



Paralyzed Veterans of America

North Central Chapter

A Member Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of
America

North Central Chapter

209 N. Garfield Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57104
1-605-336-0494 * 1-800-505-4782
Email: info@ncpva.org Website: www.ncpva.org
National PVA Website: www.pva.org



North Central Chapter

February/March 2021

Upcoming Events February/March 2021

Feb 7 . . . Super Bowl Sunday

Feb 11 . . . Membership Meeting,
Chapter Office, Noon Luncheon and
1:00 PM Meeting

Feb 14 . . . Valentine's Day

Feb 15 . . . Presidents' Day, Office
Closed

Feb 19 . . . BINGO Fundraiser

Feb 25 . . . SF Veterans Council
Meeting, Military Heritage Alliance
Building, 7:00 PM

Mar 1-4 . . . 2021 Advocacy/
Legislative Seminar (via Zoom)

Mar 11 . . . Membership Meeting,
Chapter Office, Noon Luncheon and
1:00 PM Meeting

Mar 14 . . . Daylight Saving Time
begins

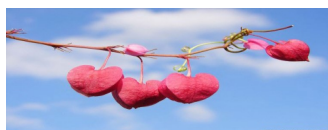
Mar 17 . . . St. Patrick's Day

Mar 20 . . . First Day of Spring

Mar 25 . . . SF Veterans Council
Meeting, Military Heritage Alliance
Building, 7:00 PM

SD Veterans Council Mtg ((TBD))

Because of the coronavirus, many
of our events may have been can-
celed. Please check ahead of time.



Happy Valentine's Day!

Sunday, February 14th

Notice of PVA North Central Chap- ter Election

Election Timeline

February 1

Nominations Open. Nominations may be made in person or by any other electronic means. Submit bio/photo and why you would be a good candidate by March 19th.

April 20

Nominations Closed.

May 1

Ballots will be mailed out with a self-addressed return envelope. Ballots must be returned in the envelope in a timely manner.

June 10

Election results will be reported at the Annual Membership Meeting.

October 1

New term of office begins

In accordance with Chapter bylaws, election of Officers will be held annually, and the Officers will serve a one (1) year term. Officers include: President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. At the Annual June Chapter Membership Meeting, the Election Committee will report the election results.

Certification of Membership - If a write-in candidate be elected, he or she shall have thirty (30) days to successfully complete the certification process, if not previously certified. If you have any questions on the election procedure, contact the Chapter Office.

SD State Veterans Cemetery

Endowment Fund

With the passing of SB 91, the South Dakota Veterans Council has established an Endowment Fund with the South Dakota Community Foundation. This fund will be used for the maintenance and operations of the veterans cemetery.

The South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery will be located at the 1-90/I-229 area in Sioux Falls, SD and will encompass up to 50 acres of land donated by the City of Sioux Falls.

All federally defined veterans, spouses, and dependent children are eligible for burial in the State Veterans Cemetery.

We are proud to be able to give our veterans their final resting place on the eastside and keep them close to their families.

If you would like to contribute to the Endowment Fund, please click on the following link. Our goal is to raise \$3,000,000.00 by 2023.

<https://sdcommunityfoundation.org/for-advisors/existing-funds/south-dakota-veterans-cemetery-fund/>



Monday, February 15th
Office Closed

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

North Central Chapter Paralyzed Veterans of America

OFFICERS

President, Casey Davidson
Vice President, Vacant
Secretary, Greg Brandner
Treasurer, Gene Murphy

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Duane Biesboer Charles Doom
Rodney Melcher Harlan Schmidt

PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Chapter Hospital Liaison: Chuck Doom
Legislation Director: Terry Paulsen/Gene Murphy
Volunteer Coordinator: Charles Doom
VAVS: Lisa Cummings/Sheri Kloes
Membership Officer: Duane Biesboer
Newsletter Editor: Barbara Priesz
Sports Director: Mike Olson/Charles Doom

NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Michael Olson

NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICER

Brad Friez
VA Dakota Regional Office
2501 West 22nd Street, Room 100
Sioux Falls, SD 57105
605-333-6801
800-795-3632

OFFICE STAFF

Lisa Cummings, Executive Director
Terry Paulsen, Government Relations Director
Barbara Priesz, Administrative Assistant

*Temporary COVID-19 Office Hours are Monday
through Friday, 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM*

Sioux Falls VA Health Care SCI Coordinator

Rachel Gangle, Social Worker
605-336-3230 ext. 7898

Fargo VA Health Care SCI Coordinator

Tracy Lamont, SCI Coordinator
701-239-3765

Black Hills VA Health Care SCI Coordinator

Michelle Hough, SCI Coordinator
605-720-7003

— Attention Members —

If you are receiving your newsletter by mail and would like to receive this via email, please contact me at the Chapter Office
(LisaC@ncpva.org/605-336-0494)
with your email address. This will help save the Chapter on postage and printing costs.



<http://www.facebook.com/ncpva>

Disclaimer: The North Central Chapter PVA newsletter is published six times a year. It serves its members and interested parties by informing them about chapter activities, veterans' issues, SCI related matters, advocacy and legislative developments and other relevant issues concerning disabilities and the disabled community. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the North Central Chapter, its Officers, Board Members or the Editor. Similarly, appearance of advertising herein does not constitute an endorsement of their products or services. The editor has the right to edit all articles.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

Membership-Duane Biesboer

The Chapter currently has a total of 179 members and 84 Associate Members.

Regular membership is FREE! If you know of anyone who has a spinal cord injury or disease please have the Veteran contact the Chapter office.

Beginning October 1st, all Associate Members will be invoiced for Annual Dues. Annual dues are \$30 per year and Life Dues are \$200.00.

Thank you to those who have sent in their dues!!

Please notify the Chapter when you have
a change of address.

Volunteer Program-Charles Doom

The Chapter had 43 hours for the month of October. Terry Paulsen and Rick Albrecht were Dec 2020/Jan 2021 Volunteers of the Month. Remember to look for your volunteer number in the newsletter and win a \$25 Gift Card! If you see your number, call the Chapter Office!



“Friends Aiming High”

by John Green

Framed and Matted - \$275

Print Only - \$75

To order your print, please contact the
Chapter Office at (605) 336-0494

SD Veterans Council



The South Dakota Veterans Council
will hold their meeting on

(to be determined)

at the SD Military Heritage Alliance Building
1600 West Russell Street, Sioux Falls,
starting at 9:00 AM

You are welcome to attend!

Benefits for Blue Water Navy Veterans

Did you know? VA provides benefits to Blue Water Navy Veterans who served as far as 12 nautical miles from the shore of the Republic of Vietnam or in the Korean Demilitarized Zone and who have [health conditions associated with herbicide exposure, such as Agent Orange](#).

DIC for Military Families

If you're the surviving spouse, child, or parent of a service member or Veteran who died from a service-related injury or illness, you may be eligible for VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC), a tax-free monthly financial benefit. [Learn about DIC eligibility criteria!](#)

Sioux Falls VA Valet Parking

The Sioux Falls VA has decided to solicit a new contract for the continuation of the Valet Parking. This could take up to six months to be awarded.

The PVA has been in contact with the Sioux Falls VA to discuss plans for assisting Veterans into the hospital

Please let Terry know (605-336-0494) of any problems or concerns when visiting the Sioux Falls VA hospital.



PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

VA Updates Welcome Kit for Veterans & Families

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced today the addition of 10 ‘quick start guides’ and caregiver resources to the [VA Welcome Kit](#) — a guide for service members, Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors to access care, benefits and services.

The updated welcome kit makes it easier to obtain information about VA resources by listing each step and document needed in the application or enrollment process.

“Our welcome kit breaks down VA’s care, benefits and services in an easy-to-follow way so Veterans and their families don’t miss out on any VA resources they may be eligible for,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “This guide is the perfect starting point for anyone interested in what the department has to offer, and I encourage everyone in the Veteran community to download and share it with their networks.”

The VA Welcome Kit is organized around major life milestones, such as separating from military service, retirement or seeking care while aging. The kit now includes a total of 14 ‘quick start guides’ that cover a variety of topics, including:

- Applying for VA health care.
- Getting started with mental health services.
- Getting started with health services for women Veterans.
- Understanding community care.
- Accessing urgent care.
- Applying for a disability rating.
- Applying for education benefits.
- Applying for burial in a VA national cemetery and for memorial products.
- Understanding the modernized decision review process.
- Getting started with services for Veterans ages 65 and older.
- Getting started with Veteran state benefits and service.
- Getting started with Vet Center services.
- Getting started with caregiver benefits.
- Applying for survivor benefits.

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More than 1 million copies of the VA Welcome Kit have been downloaded or printed across the country. VA created the kit and follow-on guides using human-centered design with feedback from hundreds of Veterans and their families.

VA Expands Access to Telehealth Services during COVID-19 Pandemic for Older, Rural and Homeless Veterans

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today its [Digital Divide Consult](#) has helped more than 12,000 Veterans obtain internet access or a video-capable device for their health care needs.

As part of the program, VA providers refer Veterans to a VA social worker, who determines eligibility for various programs to assist with getting the internet service or technology needed for VA telehealth — ensuring older Veterans, those living in rural areas and Veterans who are homeless or in temporary housing have the opportunity to participate.

According to the [Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association](#), Veterans with lower incomes, more severe disabilities and more chronic conditions are more likely to use virtual care during the pandemic; but Veterans older than 45 and Veterans who are homeless or who live in rural areas are less likely to use video care. The Digital Divide Consult provides a solution for these Veterans to access video care when needed.

“The pandemic has tested VA’s workforce like never before, and innovations like the Digital Divide Consult highlight the ingenuity and resilience that have been hallmarks of the department’s successful response to this national emergency,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “As our virtual care infrastructure continually improves, so does the quality and accessibility of Veterans’ care.”

VA’s Digital Divide Consult and other initiatives are prime reasons the use of telehealth services by Veterans continues to rise. In mid-November, a total of 196,116 telehealth video visits to Veterans in their homes or other off-site locations were completed

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over a seven-day period, representing a 1,653% increase in weekly [VA Video Connect](#) visits since the end of February. The number of video appointments held per day peaked at more than 41,000.

To further enable Veterans to participate in telehealth, VA facilities are establishing test-call services to support Veterans ahead of their first video visit. Additionally, [VA is partnering with Microsoft's Airband initiative](#) to educate Veterans on essential digital skills. VA intends to update the Digital Divide Consult as opportunities for future broadband and device discounts become available.

Men and Women with Spinal Cord Injury Needed for the Social Connections after Injury Study (SCI Study)

The SCI Study is a research study on the social and psychological health of people with spinal cord injury (SCI).

You may be eligible if you:

- Are at least 18 years of age
- Have a spinal cord injury (SCI)
- Have had your injury for at least 1 year;
- Are able to answer questions in English

Study participants answer questions (by phone, online, or paper-and-pencil questionnaire) twice, one year apart.

A small payment is offered for completing each questionnaire.

For more information, contact us by email (SCIstudy@bcm.edu) or phone (713-797- 7107).

Please leave your name and phone number, and we will contact you right away.

The study is funded by a grant to Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) from the Department of Defense. The study is being conducted by investigators from BCM, TIRR-Memorial Hermann's Spinal Cord Injury and Disability Research Center, and the University of Montana's Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities.

We are committed to including men and women, people of ethnic/racial and sexual minority groups, veterans, and people from rural communities.

Registration is open for the second **Women Veterans Empowerment Retreat April 22-25 in Tempe, Arizona!**

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This immersive and outcomes-driven experience – limited to just 40 women veterans with disabilities – will empower you to navigate the unique challenges of everyday lives. Share your experiences and learn from other women veterans and topic experts for this 3 day event.

Activities will include educational sessions, sports and physical activities and opportunities to connect and learn with those who have traveled a similar path since leaving service. Most travel costs will be covered for attendees. Grants are available for caregivers, if required.

Due to limited space, please register NOW and we will confirm attendance in February. **Register:** <https://event.me/kM010Z>

Disabled Veterans and Persons will See New License Plate Design in 2020

Disabled veterans and disabled persons will receive newly designed license plates at renewal time, beginning January 1, 2021.

At the time of renewal, there will be a \$5 per plate mailing fee per license plate set to receive the new license plate. A 45-day plate ordered permit will be issued to use until the new license plate set arrives in the mail.

Disabled veteran plate owners will be reverified with the Veterans Administration at the time of renewal. A new disabled veteran plate application will have to be submitted to the veteran's local county treasurer's office.

Applications are located at county treasurer offices and online.

Print the Disabled Person Parking Permit and License Plate Application at <https://sddor.seamlessdocs.com/f/1305>.

Print the Military License Plate Application at <https://sddor.seamlessdocs.com/f/1303>.

For more information, county treasurer contact data can be found at <https://dor.sd.gov/government/county-treasurers/contact-county-treasurers/>.

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PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, SPORTS & REC

Because of the COVID-19, many of our events that would normally be listed on this Sports & Rec page have been canceled. Always check ahead of time if you have questions.



NATIONAL VETERANS
**WHEELCHAIR
GAMES**
August 8 –13, 2021 • New York City

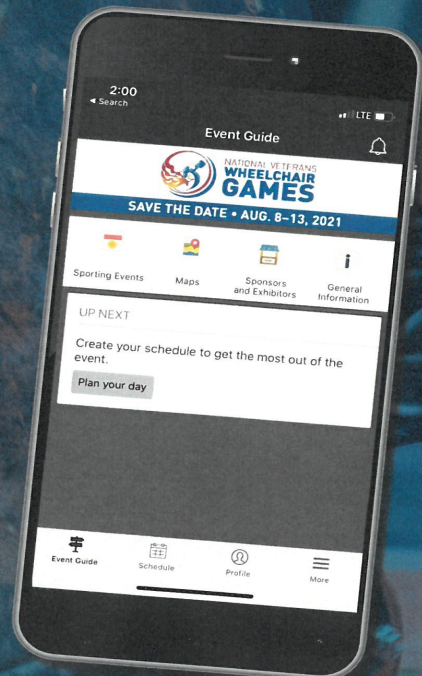
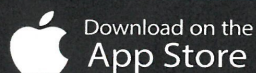
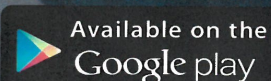
DOWNLOAD THE NVWG MOBILE APP!

THE NATIONAL VETERANS WHEELCHAIR GAMES HAS GONE MOBILE!

- Go-to Resource for Games Information
- Interactive Expo Guide & Floor Plan
- Real-time Schedule Updates
- Notifications Throughout the Week

Everything you need for the National Veterans Wheelchair Games is on our mobile app. Here's three ways you can download it to your smart device:

1. Go to <https://crowd.cc/s/3FcqE> to download now.
2. Search the **App Store** for NVWG
3. Open your **NVWG app from last year**. Tap the profile and hit "Switch Event" to view this year's content.



PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, FUNDRAISING

We're proud to be a Thrivent Choice®-enrolled organization. Through the Thrivent programs, we are eligible to receive grant dollars, fee-free donations, and support from Thrivent Action Team service projects.

To learn more about Thrivent's membership benefits and generosity programs visit thrivent.com/generosity



Support Paralyzed Veterans of America North Central Chapter by shopping at AmazonSmile.com. Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to **North Central Chapter of Paralyzed Veterans Of America Inc** whenever you shop on AmazonSmile.

<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/46-03030359947e>

Newsletter Booster Program

Thank you for your support!

Ronald and Darla Shelburg
Alan & Kathryn Gobczynski
Paul Hanson
Dennis Hahnemann

Please support your local Chapter!

Newsletter Booster Program

The North Central Chapter PVA publishes the newsletter 6 times per year. We would like to invite our PVA members, Associate Members, and business associates to help support the Newsletter Booster Program. Your name will be published in each newsletter (unless otherwise specified) for only \$10.00. Please help defray the cost of publishing by supporting **YOUR** Chapter. Thank you!

I wish to make the following donation to the Newsletter Booster Program:

Newsletter
Booster
Program

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Amount of donation \$ _____

Send all remittance payable to:

PVA North Central Chapter, 209 N. Garfield Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57104

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER, ADVOCACY/LEGISLATION-TERRY PAULSEN**2021 PVA Legislative Priorities****Preserve Access to VA's Specialized Services**

- PVA firmly believes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is the best health care provider for veterans with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D).
- VA's specialized systems of care follow higher clinical standards than those required in the private sector. Preserving and strengthening VA's specialized systems of care—such as SCI/D care, blinded rehabilitation, amputee care, and polytrauma care—remains highest priority for PVA. This includes access to high-quality prosthetics through VA's Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service.
- If VA continues to shift care to the private sector and woefully understaff its facilities, the Department's capacity to treat veterans will be diminished, and could lead to the closure of facilities and reductions in services offered to catastrophically disabled veterans.
- Congress must preserve access to VA's specialized services and provide needed funding for them.
- Congress must ensure proper staffing of VA's specialized services by ensuring the Department has the authority to provide additional pay, compensation, and retention incentives to make VA service more competitive with the private sector.

Increase Access to Long-Term Care for Veterans with SCI/D

- The lack of adequate long-term care (LTC) options presents an enormous problem for people with catastrophic disabilities who, as a result of medical advancements, are now living longer.
- There are few LTC facilities that are capable of appropriately serving SCI/D veterans. VA operates six such facilities; only one of which lies west of the Mississippi River. Many aging veterans with SCI/D need VA LTC services but VA only has the capacity to provide this kind of care for about 200 patients.
- Since VA SCI/D LTCs are exceptionally limited, veterans with SCI/D are being treated in community institutions, by providers not trained in SCI/D. This often results in compromised quality of care and poor outcomes. In some areas, it is nearly impossible to even find community placements for veterans who are ventilator dependent and those with bowel and bladder care needs.
- VA has identified the need to provide additional SCI/D LTC facilities and has included these additional centers in ongoing facility renovations, but such plans have been languishing for years. (continued in next column)

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- Congress must ensure that VA designs an SCI/D LTC strategic plan that addresses the need for increased LTC beds in VA SCI/D centers.
- Congress must provide increased funding directed at the completion of the remaining SCI/D-related construction projects.

Ensure Proper Implementation of VA's Comprehensive Caregiver Program Expansion

- The VA MISSION Act directed that VA's Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) be expanded to severely injured veterans of all eras through a phased approach beginning October 1, 2019.
- Phase I, which began on October 1, 2020, includes veterans who were severely injured in the line of duty on or before May 7, 1975, and on or after September 11, 2001.
- Phase II is expected to begin on October 1, 2022, and will include veterans from all remaining eras.
- Prolonged delays are further straining caregivers who desperately need relief now, particularly in light of the impacts of the global pandemic.
- The new rules governing the PCAFC, which were implemented on October 1, 2020, will also impact current program recipients and result in veterans being removed from the program.
- Congress must conduct oversight of VA's implementation of the expanded PCAFC to ensure that eligibility determinations are consistent and the appeals process is fair and just.
- Congress must expedite implementation of Phase II of the caregiver program to October 1, 2021.

Improve Access to Fertility Services Through VA

- Thousands of service members have suffered a genitourinary injury, resulting in the loss of, or compromised ability, to have a child.
- In September 2016, Congress granted a temporary authorization for VA to provide in-vitro fertilization (IVF) to veterans with a service-connected condition that prevents the conception of a pregnancy.
- VA began offering IVF services in January 2017, and in September 2018, they were reauthorized for another two years.

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- In drafting the rules for the program, VA anticipated recurring authorization by Congress; so, the Department stipulated IVF may continue to be provided if Congress approves its funding through the annual budget process.
- VA's current temporary authority prohibits the use of gametes that are not a veteran's and his or her spouse's. Because they require donated gametes, they are ineligible for IVF through VA.
- Congress must repeal VA's ban on IVF and make these services a regular part of the medical benefits package available to veterans.
- Congress must also pass legislation to authorize VA to provide assisted reproductive technology, including IVF, surrogacy, and gamete donation at VA for any veterans enrolled in VA health care who are living with infertility, including the authorization of service provision to non-veteran partners.

Improve Services for Women Veterans with SCI/D

- More than half a million women veterans are currently using VA health care, and women veterans with SCI/D are a small, but important subset of these users.
- Women veterans, including those living with SCI/D, need access to comprehensive gender-specific mental and physical health care with high standards of care regarding the quality, privacy, safety, and dignity of that care.
- VA has developed a robust system of care to serve the needs of veterans with SCI/D but there needs to be a stronger focus on the needs of women veterans with SCI/D.
- As Congress develops strategies and policies for VA to follow, additional emphasis is needed to ensure women veterans with SCI/D are incorporated into these plans.

Improve Access to Transportation for the Most Severely Disabled Veterans

- VA Automobile Allowance Grants

-Access to an adapted vehicle is essential to the mobility and health of catastrophically disabled veterans who need a reliable means of transportation to get them to and from work, meet family obligations, and attend medical appointments.

-The current, one-time VA Automobile Allowance Grant of roughly \$21,500 covers anywhere from one-half to one-third of the cost to procure a vehicle.

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-Because of the high cost to procure replacement vehicles (upwards of \$60,000), veterans often retain vehicles beyond their reliability point.

-Congress must pass legislation that would allow eligible veterans to receive an Automobile Allowance Grant every ten years for the purchase of an adapted vehicle.

- Automobile Adaptive Equipment

-VA's Automobile Adaptive Equipment (AAE) program helps physically disabled veterans enter, exit, and/or operate a motor vehicle or other conveyance.

-VA provides necessary equipment for veterans with service-connected disabilities such as platform wheelchair lifts, UVLs (under vehicle lifts), power door openers, lowered floors/raised roofs, raised doors, hand controls, left foot gas pedals, reduced effort and zero effort steering and braking, and digital driving systems. The program also provides reimbursements (to service-connected veterans) for standard equipment including, but not limited to, power steering, power brakes, power windows, power seats, and other special equipment necessary for the safe operation of an approved vehicle.

-Support for veterans with non-service-connected disabilities is limited to assistance with ingress/egress only.

-Congress must direct VA to reimburse the cost of items on the Department's current AAE list as well as modern driver assistance technologies to broaden opportunities for veterans with catastrophic disabilities to drive more comfortably and safely.

-Congress must pass legislation that allows veterans who have non-service-connected catastrophic disabilities to receive the same type of adaptive automobile equipment as veterans whose disabilities are service-connected.

Increase Grants for Housing Adaptations

- VA's Home Improvements and Structural Alterations (HISA) grant helps veterans and service members make medically necessary improvements and structural alterations to their primary residence.
- The grant has a lifetime limit of \$6800 for those with service-connected disabilities and \$2000 for those with non-service-connected disabilities.
- HISA grants can be used to help make entrances and exits accessible, allow access to the kitchen or bath-

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PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**From the Office of Brad Friez****National Service Officer**

The VA Regional Office in Sioux Falls is now open to the public. **The specific hours are Monday – Friday 8am to 1:30pm.** There will be security staff screening individuals who have business within the Regional Office. **You must wear a mask and have an appointment** so we can spread the foot traffic as much as possible within the building. To set an appointment with our office please call us at **(605) 333-6801**. The metal detector and the x-ray machine have been installed.

The Sioux Falls VA Regional Office is no longer processing appeals. Compensation and Pension (C&P) exams are now open and exams can be given in person throughout the country.

Bladder cancer, hypothyroidism and Parkinson's like diseases have been added to the presumptive list of conditions from exposure to Agent Orange while serving in Vietnam or off the coast of Vietnam.

Cost of living increase for VA benefits will be 1.3 percent.

The latest word we have is that the VA has three priority groups or tiers in giving out the COVID 19 vaccine. Veterans over 75 with underlying health issues are the top priority group to receive the vaccine, the next group would be those Veterans who are 65 to 74 with underlying health issues and the final group is any other Veteran not listed above. The VA is reaching out by phone to all enrolled Veterans to schedule the vaccine shot. Please ensure that the VA has your current phone number. It would also be wise to clear out your voicemail box and for those who have not yet set their mailbox up now would be a good time to do so. If you have underlying health issues but have not been to the VA in long time it would also be beneficial if you would get your private treatment records to the VA so they can reflect those health issues.

There were no updates when it comes to vaccinating VA and VSO staff within the VA Regional Office in Sioux Falls.

We strongly encourage all of our SCI Veterans who rely on a caregiver for their ADL's (activities of daily living) to look at options for a backup plan in case they or their caregiver are positive for COVID 19 or for some other reason they are not able to provide that care. Please be safe and reach out to fellow Veterans.

More Information from Brad Friez to Lisa

The VA RO is now scheduled to be reopened to the public on Monday, January 4th. Hours for the public would be what was discussed in the past which will be 8am to 1:30pm. They will be screened before having access to the building. Sounds like the security staff will be doing the screening. Brad believes we are all on the same path going forward requiring Veterans to have prior appointments lined up with our respective Service Offices. It was suggested we post signs on our offices explaining all of this and keep the doors closed.

Only the VBA within the building is opening back up to the public. Eligibility and other VHA staff within the RO building will not be seeing the general public for now. On a related note, eligibility in the hospital still located near radiology will now allow Veterans to obtain their VA ID card even without a VA appointment. This is a change from the recent protocol.

The front gate will not be taken down until immediately before the reopening of the building. There was concern that some Veterans would enter before they were supposed to.

Construction is wrapping up and there is now a power pole in the entry area that will be used for the x-ray machine after it is installed.

The front automatic door opener is due to arrive soon along with the balance of the automatic opener on the north door. There are 4-5 other doors within the building still to be installed.

Cathy mentioned that she is still pursuing a contract cleaning crew for the VA RO building and it is now in the pipeline. She didn't give any indication as to when the contract would begin.

Finally, Shawn stated that the VA's budget for this next fiscal year has been approved. There is a COLA increase of 1.3 % for VA benefits for 2021.

**CAREGIVER
SUPPORT LINE**
 **1-855-260-3274**

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**Triwest Healthcare Alliance Corp Agrees to Pay VA**

The Department of Justice announced TriWest Healthcare Alliance Corp. has agreed to pay the United States \$179,700,000 to resolve claims that it received overpayments from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in connection with its administration of certain VA health care programs.

TriWest, an Arizona corporation headquartered in Phoenix, is in the business of administering government health care programs, including those operated by the VA. TriWest is responsible for administering certain portions of the VA Patient-Centered Community Care Program (PC3) and the VA's former Veterans Choice Program (Choice). Both programs have enabled veterans to obtain medical care from providers in their communities. As an administrator of these programs, TriWest is paid by the VA to coordinate medical appointments and make payments to health care providers.

The settlement resolves allegations that TriWest retained overpayments from the VA in connection with its administration of the PC3 and Choice Programs. The alleged overpayments included payments by the VA to TriWest twice for the same services as well as payments for services for which TriWest received full or partial reimbursement from certain health care providers.

"The VA's PC3 and Choice Programs have provided significant benefits to our nation's veterans," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Jeffrey Bossert Clark of the Justice Department's Civil Division. "The department will continue to support the VA and its Office of Inspector General in ensuring that the VA's programs are administered properly and that taxpayer funds are used as intended."

"The VA provides invaluable assistance to those who have sacrificed on our behalf," said U.S. Attorney Michael Bailey for the District of Arizona. "It is vital that those who administer programs for the VA be held accountable to do so with the utmost care and integrity."

"The VA Office of Inspector General works tirelessly to promote the economy, efficiency, and integrity of the VA's programs and operations," said VA Inspector General Michael J. Missal. "This settlement is integral to ensuring that the VA's funds are spent for the benefit of our nation's veterans. I appreciate the teamwork and dedication that led to this significant recovery."

The settlement was the result of a coordinated effort by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona, the Department of Justice Civil Division's Commercial Litigation Branch, and the VA and its Office of Inspector General. The claims resolved by the settlement agreement are allegations only, and there has been no determination of liability.

VA Publishes Final Regulation to Improve Delivery of Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Services

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recently published a final rule to establish and clarify eligibility for prosthetic and rehabilitative items and services available to veterans.

This establishes for the first time, the nationwide categories of prosthetic and orthotic services, sensory aids and medical devices the VA is authorized to provide to veterans as part of their active treatment and ongoing rehabilitation.

Previously, these categories varied across VA medical centers.

"The rule establishes a uniform approach for VA to deliver prosthetic items and services to veterans," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "It ensures veterans receive the same standard of service for the rehabilitative devices they need to live independently, no matter which medical center they walk into."

Categories of prosthetic and rehabilitation items and services defined in the rule include: adaptive household items, adaptive recreation equipment, cognitive devices, communication devices, home exercise equipment, home medical equipment, home respiratory equipment, implants, mobility aids, orthotic devices, prosthetic limbs and replacement items.

The rule reflects VA's veteran-centered approach to health care, by empowering the veteran and clinician to jointly decide which prosthetic equipment will best meet the veteran's treatment or rehabilitation needs, based on clinical need and veteran input. While the items the VA currently provides to veterans will not significantly change, the rule enables the VA to identify current best practices to serve as the standard for all veterans who receive their care through the VA.

As the largest and most comprehensive provider of prosthetic devices and sensory aids in the country, the VA provides a full range of equipment and services to veterans, including artificial limbs and bracing, wheeled mobility and seating systems, implants and devices surgically placed in the veteran (e.g., hips and pacemakers), and home respiratory care. In fiscal year 2020, the VA provided approximately 21 million prosthetic devices/items to veterans, serving more than 52% of all veterans treated in VA.

For more information, visit VA's [Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Services webpage](#).

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**VA Expands Access to Telehealth Services during COVID-19 Pandemic**

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced its Digital Divide Consult has helped more than 12,000 veterans obtain internet access or a video-capable device for their health care needs.

As part of the program, VA providers refer veterans to a VA social worker, who determines eligibility for various programs to assist with getting the internet service or technology needed for VA telehealth — ensuring older veterans, those living in rural areas, and veterans who are homeless or in temporary housing have the opportunity to participate.

According to the Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association, veterans with lower incomes, more severe disabilities, and more chronic conditions are more likely to use virtual care during the pandemic; but veterans older than 45 and veterans who are homeless or who live in rural areas are less likely to use video care. The Digital Divide Consult provides a solution for these veterans to access video care when needed.

“The pandemic has tested the VA’s workforce like never before, and innovations like the Digital Divide Consult highlight the ingenuity and resilience that have been hallmarks of the Department’s successful response to this national emergency,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “As our virtual care infrastructure continually improves, so does the quality and accessibility of veterans’ care.”

VA’s Digital Divide Consult and other initiatives are prime reasons the use of telehealth services by veterans continues to rise. In mid-November, a total of 196,116 telehealth video visits to veterans in their homes or other off-site locations were completed over a seven-day period, representing a 1,653% increase in weekly VA Video Connect visits since the end of February. The number of video appointments held per day peaked at more than 41,000.

To further enable veterans to participate in telehealth, VA facilities are establishing test-call services to support veterans ahead of their first video visit. Additionally, the VA is partnering with Microsoft’s Airband initiative to educate veterans on essential digital skills. The VA intends to update the Digital Divide Consult as opportunities for future broadband and device discounts become available.

Learn more about VA telehealth at [https:// connect-edcare.va.gov/](https://connect.edcare.va.gov/). 00009

Update from Dakotas Regional Office

Veterans Benefits Administration Regional Office in Sioux Falls will be reopened its Public Contact unit effective January 4, 2021. Hours of operation are modified slightly. The RO VBA Public Contact will be opened from 8:00 am to 1:30 pm CST daily excluding federal holidays. Vocational Readiness and Employment public interactions will also be offered during these hours of operation.

This modified schedule is not permanent but will be the initial hours of operation for VBA Sioux Falls’ reopening.

Please note: Veterans Healthcare Administration Eligibility, ID Card, and Travel offices are opened; however, these services are offered in the main hospital building and are not yet being offered in the Regional Office, Building 38.

Shawn Bohn, Dakotas Regional Office Director

VA resumes Overpayment Notifications while continuing Relief Options for Veterans

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today its nationwide plan to resume mailing notification letters to Veterans, for benefit overpayments placed in suspension from April 3 through Jan. 1, 2021.

The collection of these overpayments was deferred to provide financial relief to Veterans due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“VA recognizes Veterans and beneficiaries may still experience financial distress from COVID-19, and it will continue to offer [enhanced relief options](#) for impacted Veterans,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “These include extending repayment plans, waivers, compromises and temporary hardship suspensions. Most importantly, the department will pause collections through October 2021 for Veterans who remain in financial hardship and request relief.”

Veterans and beneficiaries with questions regarding benefit overpayments may [submit requests](#) or call 800-827-0648. Call volume is generally lower Tuesday – Friday.

For health care co-payment debts, Veterans should contact the Health Resource Center at 866-400-1238 or <https://www.pay.gov> for payments.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

Questions About Airborne Hazards and Burn Pits? Attend VA's Virtual Class

Airborne Hazards and Burn Pits: What You Need to Know is a free, virtual class to help Veterans understand potential exposures and their health effects, the burn pit registry, how to manage common symptoms, and more. Join this class on Thursday, February 25, from 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. ET. You can attend through your personal computer, smart phone, or tablet.

To learn more and to register, go to the class flyer at <https://go.usa.gov/xAP87>. If you have trouble registering, email NJWRIISCEDTEAM@va.gov with the subject header "Air Hazards Class."

Fargo VA Health Care System

The Fargo VA Health Care system and all its community based outpatient clinics are operating on their normal schedules.

COVID-19 Vaccine: VA is embarking on a new chapter in the fight against COVID-19. Vaccines are now being administered at the Fargo VA as well as VA facilities across the country. It is important to understand that many Veterans will not be able to get the vaccine during this initial rollout due to the limited supply received from the manufacturer.

Initial supplies were first offered to a specific set of front-line VA health care personnel who are essential in continuing to care for patients throughout the pandemic. We also offered the first doses to Veterans residing in the Community Living Center.

To reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19, Veterans should not come into a VA facility seeking a COVID-19 vaccine. Instead, care teams will contact Veterans directly to schedule an appointment when a vaccine is available, based on each Veteran's personal risk factors.

As more vaccine becomes available, VA will offer it in accordance with CDC guidance to additional Veterans at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 as well as key staff across the health care system. As increased vaccine supply is available in 2021, VA's goal is to offer the COVID-19 vaccine to all staff and Veterans who want to be vaccinated. Learn more here: www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/

State Veterans Home Welcomes 4,500th Resident

Hiram Neiffer, a Korean War Veteran and Purple Heart recipient, moved into the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home recently. All residents are welcomed to the Home on their move but Hiram was afforded a bigger celebration since he was the 4,500th resident accepted into the Home since opening Nov 1889.

Sioux Falls VA Health Care System begins COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution with Moderna

SIOUX FALLS, SD — The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System will begin COVID-19 vaccination with the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine today following the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Emergency Use Authorization for this vaccine.

"The Sioux Falls VA is eager to offer the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine to health care personnel and community living center residents," said Erin Bultje, Public Affairs Officer. "Receiving the vaccine is like having hope delivered. As vaccine supplies increase, our ultimate goal is to offer COVID-19 vaccination to all veterans and employees who want to be vaccinated."

Sioux Falls VA is one of 113 VA Medical Centers across the country to receive the first limited supply of the [Moderna COVID-19](#) vaccine. Sites were identified based on need for the vaccine according to [CDC's 1A](#) prioritization and capacity to store the vaccine at -20°C.

The Moderna COVID-19 vaccine was 94 percent effective in clinical trials in preventing COVID-19 disease. The vaccine is administered in two doses, 28 days apart. The side effects appear similar to those of other vaccines and are short-lived.

[Thirty-seven](#) medical centers began offering the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to health care personnel and Veterans Dec 14. Fifteen additional VA facilities will receive an allocation of Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine the week of December 21.

Even after receiving COVID-19 vaccination, employees and Veterans should continue wearing face coverings, practicing physical distancing and washing hands often.

As vaccines become available for more groups of Veterans, VA care teams will reach out to eligible Veterans to schedule vaccinations. There is no need to preregister or come to a facility to sign up.

Veterans can get up-to-date information on VA's [VA COVID-19 vaccine webpage](#), which launched on December 11, 2020, and sign up to receive regular updates on the vaccine on the VA's [Stay Informed](#) page.

For more information, please contact Erin Bultje at erin.bultje@va.gov or 605-333-6889.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**Memorandum from Dept of Veterans Affairs**
Regarding Testing and Vaccination to Family
Caregivers in the Program of Comprehensive
Assistance for Family Caregivers

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance on providing COVID-19 testing and vaccination to Family Caregivers in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC).
2. Facilities may provide COVID-19 testing and vaccines to Primary and Secondary Family Caregivers to support the health and safety of Veterans in the care of a PCAFC caregiver, in balance with site-specific resources, needs, vaccine availability, hesitancy to accept the vaccine and status of the pandemic locally. Facilities may schedule Family Caregivers to receive testing and vaccines in a coordinated manner with the Veterans for whom they provide care.
3. VA's authority to provide these services is 38 U.S.C. 1720G(a)(3)(A)(i)(I). This provision of law allows VA to provide Family Caregivers with, among other things, "preparation...appropriate for the Family Caregiver to provide personal care services to the eligible veteran." VA will update the PCAFC regulations to include this authority.
4. For questions regarding PCAFC, please contact Ms. Jill DeBord, Acting National Director, Caregiver Support Program at Jill.Debord@va.gov.

Richard A. Stone, MD

January 12, 2021

Position Available (as of 1-19-2021)**The DAV in the Sioux Falls VA Regional Office is looking to hire another National Service Officer.****Interested individuals need to contact the DAV by emailing your interest in their position to dav.vbasux@va.gov****The DAV requires that their Service Officers must be disabled Veterans who are eligible for the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation Program.**

Brad Friez, National Service Officer, PVA

(continued from Page 9 - 2021)
PVA Legislative Priorities - Terry Paulsen)

room, and improve plumbing or electrical systems for necessary medical equipment.

- While the cost of home modifications and labor have greatly increased in recent years, HISA grant rates have not changed in 11 years.
- With veterans sheltering in place during and following the resolution of the pandemic, ensuring veterans can safely remain in their homes is more essential than ever.
- Congress must raise HISA grant rates to at least \$10,000 for service-connected disabled veterans and \$5,000 for non-service-connected disabled veterans.

Increase Benefits for Surviving Spouses of ALS Veterans

- Eligible survivors can receive an additional \$284.57 per month in Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) if the veteran was rated totally disabled for a continuous period of at least eight years immediately preceding death.
- This extra payment is commonly referred to as the "DIC kicker." VA regulations recognize amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) as a presumptive service-connected disease and, due to its aggressive nature, it is automatically rated at 100 percent once service connected.
- Because the average life expectancy for a person with ALS is two to five years, many spouses of deceased veterans with ALS rarely qualify for the additional DIC benefit given the eight-year requirement.
- This policy fails to recognize the significant sacrifices these veterans and their families have made for this country.
- Congress must extend DIC kicker eligibility to the surviving spouses of veterans who died of service-connected ALS prior to the 8-year period.

Car For Sale: 1995 Honda Accord, Gold/Tan in color. 220 K miles. 4 cylinder engine with automatic transmission. Interior/exterior still fairly decent with some dings here and there and usual cosmetic flaws, some rust on the rear quarter panels. Recent new front ball joints, new brakes, new battery, new wipers, new radiator, and oil change was done recently. As is - asking \$1,568.00. If interested call Mike at (605) 321-8055.

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**PVA North Central Chapter****Birthday Roster - February/March 2021**

Eugene Ridenour, Jr.	Feb 02
Hollis Brewer	Feb 05
Terry Bacon	Feb 06
Carl Berg	Feb 06
Dennis Meinen	Feb 06
Harlan Schmidt	Feb 07
Judy Hauck	Feb 08
Julie Squires	Feb 08
Doug McCuddin	Feb 09
Andrew Watson	Feb 09
Chad Maxon	Feb 11
Cathy Brandner	Feb 12
Jonathan Englund	Feb 13
Mark Johnson	Feb 13
Ralph Martin	Feb 13
Allan Trautman	Feb 14
Vernon Johnson	Feb 22
Mark Wolf	Feb 22
Ernest Milliron	Feb 24
Saundra Tryner	Feb 25
Randall Thornburg	Feb 28
Caron Morris	Feb 29
Gary Reineke	Feb 29
Glenn Broski	Mar 09
Linda LeBorgne	Mar 09
Ronald Remer	Mar 12
Tom Shields	Mar 12

(continued in next column)

(continued from first column)

Harold Muilenburg	Mar 13
Kurt Lysne	Mar 14
John North	Mar 15
Vern Anderson	Mar 16
Steve Barrett	Mar 17
Tim Ruppert	Mar 19
William Miers	Mar 20
Donald Sjostrom	Mar 20
Anthony Steensgaard	Mar 21
Dennis Adams	Mar 22
Brad Friez	Mar 25
Lance Anderson	Mar 26
Warren Zweifel	Mar 26
Terrence Kohler	Mar 27
Fred Nielsen	Mar 28
Douglas Cook	Mar 29
William Northrup	Mar 29

Wills for Heroes

Wills for Heroes is a free monthly legal clinic for veterans and their spouses to receive simple wills and powers of attorney. This clinic is for income-qualifying individuals and by APPOINTMENT ONLY.

You must call and schedule an appointment to meet with an attorney on the day of the clinic. Call East River Legal Services (605-336-9230) for the next scheduled time.

Vet Centers Up Date

During this pandemic, please remember the Sioux Falls and Rapid City Vet Centers are remaining open and continue to provide the following services:

Individual Counseling (face-to-face, telehealth and phone visits)

Group Counseling (telehealth)

Marital and Family Counseling

Military Sexual Trauma

Please give them a call to schedule an appointment!

- Sioux Falls Vet Center (605) 330-4552
- Rapid City Vet Center (605) 348-0077

PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER

To All PVA Leadership and Staff: In response to the wide ranging COVID-19 news reports and in an effort to gather more information to support our advocacy and medical services work, it is important we hear from our members about their experiences with the COVID-19 vaccine.

As you may know, VA rolled out its Vaccine Distribution Plan in mid-December. Despite the distribution plan, the vaccine roll out in VA has been inconsistent. PVA staff is dedicated to getting information out to our members to help address their concerns and reduce confusion. With just over 3 percent of the U.S. population now vaccinated and millions more getting immunized every day, we want to better understand what our members are currently experiencing with the vaccine. To do this, we must look at both what (if anything) is going well with VA's roll-out plan and what areas are falling short.

To get a full picture of the plan's progress to-date, we need help from all the chapters and all of our members. We want to know what vaccine offerings and experiences are like in your community. Please take two minutes to complete our survey online. The survey link can be found here:

[Understanding PVA Member Access to COVID-19 Vaccine](#) (continued in next column)

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This survey, which is completely voluntary, will give us an overview of the problems and concerns you face as the vaccine continues to roll out. We ask you to share this as widely as possible with your membership. Their feedback will help us focus our programming, web content, and medical services efforts as we push for greater vaccine distribution access for all of our members and their primary caregivers, as well as fight against this deadly virus.

Deadline for responses to the survey is the end of the day on **Friday, January 29, 2021**.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me directly. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Carl Blake, Executive Director
Paralyzed Veterans of America
202-416-7708 carlb@pva.org

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CONTRIBUTION CODE:
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Paralyzed Veterans
of America

North Central Chapter

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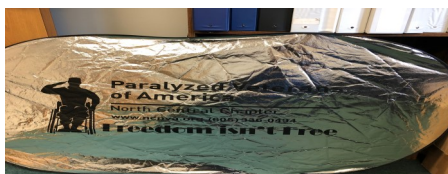
PVA NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**Power Chairs Available**

Marty, State Adjutant for the DAV, has 4 power chairs and soon to have a 5th power chair that have been donated by Veterans and/or family members to give to Veterans. If interested, call Marty at 332-6866 and their address is 1519 West 51st Street in Sioux Falls.

Scooter Lift

If anyone is interested in a scooter lift which attaches to the hitch on the back of a vehicle, we have two available.

Contact the Chapter Office (605-336-0494) for further information.

**Car Sunshades for Sale - \$10.00**

Proceeds will benefit the Chapter's programs and services! Contact the Chapter office (605-336-0494) for further information.

SUPPORT PVA**NORTH CENTRAL CHAPTER**

Paralyzed Veterans of America North Central Chapter relies solely on private donations and receives NO government funding! Your contribution is 100% tax deductible, as we are a 501(c) (3) corporation. Support by individual donors and businesses enable us to make our services FREE to members.

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vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteranshome

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**How to Donate Property**

Please donate that Auto, Boat, Yacht, Truck or RV that's no longer needed to NCPVA! Receive the maximum legal tax deductions and possibly a partial cash payment.

For more information about car, boat, RV and other property donations or to receive a "no obligation" evaluation of your potential vehicle or other property donation, please call toll free: (866) 2-GIVING or (866) 244-8464.

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YOUR NAME OR NUMBER IS
LISTED.

CHUCK DOOM
VOLUNTEER PROGRAM
COORDINATOR

DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS

1519 W. 51st Street, Sioux Falls, SD 57105

(605) 332-6866 / Fax: (605) 338-5489

National Service Office: (605) 333-6896 NSO Email: www.dav.vbasux@va.gov
www.davsd.org www.dav.org

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Paralyzed Veterans of America
North Central Chapter
209 N. Garfield Ave
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

VA Health Care Systems Contact Information

Sioux Falls VA Health Care System

2501 West 22nd Street
Sioux Falls, SD 57105
Phone: (605) 336-3230 or (800) 316-8387
Fax: (605) 333-6878

VA Black Hills Health Care System - Fort Meade Campus

113 Comanche Road
Fort Meade, SD 57741
Phone: (605) 347-2511 or (800) 743-1070
Fax: (605) 720-7171

VA Black Hills Health Care System

500 North 5th Street
Hot Springs, SD 57747
Phone: 605-745-2000
Fax: 605-745-2091

Minneapolis VA Health Care System

One Veterans Drive
Minneapolis, MN 55417
Phone: (612) 725-2000 or 866-414-5058
Fax: (612) 725-2049

Fargo VA Health Care System

2101 Elm Street
Fargo, ND 58102
Phone: (701) 232-3241
Fax: (701) 239-3705

VA Montana Health Care System

1892 Williams Street
Fort Harrison, MT 59636
Phone: (406) 442-6410
Fax: (406) 447-7916

Cheyenne VA Health Care System

2360 E. Pershing Blvd.
Cheyenne, WY 82001
Phone: (307) 778-7550
Fax: (307) 778-7336

Sheridan VA Health Care System

1898 Fort Road
Sheridan, WY 82801
Phone: (307) 672-3473 or (866) 822-6714
Fax: (307) 672-1900

The PVA North Central Chapter proudly serves the states of North Dakota, South Dakota, Southwest Minnesota, and portions of Montana and Wyoming.