The VA, nationwide, is dedicated to serving the needs of 20 million men and women living today who have served in our armed forces. We strive to make every day, Veterans Day. As Veterans Day approaches this year, we want to extend a special thank you to our dedicated men and women who served our country. We are privileged to serve them at the Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center and Healthcare Annex in Saginaw, and Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) in Alpena, Bad Axe, Cadillac, Cheboygan County, Clare, Gaylord, Grayling, Oscoda, and Traverse City.

We are diligently working on Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie’s priorities for VA to best serve our Veterans of all generations. The priorities are as follows: customer service, implementation of the Mission Act, replacing our aging electronic health record system, modernizing our appointment system, and automating our disability claims and payment systems. Lastly, transforming our business systems to allow more latitude to manage budgets and recruit, retain, and relocate staff to best serve Veterans, while also creating robust partnerships with state and local communities to address Veteran homelessness and suicide prevention. Underlying these priorities is a steadfast commitment to uphold all we do in our VA through our five core values of Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence (I-CARE).

During Fiscal Year 2018 (October 1, 2017 – September 30, 2018), the Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center, Healthcare Annex, and CBOCs provided care to 36,780 Veterans across 35-counties, of which 1,995 are women, contributing to 414,518 outpatient visits. We have added a multitude of health care services and are currently implementing the Whole Health Program, which supports Veteran-centric care, empowering Veterans to be more proactive and inclusive in their health and quality of life, using holistic approaches. One major focus of Whole Health is pain management which includes opioid safety. We are encouraging Veterans using opioids to talk openly with their providers about the possibilities of being referred to the pain management program, with the goal of decreasing the amount of opioids and incorporating integrative therapies into treatment planning.
“Our facility ended Fiscal Year 2018 with a 5-Star Rating, the highest a facility can achieve. The Star rating designation is designed to help VA identify best practices of its top performing hospitals and share them across VA's health care system to achieve system-wide improvements. Additionally, our Palliative Care Unit received an Excellence in Care Award from Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 10 for exceeding the national average regarding family satisfaction with the care their loved one received during the last month of life,” stated Dr. Barbara Bates, Acting Medical Center Director. “These are just two examples of how our staff strive for excellence.”

Our VA continues to be reviewed and accredited by the Joint Commission, Long Term Care Institute, College of American Pathologists, Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), along with other agencies, and regularly hosts visits by other reviewing bodies to include the Office of Inspector General. We welcome such reviews to assure we are meeting or exceeding standards of quality and safety to ensue trust in those we serve.

We want to personally take this opportunity to reach out to Veterans and their families and welcome them to any one of our VA facilities. Veterans are eligible for care if the following criteria are met:

- If you enlisted after September 7, 1980 or entered active duty after October 16, 1981, you must have served 24 continuous months or the full period for which you were called to active duty.
- If you are a current or former member of the Reserves or National Guard, you must have been called to active duty by a federal order and completed the full period for which you were called or ordered to active duty. Active duty for training purposes does not qualify.

Veterans may have enhanced eligibility status if they have met at least one of the following requirements:

- Receive financial compensation from VA for a service-connected disability.
- Were discharged for a disability resulting from something that happened to you in the line of duty.
- Were discharged for a disability that got worse in the line of duty.
- Are a recently discharged Combat Veteran.
- Get a VA pension.
- Are a former Prisoner of War (POW).
- Have received a Purple Heart.
- Get (or qualify for) Medicaid benefits.
- Served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War between August 2, 1990, and November 11, 1998.
- Served at least 30 days at Camp Lejeune between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987.
If none of the previously listed requirements apply, Veterans may still qualify for care based on their income, as income no longer includes net worth. Only gross household income is calculated.

We encourage individuals to visit https://www.vets.gov/ to apply on-line or call 1-800-406-5143, Extension 13120 or 13121 to ask for an enrollment packet. We also welcome you to visit our website at www.saginaw.va.gov to learn more about your hometown VA.

The staff at the VA want to thank all Veterans for their dedicated service and sacrifices made while protecting our Great Nation. We always look forward to the opportunity to serve those who have served!

The Aleda E. Lutz VAMC in Saginaw, Michigan operates an 81-bed skilled nursing and rehabilitation Community Living Center, with an additional 8-bed acute medicine and telemetry wing. It provides care to over 36,700 Veterans in a 35-county geographic area, from mid-Michigan to the Mackinac Bridge. Veterans also receive care at one of our nine VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics located throughout Michigan. More information about this VA can be found at www.saginaw.va.gov.

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