



Accessing Integrated Veterans Healthcare

Our aim is that Lehigh Valley's military service members, veterans and their families receive accessible and integrated health care services of the highest quality along the time continuum of care — including specialized services unique to their needs, no matter the source.

We know that only 28% of all Veterans obtain care through the Veterans Health Administration and those who do, rely heavily on commercial space health services to augment their needs. That means of the 19 million Veterans living in the United States only 5.3 million go to the VA for Care. Pennsylvania is the fourth largest state with Veterans, and we must be ready to help them. Veterans have a difficult time accessing medical benefits, timely care for health services, and navigating the complexity of health care.

One result LVMAC's formation of an alliance called the Healthcare in Our Community Task Force or Alliance. We seek to bring community health care providers and organizations together to offer solutions and develop coordinated care opportunities. We seek individuals who are intimately connected with healthcare in the Lehigh Valley, that can influence health services at the director or high level to serve on this task force. We believe a network of like-minded individuals, with an interest in helping Veterans achieve their potential through better healthcare services, designed to meet their need. Addressing not just Behavioral Health services but equally as important medical care.

Veterans' healthcare requires a community-wide investment and commitment to meet their needs. Sometimes these needs are unique. Not infrequently, long-term illnesses or life-threatening injuries are involved. When doctors and other health care providers work together and share information, Veterans needs and preferences are known and communicated at the right time to the right people, and the information is used to provide safe, appropriate, and effective care. This can help to keep Veterans healthier longer, better manage chronic conditions and experience care that is consistent with their medical goals and needs connected to military service.

When doctors and other health care providers don't communicate effectively with each other, treatments prescribed the Veteran creates different health issues, might conflict or become unmanageable. The Veteran is more likely to get unnecessary repeat tests. Worse yet, lack of coordination can lead to negative health outcomes, more use of emergency care, medication errors, poor transitions of care from hospital to VA or to home, and medical errors. These effects can have a larger negative impact on chronically ill or those with multiple complex health conditions.

Most veterans and their families living in the Lehigh Valley depend upon community hospital networks when they seek care. Less than 20% of veterans in the Lehigh Valley derive any form

of healthcare from the Veterans Health Administration and a bulk of Veterans would be ineligible for permanent VA healthcare a little-known fact by the public and many health care providers.

Since 2011, LVMAC has dealt with that reality. While it has sought to work collaboratively with the U.S. Departments of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) and any other governmental health care agencies (inclusive of state and local ones) wishing to provide first-class care to military service members, military veterans, and their families, most of its focus has been on the local healthcare establishment in the Lehigh Valley. Most of our healthcare endeavors involve the education of medical professionals and their supporting staff, changes to operating protocols, and improvements in communications and workings with the local Veterans Health Administration. Facilitating collaborative alliances between health services and healthcare organizations to work in unison.

Veteran health care is not competitive arena and often common ground for collaboration to serve the community can be reached. Reach out to us to learn more about the Healthcare in Our Community Task Force.

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