

Puget Sound News

From the Director

Meeting the needs of our Veterans

As the director of a health care system that provides care to more than 80,000 Veterans each year, I see firsthand the positive impact and the wide range of services and programs that VA offers. More than just providing health care, VA Puget Sound is frequently the first step in a Veteran's lifetime relationship with the Department of Veterans Affairs and often includes services such as home loans, job training, and even a college degree.

Helping Veterans stay healthy is our goal at VA Puget Sound. From our community based outpatient clinics to our programs that help end lives of homelessness or long time addictions, excellence and quality are at the heart of the care we provide. Thank you for your service.

David A. Elizalde,
Director

Pressing Issues

Taking it to the streets: Ending Veteran Homelessness

One of the most ambitious plans put forth by VA Secretary Eric Shinseki is the plan to end homelessness among Veterans. According to a joint Department of Housing and Urban Development and VA study published this year, nearly 76,000 Veterans were homeless on a given night in 2009.

At VA Puget Sound, partnerships have been developed with county partners in King, Pierce, Thurston, Whatcom and Kitsap Counties to help battle Veteran homelessness. This includes comprehensive programs that address interim housing, PTSD and

mental health, addiction treatment and other issues that can lead to chronic homelessness.



“With our federal, state and community partners working together, more Veterans are moving into safe housing,” said Shinseki. “But we’re not done yet. Providing assistance in mental health, substance abuse

treatment, education and employment goes hand-in-hand with preventive steps and permanent supportive housing. We continue to work towards our goal of finding every Veteran safe housing and access to needed services.”

“We continue to work towards our goal of finding every Veteran safe housing and access to needed services.”

Eric Shinseki, Secretary of Veterans Affairs



Staying safe in an emergency - are you ready?

Being prepared for an emergency is more than just having some extra water and flashlights. For an organization that takes care of more than 80,000 Veterans a year, it means having plans for every reasonable scenario and practicing those plans so Veterans are cared for when the worst happens.

From what to do if there is an earthquake to how to evacuate in case of a fire, Emergency Manager James Baumann is constantly developing plans to ensure



that Veterans treated here are safe. Baumann's unique background includes extensive experience in emergency management and a personal history as a engineer, demolitionist, and military medic. Add to this his work in counter-terrorism and he has few peers in VA.

Even the most robust plans require practice though and much of Baumann's time is spent developing and leading the organization in emergency simulations that often include volunteers acting as wounded patients that must be treated and moved. Complicating matters further are the geographical challenges of a health care system spread out from the coast to the mountains and from Canada to Chehalis.

"If you look at the most likely events and how they would impact us (earthquakes, floods, volcanic activity), we have a lot of things to cover compared to other areas of the country," Baumann states. "The best way to be ready for them all is by taking the more likely events and stressing the basics, the commonalities and the key principles."

What does preparedness mean to VA Puget Sound and Mr. Baumann? It means the constant reviewing of response plans, community coordination with county

and regional jurisdictions plus a minimum of six exercises every year in addition to four to six real world events that have a local impact. Being prepared also means working with the hospital's services and facilities management to identify shelter areas and evacuation procedures which lately can be extra challenging given the changes going on at both divisions. "We have been doing a lot of construction lately and there are complicated issues involved, Baumann said. "All the key participants work well together in planning for success to meet all the needs. Our facilities management and hospital leadership does a great job of coordination in that regard."

“The best way to be ready for them all is by... stressing the basics.”

Being prepared is something taken seriously not only here but across the VA. "Our facilities work hard to ensure we are prepared for an emergency," said Ed James, Area Emergency Manager for the VA Northwest Health Network. "We do this through a comprehensive process of planning, training, and exercise where we learn from our exercises and make continuous improvements to our emergency preparedness programs."

Local emergencies are not the only type to which Baumann's program responds. VA Puget Sound professionals with many different types of skills are also in demand to quickly respond to national emergencies. Baumann coordinated the staff deployments to several national emergencies including Hurricanes Rita (2005), Katrina (2005), Ike (2008), Gustav (2008) and the 2009 floods in North Dakota. "My VA training through the disaster response program prepared me emotionally and logistically for two deployments as a disaster relief social worker for both Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Ike," said VA Puget Sound's Alicia Sloan. "Social workers are trained to be very resourceful at offering psychological "first aid" to evacuees and other disaster relief volunteers, as well as problem solve quickly during crises and highly stressful situations, and perform professionally during very challenging circumstances."

While a disaster or other emergency is something that no one wants to happen, VA Puget Sound is in a constant state of preparedness to handle such an event, whether it be here or abroad.

To find more stories like this, check out www.pugetsound.va.gov

National Salute

Each year during the week of Valentine's Day, VA celebrates the National Salute to Veteran Patients. Veterans Service Organization representatives and other community groups and individuals visit our patients throughout this special week as an expression of recognition and thanks for their service and sacrifices.

Whether it be during the time of the national salute or any other time you are at VA Puget Sound, take a few moments to say a heart-felt "thank you" to the American heroes we are so honored and privileged to serve on a daily basis – our Veteran patients.



To learn more about the salute please visit the national site. To learn more about volunteering, contact the VA Puget Sound Office of Voluntary Service at (206) 764-2195 or go online at www.pugetsound.va.gov/giving

Find Us Online



For the latest news and events happening at VA Puget Sound, visit www.pugetsound.va.gov or visit our Facebook (facebook.com/vapugetsound) or Twitter (twitter.com/vapugetsound) pages.



We Are Where You Are

Facility Locations

American Lake Division

9600 Veterans Drive
Tacoma, WA 98493
(253) 582-8440 | (800) 329-8387

Seattle Division

1660 South Columbian Way
Seattle, WA 98108
(206) 762-1010 | (800) 329-8387

Bellevue

13033 Bel-Red Road, Suite 210
Bellevue, Washington 98005
(425) 214-1055

Bremerton

925 Adele Avenue
Bremerton, WA 98312
(360) 782-0129

Federal Way

34617 11th Pl South Suite 301
Federal Way, WA 98003
(253) 336-4142

Mount Vernon

307 S. 13th Street Suite 200
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
(360) 848-8500

North Seattle

12360 Lake City Way NE Suite 200
Seattle, WA 98125
(206) 384-4382

Port Angeles Extension

1005 Georgianna Street
Port Angeles, WA 98362
(360) 565-9330

South Sound

151 NE Hampe Way Suite B2-6
Chehalis, WA 98532
(360) 748-3049

Navigating VA Puget Sound during the construction

- ✔ Give yourself some extra time! Parking is limited and valet parking (Seattle only) can get busy.
- ✔ Check www.pugetsound.va.gov before you leave for any construction updates.
- ✔ Please be patient! We are undergoing unprecedented growth and expansion. It will be worth it!
- ✔ Volunteers are stationed throughout the facility to answer questions and help you find your clinic. They usually wear a green vest and have a name badge on.
- ✔ Use the suggestion boxes near the coffee stands if you have an idea on how to make this process better.



Our mission is to honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being. Our vision is to continue to be the benchmark of excellence and value in health care and benefits by providing exemplary services that are both patient-centered and evidence-based. This care will be delivered by engaged, collaborative teams in an integrated environment that supports learning, discovery and continuous improvement. It will emphasize prevention and population health and contribute to the Nation's well-being through education, research and service in national emergencies. For more information about the VA Puget Sound Health Care System, visit our homepage at www.pugetsound.va.gov.