

VETERANS' health *matters*

VOLUME 1, 2011

No wrong door

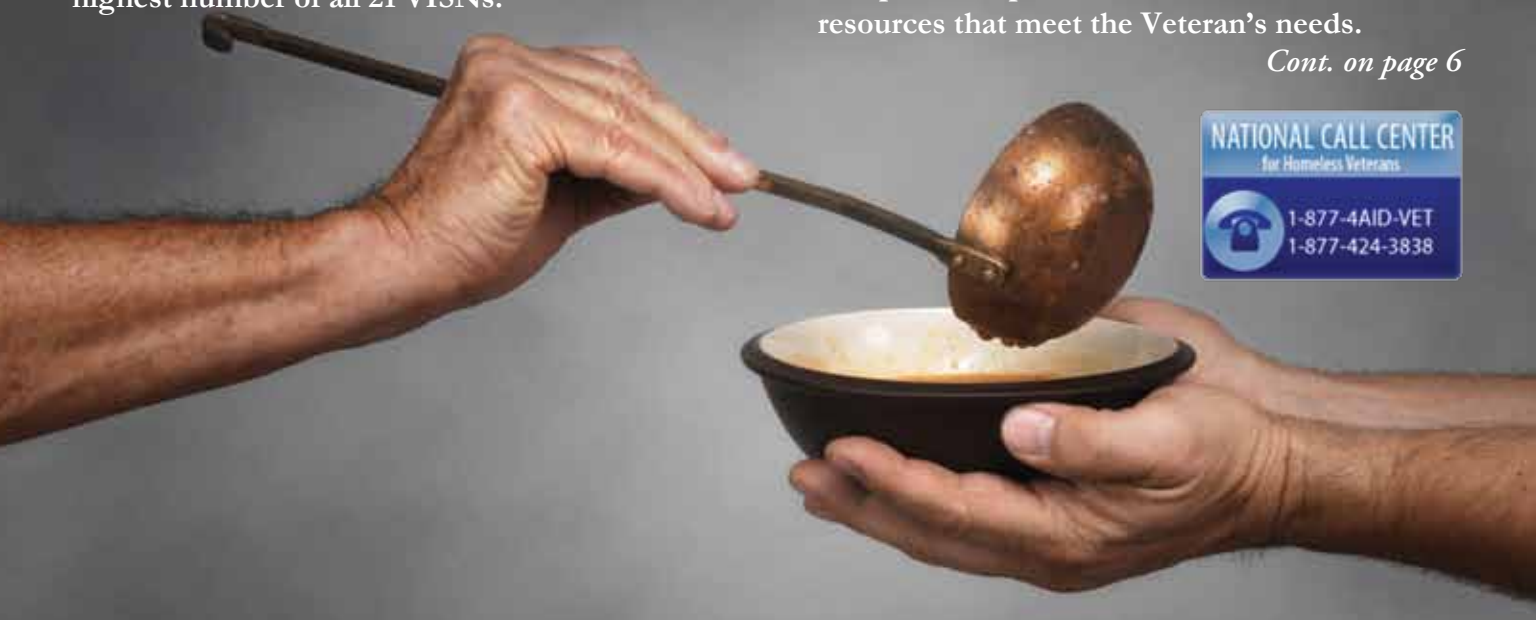
VA's philosophy of "no wrong door" means that all Veterans seeking to avoid or escape homelessness must have easy access to programs and services. Any door a Veteran visits—a medical center, a regional office or a community organization—must offer assistance.

"No Veteran should be living on the streets without care and without hope," stated Secretary Eric K. Shinseki on November 3, 2009, when he unveiled VA's five-year plan to end Veterans' homelessness. Multiple VA services, Veterans, and other organizations throughout Veteran Integrated Service Network (VISN) 21 are working, tirelessly, to make this plan a reality. And a lofty one it is for VISN 21, which has an estimated 12,771 homeless Veterans, the second highest number of all 21 VISNs.

According to Roberta Roberts, VISN 21 Network Homeless Coordinator, "We are in a unique position because our Veterans are so spread out, geographically, in cities and rural areas in northern and central California, northern Nevada, Hawaii, the Philippines, and several Pacific Islands including Guam and American Samoa. Many of our Veterans do not have a facility "door" to knock on. We encourage them and all of our Veterans to make the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans their first point of contact."

The number to call is 1-877-4AID-VET or 1-877-424-3838. A counselor who answers will provide specific referrals to VA and local resources that meet the Veteran's needs.

Cont. on page 6



Veterans Treatment Courts Key To New Presidential Strategy to Strengthen Military Families



Santa Clara Superior Court Judge Stephen Manley

On January 24, President Barack Obama, First Lady Michelle Obama, and Dr. Jill Biden announced the release of “Strengthening Our Military Families: Meeting America’s Commitments,” a report containing commitments by federal agencies to establish a coordinated and comprehensive federal approach to supporting military families. The report names Veterans Treatment Courts and the National Drug Court Institute as key to accomplishing the Administration’s goal of making our court systems “more responsive to the unique needs of Veterans and families.”

Drug Courts, Mental Health Courts and Veterans Treatment Courts are an emergent solution for Veterans involved with the criminal justice system as a result of substance abuse and/or mental illness and their families.

VA’s Homeless Intervention Program Nears Roll Out

Provider Groups Sought for Applications, Training

A homeless-prevention program by VA, which seeks to help Veterans and families who are on the verge of becoming homeless, has moved closer to implementation. The program marks the first time that VA will fund services for the spouses and children of Veterans at risk of becoming homeless.

VA is accepting applications from private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives interested in providing needed services to at-risk Veterans and their families. With funding from VA for the program, called Supportive Services for Veterans Families, community organizations will be better able to provide counseling, training, education assistance, direct time-limited financial assistance, transportation, child care, rent, utilities, and other services to participating Veterans and family members.



VA Adds Chat Feature to Online Application for Health Benefits

Veterans will find it easier and faster to apply for their health care benefits now that VA has enhanced and streamlined its online Form 10-10EZ, “Application for Health Benefits.” This revised online application now features a chat function, which will allow Veterans to receive live assistance while they are filling out the form. Additional enhancements to the process include simplification of questions related to military service in Southeast Asia during the Gulf and in the Vietnam wars. Several additional minor enhancements make the application easier and faster for Veterans to complete.

Veterans may complete or download the 10-10EZ form at the VA health eligibility website at www.1010ez.med.va.gov/sec/vha/1010ez.

President Signed Improvements to Post-9/11 GI Bill

Many Non-College Programs and State Service of Reserves and Guard Now Covered

To bring the educational benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill closer to more Veterans and Service Members, President Obama signed legislation Jan. 4 that streamlines the 18-month-old education program administered by VA.

“Since the first GI Bill in 1944, this unique educational program has adapted to the needs of America’s Veterans, active-duty personnel, reservists and Guardsmen,” said Secretary Shinseki. “Like its forbears, the Post-9/11 GI Bill is growing to ensure the men and women who serve this nation in uniform receive valuable education benefits from a grateful nation.” Information about the new provisions is available on the Internet at www.gibill.va.gov.

VA Publishes Final Regulation to Aid Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange in Korea

Will Provide Easier Path to Health Care and Benefits

Veterans exposed to herbicides while serving along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in Korea will have an easier path to access quality health care and benefits under a VA final regulation that will expand the dates when illnesses caused by herbicide exposure can be presumed to be related to Agent Orange.



Under the final regulation published in the Federal Register, VA will presume herbicide exposure for any Veteran who served between April 1, 1968, and Aug. 31, 1971, in a unit determined by VA and the Department of Defense to have operated in an area in or near the Korean DMZ in which herbicides were applied. Previously, VA recognized that Agent Orange exposure could only be conceded to Veterans who served in certain units along the Korean DMZ between April 1968 and July 1969.

Individuals can go to the website www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/AO/claimherbicide.htm to get a more complete understanding of how to file a claim for presumptive conditions related to herbicide exposure, as well as what evidence is needed by VA to make a decision about disability compensation or survivor’s benefits.

VA & HUD ISSUE FIRST-EVER REPORT ON HOMELESS VETERANS

Assessment Key to
Preventing and Ending
Homelessness

For the first time, VA and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) published the most authoritative analysis of the extent and nature of homelessness among Veterans. According to HUD and VA’s assessment, nearly 76,000 Veterans were homeless on a given night in 2009, while roughly 136,000 Veterans spent at least one night in a shelter during that year.

This unprecedented assessment is based on an annual report HUD provides to Congress and explores in greater depth the demographics of Veterans who are homeless, how the number of Veterans compares to others who are homeless, and how Veterans access and use the nation’s homeless response system.

VA FACILITY HIGHLIGHTS

VA PACIFIC ISLANDS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

New Office to Serve as Advocates for Tribal Veterans

VA has announced the creation of a new Office of Tribal Government Relations to ensure the more than 200,000 Veterans who are American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians receive the VA benefits they have earned.

“There is a long, distinguished tradition of military service among tribal peoples,” said Secretary Shinseki. “VA is committed to providing these Veterans with the full range of VA programs, as befits their service to our nation.”

Although VA has long provided benefits to Veterans in tribal lands, the new office will further strengthen and expand that relationship.

Stephanie Elaine Birdwell, an enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation from Oklahoma, has been selected as the office’s first director. A former social worker, she has spent nearly 15 years working on tribal issues with the Bureau of Indian Affairs and, most recently, the Bureau of Indian Education.

VA CENTRAL CALIFORNIA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM The Healthcare for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Program at VACCHCS Thrives

The Healthcare for Homeless Veterans program at Central California VA Health Care System is growing and striving to assist as many Veterans as possible out of homelessness. The program has several permanent or long-term housing programs in place to assist both male and female homeless Veterans and a great team of social workers to offer ongoing support. VA offers housing support in Fresno, Tulare and Madera counties and hopes to expand housing support to other counties in the region soon.



The program offers homeless assessments, mental health support, substance abuse screening and support, housing, and referrals to other supportive agencies. If you or someone you know is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless in the near future, please contact the Healthcare for Homeless Veterans program at 559-225-6100 x5764 to make an appointment, or come to the program between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m., at 2615 E. Clinton Ave. in Fresno. Enter the south end of Building 12, under the awning.

VA NORTHERN CALIFORNIA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The VA Northern California Health Care System recently held a Homeless Summit to bring together community and federal partners to discuss ways to work together to end homelessness among our Veterans by 2014. This is a national goal in the Five Year Plan to End Homelessness among Veterans, unveiled by Secretary Shinseki in November 2009.



In Northern California, our HUD-VASH program had 445 Section 8 housing vouchers by the end of 2010. We expect this program to continue to grow every year until 2014. Our Grant & Per Diem Program offers transitional housing beds in the community provided by community agencies, in programs in Alameda County, Contra Costa and Sacramento. VA just expanded with two new programs in Dixon, Fairfield and Berkeley. By the end of March 2011, we expect to have a total of 190 beds.

VA also has weekly housing groups in Sacramento and Martinez, drop in clinics in Oakland and Sacramento, and is hoping to expand both. Emergency housing is available in Richmond, Concord, Sacramento and Oakland. VA National Homeless call center is: 1-877-424-3838 or 1-877-4AID-VET. For more information about VANCHS, please call Tracy Cascio at 1-510-587-5050.

SAN FRANCISCO VA MEDICAL CENTER

The San Francisco VA Medical Center has developed a unique partnership with City College of San Francisco to provide mental health and outreach services to Veterans on campus. The college recently opened a newly modernized Veterans Resource Center to serve students who are Veterans and support their transition from military life to civilian careers. Mental health and outreach staff are on-site five days per week to provide mental health counseling services and enrollment support. The medical center's office is next door to the Veterans lounge, a place where Veterans can relax with and provide support to one another. The college estimates there are nearly 1,000 Veteran students currently enrolled.

"We believe it's important to take our services to where the Veterans are and a college campus is an excellent place to start," said Keith Armstrong, LCSW, and Director of Family Programs at the San Francisco VA Medical Center.

"So many of our staff played an important role in building this collaboration," said Armstrong.

The creation of the resource center also received significant support from local organizations and services, including the Carpenters Union Local 22. The International Brotherhood of Electricians Local 6 donated their time, material and labor to remodel the center.

VA PALO ALTO HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Creative Arts Workshop Captivates Local Veterans and Art

On Feb. 1, 2011, VA Palo Alto Health Care System was immersed in sounds, color and textures that captivated and calmed the imagination and spirit of local Veterans. More than 160 Veterans and family members attended the Creative Arts Workshop to prepare for the Creative Arts Festival, which was held on March 16, 2011. The art included photography, collage, matting, creative writing, art from the heart open-ended expression, oil painting, fly tying, drawing, hope chests, watercolor, knitting/crocheting, and craft kits. The workshop allowed Veterans to experience a new art medium without the pressure of a classroom or paying for material fees.

Veterans displayed their artwork and creativity to the larger VA community at the March festival. The first place winners in each category will attend the National Veterans Creative Arts Competition to be held Oct. 17-24, in Arkansas.



VA SIERRA NEVADA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

"VA's Faces of Homelessness...the other perspective."

Matt Kerr, a social worker with VASVHCS Continuing Care Program, is working on an innovative and thought-provoking project called VA's Faces of Homelessness, to assist with the VA-wide initiative to end homelessness among Veterans.

"In this project," says Kerr, "I am hoping to gather a panel of homeless Veterans, as well as some staff from the Healthcare for Homeless Veterans Program, and ask them to come and speak about their experiences. During the panel discussion the Veterans will be asked to share their stories of homelessness and what barriers they have come up against in the community, as well as with providers here at the VA."

The panel discussion will be videotaped and made available for providers to access as needed. Adds Kerr, "We will extend invitations to several community resources and champions to end homelessness and give them a view, first-hand of what homeless Veterans see as gaps."

NO WRONG DOOR

(Cont. from page 1)

CURRENTLY, VISN 21 HAS 1,112 TRANSITIONAL BEDS AND 1,990 PERSONAL VOUCHERS FOR PERMANENT HOUSING. VOUCHERS ARE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND VA SUPPORTED HOUSING PROGRAM (HUD-VASH). THESE PROVIDE PERMANENT HOUSING AND ONGOING TREATMENT SERVICES TO THE HARDER-TO-SERVE HOMELESS VETERANS WHO HAVE A MENTAL ILLNESS OR A SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROBLEM.

Other services for homeless Veterans include ongoing case management services by VA staff, medical and dental care, Compensated Work Therapy and Drop-In Centers.

One-to-three-day events called Stand Downs are held each year in various cities to provide food, shelter, clothing, health care, benefits assistance and linkages with other programs. To find places and dates for local events, contact the Call Center for Homeless Veterans or a Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Coordinator listed on page 7.

Supportive Services for Veterans Families Program is a new homeless-prevention VA offering. Private non-profit organizations and consumer cooperatives receive grant money from VA to provide supportive services that promote housing stability to very low-income Veterans and their families who live in or are transitioning to permanent housing.

VA Palo Alto Health Care System's Veterans Justice Outreach Program addresses the community re-entry needs for jailed Veterans. It also partners with Santa Clara County Court to attend to the underlying problems that brought Veterans into the criminal justice system and assist them in getting the services they need.

After one stint in prison, Veteran William Meyers was about to head back to jail when his parole officer told him that if he went to the VA for help, they would hold off on jail. He readily accepted the offer. For the next 21 months, Meyers went through the 1st Step Program at VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS), the Homeless Veterans Rehabilitation Program and Compensated Work Therapy. For the past six and half years he's been working for VAPAHCS and

is a Vet-to-Vet Peer counselor at a homeless shelter. He also counsels 12 residents at the "Day by Day Residential Living" home in San Jose. Meyers is responsible for the residents' well-being and group counseling sessions.



Veterans William Meyers and Perry Myrick

Veteran Perry Myrick, who now works for VA Palo Alto went through the same three programs that helped Veteran Meyers. "Perry was holed up in a room drinking, states Meyers. For more than a week I would take him food everyday and sit with him and talk to him about getting help. I just couldn't stand to see a really good man sinking like this. I can't tell you how proud I am of him now."

Myrick throws the praise back to Meyers. "He's my friend, he has come a long way and pulled me with him."



VISN 21's Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Coordinators

VISN 21 Network Homeless Coordinator

Roberta Rosenthal	San Francisco VA Medical Center-662 401 3rd Street San Francisco, CA 94121	(415) 281-5132
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VISN 21 Deputy Network Homeless Coordinator

Danica D. Bogicevic	San Francisco VA Medical Center-662 401 3rd Street San Francisco, CA 94121	(415) 281-5132
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San Francisco VA Medical Center

M. Jake Martin	Health Care / Homeless Vets 401 3rd Street San Francisco, CA 94107	(415) 281-5133
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VA Central California Health Care System

Thomas E. Williams	VAMC/122 2615 East Clinton Fresno, CA 93703-2286	(559) 225-5483
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VA Northern California Health Care System

Tracy Cascio	Oakland Federal Building 1301 Clay Street, 2705 Oakland, CA 94612	(510) 587-5050
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VA Palo Alto Health Care System

Kate Severin	VAMC/122MPD 795 Willow Road Menlo Park, CA 94205	(650) 493-5000 x27119
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VA Pacific Islands Health Care System

Andy Dahlberg	VAMC HCHV 459 Patterson Road Honolulu, HI 96819	(808) 433-0335
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VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System

Paula Rowles	VAMC HCHV/116B 1000 Locust Street Reno, NV 89502-2597	(775) 358-1761
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Word Search

- Apply
- Partnership
- Assistance
- Prevention
- Call Center
- Shelter
- Homeless
- Stand Downs
- Housing
- Supportive
- Outreach
- Voucher

T G V B V S N W O D D N A T S
 G N I S U O H L R E T L E H S
 N W X Q U S U P P O R T I V E
 K J R E T N E C L L A C Y Y L
 L O U T R E A C H R M H L J E
 M L N O I T N E V E R P P V M
 T J P I H S R E N T R A P C O
 R U Q E C N A T S I S S A K H

Kerri Childress, Editor
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**PRESORTED
 STANDARD
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 DEPT. OF
 VETERANS AFFAIRS
 PERMIT NO. G-75**

Where to find us! * OPC = Outpatient Clinic

VA Central California Health Care System

VA Central California Health Care System

2615 E. Clinton Avenue
 Fresno, CA 93703-2286
 (559) 225-6100

VA South Valley OPC

1050 North Cherry Street
 Tulare, CA 93274
 (559) 684-8703

NEW Merced OPC

340 E. Yosemite Avenue
 Merced, CA 95340
 (209) 381-0105

VA Northern California Health Care System

VA Sacramento Medical Center

10535 Hospital Way
 Mather, CA 95655
 (916) 843-7000

VA Martinez OPC

150 Muir Road
 Martinez, CA 94553
 (925) 372-2000

VA Redding OPC

351 Hartnell Avenue
 Redding, CA 95926
 (530) 226-7555

VA McClellan OPC

5342 Dudley Blvd.
 McClellan Park, CA 95652-1074
 (916) 561-7400

VA Mare Island OPC

201 Walnut Ave.
 Mare Island, CA 94592
 (707) 562-8200

Oakland Behavioral Health Clinic

525 21st Street
 Oakland, CA 94612
 (510) 587-3400

VA Oakland OPC

2221 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
 Oakland, CA 94612
 (510) 267-7800

VA Fairfield OPC

103 Bodin Circle, BLDG. 778
 Travis AFB, CA 94535
 (707) 437-1800

VA Chico OPC

280 Cohasset Road
 Chico, CA 95926
 (530) 879-5000

NEW VA Yreka Rural Clinic

101 E. Oberlin Road
 Yreka, CA 96097
 (530) 841-8500

NEW Yuba City Outreach Clinic

1231 Plumas Street
 Yuba City, CA 95991
 (530) 751-8455

VA Palo Alto Health Care System

VA Palo Alto Division

3801 Miranda Avenue
 Palo Alto, CA 94304-1290
 (650) 493-5000

VA Menlo Park Division

795 Willow Road
 Menlo Park, CA 94025
 (650) 493-5000

VA Livermore Division

4951 Arroyo Road
 Livermore, CA 94550
 (935) 373-4700

VA Capitola OPC

1350 N. 41st Street Suite 102
 Capitola, CA 95010
 (831) 464-5519

VA Stockton OPC

500 W Hospital Road
 Stockton, CA 95231
 (209) 946-3400

VA Modesto OPC

1524 McHenry Ave. Suite 315
 Modesto, CA 95350
 (209) 557-6200

VA Monterey OPC

3401 Engineer Lane
 Seaside, CA 93955
 (831) 883-3800

VA San Jose OPC

80 Great Oaks Boulevard
 San Jose, CA 95119
 (408) 363-3011

VA Sonora OPC

13663 Mono Way
 Sonora, CA 95370
 (209) 588-2600

NEW VA Fremont OPC

39199 Liberty Street
 Fremont, CA 94538
 (510) 791-4001

San Francisco VA Medical Center

4150 Clement Street
 San Francisco, CA 94121-1598
 (415) 221-4810

Downtown S.F. VA OPC

401 3rd Street
 San Francisco, CA 94107
 (415) 281-5100

VA Eureka OPC

714 F Street
 Eureka, CA 95501
 (707) 442-5335

VA San Bruno OPC

1001 Sneath Lane
 San Bruno, CA 94066
 (650) 615-6000

VA Santa Rosa OPC

3841 Brickway Blvd.
 Santa Rosa, CA 95403
 (707) 569-2300

VA Ukiah OPC

630 Kings Court
 Ukiah, CA 95482
 (707) 468-7700

NEW Clearlake VA Clinic

15145 Lakeshore Drive
 Clearlake, CA 95422
 (707) 995-7200

VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System

Ioannis A. Lougaris VA Medical Center

1000 Locust Street
 Reno, NV 89502-2597
 (775) 786-7200

VA Lahontan Valley OPC

345 West A Street
 Fallon, NV 89406
 (775) 428-6161

VA Sierra Foothills OPC

11985 Heritage Oak Place
 Suite #1
 Auburn, CA 95603
 (530) 889-0872

VA Carson Valley OPC

925 Ironwood Drive, Suite 2102
 Minden, NV 89423
 (775) 786-7200 Ext. 4000

NEW VA Diamond View OPC

110 Bella Way
 Susanville, CA 96130
 (530) 251-4550

NEW Winnemucca Rural Outreach Clinic

Army 735 4th Street
 Winnemucca, NV 89445
 (877) 320-4990

VA Pacific Islands Health Care System

Spark M. Matsunaga VA Medical Center

459 Patterson Road
 Honolulu, HI 96819
 (808) 433-0600

VA PTSD Residential Rehabilitation Program

459 Patterson Road
 Honolulu, HI 96819
 (808) 433-0004

VA Maui OPC

203 Ho'ohanna Street, Suite 303
 Kahului, HI 96732
 (808) 871-2454

VA Hilo OPC

1285 Waiuanue Ave., Suite 211
 Hilo, HI 96720
 (808) 935-3781

VA Kona OPC

75-377 Hualalai Road
 Kailua-Kona, HI 96740
 (808) 329-0774

VA Kauai OPC

3-3367 Kuhio Hwy., Suite 200
 Lihue, HI 96766
 (808) 246-0497

NEW VA Guam CBOC

498 Chalan Palasyo
 Agana Heights, Guam 96910
 (671) 475-5760

VA American Samoa OPC

Fitele Teo Army Reserve Building
 Pago Pago, American Samoa
 96799
 (684) 699-3730

NEW VA Lanai Outreach Clinic

628-B Seventh Street
 Lanai City, HI 96763
 (808) 565-6423

NEW VA Saipan OPC

Marina Heights Business Park
 P.O. Box 500938
 Saipan, MP 96950
 (670) 323-9000

VA Regional Office & Outpatient Center Manila

Veterans Affairs
 PSC 501
 FPO, AP 96515-1100
 (011) 632-523-6300