

## **VFW SERVICE OFFICER NOTES FOR THE TEN-HUT JULY 2020**

### **2020 Road Work!**

Major road work will be conducted around the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport from April to October 2020. Plan for extra time when traveling to the Minneapolis VA Medical Center. You can go to [www.AroundtheAirport.com](http://www.AroundtheAirport.com) for up to date information on alternative routes and changes to the construction.

### **VA Expands Digital Capabilities of Veterans Legacy Memorial**

No Veteran Ever Dies! The VA National Cemetery Administration has enhanced and expanded capabilities on the Veterans Legacy Memorial (VLM) website to allow for family, friends, and visitors to leave “tributes” or comments on a veteran’s memorial page. The VLM website is the nation’s first digital platform dedicated entirely to the preservation of the memory of the 3.7 million **veterans interred in VA national cemeteries**. VLM allows people to express their appreciation and gratitude for the dedicated service of our Nation’s heroes.” Learn more about VLM. To learn more click on this website [https://www.vlm.cem.va.gov/?utm\\_source=Veterans%20Legacy%20Memorial&utm\\_campaign=cem](https://www.vlm.cem.va.gov/?utm_source=Veterans%20Legacy%20Memorial&utm_campaign=cem)

### **COVID-19**

Veterans who receive care from the Minneapolis VA Health Care System can access VA care from home through the VA Health Chat app. Use VA Health Chat to receive medical advice, refill VA prescriptions, send non-urgent messages to your care team, and more through online chat on your computer, mobile device, or tablet. Learn more: [VA Health Chat app](#)

If you have symptoms of a fever, cough or new shortness of breath, call us at 866-414-5058 (toll free) before coming in for your appointment. For other concerns, you may be able to access VA care from home by phone or using VA virtual care options. For more information on COVID-19 see <https://www.va.gov/coronavirus/>.

### **Mpls VA Coronavirus Policies**

**For VA-specific information:** Read our [coronavirus FAQs](#) and [public health response](#), or use our [coronavirus chatbot](#).

**Prepare for a visit:** Everyone entering our facilities is screened, and visitors are limited. Face coverings are mandatory: we encourage you to bring your own, or you can use one we provide. Please contact us first before going to any of our locations. For some needs, you may be able to get care at home by phone or video.

**For the latest coronavirus information:** Visit the [CDC website](#).

## **Minneapolis VA Health Care System**

### **Using Technology to Care for Patients**

During these uncertain times people are looking at new ways to connect and to stay safe. COVID-19, or the Coronavirus, has changed the way we act and interact with others and health care facilities are on the front lines of managing social distancing while caring for others. The Minneapolis VA Health Care System (VAHCS) is implementing technology to assist in reducing the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and allowing patients in isolation to connect with loved ones. The iPad Video Monitoring and Assessment (iVMA) Pilot Program was created to assist health care providers during this time. This Pilot Program focuses on using technology in supporting health care providers as they conduct routine checks. Being it is a Pilot Program it is still being tested on how effective it is, but the initial assessment is positive.

The use of this technology allows health care providers the ability to monitor and care for their patients at a safe distance via video. This technology reduces the amount of times providers enter patient rooms for routine checks. Limiting the times in these rooms saves important supplies for critical times when it is absolutely necessary for a health care provider to enter a COVID room and treat a patient.

The iPads in the patient rooms are mounted on an IV stand with a commercial mounting bracket. Having the iPads mounted on an IV stand allows for the stand to be placed where the patient can see the provider via video. Since the designated provider iPad automatically connects to the patient iPad there is no need for the patient to do anything for the connection.

The iVMA Pilot Program also has the capability for families to talk with patients via video if they are in isolation. This technology gives families a way to connect with loved ones for moral support or for some, saying their last goodbyes. With such a great risk from COVID it is incredibly important to stay safe and this technology does that for all. Giving families the ability to connect can boost the patient's morale.

We can get through this trying time and we will using this technology that helps protect health care providers and gives support to patients and loved ones.

### **CARES Act Extends VA Home Loan Pre-Foreclosure Options**

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act, was signed into law to help Americans economically impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic avoid home foreclosure. VA's Loan Guaranty Service is focused on ensuring veterans and their families facing temporary or more long-term difficulty paying their monthly mortgage understand their options. If you experience financial hardship caused directly or indirectly by COVID-19, you should immediately contact your loan servicer and explore options to avoid foreclosure on your VA home loan. Read more at <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/74704/cares-act-extends-va-home-loan-pre-foreclosure-options/>

### **New Helpline Operational for Survivor Education Benefits:**

The VA announced that it opened a new helpline specifically for surviving family members who have questions relating to their education benefits. Military surviving dependents have access to two possible education benefits, Dependents Education Assistance or the Marine Gunnery Sgt. John D. Fry Scholarship. This new helpline can assist with both programs as well as other VA survivor benefits. You can call the helpline at 888.442.4551 and select Option 5 from the menu. Learn more at <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/05/11/va-opens-new-phone-line-survivor-education-benefits.html>.

### **Gulf War Illness: Mobile App**

Gulf War Veterans may have unexplained illnesses related to their service in Southwest Asia. These illnesses are referred to as a "chronic multi-symptom illness." The symptoms vary from fatigue to respiratory disorders. To help you address questions about these health effects, VA offers the Exposure Ed mobile app. Get additional details at <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/web/myhealthvet/ss20181221-gulf-war-illness-app>.

### **Have you considered working at VA?**

Have you considered working for the VA or the federal government? [Veterans preference can boost your application](#). VA has federal employment support services for Veterans and transitioning service members seeking employment and helps demystify the federal hiring process. Learn how to match job skills and education with federal occupations. [Military spouses make great VA employees too!](#)

### **VA Welcomes our LGBTQ Veterans**

VA is creating an environment where lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) Veterans can talk openly about sexual orientation, gender identity, and their mental and physical health. An open discussion with trained providers helps VA provide you the best care. Connect with your local LGBT Veterans Care Coordinator for support and resources. Get the details at <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/75405/pride-month-celebrating-served/>.

### **Get a Certificate in Agribusiness**

The Service member Agricultural Vocation Education (SAVE) Farm in Manhattan, Kansas partners with academic institutions to provide Veterans and their families with hands-on agricultural training on a 308 acre working farm. The accredited curriculum provides a certificate within one year. Apply now! If you're interested there's more information at <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/74516/74516/>.

### **Do You Want to Vote via a Mail-in Ballot (Absentee Ballot) This November?**

You probably have read, seen, and heard news stories regarding mail-in ballots. This has been a very controversial subject. I received an email message from Ms. Sandra Suchla today in regards to absentee ballot voting in Minnesota. Sandra responded saying, "Voting by absentee ballot is legal in Minnesota. You and the others in your household can request an absentee ballot be

mailed to you by visiting the county website at [www.co.winona.mn.us](http://www.co.winona.mn.us), scrolling down to the American Flag on the main site, click on Election Information, where you will see the following page. If you'd like to complete an absentee request online, there is a link for that. All that is required to use this method is a valid e-mail address. If that method doesn't appeal to you, there is a 2020 Minnesota Absentee Ballot Application that you can access and print by clicking on Request an Absentee Ballot." Any questions contact Sandra at her email address: [SSuchla@co.winona.mn.us](mailto:SSuchla@co.winona.mn.us)