



CORDWORD

Monthly News Magazine of the New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America

New England Chapter



H A P P Y N E W Y E A R

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WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

HOLIDAY BOOST



NEW ENGLAND CHAPTER OFFICES

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Many Veterans enjoy making New Year's resolutions to improve their health and well-being. For those wanting to make healthy lifestyle changes, VA's MOVE! Weight Management Program is ready to help you manage your weight, eat wisely and be more physically active. To assist you in your efforts, VA is promoting the third week of January as Healthy Weight Week.

The MOVE! Program offers useful tools to help you develop lasting habits that empower you to manage your [...continued on page 12.](#)



HolidayBoost

Call, Text, Email, Visit Another Veteran
Encourage Them to Get Their Booster Shot

The holiday season is a time of giving, sharing, and caring. VA's "HolidayBoost" encourages Veterans to reach out to their Veteran friends and families, as well as those they care about, during the holidays with some suggestions for having constructive, compassionate conversations regarding getting the COVID-19 booster (and/or vaccine).

An important part of this conversation is to listen to the other person's opinions and concerns and make sure they feel heard and understood. [...continued on page 8.](#)

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**Paralyzed Veterans
of America**

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ON THE COVER:

CordWord is the New England Chapter, Paralyzed Veterans of America's (New England PVA) monthly magazine that covers news, health, research, lifestyle and issues of interest and concern to Veterans and others with spinal cord injury and disease. Anyone interested in submitting an article to *CordWord* should email media@newenglandpva.org. The assertions and opinions expressed in articles and announcements in *CordWord* reflect the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the New England PVA. New England PVA can in no way whatsoever be held responsible for the content of such views nor can it be held liable for any direct or indirect damage that may arise from such views.

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Out Front

Michael G. Negrete, Chapter President

As tempestuous as this past year may have been, may everyone's best memories be kept close at heart, and if I could offer one word of encouragement as this New Year begins, it would be: appreciate. Appreciate the splendor that surrounds you, sincerely appreciate the people who love and support you, and genuinely appreciate the life you have been given, as our tomorrows are never promised.

As the New Year starts, I appreciate the honored privilege given me to serve the New England Chapter and its membership as its President. At a time like this, we all need to be there for each other. I want you to know that I'm here for you anytime. I want nothing more than for you to take care of yourself, your friends and your family. Please stay safe and we'll push through any challenges in 2022 with grace and positivity.

Our Chapter's Board of Directors deserves a Thank you. The members of the Board have taken on the weighty responsibility of sticking with and running the Chapter so that it can continue meeting the needs of its members. The commitment they display in keeping up with the changing impact of COVID and its required guidelines affect our mission is commendable. Decisions made by the Board aren't undertaken lightly, as each Director knows that the outcomes of those choices affect each and everyone of the

Chapter's members. Their diligence is sincerely appreciated.

A final Thank you goes to you, our members, who we strive to serve every day. Your support and understanding when things don't go quite right, and your input via suggestions, compliments or complaints, helps the Board do a better job for you.

Moving forward into 2022, we have a number of new programs we're working on to offer, such as virtual racing, wheelchair football, billiards, and bowling to point out just a few. We also still have our 75th Anniversary Gala scheduled for June 26, 2022, so please look for those invitations to come via email. We're also renovating our Chapter office for 2022 so that it reflects the image of the professional Veterans Service Organization that we are. Once complete, our intention is to have another summer open house the same as when we first moved into this new location.

Talking about serving members, I want to take a moment to recognize the passing of Gateway Chapter President and National Director [Stan Brown on January 12](#). While I only knew Stan for just a short 6 years, he was a model man of how to live life with the purpose of serving others despite the personal challenges he may have had. Stan was a fixture of service as a National Director on the PVA Board of Directors effecting policy organization wide, but even more so in the community which he lived and served. One of his proudest accomplishments was helping make the Soldiers Memorial building more accessible to veterans. His story is incorporated into the museum exhibit there today. Enough can not be said about many things he did to serve his brothers and sisters in-arms. His presence in the world will be greatly missed. I will sincerely miss my conversations with him, seeing his smiling face and hearing "Gateway, Stan Brown" at our National Board meetings. Rest in peace my brother.



Stan's passing is even more poignant to me as, I was just at the VA last week waiting on an appointment where I just happen to read on the bulletin board someone's posting of Robert Smith's "Clock of Life".

"The clock of life is wound but once, and no man has the power to tell just when the hands will stop, at late or early hour. Now is the only time you own. Live, love, toil with a will. Place no faith in time. For the clock may soon be still."

Keeping this in mind, we should endeavor to make a positive difference everyday in the lives of each person we meet, as we neither know when their clock or ours will stop.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael G. Negrete". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Michael G. Negrete
PVA National Vice President and
New England Chapter President

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10

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FROM the HILL

Kristen McCone Gordon, Chapter Government Relations Director

New England PVA participates in round table discussion with Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley (D, MA)

Chapter President Michael Negrete and I were delighted to be invited to participate in a small roundtable discussion on issues impacting the veteran

community with Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley. The objective of the discussion was for Congresswoman Pressley to discuss her advocacy around veterans, share legislative updates her office is working on, and hear directly from veterans in her community.

The Congresswoman shared updates on the GI Restoration Act and her work supporting female veterans. Congresswoman Pressley also discussed the importance of accessible mental health services, and made clear that she believes “every day is Veterans Day”. Michael and I were thrilled to hear her also raise the importance of the Veteran Families Health Services Act, a NEPVA legislative priority which she has co-sponsored.

Michael strongly advocated for our Chapter, and discussed our support for the Air Carrier Access Amendments Act (ACAA) of 2021. He called on Congress to strengthen the ACAA and raised how this issue directly impacts our members safety and dignity. Among other challenges, he shared that our members have reported: untrained assistance in boarding and deplaning and being physically harmed in the process; damage to their stowed power chairs; lack of seating accommodations; and delays in receiving assistance and returning of assistive devices.

Congresswoman Pressley was very responsive, authentic, and attentive to these issues. We are happy to report that she is looking into formally co-sponsoring the bill. Our Chapter greatly appreciates her leadership and consistent responsiveness to our requests. Following a briefing late last year, the Congresswoman also signed on as a co-sponsor to the AUTO Act.

I would love to speak with any NEPVA member who lives in Congresswoman Pressley’s district. Her office is very focused on representing the needs of their constituents and doing direct outreach to veterans. If interested in learning more about what Congresswoman Pressley is doing in your district, or if you would like to be connected to her staff, please don’t hesitate to contact me at kristen@newenglandpva.org.

Opportunities still available to participate in the 2022 Pushing Access Forward Advocacy/Legislation Seminar

A reminder to all that there is still time to join our growing Advocacy team. We are looking for interested members to participate in the 2022 annual Advocacy/Legislation Seminar, which will be held virtually March 7th – March 11th. The seminar provides participants with in-depth knowledge of PVA’s legislative priorities and an opportunity to meet (virtually!) with Members of Congress and/or their staff. These meetings are incredibly important to our work at NEPVA, and often result in Members of Congress signing onto our priority legislation.

If you are interested in participating and joining our growing New England PVA advocacy team, please reach out to me at kristen@newenglandpva.org or 571-289-8276. I look forward to speaking with you and telling you more about this opportunity!

Urgent help needed from all Rhode Island and New Hampshire members

Our Chapter needs all of our Rhode Island and New Hampshire members to [send an email](#) to Congress in support of the AUTO Act **today**.

Please take a few minutes and fill out the VoterVoice link below. As you may recall, VoterVoice is a new program from PVA that allows us to harness the grassroots power of our members in a quick, easy, and effective way. The VoterVoice system enables members to take action by sending a pre-written email to your members of Congress. All you need to do is fill in your address and hit send.

All of the information you need to respond and take action is available here: <https://www.votervoice.net/PVA/campaigns/78011/respond>.

As always, please reach out to me with any questions, concerns, or ideas.



USE YOUR VOICE

Live Whole Health #104 – Intention Setting

via VAntage Point by Alison M. Whitehead, MPH, C-IAYT, RYT-500 is the Program Lead for the Integrative Health Coordinating Center in the VHA Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation.



The start of a new year is a good time to pause and reflect on both the past year and the year ahead. Despite the many hardships of the past two years, or perhaps even more so because of them, it can be helpful to reflect on the positive events and successes of the year, no matter how small they may seem. It can also be a good time to think about habits, behaviors and projects you would like to continue and take with you into the New Year. It is also an opportunity to, perhaps more importantly, think about what you want to let go of.

Many people set New Year's resolutions, for things they resolve to continue, stop or change. Oftentimes these lists include things like lose/gain/or maintain weight, go to the gym, get more sleep, or cut down on screen time.

Intentions on the other hand, come from the heart. Intentions help your heart and mind come into alignment, and can help reconnect us to our mission, aspiration, and purpose. While different from a specific goal or resolution, intentions can help us realize our goals. For example, you may consider setting an intention to live a healthier lifestyle vs. a resolution to walk or take a chair yoga class five times a week.

While living a healthier lifestyle may include getting in some power walks or classes; it may also include weeks where you are unable to make it out for a walk five days, but perhaps you focus on getting quality sleep, eating healthy meals, or increasing the amount of water you drink.

In preparation for reflection and intention setting, take a few minutes to answer these two questions, either writing it down or just thinking about it in your mind:

- What REALLY matters to you in your life?
- What brings you a sense of joy and happiness?

Now, join in this brief meditation practice to help get you in the mindset to set your intentions for 2022.

2022 intention

Do your 2022 intentions and goals include making changes related to your health and well-being? VA's Live Whole Health mobile application is a free, easy-to-use tool created for Veterans and others who are ready to take the next step in their Whole Health journey. The Live Whole Health app is available for download on iOS or Android device. The app is not meant to replace professional care for clinical or mental health conditions.

Whole Health is VA's holistic approach to care that supports your health and well-being. Whole Health centers care around what matters to you, not what is the matter with you. With this app, you can fill out your personal health inventory, set goals, get virtual coaching, and learn more about Whole Health. Learn more in the [Live Whole Health Mobile App Fact Sheet](#).



VA Access, Supplies, Quality Standards?

By Pete Demarkis, PVA Sr. National Service Officer, Boston, MA

PVA's Government Relations Department needs your assistance with gauging how the VA is doing regarding the Access and Quality Standards VA established in 2019.

VA published the following access standards:

1. For primary care, mental health, and non-institutional

extended care services, 30-minute average drive time standard.

2. For specialty care, 60-minute average drive time standard.

3. Appointment wait-time standards of 20 days for primary care, mental health care, and non-institutional extended care services, and 28 days for specialty care from the date of request with certain exception

In addition to this, PVA would also like to know if any members have experienced difficulties in receiving any medical supplies, such as gloves, catheters, or any medications from the pharmacy.

Knowing these access standards and supply concerns, please let your covering PVA Service Officer know if you've experienced any issues or delays with the VA providing access to these services or supplies. You can find a list of Service Officers covering New England and New York on [page 3](#).



HolidayBoost

Call, Text, Email, Visit Another Veteran
Encourage Them to Get Their Booster Shot

HolidayBoost Campaign

via VAntage Point by Michael G. Goldstein, MD, is an associate chief consultant for Preventive Medicine in VA's Office of Patient Care Services

about, during the holidays with some suggestions for having constructive, compassionate conversations regarding getting the COVID-19 booster (and/or vaccine).

An important part of this conversation is to listen to the other person's opinions and concerns and make sure they feel heard and understood.

Asking open-ended questions, offering your understanding, and empathizing with their concerns can help build trust and help them to consider a change. This requires us to accept, without judgment, that our loved ones may have and keep opinions that we disagree with, as well as honor their right to do so.

Follow these six steps to have a constructive, compassionate conversation

1. Ask permission to talk about it.

2. Explore their thinking about the booster (and/or vaccine).

3. Express understanding for their concerns, acknowledge what they already do to stay safe, and respond to their concerns with empathy.

4. Ask before offering new information. See if they are open to learning more information about their areas of concern.

5. Keep the door open for future conversation.

6. Offer help if they are open to getting a booster (and/or vaccine).

Note: If they need help with finding vaccine sites, go to Vaccine Finder (www.vaccinefinder.org) or visit the VA COVID-19 Vaccine site (www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine).

Your constructive, [compassionate conversation](#) (PDF, 1.4MB) about [booster shots](#) (PDF, 232KB) with loved ones could truly be this season's gift of good mental and physical health.

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8 Important Facts About COVID-19 Booster Shots at VA

There has been a lot of talk about booster shots for COVID-19 vaccines. While the vaccines developed to fight COVID-19 have been shown to be safe and highly effective at both preventing the disease and lessening the effects in breakthrough cases, experts believe receiving an additional dose can provide further protection. To reduce confusion, VA presents you with 8 Important Facts About COVID-19 Booster Shots at VA.

1. What is a booster shot?

A booster shot is an additional dose of vaccine, given several months after the first series or single-dose regimen of a vaccine and timed when antibody protection is falling, with a goal of “boosting” antibodies and protection.

2. What is the difference between a booster shot and an additional/third dose for immune-compromised people?

A booster shot is a supplemental dose of the vaccine given to people who should have had a strong initial response to the vaccine, but whose antibody protection has fallen over time. An additional/third dose for immune-compromised people following an initial vaccine series is given to those who may not have a strong enough immune response after receiving the initial vaccine series, because of their weakened immune system. VA offers both third doses for immune-compromised individuals, and COVID-19 booster shots.

3. Who is eligible to get a booster shot at VA?

VA will offer boosters to staff and Veterans receiving VA care; and, as supply and capacity permits, additional Veterans, spouses, caregivers and CHAMPVA recipients under the authority of the SAVE LIVES Act.

4. Will VA contact me about receiving a booster shot?

You don't have to wait to be contacted to schedule your booster shot! Veterans who fall into

populations recommended by the CDC for booster shots will be identified through the VA's Veterans Outreach Tool, then contacted and advised of the recommended booster shots, which may be offered by appointment or walk-in basis.

5. When should I expect to get a booster shot?

If you got an initial series of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccines, you can get a booster shot at least six months after your second shot. If you initially got the Johnson & Johnson (J&J) vaccine, you can get a booster shot two months after your initial dose.

6. Will boosters be available for each vaccine?

Following FDA and CDC recommendations, VA is offering booster shots of the Pfizer, Moderna, and J&J vaccines. However, every facility may not have all three vaccines, so please call ahead if you have a specific preference.

7. Can I get the Pfizer booster shot if I first received the Moderna or J&J shot?

Individuals who are 18 years and older may receive any of the COVID-19 vaccines as a booster dose. Individuals younger than 18 years old may only get the Pfizer-BioNTech as a booster.

8. Can I get the booster shot and the flu vaccine in the same visit?

Flu vaccines are recommended for everyone, and can be given on the same visit with COVID-19 vaccines.

Haven't gotten or finished your first COVID-19 vaccine series yet? VA is still offering initial COVID-19 vaccines. Getting a COVID-19 vaccine lowers your risk of severe illness from COVID-19, including hospitalization and death, even with the current circulating Delta variant of COVID-19.

For more information, please go to
[VA's COVID-19 Vaccine Questions site:](https://www.va.gov/covid-19/vaccine-questions/)

[va.gov/initiatives/have-questions-before-you-get-your-covid-19-vaccine/](https://www.va.gov/initiatives/have-questions-before-you-get-your-covid-19-vaccine/)



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

PVA WASHINGTON UPDATE HIGHLIGHTS

PVA Washington Update Volume 29 Issue 1, Volume 28, Issue 19

Caregiver Resources

Several publications of interest to family caregivers have recently been released:

- The National Alliance for Caregiving and Diverse Elders Coalition released a [report](#) along with a webinar – Family Caregiving in Diverse Communities – in December 2021 focusing on the experiences of racially and ethnically diverse and LGBTQ+ family caregivers. This report offers research and ways to ensure systems of services and supports for caregivers will address health disparities and systemic barriers that diverse family caregivers for older adults face. [Read the highlights](#) and [access the webinar recording](#).
- ARCH Respite Care Foundation recently issued Guidelines for Families - [Receiving Respite Care Safely During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). The information is designed to assist families with careful and thoughtful decision making to ensure respite care is received as safely as possible during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Caregiving in Military Families Report was recently released by the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers and Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families. The report can be accessed [here](#).

U.S. Access Board/DOT Host Public Meeting to Gather Additional Information About Aircraft Onboard Wheelchair Requirements

On December 16, PVA Deputy Executive Director Shaun Castle spoke during a public meeting sponsored by the U.S. Access Board and the Department of Transportation (DOT) regarding the design of aircraft onboard wheelchairs. PVA feels very strongly that the onboard wheelchair is a crucial link in ensuring proper and dignified access to accessible lavatories. Twin-aisle aircraft are already required to have accessible lavatories and a very small number of single-aisle aircraft have them as well.

DOT is slated to put out a proposed rule for public comment soon about requiring larger single-aisle aircraft to have an accessible lavatory. In his comments, Mr. Castle noted that an aircraft with a fully accessible lavatory that includes no safe or dignified way to reach it would only continue to put lavatory access out of reach of passengers who require an onboard wheelchair.

Lavatory access is important for all air travel passengers, including those with disabilities. As part of a recent, informal survey, PVA and

other disability organizations sought to learn about the current air travel experience of passengers with disabilities. Out of 1,034 respondents, 647 individuals or 63 percent said that they have avoided air travel because they have no access to the lavatory during flight. Of 1,232 respondents, 592 individuals or 48 percent said that no lavatory access by itself was reason enough not to travel by air unless absolutely necessary.

Overall, the current onboard wheelchair provides minimal to no support depending on the passenger's disability. PVA believes that the onboard wheelchairs that are in use today need to be improved significantly to ensure safe egress and access to the lavatory without putting a passenger with a disability at risk. Mr. Castle noted that PVA believes the Access Board's Advisory Guidelines for onboard wheelchairs would make critically needed improvements to these devices and encouraged DOT to adopt those guidelines rather than using broad performance standards.

PVA Testifies on Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust Act

PVA Deputy Executive Director Shaun Castle testified on December 7 before the House Ways and Means Social Security Subcommittee in support of H.R. 5723, the Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust Act. This legislation was introduced by the Chairman of the Subcommittee, John Larson (D-CT) along with 194 original cosponsors at the end of October. A Senate companion bill (S. 3071) was introduced on that same day by Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Chris Van Hollen (D-MD).

In his testimony, Castle spoke to the importance of Social Security in the lives of veterans with disabilities and their families. He also highlighted a number of provisions in the bill that will be particularly helpful to these veterans, including an improved inflation factor that better reflects expenses faced by older beneficiaries and those with disabilities, an increased minimum benefit so that no one retires into poverty, and an

increase in the income threshold for benefits to be taxed.

Additional provisions would eliminate the five- month waiting period for those deemed eligible to begin receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and replacement of the SSDI "cash cliff" with a gradual phase out of benefits as earned income rises.

Other witnesses at the hearing represented Social Security Works, National Committee to Preserve Social Security, and Medicare and Alliance for Retired Americans. A link to the hearing can be found [here](#). To ask your members of Congress to support the Social Security 2100: A Sacred Trust Act, please click [here](#).

Annual Defense Policy Bill Signed into Law

Late last month, the President signed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). This annual bill authorizes a host of Pentagon programs and weapons systems but occasionally contains items affecting veterans as well. Below is a listing of some provisions of interest to PVA:

- Authorization to build a Global War on Terrorism Memorial on the National Mall—This is the initial part of a long and complicated 24-step process that will include approvals from the National Capital Planning Commission and the National Park Service before the monument can be built. The Memorial, which is to be built using private donations, will honor all who have served and sacrificed in the ongoing international military campaign to defeat terrorists intending to harm our country and its citizens.
- Waiver of National Park Fees—This provision permanently waives

national park fees for any veteran or Gold Star family member. It also gives free annual passes to active-duty military for national parks and federal recreational lands.

- Burn Pit Registry—This provision directs VA to include in its open burn pit registry locations where they were used in Egypt and Syria.
- Housing Modifications for Military Families—This provision includes PVA-endorsed legislation introduced by Representatives Stephanie Bice (R-OK) and Sara Jacobs (D-CA) to protect military families from being charged for home modifications needed by a family member with a disability.

The bill is more than 900 pages long, but a comprehensive summary of it is available [here](#).

Senate Panel Examines the “State of the VA” in Year-End Hearing

The Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee recently held a hearing to assess VA as the year draws to a close. The implementation of the Cerner electronic health record (EHR) system, upcoming AIR Commission, accessibility for community care, veterans homelessness, suicide prevention, and medical treatments for veterans with traumatic brain injuries were some of the many important subjects discussed with the lone witness, VA Secretary Denis McDonough. In his oral comments, McDonough told the Committee that VA is “providing more care, more services, more benefits to more veterans than ever before.” He noted that VA has not only continued to provide care and benefits for veterans during the pandemic, but also opened its doors to non-veterans for health care as part of its Fourth Mission.

The Secretary urged Congress to provide the department its full fiscal year 2022 budget appropriation as soon as possible, and to avoid the imposition of a full-year continuing resolution. He also identified the pandemic as the department’s biggest challenge because it impacts everything done for veterans as well as the workforce.

Asked about the department’s top priorities for the coming year, he said getting veterans timely access to care and benefits are his top priority and “everything else is extra credit.” Continuing to progress in the area of toxic exposures was cited as another priority.

When questioned about the claims backlog, McDonough acknowledged that there are about 260,000 pending claims. He said VA is using additional

funding provided by Congress through the American Rescue Plan to hire 2,000 more claims processors. With the additional staff, new technology, automation, training, and use of mandatory overtime, he believes the backlog can be under 100,000 by April 2024.

The Secretary was also asked about VA’s Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. He acknowledged that Congress did not create the program so that 80 percent of the applicants could get denied; so, VA is looking at ways to change that. He told the Committee that VA cannot get around the requirement that the veteran’s disability be service connected because it is what the law requires. The number of activities of daily living with which the veteran needs help is also a problem, but VA has some regulatory flexibility on that issue so long as the veteran’s disability has been proven to be service connected. Secretary McDonough said they are already working on regulations that may give them that flexibility but did not provide specifics.

He told the Committee that VA is currently looking at everyone eligible under the old caregiver (Legacy) program and the department has communicated with about 2,000 of 19,000 impacted people. He agreed that up to 6,700 of them may not be eligible to remain in the program but noted that their participation would not end until next October and payments would continue until the end of 2022. You can find the Secretary’s written statement and a recording of the hearing [here](#).



Healthy Weight Week Promotes a Healthier You!

via VAntage Point by Jay Shiffler is a communications specialist with the National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention



Many Veterans enjoy making New Year's resolutions to improve their health and well-being. For those wanting to make healthy lifestyle changes, VA's MOVE! Weight Management Program is ready to help you manage your weight, eat wisely and be more physically active. To assist you in your efforts, VA is promoting the third week of January as Healthy Weight Week.

The MOVE! Program offers useful tools to help you develop lasting habits that empower you to manage your weight and health more effectively than short-term diets.

Set your goal

Start by writing down your motivation to manage your weight and improve your health. You may find it easier to maintain healthy habits if you remain mindful of your reasons to change. For you, it may be as simple as wanting to be more active with your children or grandchildren. Others might want more energy to pursue their favorite hobbies, work or household activities.

Ask your healthcare provider what you can do now to stay healthy. Managing your weight can help you manage other health conditions, such as heart disease, hypertension and diabetes. It is important to set a realistic goal that you can achieve. Losing 5% of your body weight can reduce your risk of many chronic conditions.

We are all different, so your weight goal will be unique. So, too, will the actions you take to improve your health.

Make a plan

Next, consider any lifestyle changes that you want to make to improve your

health. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many Veterans are experiencing stress, isolation and reduced availability of healthy foods and exercise resources. VA MOVE! clinicians will help support and encourage you to look for creative ways to be more active and make healthy food choices.

Scheduling time to walk, participating in a gym or yoga class, or tasks around the house like gardening are simple ways to reduce stress and boost both your activity and self-esteem. When you cook with vegetables, whole grains, fruits and lean proteins, you can be proud of the meal you've made and limit the highly processed foods that you eat.

Keep track of your progress

Once you have established your goal and your weight management plan, you will be ready to track your progress. Keeping track of the food you eat and the activities you do each day will make it easier to meet your weight loss goals. You may also find that tracking helps you build confidence and focus on the ways you can reach your health goals.

Reward yourself

When you reach a goal, find a reasonable way to reward yourself. Your reward may be a new workout outfit, competing in a fitness competition like a 5K Walk/Run, or attending a sporting event. It's important to reward yourself for your hard work and to keep your motivation and commitment.

A new year – a healthier you

Having a healthy body also includes maintaining a positive self-image. Accepting your body is important. Your MOVE! team will help you find the right tools to empower yourself and gain a positive mindset about your body. Remember that people come in all sizes, shapes and colors. When you take care of your body and mind, you improve your quality of life and live longer, too!

Are you ready to take the next step toward a healthier weight and a healthier you?

Speak with your local MOVE! Coordinator today. For more information visit: www.move.va.gov and [watch this video](#).

You can also read MOVE! Success Stories from Veterans like you at <https://www.move.va.gov/SuccessStories/index.asp>.





Wellness Classes with Ompractice

VA Boston is now offering unlimited virtual access to live yoga, tai chi, meditation, and other wellness classes...at no cost to Veterans!

- Ompractice partnered with the VA so you can take classes wherever you are!
- You will be supported by an experienced professional using two-way video
- You will find the schedule offers classes for beginner and advanced users
- Wellness is possible for all!

Directions to sign up for Veteran use of Ompractice


To Sign Up:

- Go to the Veterans Affairs page on Ompractice: <https://www.ompractice.com/veteransaffairs>
- Click "I'm a Veteran" button, and select "Massachusetts/Boston VA"
- Add the Free membership to your cart, go through the purchase info (it's free). And your membership is now active!
- You will get a welcome email with instructions on how to sign up for your first class, but just in case...

Use your phone's camera to scan the QR code



To Take a Class:

- Choose any class from the schedule here www.ompractice.com/schedule
- Add the class to your cart. Classes should show as \$0 if you are logged in. If you are prompted for a credit card, you are not logged in
- Click "Proceed to checkout" and enter your basic information. In the "Additional Information" section, you'll have the opportunity to add any notes you'd like the teacher to be aware of (injuries, comments, requests)
- Click purchase (again, will be \$0)
- When you're done, you will receive an email with a unique link to the class in Zoom, the video platform Ompractice uses for their live online classes
- Ompractice has very responsive customer support! Click green  button in the bottom right-hand corner of any page on the Ompractice website and speak directly with a person. Ompractice is happy to give class recommendations, answer questions, or listen to feedback!

VA Delays Electronic Health Record Implementation Date Due to COVID-19 Surge in Ohio

Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs



WASHINGTON — Effective Jan. 14, the Department of Veterans Affairs is delaying the scheduled deployment of its new electronic health record effort at the VA Central Ohio Healthcare System in response to a surge in COVID-19 cases affecting the workforce and community.

In consultation with leaders at the Ohio facility and VA senior leaders, the department shifted implementation of the new EHR system to April 30 from the previously scheduled date of March 5.

“Our primary mission is to serve Veterans,” said Dr. Terry Adirim, program executive director of the Electronic Health Record Modernization Integration Office, who manages the daily operations of VA’s EHR effort. “As we see the pandemic surge in the Columbus community, we need to support the medical professionals while they focus their attention on meeting the health care needs of their patients. EHR deployment activities must be weighed against community health and can be resumed when it is appropriate to do so.”

VA data shows, as of Jan. 13, the VA Central Ohio Healthcare System is currently experiencing a COVID-19 positivity rate of 34.9% across

its 15-county service area, with Franklin County experiencing a 153% increase in COVID-19 cases over the past 14 days. A significant number of the workforce at the facility (approximately 209 employees) are “unable to work,” doubling the number of employees reporting this status the previous week and one of the largest changes in this status across all VA medical facilities nationwide. Adding an EHR deployment during this pandemic surge would risk significant impact to health care operations at the facility and the ability of staff to adequately serve Veterans.

VA officials are continuously reviewing the conditions at upcoming implementation sites to ensure local conditions allow for a safe deployment.

The new EHR will replace VA’s current Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture and will link with the Department of Defense’s health records to create a lifetime of seamless care for service members and Veterans. For more information about the overall effort visit EHR Modernization.

VA Takes Action to Become Federal Model for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access for Veterans and Employees

Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs



WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs becomes attuned making inclusion, diversity, equity and access a part of its cultural transformation [action plan](#). An 18-member [I-DEA task force, created April 1, 2021](#), developed 20 recommendations and 68 sub-recommendations for the department to consider during the next four years to ensure all VA employees, Veterans, their families, caregivers and survivors have equitable treatment and experiences when interacting with VA.

“This action plan reflects the Department of Veterans Affairs is working to ensure our customers and employees have equal access to all VA offerings and are treated with respect and dignity when interacting with the department,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “We recognize this work requires a culture shift and will not happen overnight, but the Biden-Harris administration and I will see this through to completion on behalf of the Veterans we serve and the diverse workforce that carries out our mission.”

The 20 recommendations address potential gaps to include:

Collecting and disaggregating race, ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation demographic information about VA employees and Veterans we serve.

Developing a workforce plan to integrate I-DEA into hiring, position management, talent development and executive coaching to address potential areas of need.

Revamping VA’s communications efforts to better reach underserved communities such as those who live in rural or remote areas, outlying communities or Veterans with limited English proficiency.

The I-DEA action plan also establishes an I-DEA sub-council tasked with facilitating policy development, adoption and implementation of the recommendations outlined in the plan and to ensure enterprise policy decisions are consistent with the secretary’s strategic goals.

The sub-council is chaired by Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration/Operations Security and Preparedness Gina Grosso and Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Resolution, Management, Diversity and Inclusion Harvey Johnson.

VA, Civil Air Patrol chaplain corps to support families of Veterans at national cemeteries

Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs



WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs' [National Chaplain Service](#) teams up with the [Civil Air Patrol Chaplain Corps](#)

to expand Veterans' families access to qualified faith leaders during committal and memorial services held at VA cemeteries.

VA's National Chaplain Service provides administrative support, training and other services to assist CAP in supporting VA national cemeteries and providing chaplain coverage when a VA chaplain is not available.

"The partnership, implemented in December 2021, came about from increased requests from family members asking for chaplain support during burial services at NCA cemeteries," said VA Chaplain Program Manager for Family Care and Bereavement Chad Maxey. "Working with Civil Air Patrol expands our ability to provide trained chaplains, whether from VA or CAP, to Veterans' families when they need it most."

Every VA Medical Center has chaplain services available to Veterans and their families that represent a broad spectrum of religious traditions. Family members of Veterans may request chaplain support through their [local VA](#) Chaplain Service Office when scheduling a burial.

"Our chaplains stand ready to help families honor the memory and legacy of their loved ones," said Civil Air Patrol National Commander Maj. Gen. Edward D. Phelka. "We look forward to working with VA in support of this noble mission."

In 2021, VA's National Cemetery Administration conducted more than 150,000 burials, an all-time high dating back to its establishment in 1973. For more information on VA support services, [burials](#) and memorials, visit VA's [National Cemetery Administration](#).

VA Health Records Now Display Gender Identity

Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs



Recognizing gender identity improves health care experience

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs began including gender

identifiers in its national medical record system in December 2021 to help VA providers better understand and meet the health care needs of Veterans.

Providing this option demonstrates the agency's commitment to delivering care fitting the individual needs of Veterans enrolled in VA health care, including transgender and gender-diverse Veterans.

VA added transgender male, transgender female, non-binary, other or does not wish to disclose options to its new gender identity field.

"Our goal is to align the department's policies and procedures with the

president's vision for a more inclusive government," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "All Veterans, all people, have a basic right to be identified as they define themselves. This is essential for their general well-being and overall health. Knowing the gender identity of transgender and gender diverse Veterans helps us better serve them."

A person's gender identity conveys essential information about who they are and may signal experiences of stigma and discrimination that can affect their health. VA health records now display both gender identity and preferred name, so VA staff can address the Veteran appropriately.

Further information can be found in [VHA Directive 1341](#) or at [LGBTQ+ Health Program](#).





Veterans Career Program

Career Support for ALL Veterans

With Paralyzed Veterans of America's Veterans Career Program,

You Will:

- Receive carefully tailored **one-on-one support** from a career expert team member.
- Set goals to achieve your career objective.
- Learn how to craft an effective resume and cover letter specific to your career interests.
- Develop effective interview and communication skills so you are confident in interviews.
- Craft job search strategies to meet your employment goals.
- Create an effective LinkedIn profile.
- Identify and engage in networking opportunities.
- Build confidence in your career pursuits.
- And much more!



We Will:

- Provide one-on-one guidance to help you find **meaningful employment, education and volunteer opportunities**.
- Assess your current abilities, training, and experience and help you identify career goals.
- Guide you through development and enhancement of your resume and cover letter.
- Teach you how to build an effective LinkedIn profile page.
- Practice mock interviews to hone your skills before you interact with employers.
- Regularly communicate with you to track progress and identify other resources to assist in the job search process.
- Be a **Partner for Life** to assist you for the duration of your career.

PVA.org/VeteransCareerProgram • VeteransCareerProgram@PVA.org • [f ParalyzedVeterans](https://www.facebook.com/ParalyzedVeterans) • [i PVA1946](https://www.instagram.com/PVA1946)

Spread Joy, Not Flu this Season: Free Flu Shot at VA or 70,000+ Network Providers

via Vantage Point by Jonathan Ludwig, Senior Communications Specialist for the VHA Office of Community Care

Have you received your flu shot yet? If not, don't worry. It's not too late! This holiday season, there is no better time than now to protect yourself and your loved ones from the flu. VA has made it easier than ever to receive your flu shot.

Flu Shots: It's Time to VAX to the MAX!

In addition to every VA medical facility, flu shots are available at no cost for eligible Veterans at more than 70,000 in-network community providers nationwide. According to the [Centers for Disease Control](#), you can even get a flu vaccine and a COVID-19 vaccine during the same visit.

We encourage you to check out this [brief video](#) or follow these four steps to get your community flu shot:

1. Check your eligibility

Community flu vaccines are available to eligible Veterans who:

- Are enrolled in the VA health care system, and
- Received care through VA from either a VA or community provider within the past 24 months. This eligibility is new for 2021-2022 flu season.

To check your eligibility (for the community urgent care benefit, which includes the flu vaccine):

- Call 800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411), select option 1 (for urgent care information), then option 3 (for urgent care information), and then option 1 again (to check urgent care eligibility), or
- Contact your local VA medical facility.

A great part of this benefit is that you can get a community flu vaccine without prior authorization. Flu vaccines that are provided include standard (quadrivalent), high dose, and preservative-free.

2. Find a participating provider

To find an in-network provider, go to the [VA Facility Locator](#) and enter the following information into the search tool:

- City, state, or postal code: Enter the appropriate ZIP code for your area
- Facility Type: Select "Urgent Care" OR "Community pharmacies (in VA's network)." If you select "Urgent Care," choose "In-network community urgent care"
- Click "Search"
- Choose provider

You can also call 877-881-7618 or your local VA medical facility for help locating an in-network provider. Make sure the provider is in-network to avoid being charged for the flu vaccine.

3. Go to the provider

Before going to the provider:

- Call ahead to make sure the provider offers the flu vaccine through this benefit.
- Print the [Billing Information Card](#) (or have it viewable on your mobile device) and take it with you to the provider.

When you arrive:

- Tell them you're a Veteran enrolled in VA health care, and
- You would like to get a flu shot, paid for by VA.
- Show your government-issued ID and the [Billing Information Card](#).

4. Get vaccine

There is no copayment charge if your visit consists only of a flu vaccine. In addition, flu-vaccine only visits do not count toward visits and/or copayments associated with using VA's urgent care benefit.

More information

- [Flu Shots – Community Care](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Community Flu Vaccines](#)
- [Influenza \(Flu\) – VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention](#)
- [Influenza \(Flu\) – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

2021-2022:
Blasting off
to Fight Flu
and COVID-19
Together

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

www.prevention.va.gov/flu
www.va.gov/covid-vaccine-questions

#VAVaxToTheMax



ANNUAL AIR RIFLE & AIR PISTOL PROGRAM

Cal-Diego Air Rifle and Pistol Tournament

December 3, 2021
Camp Pendleton
Camp Pendleton, CA

Wisconsin Air Rifle and Pistol Tournament

March 11-12, 2022
Milwaukee Tech Area College
Milwaukee, WI

Mid-Atlantic Air Rifle and Pistol Tournament

March 2022 (Dates TBD)
Colonial Shooting Academy
Richmond, VA

Buckeye Air Rifle and Pistol Tournament *

April 14-16, 2022
Spire Institute
Geneva, OH
**Buckeye Wheelchair Games*

PVA BOATING/FISHING TOUR

Mid-America Bass Tournament

September 10-12, 2021
Lake Eufaula
Eufaula, OK

Vaughan Bass Tournament

October 8-10, 2021
The Lakes of Egypt
Marion, IL

Southeastern Bass Tournament

October 15-17, 2021
Thurmond/Clarks Hill Lake
Evans, GA

Florida Gulf Coast Bass Tournament

April 1-3, 2022
Lake Toho
Kissimmee, FL

Kentucky-Indiana Bass Tournament

April 22-24, 2022
Lake Barkley
Kuttawa, KY

Mid-Atlantic Bass Tournament

June 10-12, 2022
James & Appomattox Rivers
Hopewell, VA

Capital Clash Bass Tournament

June 17-19, 2022
Potomac River
Waldorf, MD

ANNUAL PVA/NWPA BILLIARDS TOURNAMENT SERIES

Buckeye Billiards Tournament

July 17-18, 2021
8 Ball Sports Bar & Billiards
Columbus, OH

Mid-South Billiards Tournament

October 15-16, 2021
Clicks Billiards
Memphis, TN

Mid-Atlantic Billiards Tournament

March 18-20, 2022
Diamond Billiards
Midlothian, VA

ANNUAL PVA/AWBA BOWLING TOURNAMENT SERIES

Great Plains Bowling Tournament

July 29-August 1, 2021
Thunderbowl
Council Bluffs, IA

Mid-Atlantic Bowling Tournament

September 24-26, 2021
Bowl America
Midlothian, VA

Florida Gulf Coast Bowling Tourn.

February 23-25, 2022
Pin Chasers
Tampa, FL

Vaughan Bowling Tournament

April 2022 (Dates TBD)
Bowlero
Romeoville, IL

PVA NATIONAL SHOOTING SPORTS CIRCUIT

North Central Trapshoot

September 11-12, 2021
Crooks Gun Club
Sioux Falls, SD

Cal-Diego Trapshoot

March 25-27, 2022
Redlands Shooting Park
Redlands, CA

Nevada Trapshoot

April 1-3, 2022
Clark County Shooting Park
Las Vegas, NV

Florida Gulf Coast Trapshoot

May 13-15, 2022
Silver Dollar Trap Club
Odessa, FL

Vaughan Trapshoot

June 3-5, 2022
St. Charles Sportsmen's Club
Elburn, IL

Wisconsin Trapshoot

June 10-12, 2022
Brown County Sportsman Club
Green Bay, WI

Iowa Shooting Trapshoot *

June 17-19, 2022
Otter Creek Sportsman Club
Cedar Rapids, IA
**Year-End Tournament*

Mid-Atlantic Trapshoot

(Dates TBD)
Conservation Park of Virginia
Charles City, VA

BOCCIA

KY-IN Boccia Tournament

July 17-18, 2021
Indianapolis, IN

KY-IN Boccia Tournament

September 25-26, 2021
Bowling Green, KY

Bayou Boccia Tournament

February 11-12, 2022
Gulfport, MS

Buckeye Boccia Tournament *

April 14-16, 2022
Geneva, OH
**Buckeye Wheelchair Games*

Mid-Atlantic Boccia Tournament

May 2022 (Dates TBD)
Richmond, VA

Vaughan Boccia Tournament

(Dates TBD)
Carol Stream, IL

HANDCYCLING

Echelon Racing League ToAD Virtual Criterium Races

November 2021 -February 2022

PVAR High Performance Camp

January 29 – February 3, 2022
Brooksville, FL

Museum of Aviation Marathon

January 15, 2022
Warner Robins, GA

Carbonbike USA

February 5-6, 2022
Gainesville, FL

Valley of the Sun

February 18-20, 2022
Phoenix, AZ

Off-Road Spring Expo

April 13-16, 2022
Chesterfield, VA

Redlands Cycling Classic

April 20-24, 2022
Redlands, CA

Gettysburg Marathon

April 2022 (Dates TBD)
Gettysburg, PA

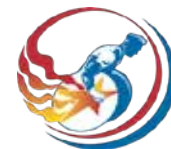
Tour of America's Dairylands

June 2022 (Dates TBD)
Milwaukee, WI

Wichita Omnium

June 2022 (Dates TBD)
Wichita, KS

NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES



July 7-12, 2022
Tempe, AZ



JANUARY CHAPTER MEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

Dennis A Abaid	Doug Elliott	Anthony Manfredi	Jose D Roman
David E Alderman	Stephen J Emt	Tracy E McLain	Roger Rua
Raquel Ardin	Lawrence R Favreau	Fred J Meda	Marc S Saucier
Linwood A Baker	Paul W Feist	William J Michaud	Michael W Savicki
Robert W Blanchard	Leonard J Fowler	Mico J Morin	David P Schramm
Michael J Bottary	Andrew N Gibbons	Scott A Murphy	Kenneth R Sherman
Richard W Bourque	Lester R Hayward	John D Nikolais	Barry Sumner
Herbert K Brewer	Donald A Hodgdon	Robert W O'Donnell	William E Townsend
Donna L Burk Grenon	Steven R Hughes	William S Ogden	Conrad L Vandal
Eileen P Butler-Pacheco	Thomas P Hyde	Henry H Owens	Merrill A Vaughan
Robert W Cannon	Mark A Jenkins	Matthew W Palis	Daniel R Veronesi
David J Chapdelaine	Joshua L Keller	John Pappalardo	Raymond A Wells
Donald J Collins	Dennis S Knutson	Rene Pepin	GShayn White
Michael J Collins	Paul B Lavin	Richard A Powers	Ronald E White
Edward J Deiss	Corey B Lee	Barton B Price	James E Wiggins
FrancisDigiacomio	David J Lewis	Harold A Radochia	Michael Witkowski
Michael H Doran	Corey C Lorden	Lenore M Randolph	Ronald C Yablonski
Brian A Doyle	Mark F Lovell	John K Ringland	
Elizabeth J Eberhardt	Thomas W Luckey	Victor L Rivera-Ayala	



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Office Hours
Mon-Fri, 8:30am - 4:30pm



YOUR INVITED: CHAPTER BOARD MEETINGS - ONLINE or IN-PERSON

Chapter members interested in attending our monthly Board of Director's meeting, either online or in-person, may do so by sending an email request with your full name and address to meetings@newenglandpva.org requesting a "BOD Meeting Invite". For Online access you will receive the meeting connection information via email a few days before the meeting. If asking to attend In-Person, you will receive the Chapter's COVID-19 office access policies and protocols.

The regular monthly Board meetings are typically held the first Wednesday of the month and start at 10:30 AM. As with all Board meetings, Chapter members are encouraged to attend, but please be reminded you'll have the opportunity to listen-in to the meeting's discussions, but reserved from speaking unless specifically called upon.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the Chapter Board meetings, please email them to meetings@newenglandpva.org.

Serving Paralyzed Veterans and the Disabled Community Since 1947.