff here at Detroit VA. The Detroit VA staff have been great to work with. After all we are all in this together.”

—Mark Fraley, LPN, Cadillac CBOC
Special Events and Recognition

Sterile Processing Staff Pass National Certification

Oath Rededication
June 15, 2020

Employee of the Month 2020—April/May/June

Ronald Newcombe, Biomedical Information Systems Specialist
Benjamin Berg, Medical Technologist, Lead Microbiologist
Wendy Schultz, Social Worker, Supervisor
Program Highlights

Suicide Prevention

If you know a Veteran who may experience thoughts of suicide, getting them the assistance they need, as quickly as possible, is crucial. The “BeThere” campaign offers information on how you can help.

Visit www.VeteransCrisisLine.net/BeThere

Veterans Crisis Line:
1-800-273-8255 Press 1

Virtual Classes Offered

Log onto our Facebook page to learn of virtual events being scheduled.
https://www.facebook.com/VASaginaw

Or go to https://www.saginaw.va.gov/patients/patiented.asp to learn more.

Are you a caregiver of a Veteran and need assistance? Call the Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274

Veterans Health Education
989-497-2500
Extension 11744

Community Care

Learn about Community Care and the Mission Act by visiting:
www.va.gov/communitycare

National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
Learn more at www.prevention.va.gov

VA Transportation

1. They transport Veterans FROM the Aleda E. Lutz VA in Saginaw TO Ann Arbor and Detroit VA Medical Center's. Call 989-497-2500, Extension 13108 to schedule.

2. They transport Veterans FROM Gaylord, Grayling, West Branch, and Standish TO Saginaw, Ann Arbor, and Detroit. Call 989-497-2500, Extension 13125 to schedule.

VA Veteran Safety Plan for Care Update

Please visit the front page of our internet site https://www.saginaw.va.gov/ for the most recent, updated information regarding our current state of our medical center. There are other important topics, resources and contact information relevant to the current Coronavirus pandemic.

Veterans Text Message Appointment Reminders
New Feature Alert—for Veterans waiting greater than 30 days for an appointment. VEText will offer sooner appointments when available. Make sure your current cell phone # and address is listed in our records.
Special Program Contacts

Suicide Prevention Coordinator
989-497-2500, Extension 11778

Caregiver Support Coordinator
989-497-2500, Extension 11686

Former Prisoner of War Advocate
989-497-2500, Extension 11798

Homeless Veteran Program
989-497-2500, Extension 11773

LGBT Veteran Care Coordinator
989-497-2500, Extension 11783

Military Sexual Trauma Coordinator
989-497-2500, Extension 15713

Multiple Sclerosis Coordinator
989-497-2500, Extension 11440

Patient Advocate
989-497-2500, Extension 13012

Spinal Cord Injury Coordinator
989-497-2500, Extension 11783

Transition Care Management
989-497-2500, Extension 11794

Veterans Justice Outreach Coordinators
989-497-2500, Extension 11916 or Extension 11694

Women Veterans Program Manager
989-497-2500, Extension 11560

Whole Health
989-497-2500, Extension 13313

VET Centers
Readjustment Counseling Services

Saginaw—5360 Hampton Place, Phone (989) 321-4650

Traverse City—3766 N. US 31 South, Phone (231) 935-0051

Office of Inspector General—1-800-409-9926

Joint Commission—1-800-994-6610
Community Based Outpatient Clinics:

Lt. Col. Clement C. Van Wagoner VA
Alpena 180 N. State Avenue
989-356-8720

Bad Axe 1142 S. Van Dyke Rd, Ste. 100
989-497-2500, Ext. 15602

Cadillac 1909 N. Mitchell Street
231-775-4401, Ext. 11410

Cheboygan County (Mackinaw)
14540 Mackinaw Highway
231-436-5176

Clare 11775 N. Isabella Road
989-386-8113, Ext. 13530

Gaylord 806 S. Otsego
989-732-7525, Ext. 13520

Grayling 1680 Hartwick Pines
989-344-2002

Oscoda 5671 Skeel Avenue, Ste. 4
989-747-0026, Ext. 11411

Col. Demas T. Craw VA Clinic
Traverse City 701 U.S. 31 South
800-406-5143, Ext. 11412

Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center
1500 Weiss Street, Saginaw, MI

VA Healthcare Annex
4241 Barnard Road, Saginaw, MI
800-406-5143

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www.saginaw.va.gov
www.facebook.com/ VASaginaw

We invite you to sign-up for our periodic e-mail and website updates by visiting our webpage and subscribing with your e-mail address.