



2017

**ANNUAL
REPORT**



ERIE VA MEDICAL CENTER

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Erie VA Medical Center

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FACILITY PULSE

Erie VA Medical Center (VAMC) proudly serves more than 21,600 Veterans throughout the tri-state area in northwestern Pennsylvania, northeastern Ohio, and western New York with a Total Operating Budget of \$140M. In addition to the main medical center located in Erie, Erie VAMC operates five community based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) aimed at making health care more accessible to Veterans in their own communities.



768 Total Employees
 202 Veteran Employees
 148 Nurses
 51 Physicians



21,666 Unique Patients
 20,499 Male Patients
 1,167 Female Patients



Facility Utilization
 66 Operating Beds
 261,243 Outpatient Visits
 509 Admissions
 2,147 Surgical Procedures



\$140M Operating Budget
 \$70M Salary & Benefits
 \$9.8M Consolidated Mail Out Pharmacy
 \$8.1M Services
 \$8M Supplies
 6.4M Drugs and Medicine
 \$4.8M Miscellaneous
 \$2.7M Equipment
 \$1M Utilities
 \$30M Construction



Voluntary Service
 473 Volunteers
 73,353 Volunteer Hours
 22 Youth Volunteers

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.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Thank you for another year of tremendous partnership and support of the Erie VA Medical Center (VAMC) and the Veterans we serve! I'm proud to present our 2017 Annual Report – a glimpse of all we've accomplished together for Veterans.

Since coming on board as Director, I have focused on two critical objectives: 1) to be the **provider of choice for Veterans**, and, 2) to be a **best place to work for employees**. With the help of exceptional staff and support from volunteers, Veterans, and community partners like you, we're making strides toward meeting these goals which you will see highlighted throughout this report.

In 2017, we continued to build upon excellence and launch new, innovative strategies to provide high-quality, timely, and convenient health care. From launching a new Whole Health Program which will offer alternative therapies to Veterans dealing with pain management (see page 6), to utilizing virtual care

options to provide convenient, same day primary care services (see page 7), to executing a \$30M expansion & renovation plan to improve the Erie VAMC campus (see page 12-13) – we're investing in the future of Veteran-centered health care.

Erie VA Medical Center has a proud tradition of providing exceptional health care, and with your continued partnership, we are able to keep moving forward and leading the way as a top performer in the VA.

Thank you for standing with us in honoring service and empowering health. Most importantly, thank you to all our Veterans for your selfless and courageous service to your country. We are honored to be your VA!

John Gennaro,

John Gennaro

Director
Erie VA Medical Center

ERIE VAMC AMONG VA TOP PERFORMERS IN ACCESS, QUALITY & PATIENT SATISFACTION



MAINTAINING BEST PRACTICES, BUILDING FOR FUTURE SUCCESS

As a VA top performer, Erie VAMC continues to develop and implement strategies to improve access, quality, and patient satisfaction by tailoring health care services to meet the needs of Veterans. Improvement efforts focus on five key areas: 1) Greater Choice for Veterans, 2) Improving Timeliness, 3) Preventing Suicide, 4) Focusing Resources More Efficiently, and 5) Modernizing Our Systems. As you will see throughout this annual report, these key areas help drive our vision, our services, and our path forward.

Veteran Satisfaction - Access to Care

92% Erie VAMC	90% McKean CBOC
92% Ashtabula CBOC	100% Venango CBOC
90% Crawford CBOC	93% Warren CBOC

Source: www.accesstocare.va.gov (as of Jan. 2018)

Local Hospital Ratings

80% Erie VAMC	70% Saint Vincent
60% Bradford	80% Titusville Hospital
75% Corry	68% UPMC Hamot
76% Meadville	60% Warren General
72% Millcreek	

Source: www.accesstocare.va.gov (as of Jan. 2018)

Visit www.accesstocare.va.gov to view access, quality, and patient satisfaction data for your VA clinic.

TOP 25 ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

In recognition for groundbreaking achievement and innovation in health care sustainability, Erie VAMC received the Top 25 Environmental Excellence Award from Practice Greenhealth. Award winners, including Erie VAMC, are recognized as leading the industry with innovation in sustainability, demonstrating superior programs and illustrating how sustainability is entrenched in their culture.

As Practice Greenhealth's highest honor, this award recognizes the best of the best in health care environmental stewardship. In addition to receiving the Top 25 Environmental Excellence Award, Erie VAMC received:

- Greening the Operating Room Recognition Award
- Circles of Excellence Award for Water
- Circles of Excellence Award in Leadership

Erie VAMC prioritizes green practices in our day-to-day operations and our planning for the future. It's an honor to be recognized for commitment to the health and safety of our patients, staff, environment and community.

2017 EXCELLENCE IN GOVERNMENT AWARDS

In 2017, more than 40 Erie VAMC employees were recognized at the prestigious 2017 Excellence in Government Awards sponsored by the Pittsburgh Federal Executive Board. While this was the first time Erie VAMC participated in this awards program, Erie VAMC brought home the most medals of any other federal agency present, a total of nine winning awards, demonstrating the exemplary commitment and dedication displayed by Erie VAMC staff in service to our nation's Veterans.



Secretary's Award

Michael Wehrer, Erie VAMC's Homeless Care Team Supervisor won the Secretary's for Outstanding Achievement in Service for Homeless Veterans Award in 2017.

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN HOMELESS SERVICE

In 2017, Michael Wehrer, Erie VAMC's Homeless Care Team Supervisor, won the Secretary's Outstanding Achievement in Service for Homeless Veterans Award for his work developing a tool to enhance the national Homeless Veteran Clinical Reminder. Results led to improved response time in helping Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to ensure no Veteran falls through the cracks. This is now recognized as a national best practice in homeless operations throughout VA.

This award is a national honor that recognizes exemplary employees working to address Veteran homelessness.

RISING STAR IN HEALTHCARE

Erie VA Medical Center Director John Gennaro was named a Rising Star in Healthcare in Becker's Hospital Review's list of top healthcare leaders under the age of 40. This designation recognizes health care leaders that have gone above and beyond to achieve greatness in the healthcare field at a young age. During Gennaro's 16-year career in the VA, this is the fourth time he has been recognized by Becker's Hospital Review as an emerging leader in healthcare.

GREATER CHOICE

We're committed to giving Veterans more options for their health care and to expanding same day services for convenient access to care.



Whole Health Coaches

William Lachner (right) works with a Veteran to develop healthy living goals as part of his integrated holistic health plan.

WHOLE HEALTH FLAGSHIP SITE

Erie VA Medical Center is one of 18 flagship facilities across the Nation leading the way on implementation of a Whole Health Program to provide better complementary care for Veterans. This Whole Health approach to health care focuses specifically on reducing chronic pain without medication through alternative therapies.

The Whole Health program will be integrated with opioid safety, mental health, and suicide prevention initiatives. Initially, our Whole Health will focus on acupuncture, chiropractic care, yoga, Tai-chi, and mindfulness.

In 2017, Erie VAMC started building the foundation for this program with the recruitment of seven Whole Health program staff, including a clinical director, a program manager, three health coaches, a data manager and a secretary.

The goal of Whole Health is to empower and equip Veterans to take charge of their health, healing, and well-being, and ultimately, to improve the quality of life for Veterans. It is time to radically re-envision and redesign what a health system is, and the VA is positioned to lead the way - for Veterans and our country.

COMMITMENT TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO PRIMARY CARE

Erie VAMC committed to increasing the number of Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACTs) in Erie from nine teams to 12 teams to further our commitment to provide timely care.

To that end, in all four VA staffed CBOCs, we hired an additional Primary Care Provider. Thus increasing the PACTs in our CBOCs.

The increase of PACTs will allow better access, and ultimately, same day services, for Veterans. This increase will also provide ample access as we continue to enroll new patients and increase our patient population.

VA VIDEO CONNECT



Erie VAMC launched a new virtual care program called VA Video Connect aimed at improving access to care by providing a more convenient way of "visiting" a VA health provider.

With VA Video Connect, patients can use a phone camera, computer, or tablet to connect to a provider through the virtual medical room. The virtual medical room, through VA Video Connect, is encrypted to ensure the visit is secure and private. This feature gives patients the freedom to be in any location or setting while meeting with their provider. Patients are encouraged to speak to their health care provider to see if VA Video Connect is appropriate for their care.

VIRTUAL PRIMARY CARE IMPROVES PATIENT ACCESS

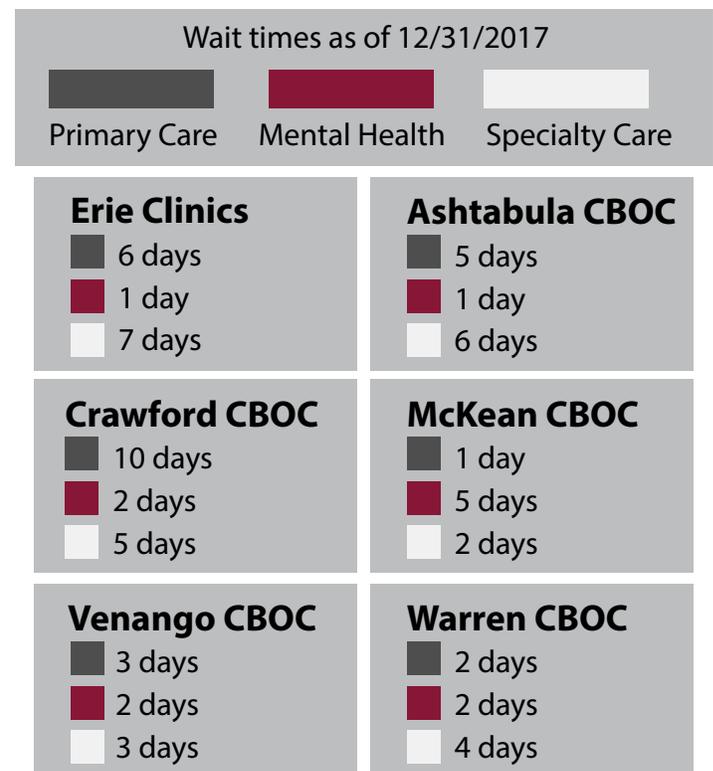
Erie VAMC partnered with the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center providers to launch a virtual primary care clinic in Erie VAMC's Ashtabula Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) by using innovative telehealth technology to provide same day access to Veterans.

Ashtabula CBOC patients were given the option to be seen same day virtually by Dr. George Tzanis, Chief of Primary Care Services out of the Philadelphia VAMC. With a nurse in the room, patients connected virtually for the primary care visit with Dr. Tzanis and the nurses could fulfill provider orders right on-site.

This pilot program, which was initially developed to provide temporary primary care coverage during a provider absence, has proven to be an effective and convenient service for Veterans. This virtual innovation has become a best practice for primary care coverage to ensure Veterans receive easy access to care within the VA system.

AVERAGE WAIT TIMES

Source: www.va.gov/health/access-audit.asp



VA MOBILE APPS

VA Video Connect, along with a number of other VA health management apps, can be downloaded at mobile.va.gov/appstore.

FOCUSING RESOURCES

We're committed to focusing our resources more efficiently by building a network of community support.



Erie Otters Team Visit

The Erie Otters autographed t-shirts for residents in the Community Living Center in 2017.

THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS

Erie VAMC continued to strengthen partnerships with local organizations to enhance the quality of life for Veterans and it's been quite a year!

With the help of The DAV Department of Pennsylvania, we received two new vans to transport patients to and from VA health care appointments. Local minor league sports teams – including the Otters, Bayhawks, and SeaWolves – also donated hundreds of free tickets to local Veterans and their families to recognize their service and show community support. Tops Market hosted a Christmas Party for Veterans and their families donating more than \$30,000 in gifts, food baskets, and holiday fun.

This past year, Erie VAMC Dietitians partnered with the local Second Harvest Food Bank to bring FREE produce and grocery items to more than 80 low income Veteran and military families every quarter. Erie VAMC also partnered with the local Elks Lodge Post #67 to provide more than 300 Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinner Food Baskets to Veterans who couldn't afford a warm holiday meal.

This is just a glimpse of the incredible community of support we have that bands together for one shared mission: to better the lives of Veterans and their families.

COMMUNITY VETERAN ENGAGEMENT BOARDS

In FY2017, Erie VA Medical Center strategically partnered with community agencies to establish two Community Veteran Engagement Boards (CVEBs); one in Erie County and one in McKean County. The goal of these CVEBs is to provide a warm handoff to connect Veterans, service members and military families to the right resources so that no matter what door a Veteran or servicemember knocks on, we can provide support.

Erie VAMC has played an active role in planning and coordinating public forums and Veteran resource fairs to open the line of communication between Veterans, VA and community stakeholders.

Both CVEBs have witnessed a number of success stories – Veterans finding employment when jobless, shelter when homeless, benefits when struggling financially, and more – from this type of community-wide collaboration.

The power of establishing a true Veteran-centered community.

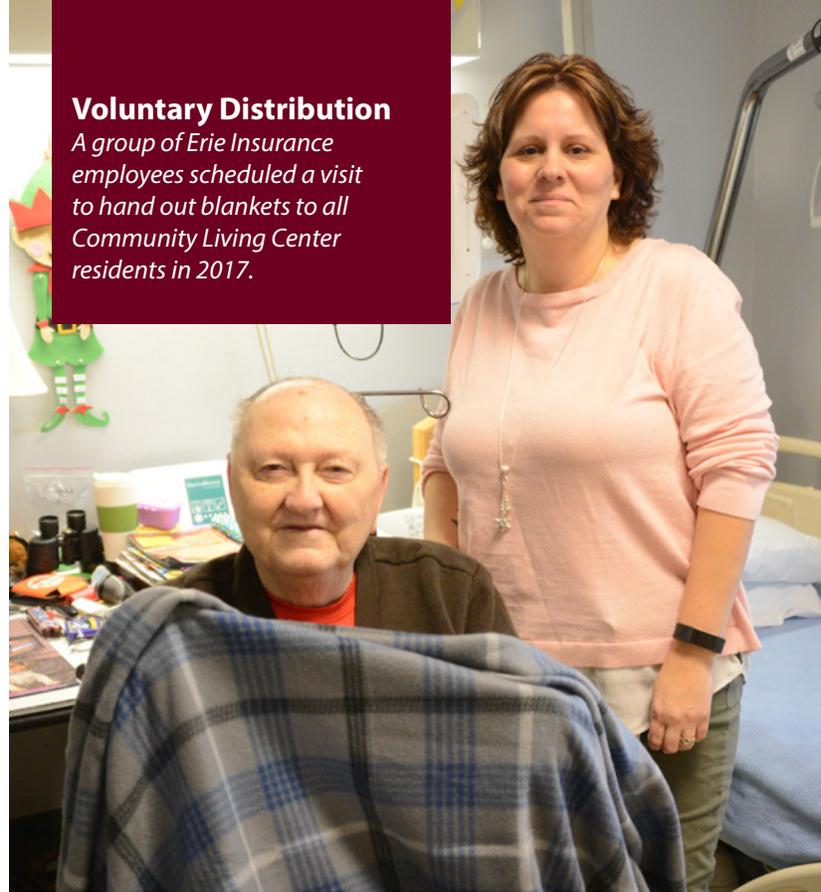
“Many Veterans in need don’t know where to turn when they are struggling, but by having this CVEB in place, and establishing a ‘no wrong door’ model of support, I witnessed a Veteran go from being homeless and sleeping on a family member’s couch to finding a home of his own in just TWO DAYS. How? I reached out to our CVEB and our team immediately stepped up to help – everything from covering a security deposit to supplying furniture and household items and even delivering everything to the Veteran’s doorstep. That is the power of establishing a true Veteran-centered community.”

George Tanner

Veteran and Co-Chair of the Erie CVEB

Voluntary Distribution

A group of Erie Insurance employees scheduled a visit to hand out blankets to all Community Living Center residents in 2017.



COMMUNITY PULSE



78 Outreaches



110+ Media Engagements



8,163 Website Subscribers



3,495 Social Media Followers

Erie VAMC continues to build an integrated network of support in-person, online, and throughout the community.

Join our Virtual Community at:

www.erie.va.gov  [VAMCErie](#)  [ErieVAMC](#) 

Veterans Crisis Line



The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline.

RECEIVE CONFIDENTIAL SUPPORT.

#BeThere

Call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1

Text 839863

Chat Online at veteranscrisisline.net

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Our clinical priority is to eliminate suicide and provide education on how to #BeThere for Veterans in crisis.



Homeless Care Team Stocks Supplies for Homeless Veterans

The Homeless Care Team moved a delivery of 50 donated mattresses into their storage center to give to Veterans in need in 2017.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE

Erie VAMC Behavioral Health Clinic Ranked One of the Best in Nation by SAIL.

Erie VAMC's Behavioral Health Clinic (BHC) is ranked as one of the best in the Nation in terms of quality, safety, and patient satisfaction according to Strategic Analytics for improvement and Learning (SAIL) metrics. Erie VAMC's BHC takes an integrated and strategic approach to risk factors related to suicide by developing effective programs and services to mitigate those risk factors.

Erie VAMC added a Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC) position which gives Erie VAMC three full-time SPCs. The goal of this additional position is to actively engage in community outreach to further the reach of suicide prevention information. BHC started a weekly Job Club to help unemployed

Veterans find and maintain meaningful employment as unemployment can be linked to risk of suicide.

On a national level, Erie VAMC's BHC shared several best practices that have resulted in positive Veteran outcomes, specifically the homeless clinical reminder alert, the homeless acuity matrix, and the integration of systems redesign into the Behavioral Health culture. Erie VAMC piloted a national initiative called Recovery Engagement and Coordination for Health – Veterans Enhanced Treatment (REACH VET), to help identify Veterans who may be at risk for hospitalization, illness, and suicide. This program is now a national directive for every VAMC.

MODERNIZING OUR SYSTEM

As part of VA's modernization efforts, Erie VAMC is currently undergoing a \$30M modernization plan focused on expanding and renovating the Erie VAMC campus to enhance the Veteran experience.



Boiler Plant Construction Crew

Members of the construction team stand on the upper guard railing after the Wreath Ceremony on December 12, 2017. Erie VAMC construction has created more than 300 local jobs and serves as an investment in Veterans and our community as a whole.

CURRENT CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

Boiler Plant

Square Footage: 11,383

Expected Completion Date: Summer 2018

Project Details: This project includes a new boiler house and three new fire-tube boilers with quality controlled steam production system and an energy-efficient design. This new boiler plant is the backbone of Erie VAMC's modernization plan as it powers our entire campus allowing us to continue to expand our services for the Veterans we serve.



Construction Updates

Follow us at erie.va.gov for construction updates and announcements of future projects, including upgrading and relocating the dental clinic to the third floor, improving and updating the cafeteria, and installing a large water-storage tank for sustainability.

“Not only are we changing the physical landscape of the Erie VAMC campus, but we are building on a tradition of excellence by investing in the future of Veteran-centered health care.” – John A. Gennaro.



Community Living Center

Square Footage: 24,114

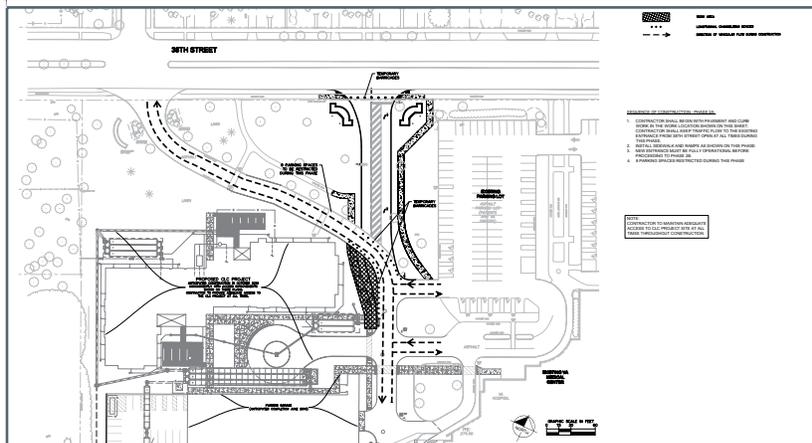
Expected Completion Date: Fall 2018

Project Details: This new state-of-the-art 22-bed, stand-alone Community Living Center facility features private rooms, private bathrooms, more community living rooms for visitors, and a kitchen to provide a more home-like feel for residents.

Traffic Flow Improvement Project

Expected Completion Date: Fall 2018

Project Details: This project creates a new drive way entrance off 38th Street and includes a new traffic light and left turn lane to increase traffic safety for all Veterans, visitors, and neighbors.



The Patriot Cafe / Veterans Canteen

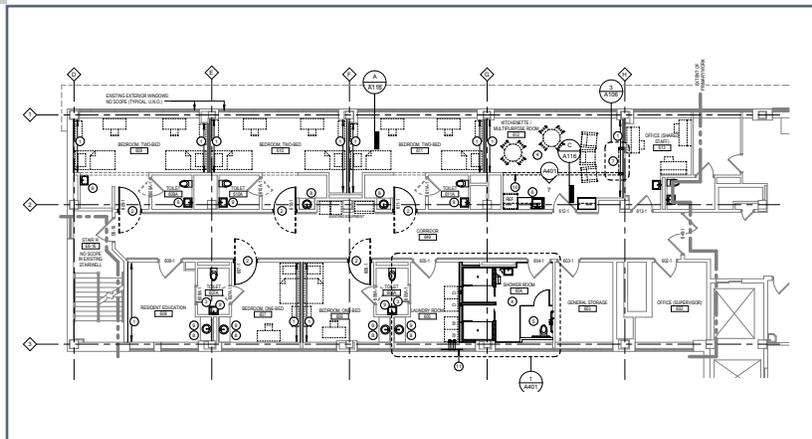
Expected Completion Date: Fall 2018

Project Details: This renovation project will transform the dated cafeteria into a modern, welcoming eatery for Veterans and visitors.

New Residential Treatment Unit

Expected Completion Date: Summer 2018

Project Details: This new eight-bed Residential Treatment Clinic will provide comprehensive evidence-based support for Veterans struggling with substance abuse and a serious mental illness.



HOW YOU CAN HELP SUPPORT LOCAL VETERANS

Spread the Word – Refer a Veteran to Erie VAMC for Health Care

We stand by our Veterans, now we're asking you to stand by us and refer a Veteran to the Erie VAMC for health care. Erie VAMC and our community based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) serve more than 21,000 Veterans, yet many Veterans still don't know that they may be eligible for care. We'd like to address some of the most common myths about enrolling for VA health care, setting the record straight.

Common myths about enrolling for VA health care

Myth 1: "I didn't serve in combat/I wasn't injured in the service, so I'm not eligible for VA health care."

False. If you served in the military – even during peacetime – in the active military, naval, or air service, and are separated under any condition other than dishonorable, you may qualify for VA health care benefits.

Myth 2: "I don't want to go to the VA because I want to save those appointments for those who really need it."

Fact: The more Veterans that use our services, the more funding and resources we receive allowing us to continue serving more and more Veterans. You do not take away from another Veteran!

Myth 3: "I make too much money so I've never applied for VA care."

Fact: It's not all about income. There are many other factors taken into consideration when applying for VA health care. Other factors include having a service-related injury or illness (such as exposure to Agent Orange), when and where you served, if you are a former Prisoner of War, if you received a Purple Heart Medal, etc.

Myth 4: "I want to go to the VA but I don't want to lose my private health insurance."

Here's some great news – assuming you are eligible for VA health care, you do not need to give up your private health insurance. You can keep your own insurance and seek health care from the VA as well – the best of both worlds.

Bottom Line, Talk to an Eligibility Representative Today:

If you have served in the military, you may be eligible for VA health care. Refer a friend today! Apply online at www.va.gov/health, in-person by stopping into the Erie VAMC Eligibility Office between the hours of 7:30a.m.-4:30 p.m. with your DD-214, or call 814-860-2970 or toll-free at 1-800-274-8387 to speak with an eligibility representative.



Voluntary Services

Denise Lorei, escort service volunteer.

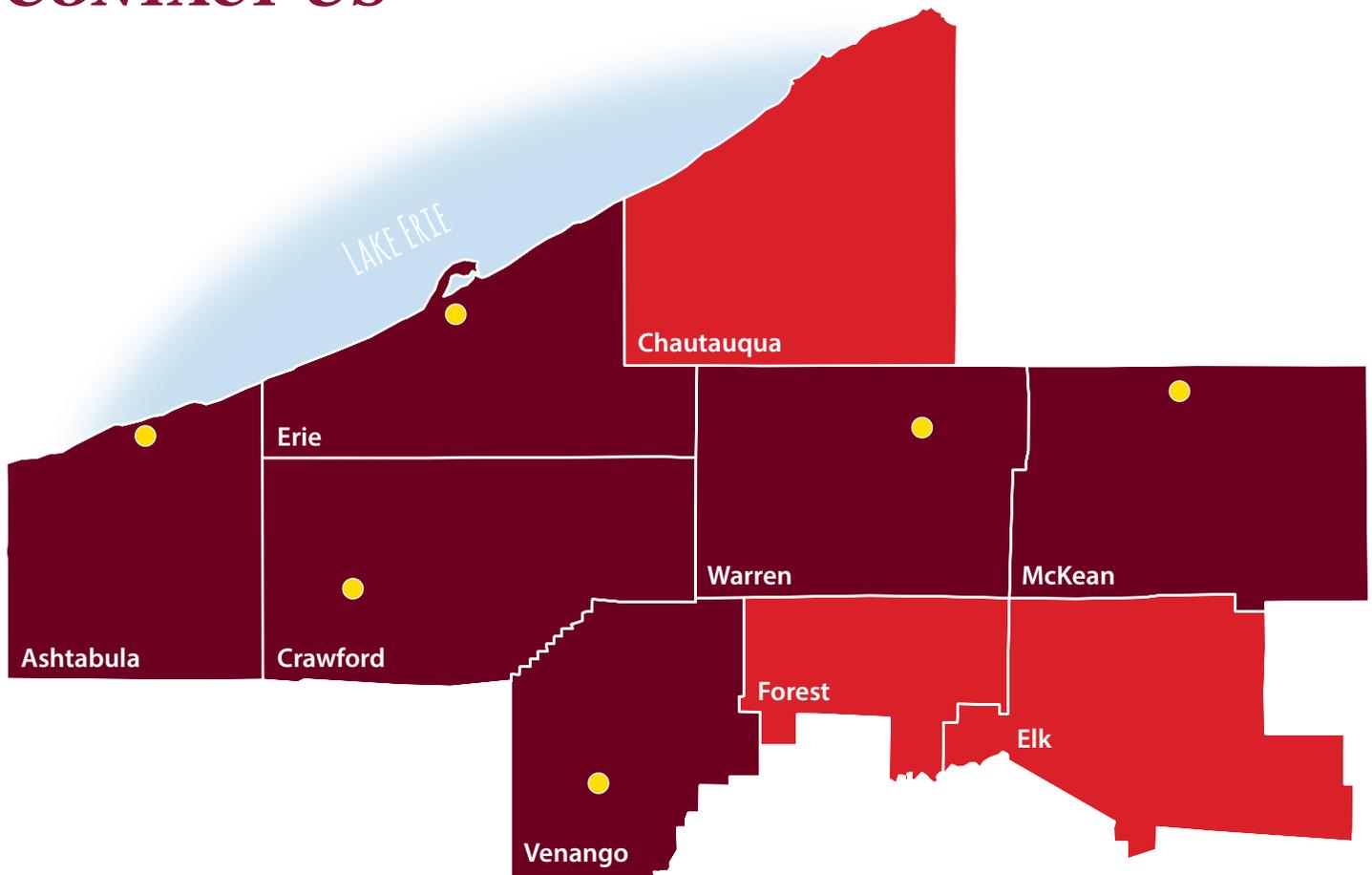
BECOME A VOLUNTEER

Help Us, Help the Community

Become an Erie VAMC
Volunteer!

Erie VAMC volunteers play an important role in providing exceptional care to the Veterans we are so honored to serve. From working the greeters desk at the main entrance, to driving Veterans to and from their health care appointments, to visiting with Veterans in our Community Living Center, there is a right volunteer fit for you! We have a number of opportunities throughout the medical center that help make our patients' stay more enjoyable. Call our Voluntary Service Office at 814-860-2454 today to learn more, or visit: www.erie.va.gov/giving.

CONTACT Us



Important Contacts

Main Line – Phone Tree

814-868-8661

1-800-274-8387 (toll free)

- Press 1 - Pharmacy
- Press 2 - Appointments & Specialty Care Providers
- Press 3 - Nurse Line
- Press 4 - Eligibility
- Press 5 - Billing
- Press 7 - Veterans Crisis Line

Eligibility

814-860-2970

Veterans Crisis Line

www.veteranscrisisline.net

1-800-273-8255 (press 1)

Text - 838255

Release of Information

814-860-2212

Behavioral Health Clinic

814-860-2038

Transition & Care Management

(OEF/OIF/OND)

814-860-2965

Medication Refills

814-868-6284

1-800-274-8387 (toll-free)

Medical Social Work

814-860-2529

Women Veterans Program

814-860-2907

Caregiver Support Program

814-860-2657

Non-VA Care Notification

Notify within 72 hours

814-860-2800 (M-F 8a-4:30p)

814-868-8661 (After hours, ask for Medical Administration Assistant)

VA Mobile Applications

mobile.va.gov

C.B.O.C.s

● Ashtabula VA Clinic

2044 Lambros Ln

Ashtabula, OH 44004

Phone: 866-463-0912

● Crawford VA Clinic

16954 Conneaut Lk Rd

Meadville, PA 16335

Phone: 866-962-3210

● Venango VA Clinic

464 Allegheny Blvd

Franklin, PA 16323

Phone: 866-962-3260

● Warren VA Clinic

3 Farm Colony Dr

Warren, PA 16365

Phone: 866-682-3250

● McKean VA Clinic

23 Kennedy St

Bradford, PA 16701

Phone: 814-368-3019

ERIE VA MEDICAL CENTER

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Erie, PA 16504
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www.erie.va.gov 
VAMCErie 
ErieVAMC 

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