



Newsletter

SEPTEMBER IS SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

“Don’t Wait. Reach Out.”

We want Veterans to know that you don’t have to solve life’s challenges alone. Day-to-day issues with finances, jobs, housing and relationships can be stressful, and it’s important to get help before your problems feel overwhelming. Take a confidential, anonymous risk assessment to see how you might benefit from VA or community-based services.

Help support
VETERANS
in your life and
REACH OUT.

Don't wait. Reach out.
VA.GOV/REACH

You may call the
following numbers:

VA Manila Main Line
+63 (02) 8550-3888
press 7

VA Manila Toll Free Phone
+63 1 (800) 1888-5252
or #MyVA (#6982)

Veterans Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255

Direct Line of Suicide
Prevention Coordinators
+632-8-396-3774
+632-8-396-3786

CHANGES AT MANILA VA OPC **What does this mean for you?**

Manila VA Outpatient Clinic is striving to improve the quality of care to help each of you improve your health. To achieve the best healthcare, we need you to be engaged in managing your health. The services we provide are only a part of what it takes for you to live healthier. Our changes will help you get your care in the timeframe recommended by your provider and help you understand how to implement your care plan at home.

What is changing?

We will schedule two and on rare occasions at most three appointments for you each day. Please be aware that if you fly in for an appointment or travel a long distance, you will need to plan your stay as appointments may be scheduled on different days. Too many sessions on one day with too much information are confusing which prevents you from achieving your best health.

Make your appointments near the date suggested by your provider.



Consider having virtual telephone or video appointments. We can provide you with an Outside Procedure Request so you can get labs locally and get reimbursed through FMP.



Come to the clinic on multiple days to help you get the most benefit out of each appointment.



For more information on why we are limiting the number of appointments per day, see page 4.

VA DEPUTY SECRETARY REMY VISITS MANILA



Photo by: U.S. Embassy Manila's Public Affairs Section

On Thursday, August 25, 2022, we had the privilege of hosting VA Deputy Secretary Donald M. Remy. Deputy Secretary Remy described his visit as a listening tour. During his visit he held several meetings to include the Embassy, VBA and Clinic Leadership, Clinic Staff, Veterans Representatives, as well as held an Employee Townhall Meeting. He also participated in our awards ceremony for staff recognition.

His day was dominated by three topics - Opioid prescribing ending October 1st, Foreign Medical Program (FMP) with timeliness of payments, and the future of the clinic here in the Philippines.

- **Foreign Medical Program:** He stated they were going to conduct a top to bottom audit of the FMP to ensure they are staffed properly and have timeliness as their #1 goal.
- **Opioid Prescribing:** He listened to concerns, but agreed with the curtailment of controlled substances by October 1 due to safety concerns and clinic capability.
- **Manila VAMC:** Deputy Secretary announced to every group he spoke with that the Clinic is not closing as it serves a very special mission in the Philippines.



From left to right: Senior Advisor for Pacific Strategy, Vivian Hudson, Manila VA Acting Director Kevin McAllister, VSC Manager Nathan Loftis, Deputy Secretary Donald Remy, Asst. Clinic Manager Elizabeth Harris, Acting Clinic Manager John Stelsel, and Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations RimaAnn Nelson. Photo by: U.S. Embassy Manila's Public Affairs Section

A MESSAGE FROM THE ACTING CLINIC MANAGER, JOHN L. STELSEL



Greetings!

What a tremendous honor it is to be detailed to the VA Manila Outpatient Clinic. As I'm about to wrap up my 29th year of VA service, I cannot imagine a better assignment than to have serving the Veterans here in the Philippines. Quickly, I've learned that working internationally is clearly different compared to the other 8 VAs I have served.

In addition, I have been touched by the warm reception given by our wonderful and dedicated staff as well as our Veteran Service Representatives. I soundly believe that to be successful in the VA, we all have to work as a team for the benefit of our Veterans. It takes multiple staff from multiple areas to make any clinic successful and operating at top efficiency. We will continually strive to be the best in the VA with quality and excellence as our guiding principles.

As we have all been assured, our Clinic will **NOT** be closing and will be here to serve for years to come.

Current focus areas:

- Preparation for continued growth, ensuring new Veterans are seen within the goal of 20 days for Primary Care/Internal Medicine and 28 days for Specialty Care.
- Through Strategic Planning and Data Validation, reviewing what new services could be added, either full or part time.
- With added Mental Health providers arriving, ensuring better access is achieved.
- Implementation of PACT act services, as guidance is received.

I look forward to continuing to work with you all with our goal of providing world class service to our Veterans.

Thank you all for your service and support! - John



Upcoming Clinic Closure

The U.S. Embassy, along with the Manila VA Outpatient Clinic & Regional Office, will be closed in recognition of the following holiday:

Monday, October 10, 2022



**HAPPY ★★★
COLUMBUS
DAY**

Care in the Community through the Foreign Medical Program (FMP)

Veterans may also obtain care and medical services for their VA adjudicated service-connected conditions in the community. Please take note of these reminders:

- If you are going to **FMP partner facility**, please bring:
 - FMP Benefits Authorization Letter (BAL); and
 - Progress Note or Doctor's Order showing diagnosis of the condition to be treated.

Note: Some hospitals accept VA Rating Decision (RD) letter in lieu of the FMP BAL.

- If you are going to **non-FMP partner facility**, you will need to file your reimbursement by fax or email:
 - [VAF 10-7959F-2](mailto:VAF.10-7959F-2), Foreign Medical Program Claim Cover Sheet;
 - FMP Benefits Authorization Letter (BAL);
 - Progress Note or Doctor's Order showing diagnosis of the condition to be treated;
 - Official Receipts; and
 - Billing and medical documentation.

To request for BAL or RD, Veteran can write a request or complete [VAF 21-4138, Statement of Support of Claim](#) then submit to the Manila VA Regional Office at vamanilaro.vbampi@va.gov.

FMP CONTACT DETAILS

Address: Foreign Medical Program
PO Box 469061, Denver, CO 80246-9061 USA

Telephone number: 1-303-331-7590

Fax number: 1-303-331-7803

Email: hac.fmp@va.gov

Website:

<https://www.va.gov/communitycare/programs/veterans/fmp/index.asp>

CHECK-IN REMINDERS & PROCESS

How will I be reminded of my appointment?

- 7 days and 2 days before appointment, expect an automated text message.
- Confirm or cancel your appointment.
- Text will have a request to do a mobile check-in where you will verify your contact information, emergency contact, and next of kin.
- 3 days before appointment, expect an automated call.

How soon should I get to the clinic?

- For Internal Medicine (IM) appointments, you should come 90 minutes.
- For all other appointments without IM combo, arrive 30 minutes before the appointment.

What is the process for checking in at the Clinic?

- Bring your cell phone to use for the automated check-in.
- When you get to the clinic, scan a QR code or text "check in" to +63 922 110 1210 and follow the instructions. This will let us know you are at the clinic.
- The earliest time to check in is 30 minutes before each appointment.
- Wait in the lobby for the lab staff to call you at your lab appointment time.
- Our goal is to have your labs done 90 minutes prior to your IM appointment, so your doctor can review the results with you during the visit.

Why are we changing the number of appointments per day?

Limited availability of providers and limited clinic space

We will likely continue to provide at least 25%-50% of our appointments as virtual appointments depending on the service. This makes it very difficult to schedule multiple services on the same day since we may not have face-to-face appointments every day for service you need.

The clinic is growing with the addition of Mental Health psychiatrists, psychologists and Internal Medicine doctors. To use our space efficiently, our specialty providers, such as Internal Medicine providers and Mental Health providers share rooms.



Some days these providers are providing virtual care from locations outside of the clinic to your home. This arrangement aligns with the preference of Veterans to continue to have the option for virtual care. Virtual care includes telephone and video appointments.

To help Veterans live healthier

For convenience, many Veterans have been requesting all their appointments on the same day. The practice of scheduling multiple appointments on the same day resulted in quality concerns for Veterans for several reasons.



Confusion in future scheduling

Example: You have three appointments in a day. You receive one follow up in 3 months and the other two for 6 months. Veteran decides to wait and have all appointments in six months. If the Veteran waits 6 months, that could affect their overall health and increase the risk of complications.

Missing of critical information

When seeing multiple providers in the same day, there is a tremendous amount of information to remember. Research suggests that how healthy you are and how long you live depends on several factors. What your provider does in the clinic appointment is only about 1/5 of what it takes to keep you healthy. What keeps you healthy is when you take the information from your doctor and make changes in life.

Quality of Care

Let's think about a day for a patient with multiple appointments. The Veteran has their typical appointments that are quite complicated and cover many things. From the appointments the Veteran is supposed to listen, determine what the key takeaway messages and remember them.

These are some examples of information from four appointments (Cardiology, Internal Medicine, Mental Health, and Gastroenterology) that a Veteran would need to act on when they get home.

- Meet the cardiologist who talks to the Veteran about monitoring blood pressure and beginning an exercise program.
- Meet with Mental Health provider who talks to the Veteran about increasing interaction with friends and how to deal with a difficult family member.
- Meet with Internal Medicine provider who talks to him about a medication change and side-effects to watch for.
- Meet with the gastroenterologist who adds some medications and discusses different food choices that the Veteran needs to make.

Despite the long day, the Veteran needs to remember everything that happened and plan to follow up on the recommendations. In this case, the Veteran had four appointments and now must remember seven changes to be made. If the MH appointment was on another day and virtual, then it reduces the amount of information that the Veteran needed to handle. If the Veteran had made two trips and two appointments, this would decrease the amount of information that Veteran would need to keep track of. When making changes to improve your health, a person can manage at most 2-3 changes at one time. In the above example, the Veteran is having to track and make 7 changes. The likelihood is that the Veteran won't be able to do that, and the result will be that the Veteran won't have the best health that they could have. We, at the Manila VA OPC, want you to have the best health that you can.

MEDICATION NOTICE

To avoid delayed medication refills, please plan out and order **10 working days** in advance of the **upcoming clinic closures**. Air21 is also closed on these dates.

If you run out of medications for a service-connected condition, you can buy a short-term supply of needed medicines and file a claim for reimbursement from the Foreign Medical Program.



Photo by: U.S. Embassy Manila's Public Affairs Section

Manila VA OPC employees received challenge coins from the Honorable Donald Remy, Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs for their exemplary contributions to the organization, during his visit last August 25, 2022.

CONTACT US

VA Manila Main Line
+63 (02) 8550-3888

VA Manila Toll Free Phone
+63 1 (800) 1888-5252
or **#MyVA (#6982)**

Clinical Fax (Medical Records)
+63 (02) 8550-3964

Patient Advocate
+63 (02) 8396-3716

Clinic Manager
+63 (02) 8396-3735

- Option 1 Regional Office
- Option 2 Outpatient Clinic
- Option 3 Veterans Evaluation Services
- Option 4 Foreign Medical Program's Hotline
- Option 5 VBA Offices in the United States
- Option 6 VA MISSION Act Hotline
- Option 7 Veterans Crisis Line
- Option 8 VA Manila Pharmacy

If you have questions, visit:

www.myhealth.va.gov
<https://ask.va.gov>

REQUIREMENTS TO ENTER THE CLINIC

- Bring two (2) valid ID cards with a photo (i.e., Passport, Driver's License). The Guard will keep one (1) valid photo ID card and give you a badge. Your companion or attendant must also bring one (1) valid photo ID card.
- You will not be allowed to enter if you carry laptop computers, recording devices, any large electronic devices, knives, weapons, and contraband items.

IF YOU ARE LATE OR UNABLE TO MAKE IT...

Please immediately call **02-8550-3888 then select 2** so we can arrange for you to be seen later in the day or on another day. We will be able to use this slot for patients waiting for care.

IF YOUR DOCTOR IS RUNNING LATE OR ON AN EMERGENCY LEAVE...

We will immediately contact and offer you the option to be seen by another doctor if available. Alternatively, you can still have your laboratory done and we will schedule you for an in-person/ telephone/ virtual consult with your primary doctor.

COMPLETION OF VA AND NON-VA MEDICAL FORMS

VHA Privacy and Release of Information (ROI) guidance are applied when releasing any VA or Non-VA Medical Statements or medical forms completed on behalf of the Veteran. Our providers may complete these forms to the best of their ability based on their scope, clinical expertise, and available historical evidence.

If you want a copy of your medical records, please complete **VA Form 10-5345A** and attach the medical form you need our provider to complete.

Please expect a 20-workday turnaround time.

PLANNING TO TRAVEL TO THE UNITED STATES?

Veterans who are planning to travel to the United States and want to continue medical treatment should call **02-8550-3888** and have yourself connected to the Traveling Veteran Coordinator (TVC). Alternatively, you can send a Secure Message via MyHealthVet Portal.

Your Manila VA provider will recommend coordination when needed care with an alternate VA facility is required. It takes about 4 to 6 weeks to process the transfer of care.

If you need help with disability claims, please call **+63 (02) 8550-3888** and **select 1** or access their website at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation>