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**Your actions
could save a life.**

Showing you care can make a big difference to someone in crisis.

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Suicide Prevention*

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Treatment Program*

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HOW TO SELECT A
SUNSCREEN

Choosing the right sunscreen can help reduce the risk of skin cancer and early skin aging caused by the sun.

SUNSCREEN IS AN IMPORTANT TOOL in the fight against skin cancer. Use a safe sunscreen. The easiest way is to use SPF.

1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime.

The American Academy of Dermatology recommends calculating a skin cancer risk score on the following scale:

BROAD SPECTRUM
Make sure a sunscreen protects the skin from

Skin Cancer Prevention

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VA Prosthetics and Innovation

Working with community partners to improve Veterans experiences



The VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System's Prosthetics Service is partnering with industry to bring several new innovative devices to Veterans, giving them faster service, with more efficient and comfortable prosthetics.

The first device the Prosthetics section is recently unveiled is the Bioness Functional Electrical Stimulation System. This apparatus is applied when a muscle may not be working normally, but the Veteran may still have the impulse that can go from the brain to the disabled extremity. For many Veterans with severe muscle trauma or gunshot wounds, these electrical impulses can allow them to eventually walk on their own two feet.

One of the greatest priorities for the VA is providing same-day service. This was especially a challenge in prosthetics, where the lengthy process of manufacturing and shipment meant a Veteran would often have to wait 6-8 weeks for a new prosthetic leg. Thanks to the new Össur Modular Socket System, VASNHS technicians can have

a new leg ready for use in as little as 90 minutes. This product uses a pressurized casting process to form a prosthetic socket for below-knee amputees. The Veteran can be fitted for the socket, have it shaped, and sanded while they wait, and walk out the on their new leg that same day. For some Veterans with above-the-knee amputations, hard molded sockets can become cumbersome and uncomfortable, especially when being used in athletic activities. VASNHS has partnered with Martin Bionics Innovations to bring Veterans a harness system socket. This innovation permits greater range of motion, greater comfort, and even promotes muscle growth from the use of natural movement.

Prosthetics is one of the busiest areas within the VA, providing care to between 120-150 Veterans per day, according to Orthotist Kathleen Simmons. If a Veteran chooses to receive care outside the VA, it's important that our community providers are trained in these new devices, so VASNHS invited technicians and doctors from several private practices to train with VA providers and the product representatives to ensure everyone would be adept in the care and use of these new prosthetics devices.

With the use of these new products, training, and the dedication of the Prosthetic section, VASNHS plans to stay on the forefront of new innovations for Veterans for many years to come.

Mayor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and their Families

City of Las Vegas selected for the Mayor's Challenge



Former Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. David J. Shulkin at the North Las Vegas VA Medical Center March 9 2018.

The City of Las Vegas and Southern Nevada have been selected by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration as one of eight municipalities nationwide for the Mayor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans and their Families. Former VA Secretary Dr. David J. Shulkin made the formal announcement during a visit to the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System March 9.

"The single most important issue clinically to us in VA right now is to reduce Veteran suicide," said Shulkin. "Twenty Veterans a day that take their life through suicide is a number that is so staggering, it's really hard to even begin to think about, but certainly, none of us should accept that. There's just so much more that we can do."

Joining the Former Secretary for the announcement was Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval, who spoke about reducing suicide in a state with a growing Veteran population. "There is recently released data from the VA that shows that Nevada's Veteran suicide rate is one of the highest in the nation," the Governor stated. "That's unacceptable, and that's why we need to do more... You have my commitment, and you have the commitment of the people of the State of Nevada that we're going to do everything we can to work with you to really turn this around and make Nevada the most improved state in the country with regard to suicide prevention."

A VA state-by-state study of suicide data from 2014 found that, after accounting for differences in age, the Veteran suicide rate in Nevada is significantly higher than the overall national average with 22.6 percent, or more than one out of every five suicides in the state, being committed by a Veteran. Additionally, the study also revealed that of the estimated 20 Veterans who take their lives daily, 14 were not connected to VA care or services.

As one of the first eight cities selected for the Mayor's Challenge, the City of Las Vegas will form an interagency team comprised of experts from city, county, state, federal and nonprofit agencies to increase awareness of VA and other resources available to service members, Veterans and family member in crisis.

"I'm very proud of Las Vegas being selected as one of the eight cities where we're going to study and work on the [Veterans] suicide problem," said Congresswoman Dina Titus, a former House Veterans Affairs Committee member who represents the City of Las Vegas. "You've heard the statistics and know people who are in these desperate situations and it's great that the VA is making mental health a priority along with physical health... I urge you as you move forward to address this problem here in Nevada to think outside the box. There are some programs going on around this country to address PTSD and depression."

Secretary Shulkin stressed the importance of suicide prevention efforts at the local level, with a focus on a coordinated approach to address mental health care. "One thing we know that makes the most difference is the work within the communities... within that fabric of not for profits, churches and local governments... to use a public health approach to reduce Veterans suicide," he said. "That's why Las Vegas has been selected."

As the lead for Southern Nevada's public approach to reduce Veterans suicide, the City of Las Vegas sent a core team to Washington D.C. March 14-16 to attend the Mayor's Challenge Policy Academy. During these meetings, team members from the eight cities had the opportunity to participate in technical assistance sessions, learn about innovative suicide prevention strategies, share best practices, and develop action plans to for their communities.



Councilman Steve Seroka who spoke on behalf of Mayor Carolyn Goodman

“We will be taking our expertise [to Washington DC] and look forward to working with experts from across the country,” City of Las Vegas Councilman Steve Seroka said prior to the policy academy where he represented Las Vegas Mayor Carolyn Goodman. “We will bring back what we learn and share it to execute and take this important mission to the next level.”

During the March 9 event, Secretary Shulkin announced a proposed expansion of mental health coverage for newly separated service members. “This week we’ll be delivering to the President a plan to allow every active service member who is transitioning from service to have a mental health care coverage benefit,” the Secretary stated. “Today, just 40 percent of those who leave the service are eligible for VA mental health care. That needs to be 100 percent because the single highest incidence of suicide for Veterans is that first 12 months after leaving the service.” The proposal followed one of Secretary Shulkin’s first initiatives as VA Secretary to provide mental health services to Veterans with other than honorable (OTH) administrative discharges.

“Fifteen percent of our service members get a discharge like that many times related to a behavioral health issue or post-traumatic stress... people who need the benefits the most who are unable to get them,” he said. Under the initiative, former OTH service members with an emergent mental health need can present at a VA emergency department, Vet Center or contact the Veterans Crisis Line for emergency stabilization care. They can receive care for their mental health emergency for an initial period of up to 90 days, which can include inpatient, residential or outpatient care.

During this time, the Veterans Health Administration and the Veterans Benefits Administration will work together to determine if the mental health condition is a result of a service-related injury, making the service member eligible

for ongoing coverage for that condition.

“This is such an important day for us to be together, to make sure that we are all giving our support to all of those who are going to be leading us through this effort, because we can make a big difference, and we can do it right here in Nevada,” the former secretary said to an at-capacity crowd of elected officials, Veterans service organization leaders and service providers. “When I look at how each of you came because this is an important issue and because you support Veterans, it gives me tremendous hope that this community is going to make a difference and that we’re going to be successful in finding solutions that we can share with the rest of the country.”



Nevada Governor Sandoval and VASNHS Director Peggy Kearns signing the “Be There” declaration for Veterans suicide prevention campaign.

Veterans in crisis or having thoughts of suicide — and those who know a Veteran in crisis — should call the Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1, chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat, or text to 838255.



Addictions and Disorder Treatment Program (ADTP)

Getting care and treatment for Veterans who need it the most



Alcohol and substance abuse affects Veterans more than the average American, and the numbers are growing. For Veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan and are receiving care at the VA, about one in 10 has been treated for some form of substance abuse, with more than half the cases being alcohol related.

While alcohol abuse and addiction can plague Veterans anywhere in America, Las Vegas can present a greater challenge, according to VASNHS Medical Center clinical social worker Michael Campana. "I don't think alcoholism is more prevalent than in any other place, however, because of the 24/7 availability of alcohol, and the partying atmosphere, it's a greater challenge," he said.

Campana, who has worked within the addictions and disorder treatment program (or ADTP) for over 30 years, said that the hardest part for Veterans is just recognizing that they have issues with alcohol abuse in the first place. "I think that because of the shame or the guilt that comes along with alcohol or other drug problems, most people initially are more hesitant to seek treatment, and a lot of times, they are the last person to realize the existence of a problem." Campana said. "Their comrades in arms see it, their spouse sees it, their kids see it, maybe their commander sees it, but the denial that's inherent in this disease makes it very

difficult to recognize and accept." The VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System offers several resources for treatment, from intensive inpatient to routine outpatient care to group therapy.

Treatment options are co-determined by the Veteran and their provider on a case-by-case basis, but Campana said that not every modality works for every patient. "The first step is a diagnostic assessment. We take a comprehensive look at different areas of their life... not just drinking behavior, but also other areas such as social behavior and medical history," Campana said. "From there, we look at whether we have to stage a personal intervention. A lot of times, it's just trying to get them to take a look at their consequences of abuse—especially if they're still in denial."

Treatment options vary greatly. The core program, the Outpatient Addictive Disorder Treatment Program, consists of three phases: an introduction phase, education phase, and after-care, or maintenance phase. For Veterans who prefer to meet one-on-one with a counselor, the VA has individual therapy sessions available. However, Campana added that many Veterans like the camaraderie of group therapy. "Group support works well because it reminds Veterans that they are not alone. There is that 'band of brothers' that Veterans have that doesn't exist in the outside," he said.

Teamwork is an important aspect of treatment, not only for the patient, but for the care team as well. Because alcohol abuse encompasses more than just one section of health, Campana added the VA has a comprehensive approach to treatment. "It could be physical issues, psychological issues, social issues...with their families, friends, or their job. It could be legal issues," he said, "We work very closely with other sections of care because alcohol abuse can impact all aspects of a patient's overall health."

While it's always best for a Veteran to seek treatment on their own initiative, Campana said patients sometimes come to the VA out of necessity. "We get Veterans who are here as part of a court-mandate, because of legal issues like DUIs or domestic violence. Often, if they complete a year within our treatment program, their charges are reduced or wiped out."

Regardless of why the Veteran is seeking treatment or the severity of the abuse, Campana stressed the importance of the maintenance phase. "With this disease, its ongoing support that's needed, and I think the important thing is finding a kind of support system that works for you. For a lot of people, it's our program, for some people, it's a 12-step program, for others, it's a combination of the two. Just as long as it's something that you can commit to."

[For any Veterans who wish to enroll in ADTP treatment services, initial screenings are offered at the North Las Vegas VA Medical Center Mental Health Clinic.](#)

[Walk-ins are available on Wednesdays from 7:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. Veterans can also call 702-791-9062 to make an appointment.](#)

Red Coat Ambassador Program

Enhancing the Patient Experience



Mr. Istle and Mr. Smith, at the VA Medical Center

When you meet John Istle, the first thing you see is his smile. Wearing a vibrant red vest and a “Just Ask Me!” button, this Air Force Veteran and volunteer walks through the North Las Vegas VA Medical Center and greets every visitor with earnest enthusiasm. As one of the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System’s new Red Coat Ambassadors, it’s that first impression that he hopes will make Veterans feel welcome when they come to their appointments. “Lead with a smile instead of a frown,” Istle explains. “Talk to them. Everybody’s got a story. Just try to treat people the way you’d like to be treated, that’s all.”

The Red Coat Ambassadors are volunteers and staff that perform several jobs within the medical center; from physical assistance to informational guide to emotional support. Their red coats (or vests) are easily recognizable, and identify the ambassador as someone who the vets can go to for assistance. They also pass on patient comments and concerns to the Veterans Experience Service.

While the Red Coat Ambassador Program is a new initiative locally, it has seen great success in other locations around the country... “The Red Coat Ambassadors provide a personal, positive first-impression for veterans, family members, and care-givers when they enter a VA Medical Center,” said

Jennifer Gerrib, Chief of VASNHS’ Veterans Experience Service. Istle isn’t new to volunteering at the VA. He’s assisted in various roles at the medical center for five years, doing everything from transportation to working at the Fisher House. “I like helping vets. I’m a vet, and when I go back to my time in service, I remember being helped myself,” he said. “VASNHS started 2018 with eight Red Coat ambassador volunteers, but has since added a few more volunteers.

Sylvester Smith III, a two-tour Vietnam Veteran who has volunteered at the medical center for more than a year, recently spent his first day as an ambassador shadowing Istle. “John’s showing me how to be thorough, the things to look for besides just the obvious things,” Smith said. “I have a lot of respect for him, he’s been around here for quite a while.” “I don’t think a man can be satisfied until he gives a little bit of himself for others.” Smith added, stating that he is happy continuing his service to others as a Red Coat Ambassador.

The Red Coat Ambassador Program is one of several tools that the VA hopes will enhance the overall patient experience. As the number of volunteers grows, Jennifer hopes to expand the program to VASNHS’ outpatient clinics as well. “People may not always remember what you say or do, but they will remember how you make them feel,” she said. “This is important because the way we treat our Veterans today is why they will choose the VA tomorrow.”

For any registered volunteers who are interested in becoming a Red Coat Ambassador, contact the Veterans Experience Service at 702-791-9000 ext. 14731. If you’re interested, but are not already a registered volunteer at VASNHS, contact Voluntary Services to join.



True North Award

The Department of Veterans Affairs’ Southern Nevada Healthcare System has become the first VA facility in the nation to earn the highest honor from one of the world’s largest specialty nursing certification boards.

The Competency & Credentialing Institute (CCI) announced the VASNHS as their 2018 TrueNorth Award winner. The award recognizes facilities whose “true north” guides the nursing staff to be lifelong learners, models of excellent practice and continuous advocates for superb patient care and nursing practice through CNOR certification.

“The award is for excellence in support of perioperative nursing certification,” said Jim Stobinski, CEO of CCI. “These are the best practices in the country, and they are exemplified by this facility, and that was the reason for granting the award.” Stobinski, along with CCI President Julia Thompson expressed their admiration for the VASNHS perioperative nursing staff’s work in and outside of the operating room.

To receive CNOR certification, perioperative nurses must demonstrate that they are qualified to provide specialty care for patients before, during, and after surgery. This is accomplished via education and training, completing a minimum of two years and 2,400 hours experience perioperative nursing, and passing a qualification exam.

Ultraviolet (UV) Radiation Exposure = Skin Cancer

Being Prepared for the Summer Sun

Written by: Lowryanne Vick, DNP, APN, ACNP-BC, CCRN-CMCy Chief, Telehealth Services

Nationally, skin cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer. According to the Surgeon General, "Each year in the United States, nearly 5 million people are treated for all skin cancers combined, with an annual cost estimated at \$8.1 billion." Skin cancer is one of the most preventable forms of cancer and is often the result of UV exposure. Las Vegas summers are known for temperatures in the triple digits. During these extreme temperatures, many people hit the pool, go to the park, or just bask in the sun. These activities seem harmless. However, they come with potential hazards that can jeopardize your quality of life and finances or may even cause death.

Take necessary precautions while participating in these activities.

Why? **Do it B.E.C.A.U.S.E!**

Be aware of the different forms of skin cancer.

Examine your skin monthly.

Cover up by wear protective clothing and sunglasses with at least 99/100 percent UVA/UVB protection.

Avoid tanning.

Use sunscreen generously - SPF 30 or higher, reapply every two hours and after swimming or sweating.

Seek shaded area between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. ; remember...

Early detection and prevention. Dermatologists (skin specialists) at the VA can help!

Skin Cancer in Nevada

- Approximately 38.3 percent of white adults in Nevada had at least one sunburn in the past year. Sunburns are a risk factor for the development of skin cancer.
- An estimated 480 state residents were diagnosed with melanoma in 2009. Melanoma is responsible for about 75 percent of all skin cancer deaths.
- Humboldt County has the highest rate of new melanoma diagnoses, a rate that exceeds the national average.
- Approximately 68 people in Nevada die of melanoma annually.
- The melanoma death rate among Nevada residents is higher than the national average.



IS YOUR SKIN LOOKING GOOD?

WHEN DETECTED EARLY, SKIN CANCER IS HIGHLY TREATABLE.

The American Academy of Dermatology recommends that everyone check their skin regularly for any new or suspicious spots.

✓

SKIN CANCER SELF-EXAMINATION

You can detect skin cancer early by following dermatologists' tips for checking your skin:

1



Examine body front and back in mirror, especially legs.

2



Bend elbows, look carefully at forearms, back of upper arms, and palms.

3



Look at feet, spaces between toes and soles.

4



Examine back of neck and scalp with a hand mirror. Part hair and lift.

5



Finally, check back and buttocks with a hand mirror.

If you notice any irregular spots on your skin, or anything changing, itching or bleeding, see a board-certified dermatologist.



Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States.

Current estimates are that 1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime.





On average, one American dies from melanoma every hour.



To find a free SPOTme® skin cancer screening or a board-certified dermatologist, visit SpotSkinCancer.org. #LookingGoodin2016

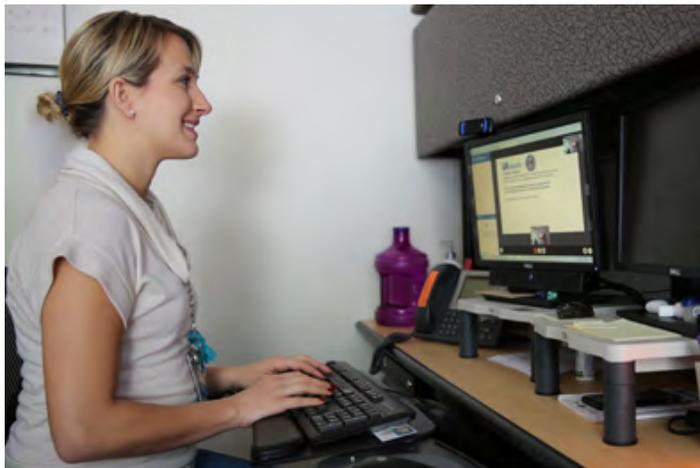
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- The melanoma death rate is nearly three times higher among Nevadan men than women.
- In 2009, over 1 million people were diagnosed with skin cancer, making it the most common of all cancers. More people were diagnosed with skin cancer in 2009 than with breast, prostate, lung, and colon cancer combined. About one in five Americans will develop skin cancer during their lifetime.
- One American dies of melanoma almost every hour.
- Melanoma is the second most common form of cancer for adolescents and young adults.
- For people born in 2009, one in fifty-eight will be diagnosed with invasive melanoma—more than 25 times the rate for people born in 1935.

For more information visit: www.SpotSkinCancer.org

Expanding Therapy Services to Victims of Military Sexual Trauma

The VASNHS is expanding therapy services by using some of the latest advancements in telehealth technology



Dr. Nicole Anders, a VA clinical psychologist conducting a “web camera” session

The VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System is expanding therapy services to victims of military sexual trauma by using some of the latest advancements in telehealth technology.

In an effort to assist those unable to travel for face-to-face MST counseling sessions, VASNHS clinical psychologists recently started to provide therapy to Veterans using smartphones, tablets and computers with webcams in their homes.

“We highly recommend in-person MST therapy whenever possible, but Veterans cannot always make the trip [to the VA],” said Dr. Nicole Anders, a clinical psychologist who oversees VASNHS’ MST program. “This option, while not preferred method to counsel those with MST-related needs, opens more therapy doors for those in need and is better than no treatment at all.”

Veterans who want to use the in-home telehealth counselling must first receive a referral from their provider. Once a request is approved, he or she receives an emailed link to join an online session

According to VA statistics, one in four women and one in 100 men report that they have experienced sexual assault or repeated sexual harassment during military service.

One hurdle that trauma counselors must overcome is the stigma surrounding sexual assault, especially among men. Statistically, men make up one half of all victims of military sexual trauma. Telehealth has the potential to help gradually introduce MST victims to therapy, and build trusting relationships with counselors.

“We don’t realize how much our lives can be affected by the secrets we keep,” Anders said. “If we are feeling emotionally upset it can affect our physical health, our relationships, etc. Mental health is so important, and is connected to all aspects of our lives. It’s very critical to find a safe space to open-up about issues. Time does not heal all wounds and it won’t go away without some work. But we are here to help.”

Veterans who have experienced MST related issues can get assistance by seeing their primary care provider and requesting a referral for face-to-face or telehealth counseling sessions.

For more information about the MST programs:

Visit www.lasvegas.va.gov or call **702-791-9062**

Upcoming Events April - June 2018 (Go to www.lasvegas.va.gov for current dates & times)

7-8 Apr - NDVS Nevada Veterans Advocate Workshop - Henderson

14 Apr - Health & Wellness Fair & Qtrly Veterans Town Hall - VAMC

4 May - UNLV Engage Breakfast for Veterans - UNLV

6-12 May - National Nurses’ Week 2018

10-13 May - American Patriot Fest & Traveling Vietnam Wall-Las Vegas

11- 12 May - At Ease Event: Free Legal Assistance for Veterans - VAMC

16 May - 8th Annual VA2K Walk & Roll - VAMC & Clinics

28 May - Federal Holiday: Memorial Day

12 June - 2018 VA Community Mental Health Summit - VAMC

14 June - United States Army Birthday 243 years



If you are a Veteran enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system, the **Veteran Appointment Request** mobile application (app) allows you to self-schedule or request primary care appointments and request mental health appointments. You can also view appointment details, track the status of requests, send messages about the requested appointments and get notifications about appointments and cancel appointments.

For directions go to: <https://mobile.va.gov/appstore/veterans>

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Changing Behavior for Better Health

The VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System *“To The Point Newsletter”* was designed to give Veterans, families and stakeholders information on the programs, services and the knowledge to better educate them of whole-health approaches to wellness.

Together with a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT), each Veteran works together with health care professionals to plan for whole-person care and life-long health and wellness. The Veteran is the focal point at the center of the health team so he or she can make informed decisions about their health care plan with the provider, nursing, nutrition, mental health, and services in the VA and local community.

Special Events

Health & Wellness Fair and VA Quarterly Town Hall



The SNVCEB Health & Wellness Fair will include information tables, as well as other displays and information for Veterans, their families and caregivers.

The Department of Veterans Affairs will hold its quarterly **Veterans Town Hall April 14, 2018**, which includes the **moderated Town Hall from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.** and **Health & Wellness Fair from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.**

The Town Hall will include updates from Veterans Health Care and Veterans Benefits leaders on national and local activities and initiatives, followed by a question and answer session where leaders will answer pre-submitted questions or questions of general interest submitted on a comment card during the session.

Veterans can submit questions in advance to: vhalaspao@va.gov

Questions of a personal nature or those unable to be addressed during the town hall will be sent to the appropriate representative for a direct response back to the submitter.

(Note: Listing of participating non-government organizations is for informational purposes only and does not infer or imply endorsement by the Department of Veterans Affairs)

When:

Saturday, April 14, 2018 at 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Where:

VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System Medical Center
6900 N. Pecos Road
North Las Vegas, NV 89086

Background:

Numerous Federal, State and Local Agencies and Community Partners will be on hand to provide information and assistance to Veterans, active-duty, Guard and Reserve personnel, families and caregivers. Co-hosted by the Southern Nevada Veterans Community Engagement Board (SNVCEB) and the Department of Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION IN THE VA SOUTHERN NEVADA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING WEB LINKS:

VASNHS Website
Free Email Alerts



Scan Here to Sign-up!



www.facebook.com/LasVegasVA



www.twitter.com/VALasVegas



www.myhealth.va.gov



www.instagram.com/VALasVegas

VASNHS YouTube



Scan Here for videos!