



SAVAHCS Director's Report

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Director

February 2025

Hot Topics

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Updates and Accomplishments

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Hot Topics

**Safe Patient Handling
Mobility - Falls Prevention
& Wound Care Focus**

HOSTED BY
Southern Arizona VA Healthcare System

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2025

SAVAHCS Industry Day

This event is an opportunity to meet with procurement ready suppliers to review innovative products and services to support safe patient handling, mobility, fall prevention, and wound care. The event will be held on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, and begins at 9:00 a.m. in the Rose Garden. For more information email Andrea.Hunter2@va.gov.



National Salute to Veteran Patients Week

This year's observance for National Salute to Veteran Patients will be February 9-15. During the week of Valentine's Day, we will have several activities to honor and show appreciation to hospitalized and outpatient Veterans. For more information email TucsonCDCE@va.gov.

February 13, 2025 | 4p



SAVAHCS Virtual Veteran Engagement Fair

Join us on Thursday, February 13, from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. online. We will be providing updates on SAVAHCS operations and VHA initiatives. Click [here](#) to join online day of event. Meeting ID: 270 991 448 272
Passcode: PM2d4iw2

For advance questions and to RSVP, please email the Public Affairs Office at pao.savahcs@va.gov.



Recreation Creative Arts Therapy Month

It recognizes the importance of these therapeutic approaches in improving health and wellness for Veterans. The event will take place in the Rose Garden on Wednesday, February 26, from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. For more information email Miranda.Blakeslee@va.gov.

Please join me in welcoming Sarah Sinclair, DNP, RN, NE-BC to the SAVAHCS as our



Interim Associate Director of Patient Care Services. She has been on station since January 21, working with Dr. Cassandra Valdez and the team for 2 weeks to transition. Dr. Sinclair will assume the Interim role beginning Feb 9 when Dr. Valdez moves to her new role of Chief Nurse Officer at VISN 22.

Dr. Sinclair began her nursing career 33 years ago in England, relocating to Albuquerque in 2004. She started as a travel nurse in Cardiovascular ICU, becoming full time charge nurse at the end of the contract. Her first leadership role was manager of critical care in 2007, with a subsequent promotion to director in 2009. She returned to school to complete her Master of Science in Nursing Education, then took over the management of float pool, travel nursing, and onboarding for the health system.

In 2018 she relocated to Nashville and ran the Division Float Pool for HCA. During this time, she completed her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree with a focus on Health Systems Leadership.

Dr. Sinclair returned to New Mexico to be closer to family in early 2019 and was appointed Director of Nursing at Presbyterian, Rust Medical Center. In Jan 2023, Dr.

Sinclair was appointed as Deputy Associate Director for Patient Care Services at New Mexico VA Health Care System.

Dr. Sinclair loves to hike and completed the Bataan Memorial Death March Marathon in 2024. She also loves to spend her time off with her 2 young grandchildren.

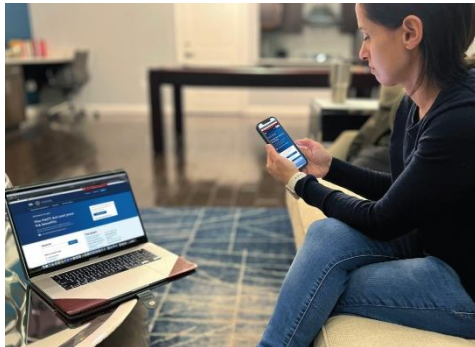
Welcome to the SAVAHCS team Dr. Sinclair!

New Travel Claims Form

VETERAN/BENEFICIARY CLAIM FOR REIMBURSEMENT OF TRAVEL EXPENSES	
SECTION A. TRAVELER'S INFORMATION	
1A. CLAIMANT'S NAME (Last, First, Middle)	1B. CLAIMANT'S SSN (999-99-9999)
1C. CLAIMANT'S DATE OF BIRTH (MM/DD/YYYY)	
3B, 3C and 3D if Caregiver, Attendant or Donor is checked	
* Program <input type="checkbox"/> ATTENDANT (Medically authorized by VA) <input type="checkbox"/> DONOR (VA Transplant Care)	
	3B. VETERAN'S SSN (999-99-9999)
	3C. VETERAN'S DATE OF BIRTH (MM/DD/YYYY)
SECTION B. TRIP INFORMATION	
4. ADDRESS (Street, City, State, Zip)	1B. DATE TRIP BEGAN (MM/DD/YYYY)
	1C. TRAVEL BY (e.g., car, train, bus, taxi)

Help us remind our Veterans that the old voucher claim form has officially expired. The new forms are conveniently placed out for use on the Beneficiary desk in the building 80 lobby near the VCS canteen. The forms can also be found online at <https://www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-10-3542/>. For any questions, call Beneficiary Travel at (520) 792-1450, extension 1-4626.

My HealthVet on VA.gov Transition



The VA's patient portal, [My HealthVet](#), is moving to [VA.gov](#) one tool at a time. With the new **My HealthVet on VA.gov** portal, Veterans will have a more secure, single online location to manage their health care and other VA benefits and services. As each new version of a My HealthVet tool is completed, Veterans are testing it and sharing their feedback prior to the tool being moved permanently to the portal on [VA.gov](#).

As of January 31, 2025, Veterans will no longer be able to sign in using My HealthVet user ID and password. The two-remaining sign-in options will be Login.gov, which offers streamlined setup and integration with other federal services like TSA Precheck and FEMA, and ID.me, which provides additional verification methods, including video calls, and can be used for military discounts.

If you or the Veterans you serve have questions about this change, please call the SAVAHCS Virtual Health Resource Center at (520) 629-1713 or send an email to TucsonVHRC@va.gov.

VA Health Care available to Thousands of Southern Arizona Veterans

VA has expanded health care eligibility for Veterans exposed to toxins and hazards during service. As of March 5, 2024, eligible Veterans can enroll directly in VA health care without first applying for benefits. This includes Vietnam War, Gulf War, post-9/11 combat veterans, and those exposed during training or active duty in the U.S. Veterans are urged to get screened for toxic exposures, even if currently healthy. VA offers a quick 5-minute screening that could detect early signs of exposure-related conditions. Encourage Veterans to get screened today – their health may depend on it.

Additionally, Veterans who never deployed but were exposed to toxins or hazards while training or on active duty in the United States will also be eligible to enroll, in one of the largest-ever expansions of Veteran health care (va.gov).

To enroll and schedule your screening, visit [VA.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT) or call 1-800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411). Take advantage of this expanded care and protect your health today.

Whole Health Efforts at SAVAHCS

Whole Health is VA's approach to care that supports the Veteran's or individual's health and well-being. This means the health care team develops a personalized health plan based on the Veteran's values, needs, and goals., and what's important to them.

We offer self-help skills and support to make the changes the Veteran wants through: [Mindful Awareness](#), [Moving the Body](#), [Personal Development](#), [Nutrition](#), [Spirit & Soul](#), [Power of the Mind](#) and more.

We're actively spreading the word so that more Veterans are aware and enroll in these services.

For more information about Whole Health classes and resources, Veterans can contact SAVAHCS at (520) 792-1450, extension 1-4971. They can also connect with health care teams via telephone or video appointments and utilize MyHealthVet for routine healthcare needs.

SAVAHCS Outreach Engagement Efforts

SAVAHCS Outreach is committed to reaching underserved Veteran populations in rural areas who are not yet enrolled in VA healthcare. Our efforts focus on ensuring these Veterans have access to the care and resources they deserve. However, we need the support of our community partners to help identify and connect with these Veterans.

If you know of any Veterans who need assistance or enrollment guidance, please reach out to Orlando Ford, our Outreach Coordinator and Minority Veteran Program Coordinator, for further assistance at (520) 629-1819 or via email at Orlando.Ford@va.gov.

Together, we can make sure every Veteran gets the care they need.

Community Engagements & Partnerships



Hematology/Oncology Department Received a large monetary donation from Mrs. Susan-Lea Skuhr, in memory of her late husband, Charles Henry Skuhr Jr. The donation, made through the Military Order of the Purple Heart, will provide patient snacks in the department where her husband received treatment.



SAVAHCS MLK Walk Was led by African American Special Emphasis Program Manager Rhonda Murray, around the SAVAHCS campus. Through the walk, we recognize and celebrated Dr. King's commitment in seeking solutions for unity through non-violent means.



National Day of Service Inspired Volunteers to help us move our amazing Patriot Pantry from the kitchen in building 3 to its new home in building 38. SAVAHCS' Patriot Pantry distributes food from donations to eligible Veterans with the goal to improve food security and quality of life.



SAVAHCS Outreach Team Attended the Tucson Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Station Veterans Mini Resource Fair. Veteran staff in attendance received valuable assistance with their VA disability claims and enrollment in VA healthcare.



SAVAHCS Quarterly Mental Health Open House Attendees learned about various treatment options, support programs, and how to connect with mental health professionals at our facility. More importantly, they received information that they can share with other Veterans in the community.

Mental Health Building 90 expansion project to expand existing Mental Health Facility: Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC) Mental Health Clinic construction phase scheduled to be completed by mid-December for the start of equipment installation. Furniture installs projected for mid to late-January 2025.

Mental Health Building 90 renovation project to convert the Agave clinic into a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT)-compliant layout Renovation portion of the project will start with the Agave Clinic followed by the Mental Health Primary Care Staff space.
Agave Clinic staff will move to the PRRC Mental Health Clinic early-February 2025.

Auditorium Stage Renovations A new door is currently being built. Flooring and door will be installed in the fall. Projected end date of March 2025.

Roof Repair Projects Building 50, 78 and 90 have been completed. Building 60 E3 roof tile started on October 28.

Emergency Department (ED) Renovations and Expansion The beginning stages of the construction project have started. The main walk-in entrance to the ED will be relocated during construction in the same vicinity as the previous entrance. Please follow the signs posted.



WWII Veterans' new eligibility for VA Health Care

If you served in World War II and are not currently enrolled in VA health care, this recent legislation ensures that you are now eligible for VA health care. WWII is defined as the period beginning December 7, 1941, and ending December 31, 1946. The Cleland-Dole Act was signed into law December 29, 2022. Section 101 of this law expands eligibility for VA care for Veterans of World War II. Apply today, even if you applied before and your application was not approved. Income level and service length do not matter.

WWII Veterans will be at minimum in Priority Group 6. You could be in a higher priority group if you have other eligibilities. Even if you were deferred before, please consider applying again. Please note, you must apply for VA health care if you are not currently enrolled. VA cannot automatically enroll you in VA care.

VA Priority Groups | Veterans Affairs

Cleland-Dole: Mental Health Copay Exemption

Veterans who owe [copays](#) for outpatient mental health and substance use disorder visits now have easier access to the soonest and best care. VA is canceling and refunding the first three mental health and substance use disorder copays in each calendar year between June 27, 2023, and December 29, 2027. [Learn more.](#)

PACT Act has expanded VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances, helping to provide generations of Veterans and their survivors with the care and benefits they have earned and deserve.

As of January 31, we have screened over 56,300 Veterans for Toxic Exposure Screenings.

COMPACT Act

Veterans in acute suicidal crisis can go to a VA or community health care facility to receive free emergency health care – including ambulance transportation costs – and be eligible for inpatient or crisis residential care for up to 30 days and outpatient care for up to 90 days, including social work. This change was made possible by the Veterans COMPACT Act of 2020. For more information contact the COMPACT Act Coordinator Office at (520) 203-2191.

SERVICE Act

Signed into law in August 2022, the SERVICE Act focuses on the health effects of toxic exposures. While the PACT Act expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic-exposures and certain Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and Post-9/11 eras, the SERVICE ACT focuses on ensuring that VA policy permits Veterans deployed to certain locations during certain periods of time to be eligible for a breast cancer risk assessment and mammography screening for breast cancer if a risk is found. For Veterans already using VA health care, see your primary care provider to assess your risk for breast cancer. If you're not already enrolled or using VA health care, go to <https://www.va.gov/health-care/how-to-apply> for more information.

Veterans Crisis Line New Number

Dial 988, then Press 1- Veterans in crisis or those concerned about a Veteran can call to reach trained responders 24 hours a day, seven days a week to receive confidential crisis support.

Veterans can still call 1 (800) 273-8255 and Press 1, chat online at Chat (www.veteranscrisisline.net) and text 838255 to reach trained crisis responders.

Veterans can use the latest technology to connect with their health care teams

Veterans who have questions on how to use virtual technology options may reach out to the Virtual Health Resource Center (VHRC) at (520) 629-1713, email TucsonVHRC@va.gov or visit the center at the main facility in Bldg. 80 on the second floor. Hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Telephone or Video Appointments - Veterans may receive care at home, either over the phone or via video using VA Video Connect on their computers, smartphones, or tablets. Visit <http://www.mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect> or contact the VHRC to learn more.

Veterans can save time by using MyHealthVet, the VA patient portal, for all their routine healthcare needs. Veterans can make medical appointments, contact providers, and request prescription refills. To learn more, contact the VHRC team at (520) 792-1450, extension 1-6889.

Prescription Refills - Veterans may request prescription refills, order, and have medications mailed to their homes using My HealthVet or the VA Health and Benefits mobile app, which can be downloaded from the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store or by visiting mobile.va.gov. Veterans may also order prescriptions via phone at (800) 470-8262 (press 1).

VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network (VISN 22) Nurse Advice Line at (877) 252-4866 Veterans can call 24/7 to speak with a registered nurse for any routine health care questions over the phone.

Did You Know?

Primary Care, Mental Health, and Specialty Care appointment wait times by VHA facility can be found at the newly updated Access to Care website at <https://www.accesstocare.va.gov>.

Stand up to your fear of falling

A Matter of Balance is an evidence-based program that emphasizes practical strategies to reduce fear of falling and increase activity levels. Participants view falls and fear of falling as controllable, set realistic goals to increase activity, change their environment to reduce fall risk factors, and exercise to increase strength and balance. A simple exercise routine that is designed to be helpful in fall prevention is introduced in session three. The group meets for eight, two-hour sessions over four weeks. To learn more contact Rogan Adams at (520) 792-1450, extension, 1-4051 for more information.

SAVAHCS Local Contacts:

- Southern Arizona VA Health Care System Main Line (520) 792-1450 or 1 (800) 470-8262
- Caregiver Support Program (520) 792-1450, extension, 1-5390
- Care in the Community (520) 792-1450, extension, 1- 6555
- Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE) (formerly Voluntary Services) (520) 629-1822
- Compensation and Pension (520) 629-4662
- Eligibility and Enrollment Section (520) 792-1450, extension, 1-6572 or 1-1740
- Homeless Program Coordinator (520) 792-1540, extension, 1-1839
- Medication Automated Refill Line (Toll Free) 1 (800) 470-8262, Press 1, then press 1 again to use the automated line to refill/renew a prescription
- Mental Health Clinic (520) 629-4884
- Virtual Health Resource Center (520) 629-1713 (for assistance with My HealthVet and other virtual care technologies)
- Native American Program (520) 792-1450, extension, 1-6622
- Patient Advocate Office (520) 629-4933
- Public Affairs (520) 629-1819
- Release of Information Office (520) 792-1450, extension, 1-4665
- Suicide Prevention Coordinator (520) 792-1450, extension, 1-6415

- Post-9/11 M2VA Case Management for Veterans recently separated from military (520) 269-1684
- Women's Health Clinic (520) 629-4885

VA National Contacts



- 1 (800) MyVA411 (1-800-698-2411) for all VA related questions about care, benefits, and services
- General VA Billing Questions 1 (866) 400-1238
- National Caregiver support line 1 (855) 260-3274
- National Memorial Cemetery Phoenix (480) 513-1412
- Phoenix Regional Office (VBA) 1 (800) 827-1000 VA Billing and collections Consolidated Patient Account Center (CPAC) 866-802-6819
- VA Health Care (877) 222-8387 (VETS)
- VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network Nurse Advice Line 1 (877) 252-4866