

**MANILA VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC
ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REMINDERS
December 2021**

UPDATES FROM THE CLINIC MANAGER

Maligayang Pasko at Manigong Bagong Taon! Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! As 2021 draws to a close, I want to take a moment to reflect on the accomplishments of the VA Manila Outpatient Clinic and to recognize some of our staff.

VA Manila delivered more than 24,000 medical and mental health appointments to Veterans during Fiscal Year 2021, which ended on September 30. This was a 20% increase in total visits to VA Manila compared to Fiscal Year 2019. We are off to an equally busy start to this year, having already completed 5,500 appointments during the first three months of Fiscal Year 2022.

Also in 2021, VA Manila administered nearly 8,000 COVID-19 vaccines and boosters and we have 500 more Veterans scheduled to receive their boosters or first/second doses at vaccine clinics in January 2022. If you are still unvaccinated, please consider getting your jabs as soon as possible. And if you've already been vaccinated, get your booster shot. Vaccinations and boosters are the best way to help protect yourself, your families and communities from serious illness, hospitalizations, and complications from COVID. If you do get vaccinated from local government units or the Department of Health, please let your VA provider know so we can document your vaccine in your VA medical records. You can do this by sending your vaccine card to your care team via MyHealthVet / Secure Messenger.

We wouldn't have been able to accomplish so much in 2021 without the hard work of our dedicated staff. I was honored to join with the Embassy and the Charge d'Affaires to present Superior Honor Awards to many of the Clinic's staff members a few weeks ago – including our nurses, infection control committee, suicide prevention team, and safety manager. We also recognized two staff, Cookie Torrijos and Leony Revidad, for their 30 years of service with VA Manila. Your VA Manila staff have worked tirelessly this year, and we are so grateful for their hard work and sacrifices.

Looking ahead, we are committed to providing eligible Veterans with the care and services they have earned. VA Manila will continue to provide more appointment options to our Veteran community too – providing and even expanding telephone and video connect medical and mental health appointments. Offering more choices in appointment times and modalities helps VA Manila to serve our Veterans in the most convenient way possible for them. We are also expanding VA Manila's Mental Health services during 2022. We will be recruiting for new mental health providers, both psychiatrists and psychologists, and are also going to be hiring a dedicated mental health nurse to assist our growing clinical team. We hope to complete these actions over the first few months of 2022.

While 2021 had many challenges, we end the year filled with hope and promise. While I still find it hard to celebrate Christmas without cold temperatures and snow, there is something nice about being able to go golfing on Christmas Eve!

I wish you and your families a joyous Christmas, and a safe, healthy, and prosperous New Year.

COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATES:

VA Manila continues to provide COVID-19 vaccines and boosters to eligible, service-connected Veterans. Veterans who would like to receive their booster should contact VA Manila to schedule their appointment. You may call the Clinic during normal business hours, or email: ManilaCOVIDVaccine@va.gov.

VA Manila is currently providing Pfizer vaccinations and boosters. Veterans who received a J&J / Janssen primary vaccine at VA Manila are eligible and encouraged to receive a Pfizer booster. CDC has approved using different vaccine brands for the primary vaccine doses and the booster dose, and studies have shown this may result in higher levels of protective immunity. Currently, the only brand of vaccine VA Manila has available is the Pfizer vaccine. We do not anticipate receiving additional vaccine brands, such as J&J or Moderna, in the near future. Veterans who would prefer to receive a different brand of vaccine other than Pfizer may wish to contact their LGU or Department of Health representatives

The Clinic has available vaccine appointments on the following days:

- Monday, January 17 9:00 AM to 2:30PM (240 appointments)
- Thursday, January 20 10:30 AM to 11:30AM (12 appointments)
- Thursday, January 27 10:30 AM to 11:30AM (18 appointments)
- Saturday, January 29 9:00 AM to 2:30PM (240 appointments)

Because the Pfizer vaccine requires special handling to prepare it for administration, we cannot accommodate walk-in appointments during our mass-vaccine clinics. We also ask that Veterans arrive only 15 minutes ahead of their scheduled vaccine time. This helps to ensure patients are seen at their scheduled time and that we have enough seating while maintaining physical distancing.

UPCOMING CLINIC CLOSURES:

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

- US/PH Christmas Day
 - Friday, December 24, 2021 (observed)
- PH Jose Rizal Day
 - Thursday, December 30, 2021

- US/PH New Year's Day
 - Friday, December 31, 2021 (observed)

- US Birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - Monday, January 17, 2022 (observed)

****VA Manila will be open on MLK day for a Mass Vaccine Clinic for Service-Connected Veterans with scheduled vaccine appointments only****

During the week between Christmas and New Year's, VA Manila will be open and currently has some primary care appointments still available. While not all providers will be working, the Clinic will have at least 3 doctors here each day completing scheduled in-person and virtual appointments. The clinic will return to normal operations and full staffing on Monday, January 3, 2023.

NOTE: Plan ahead and order your refills 10 work days in advance of holiday closures. Air21 is also closed on these holidays so medications will be delayed if you fail to request refills 10 days in advance. If you run out of medications for a service-connected condition, you can buy a short-term supply of needed medicine and file a claim for reimbursement from the FMP. VA Manila's pharmacy has refilled all prescriptions due for renewal until January 3, 2022 and has already mailed them via Air21.

FOREIGN MEDICAL PROGRAM (FMP) UPDATES

TIPS FOR FAST FMP REIMBURSEMENT

Email or fax your claim instead of mailing it. You will reduce processing time by at least two weeks.

Email: hac.fmp@va.gov

Fax number: 1-303-331-7803

Submit your claim in one complete package. A complete package includes:

A completed VAF 10-7959F-2, Foreign Medical Program (FMP) Claim Cover Sheet.

Use a permanent address where mail will always reach you.

Include a diagnosis or nature of illness or injury

Doctor's name and medical title

Doctor's office address

Doctor's office telephone number

Doctor's billing address if different from office address

Include claim information – ESPECIALLY the Diagnosis Treated

Narrative Description of each service and/or drug (This determines if the condition is Service Connected)

Each service's billed charge

Date(s) of service.

Submitting a claim to FMP without all the required information will result in your claim be denied and you will have to resubmit a new claim.

HOW CAN I HELP GET MORE HOSPITALS TO ACCEPT FMP?

Contact your Veteran Organizations, Retired Activity Officers and Post Commanders to meet with hospital leadership in your community. Several hospitals on the current list are there because the RAO and Veterans organizations facilitated their participation

VA MANILA REGIONAL OFFICE AND OUTPATIENT CLINIC TELEPHONE NUMBERS

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

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

- AudioCare (Pharmacy Refills):
 - +63 (02) 8556-8387

- 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 – Transfer to Veterans Evaluation Services (VES)

Option 4 – Transfer to the Foreign Medical Program's Hotline

Option 5 – Transfer to VBA Offices in the United States

Option 6 – Transfer to the VA MISSION Act Hotline

Option 7 – Transfer to the Veteran's Crisis Line

Option 8 – Transfer to VA Manila's AudioCare Line (Pharmacy Refills)

PLEASE DON'T NO-SHOW!!! REMINDER TO CANCEL APPOINTMENTS

This serves as a friendly reminder to all Veterans who use the VA Manila Outpatient Clinic for their medical care, please cancel any appointments that you will not be able to keep. When Veterans do not cancel appointments, VA loses an opportunity to provide medical services to your fellow Veterans, decreases provider productivity, and requires additional administrative time from our staff to reschedule appointments. Ideally, we ask that Veterans notify the VA Outpatient Clinic at least 48 hours in advance of their appointment if you determine you have a scheduling conflict. This allows the Clinic's Advanced Medical Support Assistants (AMSAs) to reach out to other Veterans waiting for care to offer them the new time slot. Our AMSAs typically reach out to all Veterans 72 hours before their appointments to confirm

attendance. Additionally, the VA's AudioCare reminder system makes telephone reminder calls between 24-48 hours before Veteran appointments.

Please be considerate to your fellow Veterans and do your part if you have a scheduled appointment that you won't be able to keep. You can reach the clinic at +63 (2) 8550-3888, Option 2, or toll free at [#MyVA](https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/10-5345.pdf) (#6982) from any mobile phone.

COMPLETION OF VA AND NON-VA MEDICAL FORMS

VHA privacy and release of information policies and procedures are applied to releasing any VA or Non-VA Medical statements or medical forms completed on behalf of the Veteran.

VA Providers can complete medical statements/forms with respect to a Veteran's medical condition and functionality, to the best of their ability based on their scope, clinical expertise and available historical evidence.

Complete a VA Form 10-5345 and leave it together with the medical statement/form you want completed with the Office of Release of Information. Here is a link to the form on VA's webpage: <https://www.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/10-5345.pdf>.

Expect a VA Manila response within 20 working days.

Veterans requesting assistance with submitting a VA disability benefits claim should access the VBA Internet website at <http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation> or call +63 (02) 8550-3888 and press 1 for additional assistance or check in at the VBA Reception Desk

PLANNING TO TRAVEL TO THE UNITED STATES?

Veterans planning to travel to the United States and want to continue medical treatment should call the clinic's Traveling Veteran Coordinator (TVC) at +63 (02) 8550-3888, press option 2. Our TVC can facilitate your care with her counterpart in the United States. Your VA Manila provider will recommend coordination when needed care with an alternate VA facility near you is required. Please allow 4 to 6 weeks lead time to ensure appointments can be prearranged upon your arrival.

VETERANS CRISIS LINE

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified and caring Department of Veteran Affairs responders through a confidential toll-free hotline, online chat or text. Veterans and their loved ones can call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1. To learn more about the Veterans Crisis Line or to chat online, go to <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/> and click on the appropriate link.

NO VALID GOVERNMENT ID/NO ENTRY/NO EXCEPTIONS:

The U.S. Embassy Regional Security Office no longer permit employees, Veterans, attendants, and family members to enter a U.S. Embassy facility to include the VA Manila

Regional Office and Outpatient Clinic without a valid government picture ID. Family members and attendants over the age of 14 will also need to provide a valid government ID.

COMPUTER LAPTOPS PROHIBITED:

The U.S. Embassy, including VA Manila, no longer permits Veterans, attendants and family members to enter a U.S. Embassy facility with a computer laptop. Do not bring any large electronic device as the U.S. Embassy guards nor VA staff are permitted to accept or store the device.

OTHER PROHIBITED ITEMS:

Visitors, attendants and family members are prohibited from bringing into a U.S. Embassy facility, including VA Manila, weapons of any kind to include pocket knives, cameras, recording devices, and large electronic devices. Veterans, attendants, family members and visitors are prohibited from taking photos inside the facility and are prohibited from leaving their personal belongings in the reception lobby.

Daniel Gutkoski, MHA
Clinic Manager