

Salute Your Health

Affirming Our Commitment to America's Heroes

VA Announces Core Values and Characteristics

Who we are, what we stand for, and where we are going

We exist to provide exceptional health care to our nation's most revered heroes, Veterans. In VA efforts to pursue excellence, Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki released a new set of core values and characteristics in June.

We want to share these values and characteristics with patients and stakeholders so you understand what we are striving for.



Core Values – I CARE

Integrity – Act with high moral principle. Adhere to the highest professional standards. Maintain the trust and confidence of all with whom I engage.

Commitment – Work diligently to serve Veterans and other beneficiaries. Be driven by an earnest belief in VA's mission. Fulfill my individual responsibilities and organizational responsibilities.

Advocacy – Be truly Veteran-centric by identifying, fully considering, and appropriately advancing the interests of Veterans and other beneficiaries.

Respect – Treat all those I serve and with whom I work with dignity and respect. Show respect to earn it.

Excellence – Strive for the highest quality and continuous improvement. Be thoughtful and decisive in leadership, accountable for my actions, willing to admit mistakes, and rigorous in correcting them.

Core Characteristics

Trustworthy – VA earns the trust of those it serves – every day – through the actions of all employees. They provide care, benefits, and services with compassion, dependability, effectiveness, and transparency.

Accessible – VA engages and welcomes Veterans and other beneficiaries, facilitating their use of the entire array of its services. Each interaction will be positive and productive.

Quality – VA provides the highest standard of care and services to Veterans and beneficiaries while managing the cost of its program and being efficient stewards of all resources entrusted to it by the American people. VA is a model of unrivalled excellence due to employees who are empowered, trusted by their leaders, and respected for their competence and dedication.

Innovative – VA prizes curiosity and initiative, encourages creative contributions from all employees, seeks continuous improvement, and adapts to remain at the forefront in knowledge, proficiency, and

continued on page 2

continued from page 1

capability to deliver the highest standard of care and services to all the people it serves.

Agile – VA anticipates and adapts quickly to current challenges and new requirements by continuously assessing the environment in which it operates and devises solutions to better serve Veterans, other beneficiaries, and service members.

Integrated – VA links care and services across the Department; other federal, state, and local agencies; partners; and Veterans Services Organizations to provide useful and understandable programs to Veterans and other beneficiaries. VA's relationship with the Department of Defense is unique, and VA will nurture it for the benefit of Veterans and service members.

Erie VA in Action

“I CARE” is more than just words. It is a personal commitment to act.

Erie VA Customer Service

Committee – Erie VA Customer Service Committee – responsible for addressing concerns, suggestions, and comments from patients, problem solving, and enacting change to enhance our services.

Erie VA Systems Redesign

Lean Teams – Responsible for increasing value-added services by eliminating waste and inefficiency.

Handle with Care Campaign – Erie VA employees strive to treat every patient who walks through this door as a loved one to ensure we handle each patient with the care and quality they deserve.

What is your role in this? Tell us what you want! Submit your suggestions on how we can improve services online by visiting www.erie.va.gov/suggestions.

Pursuing Wellness with Diabetes



Did you know 77 percent of Veterans are overweight and one in four Veterans has diabetes? Being well is an active effort. While the exact cause of diabetes is unknown, contributing factors, such as being overweight and lack of exercise, play a serious role in developing type 2 diabetes. Erie VA Medical Center Patient Aligned Care (PACT) teams are here to help patients take control of diabetes.

Classes, Specialized Team

Erie VA offers group diabetes education classes to Veterans who are newly diagnosed with diabetes or pre-diabetes and Veterans who have lived with diabetes for a long time and want to take charge. These education classes

are led by the Erie VAMC diabetes team supported by a pharmacist, a certified diabetes educator, a registered dietitian, and a registered nurse.

Tips for Staying Healthy

The class is four- and one-half hours and covers diabetes wellness, including eating a balanced diet, diabetes medication review, and basic information about diabetes and how it impacts patients. Diabetes Group Education classes are offered on the first Tuesday of the month from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and the third Thursday of the month from 12 noon to 4:30 p.m.

Talk with your PACT team for information about this program.

PTSD Patient Education Program

The Behavioral Health Clinic treats more than 1,100 Veterans for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). To meet the needs of this increasing patient population, a team of behavioral health clinicians worked together to develop an education program.

This new program is a series of 10 education classes that cover a variety of PTSD-related topics led by a psychologist who specializes in PTSD.

The program offers Veterans a better understanding of PTSD symptoms, which ultimately enhances treatment, while offering valuable peer-to-peer support.

Veterans are often intimidated by the thought of group therapy; however, the following should be considered:

- Veterans are not asked to share personal information, including trauma history. They may choose to do so, but it is not expected of them.
- The focus of the group is on building skills necessary to deal with PTSD and learning more about the diagnosis.
- Veterans train together and serve together. The group gives Veterans the opportunity to connect with each other so that they can heal together just as they served together.
- Veterans understand each other in a special way.
- By joining a group, they can have a positive impact on a fellow Veteran.

“One of the hardest things to do is to get an old Vet like me to step foot in the VA system and ask for help,” says Stephen Carroll, a Vietnam Veteran. “Not only did I walk through that door but I came back for more. Next time, I’m bringing a friend with me.”

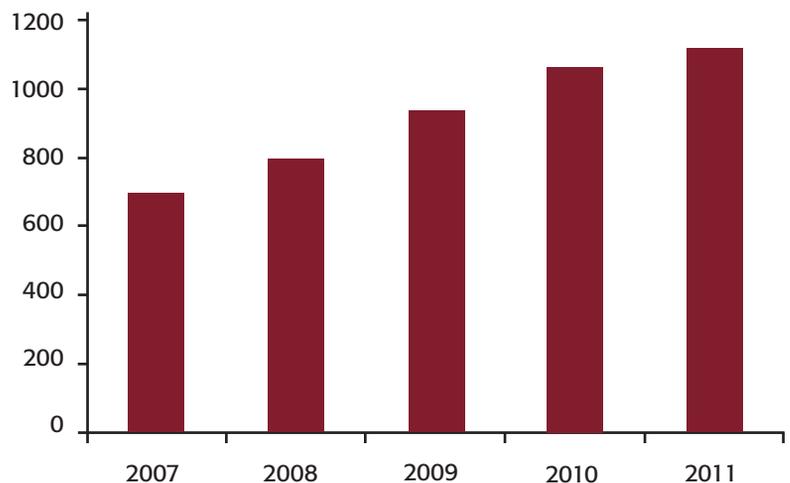
This program is a real example of care in action as we continuously look at enhancing quality and satisfaction.

Talk with your provider for more information about this program or call **814-860-2038**.



Front row, left to right: Ann Muczynski, LCSW, Lisa Schwartz, LCSW, Virginia Brocki, RN, Janet Montgomery, LSW. Back row, left to right: Jeff Rose, LCSW, Tony Mancini, Ph.D., Russ Jenkins, Ph.D., and Ed Dabkowski, Ph.D.

Increase in Veterans Treated in Behavioral Health for PTSD



“Looking into the window of a person after 42 years is a difficult thing to do. But the counselors make all the difference. During this education program, the counselors get us involved, keep us on track, and help us understand the affects PTSD has on us.” – Stephen Carroll, a purple heart recipient who served as a machine gunner for 20 months in Vietnam.

Surgical Advances in Treating Carpal Tunnel

Erie VA Medical Center offers a new, alternative endoscopic method of the carpal tunnel release surgery that helps patients recover faster. Erie VA is one of the first facilities in the area offering the endoscopic method of carpal tunnel release surgery.

During the endoscopic release surgery the surgeon makes a quarter to a half an inch incision at the bend of the wrist, whereas the traditional method involves a two-inch incision made from the palm to the wrist.

This new method allows for a faster recovery time, averaging about six weeks for recovery, because less tissue is disturbed during the surgery.



The dedicated surgery team that started this alternative method of carpal tunnel release surgery. From left to right: Norm Rosenthal, RN, OR Supervisor; Harvey Insler, MD, orthopedic surgeon; Susan Sass, RN; Michael Fitzgerald, orthopedic physician assistant; and Maureen Myers, RN.

This method also lowers risk of infection, inflammation, and strain on the stitches from movement. The entire procedure, including anesthesia, takes about 20-30 minutes.

Erie VA operates on more than 50 cases of carpal tunnel

per year. This alternative method of surgery, which was recently launched in July, is part of Erie VA's commitment to providing Veterans with exceptional health care by using new technologies to improve services.

Behavioral Health Council

Veterans and family members of Veterans receiving behavioral health services have been brought together to start the Erie VA's first Behavioral Health Council. Their goal, as stated in their mission statement, is to work to ensure that "all Veterans receive the highest quality of services available to them." The Council provides valuable input from the perspective of those receiving services to the staff of Behavioral Health Clinic.

Reaching Out at Events

The group sees part of its mission to educate their fellow Veterans

about mental health issues and available resources at the Erie VA. In order to do this, the members have already participated in a number of outreach events, including Erie's Roar on the Shore Bike Rally. During the event, the Council members were able to talk with dozens of Veterans who may benefit from behavioral health services at the VA, but were reluctant to engage in them.

Learning at National Conference

The Council's president, Dean Taylor, was one of 42 Veterans selected from across the country

to participate in the Veteran's Mental Health Council Conference, held in New Orleans on June 20 and 21. Taylor was able to make connections with members from councils across the country and bring ideas on how the Council may better implement its mission.

The Behavioral Health Council meets the third Wednesday of the month in Building 5, Behavioral Health clinic from noon to 1 p.m. The Council is actively seeking new members. To obtain more information please call Dean at **814-860-2707**.



New Caregiver Support Program

In May, Erie VA started a new Caregiver Support Program geared towards providing support to family caregivers taking care of the Veteran they love. Since this program began in May, more than 1,700 applications have been processed nationally. More than 80 caregivers are now receiving benefits through the VA.

“This is the best program the government has come up with in a long time. It really helps. The process was the easiest process I’ve been through. I have insurance, money, and I have someone I can talk to now.”

– Elenna Vanmeter, Veteran caregiver



Tricia Stritzinger, LCSW, Caregiver Support Program Coordinator

Expanded Offerings

- Caregiver support groups
- Caregiver Support Line
- Respite care
- Education
- Adult day care
- Home-based primary care
- Homemaker and Home Health Aide Program
- Home Telehealth
- Hospice care
- Palliative care

Stipend, Medical Coverage

A family caregiver of a Veteran who is injured post-9/11 may be eligible for additional services through the VA including a stipend, comprehensive training, and medical coverage through VA if you are not already covered by a plan.

For more information about the Caregiver Support Programs call Tricia Stritzinger, Caregiver Support coordinator, at **814-860-2657**. Or Call the Caregiver Support Line at **855-260-3274** Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. and Saturday, 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Find information online at **www.caregiver.va.gov**.

November is Caregiver Awareness Month! Stay tuned to www.erie.va.gov for Caregivers awareness activities coming in November.

COMMUNITY CLINIC CORNER



Important Community Based Outpatient Clinic Hours

The Ashtabula, Crawford, Venango, and Warren clinics, including labs, will open at 9 a.m. on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. This does not apply to the McKean clinic, which will continue with regular hours. All five clinics will have no scheduled primary care provider or nurse clinic appointments offered after 12 noon every Wednesday.

My HealthVet

What if you could refill VA prescriptions with the simple click of a button? What if you could check your VA appointments on your smartphone while waiting in line for a movie? What if you could send a message to your health care team on a Saturday morning instead of waiting to call on Monday? As a My HealthVet user, you can!

Join more than 2,500 local Veterans and register for My HealthVet so you can manage your health care anywhere, anytime.

Why sign up for My HealthVet?

- Send secure messages to your health care team.*
- Refill VA prescriptions online.
- View appointments.*
- View wellness reminders.*
- Access online medical libraries.
- Keep track of your health history.

*Must be In-Person Authenticated to use.

How to register and upgrade your account:

1. Go to www.myhealth.va.gov.
2. Click the Register Today button on the right side of the screen.
3. Complete the registration page and create your MHV User ID and Password.

Tips: If you are a VA patient, you must check

VA Patient and Veteran in the Relationship to the VA section. Enter all information as it appears in your VA record.



Once you are registered, you must be In-Person Authenticated to use all the features. This authentication step ensures VA security and privacy so you, the patient, are the only one able to access your account. To be authenticated, bring a photo ID and the signed Authentication form found on the website (also available at your clinic), to the Erie VA Medical Center's Release of Information Office or to your local VA Clinic.

For questions, call Erie VA's My HealthVet coordinator at **814-860-2097**.



My HealthVet at a Glance

2,611 Monthly Prescription Refills

2,559 Enrolled in My HealthVet

1,544 Authenticated Users

263 Users Opted-In to Secure Messaging

141 Active Secure Messaging Users

35% Increase in Number of SecureMessages per Month

30 VA Secure Messaging Teams

Health Promotion Disease Prevention

www.prevention.va.gov

Fall 2011

View upcoming events and classes online at www.erie.va.gov.

9 HEALTHY LIVING MESSAGES

Cancer Survivors Support Group

Join the Man to Man support group. Life after cancer ... share, support, learn.

WHEN: October 20 from 1 to 2 p.m.

WHERE: Conference room 1 on the second floor of the Erie VA Medical Center

Be Involved In Your Health Care

Be Physically Active

Eat Wisely

Strive for a Healthy Weight

Manage Stress

Be Safe

Tobacco Cessation Support Group

Quit the habit. Live longer. Join the support group to help you commit to quit.

WHEN: Every Friday at 9 a.m.

WHERE: Behavioral Health Clinic

CONTACT: Stephanie Dorich, LWS, at 814-860-2038, or ask your primary care provider for a referral to a tobacco-cessation group program.

Be Tobacco Free

Limit Alcohol

Get Recommended Screening Tests and Immunizations

Get your free flu shot!

Stop by your regular Erie VA primary care clinic any Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. or your Community Based Outpatient Clinic between 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. for your free flu shot.

For up-to-date information about Erie VA seasonal flu announcements, call the Flu Phone at 814-860-2730.

Weight Management MOVE! Education Series

Studies of those who have lost weight found that having support increases your chance for success. Enroll in a four-week educational series taught by a registered dietitian, a physical therapist, and a behavioral health clinician to get started!

CONTACT: 814-860-2554 for more information or to schedule an appointment for one of several weight-management programs:



2012 Veterans Calendar

Veterans calendars for 2012 will be given out to patients starting in November. The theme is "The VA & You: A Partnership of Care." Be sure to pick up your 2012 calendar. It will help you keep track of your appointments and your health.





Erie Veterans Affairs Medical Center
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INSIDE:

- **Staying Well with Diabetes**
- **Carpal Tunnel Surgery**
- **Sign Up for My HealthVet**

Attention Postmaster: Time Dated Material Enclosed

Salute Your Health is published quarterly as a patient education service by the Erie VA Medical Center. The publication is intended to provide information to help you stay well, manage your health care, and learn more about the many services available through the VA. This publication is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, which should be obtained from your provider. All articles may be reproduced for educational purposes. Our mission is to maintain and improve the health and well-being of Veterans by providing state-of-the-art comprehensive health care in a professional and pleasant environment. All models used for illustrative purposes only. (FA11 6210M)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT US AT:
Erie VA Medical Center
135 East 38th St., Erie, PA 16504
814-868-8661 or 800-274-8387
Check out our Web site for
hours, telephone numbers, and
maps at www.erie.va.gov.

Veterans Day Parade & Ceremony

Mark your calendars for the Annual Veterans Day Parade and Ceremony coming up on Saturday, November 12, 2011. The parade will begin at 26th and State streets at 9:30 a.m. with the ceremony beginning at 11 a.m. in the Drill Hall of the Armed Forces Reserve Center. The ceremony will include a keynote speaker, patriotic music, volleys, a wreath presentation, taps, and much more! The ceremony is open to the public, and everyone is encouraged to attend, so spread the word.

Support local Veterans by walking in the parade! Call Ken Sawdey at **814-866-9565** to participate.

