

VSO Leadership Forums  
Feb 6 – 9, 2012

The VSO Leadership Forums were designed to provide Veteran Service Organization leaders in the Philippines an opportunity to provide necessary feedback to VA Manila on current service levels. These forums also afforded the VA Manila Director the opportunity to provide updates and information regarding ongoing and upcoming initiatives to improve service to Veterans in the Philippines. The following represents a recap of the key points presented:

**Paperless Claims & E-Benefits:** VA is moving quickly to a paperless claims process through its E-Benefits program. Soon the primary means to file a claim with VA will be online. VA is encouraging all Veterans to enroll in E-Benefits.  
<https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal>

Features include:

- Status of your claim or appeal to BVA anytime anywhere, 24x7.
- Status of your monthly claim payment and payment history.
- Download DOD and VA records such as Official Military Personnel File incl. DD 214.
- VSOs will have access.

It does take a little time to get your password when you sign up for this program, but that should not be a reason not to enroll (a few weeks via mail). A Veteran in DEERS already or a Veteran with a MyHealthVet account can establish an E-Benefits account faster.

**MyHealthVet** is VA's online personal health record. All Veterans receiving healthcare from VA should sign up for a MyHealthVet account.  
[http://www.va.gov/eauth/My\\_HealthVet.asp](http://www.va.gov/eauth/My_HealthVet.asp)

MyHealthVet provides 24x7 online access to users anywhere, anytime to health care information, resources, tools. Some of the best features are:

- Ordering refills to prescriptions on-line
- Communicating with your doctor and primary care team via secure e-mail.
- See all scheduled appointments going back 2 years with the status of each.
- See chemistry & hematology lab results – display 7 days after test results entered.

**Simplified Notification Letter for Disability Rating Decisions:** Soon Veterans who have filed disability compensation or pension claim with VA Manila will receive notification letters that look and read differently than the lengthy letters we have always sent, along with the lengthy 'legalese' rating decision. Features of the re-designed letters include:

- This new letter should be much easier to understand.
- Eliminates sending two documents – one lengthy letter and a separate lengthy decision.
- Allows VA to make decisions faster = better service to Veterans

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\*NOTE: This does not change how VA makes decisions – just how VA communicates decisions to Vets.

**PHONES:** VA Manila is acutely aware of the challenges Veterans are having reaching its offices by phone, particularly in our clinic. Our Fix the Phones initiative is in progress and Veterans can expect to see improvements. VA Manila now has its Pharmacy line manned full-time and has reorganized the phone tree to properly route calls to the correct place. Two key points here: **We encourage Veterans to order prescription refills and renewals automatically through our new PLDT toll-free AudioCare Line: 1-800-1888-8387 (1-800-1888-VETS). Callers in metro Manila with a 02 area code may continue to use 556-8387 (556-VETS).**

VA encourages all Veterans Service Organizations to assist their membership by providing access to landline telephone service and Internet connectivity at their Post home.

VA Manila Fix the Phones Strategies include:

- Promote greater use of Audiocare.
- Promote Toll-Free Audiocare.
- Adding non-Pharmacy staff to call center and free up Pharmacy staff to refill prescriptions rather than answer phones.
- Controlled drug refills will be handled by other clinical staff.
- Encourage Veterans to order refills via MyHealtheVet.

\*\* For those who feel they must call the pharmacy, please dial (632) 556-8387.

VA Manila previously published a different number ((632) 318-8311) for its Pharmacy.  
**PLEASE DO NOT DIAL THIS NUMBER**

**CLINIC OPERATIONS.** VA Manila continues to experience some growing pains with our new building. While a significant upgrade from our previous clinic location, we realize we have more to do. Over the course of the first year in the new building the following enhancements have been added, mostly due to Veterans feedback:

- VA Manila now offers 7 am. access to the outside waiting pavillion. Clinic and Regional Office open for business at 7:30 am.
- Food Service has been provided in the waiting pavillion.
- Free Parking along the entire frontage road of the clinic and US Embassy Seafront compound has been added.
- Same day cash payments for beneficiary travel claims less than P15, 000 at \$0.41 per mile rate. Claims over P15,000 will be paid via direct deposit.

Improvements coming soon:

- New signage throughout the facility to assist traffic flow and help Veterans locate their assigned room.

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- Self-Service kiosk / Internet access in lobby for those with E-Benefits and MyHealthVet accounts
- Prescription renewals via Audiocare (refills are already possible via Audiocare). Renewals require a doctor's new prescription and number of indicated refills.
- A redesigned lab draw area to ease traffic in morning
- Better turn around time on lab results and prescription refills, reducing wait times in the clinic.
- A paging system in the outside waiting pavillion will be installed.
- Stricter enforcement of access policies such as allowing multiple attendants and family members inside clinic. This will free up sub-waiting areas for patients. Stricter no walk-in policies will be enforced, improving service to those with an appointment.

**Walk-Ins:** VA Manila is the only VA located in a foreign country. For security purposes VA, along with other US Embassy agencies providing public services, must operate on an appointment system. VA Manila has observed a significant increase in the number of Veterans presenting themselves without an appointment. This greatly disrupts VA operations and ultimately results in diminished service to those with appointments. Veterans Service Organization leaders are encouraged to remind their members to please make an appointment first. Those with a need to drop off documentation or to pick up lab results or medication refills are encouraged to call first. VA Manila can usually make arrangements that cause the least disruption. Travel reimbursement for drop offs of pick-ups is not authorized.

**Disruptive Visitors:** VA Manila has implemented a zero tolerance policy toward any form of abuse from visitor, be it physical, verbal, electronic. Please work with your organization's members to carry out our business in a mutually respectful manner. The Golden Rule applies. VA Manila insists its employees act and treat Veterans with respect. It is one of our core values. The same is expected from the Veterans we serve.

Disruptive behavior and failure to carry out one's personal financial obligations are also jeopardizing VA Manila's ability to provide fee-for-service care in the community. Veterans receiving a letter of authorization (LOA) from VA can only expect VA to pay for the treatment noted on the LOA. All other treatment obtained is at the Veterans' expense. Veterans displaying disruptive behavior toward staff in fee-basis facilities can ultimately result in limited options for care for all Veterans in the Philippines. More than once fee-basis facilities have called VA Manila to complain about patients referred to them. Several have threatened not to accept VA Manila's business. Veterans Service Organization leaders are encouraged to remind their members that their actions effect more than themselves.

**Flyer.** You can find the electronic copy of the 2-page flier handed at the forums at this link.

<http://photos.state.gov/libraries/manila/299618/dellutajc/US%20Department%20of%20Veterans%20Affairs.pdf>