

**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs New York Harbor Healthcare System
PATIENT HANDBOOK: QUALITY HEALTH CARE FOR VETERANS**

Welcome to the Department of Veterans Affairs New York Harbor Healthcare System (VA NYHHS). We are a multi-site healthcare system in the Veterans Integrated Service Network 3 (VISN 3). We provide quality care to eligible veterans of the United States Armed Forces. Our hospital staff is trained to provide you with the best care to meet your medical, psychosocial, emotional, and spiritual needs. We are committed to helping you improve your health.

At VA NYHHS, our major goals are to provide quality health care services, delivered in a timely, ethical and financially responsible manner, in an organizational culture consistent with our mission, vision and values. We have full accreditation from the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations.

Our mission is to provide our veteran patients with the best health care using the abilities of all employees, supported by our commitment to education and research. We seek to be the provider of choice of veterans and the community by offering efficient, integrated quality health care services through a full range of inpatient acute and tertiary care, and outpatient primary, specialty and chronic health care services in a system that is easily accessible.

I thank you for choosing VA NYHHS as your health care provider.

Director, VA NY Harbor Healthcare System

PATIENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is pleased that you have selected us to provide your health care. We want to improve your health and well-being. We will make your visit or stay as pleasant for you as possible. As part of our service to you, to other veterans and to the nation, we are committed to improving healthcare quality. We also train future healthcare professionals, conduct research and support our country in times of national emergency. In all of these activities, our employees will respect and support your rights as a patient.

I. Respect and Nondiscrimination

- You will be treated with dignity, compassion and respect as an individual. Your privacy will be protected. You will receive care in a safe environment. We will seek to honor your personal and religious values.
- Your or someone you choose has the right to keep and spend your own money. You have the right to receive an accounting of VA held funds.
- Treatment will respect your personal freedoms. In rare cases, the use of medication and physical restraints may be used if all other efforts to keep you or others free from harm have not worked.
- As an inpatient or long-term care resident you may wear your own clothes and keep personal items. This depends on your medical condition.
- As an inpatient or long-term care resident, you have the right to social interaction and regular exercise. You will have the opportunity for religious worship and spiritual support. You may decide whether or not to participate in these activities. You may decide whether or not to perform tasks in or for the Medical Center.
- As an inpatient or long-term care resident, you have the right to communicate freely and privately. You may have or refuse visitors. You will have access to public telephones. You may participate in civic rights.
- As a long-term care resident, you can organize and take part in resident groups in the facility. Your family also can meet with the families of other residents.
- In order to provide a safe treatment environment for all patients and staff, you are asked to respect other patients and staff and to follow the facility's rules. Avoid unsafe acts that place others at risk for accidents or injuries. Please immediately report any condition you believe to be unsafe.

II. Information Disclosure and Confidentiality

- You will be given information about the health benefits that you can receive. The information will be provided in a way you can understand.
- You will receive information about the costs of your care, if any, before you are treated. You are responsible for paying for your portion of the costs associated with your care.
- Your medical record will be kept confidential. Information about you will not be released without your consent unless authorized by law (i.e., State public health reporting). You have the right to information in your medical record and may request a copy of your records. This will be provided except in rare situations where your VA physician feels the information will be harmful to you. In that situation, you have the right to have this discussed with you by your VA provider.
- You will be informed of all outcomes of care, including any injuries caused by your medical care. You will be informed about how to request compensation for injuries.

III. Participation in Treatment Decisions

- You, and any persons you choose, will be involved in all decisions about your care. You will be given information you can understand about the benefits and risks of treatment. You will be given other options. You can agree to or refuse treatment. Refusing treatment will not affect your rights to future care but you have the responsibility to understand the possible results to your health. If you believe you cannot follow the treatment plan you have a responsibility to notify the treatment team.
- As an inpatient or long-term care resident, you will be provided any transportation necessary for your treatment plan.
- You will be given, in writing, the name and professional title of the provider in charge of your care. As a partner in the healthcare process, you have the right to be involved in choosing your provider. You will be educated about your role and responsibilities as a patient. This includes your participation in decision-making and care at the end of life.
- Tell your provider about your current condition, medicines (including over the counter and herbals) and medical history. Also, share any other information that affects your health. You should ask questions when you don't understand something about your care. This will help in providing you the best care possible.
- You have the right to have your pain assessed and to receive treatment to manage your pain. You and your treatment team will develop a pain management plan together. You are expected to help the treatment team by telling them if you have pain and if the treatment is working.
- You have the right to choose whether or not you will participate in any research project. Any research will be clearly identified. Potential risks of the research will be identified and there will be no pressure for you to participate.
- You will be included in resolving any ethical issues about your care. You may consult with the Medical Center's Ethics Committee and/or other staff knowledgeable about health care ethics.
- If you or the Medical Center believes that you have been neglected, abused or exploited, you will receive help.

IV. Complaints

- You are encouraged and expected to seek help from your treatment team and/or a patient advocate if you have problems or complaints. You will be given understandable information about the complaint process available to you. You may complain verbally or in writing, without fear of retaliation.

VA NYHHS Facilities

Our Three Main Campuses

Brooklyn Campus

800 Poly Place

Brooklyn, NY 11209

Telephone number: (718) 836-6600

Medical, surgical and psychiatric facility with 153 operating beds and outpatient clinics. The Brooklyn Campus provides radiation oncology for all of VA NYHHS.

New York Campus

423 East 23rd Street

New York, NY 10010

Telephone number: (212) 686-7500

Referral level 2 tertiary care facility with 166 operating beds and outpatient clinics. The NY Campus receives patients for cardiac surgery, neurosurgery, prosthetics and other services from other VISN 3 VA medical centers.

St. Albans Campus

179-00 Linden Blvd.

Jamaica, NY 11425

Telephone number: (718) 526-1000

Extended Care Center that provides long and short term skilled nursing and rehabilitation with 231 beds (181 nursing home beds, 50 psychosocial domiciliary program beds); also outpatient primary care services.

VA NYHHS Visiting Hours

Medical/Surgical Units: 11:30 am - 8:30 pm daily

Intensive Care Units (two visitors for 10 minutes per hour): 11:00 am - 8:00 pm daily

Psychiatry Units: Please check with unit staff for visiting hours; exceptions may be made)

St. Albans Primary and Extended Care Center: 9:00 am - 9:00 pm daily

PRIMARY CARE PROGRAM

Our main focus at VA NYHHS is to provide quality primary care services. The Primary Care Program offers continuity and coordination of medical care, with an emphasis on timely access to care. You are assigned a primary care provider who is part of an interdisciplinary team. Your provider and the team will work with you to promote good health. You will have regular health screenings and check-ups. The provider will help you prevent and manage chronic diseases. He or she will also provide health education and nutrition counseling.

If you need specialty care, your primary care provider will ensure that you will be evaluated and treated by the appropriate specialist provider, and will coordinate your care with that specialist provider.

The **Brooklyn, New York, and St. Albans** campuses have active Primary Care programs. These services are also provided in the following community locations:

Veterans Healthcare Center

40 Flatbush Avenue Extension, 8th Floor,
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201

Telephone number: (718) 439-4300

Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 am-4:30 pm

The clinic is located on Chapel Street (entrance is at 40 Flatbush Avenue Extension) in downtown Brooklyn. The clinic offers medical care and mental health services and programs. The programs include Mental Health Intensive Case Management, VA Supported Housing and a homeless veterans drop-in center. There is also a mental health outpatient clinic and an ambulatory substance abuse program. VA shuttle service is provided to link veterans to services at the New York and Brooklyn campuses.

Staten Island Clinic

1150 South Avenue, Suite 301
Staten Island, N.Y. 10314

Telephone number: (718) 761-2973

Hours: Monday, 9:30 am-6:00 pm Tuesday through Friday, 8:00 am-4:30 pm

The clinic provides primary care, podiatry, mental health and optometry services. Patients who need other specialty care services are referred to the Brooklyn / New York campuses.

Harlem Care Clinic

55 West 125th Street, 11th floor
New York, N.Y. 10027

Telephone number: (212)828-5265

Hours: Monday through Friday, 8:00 am -4:30 pm.

The clinic provides the full range of primary care and preventive health services.

If you wish to transfer your health care to a VA community-based outpatient clinic listed above, please discuss this with your primary care provider.

EMERGENCY CARE

The Emergency/Admitting unit, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, has staff that provides emergency medical treatment and evaluates acute medical, surgical and psychiatric problems. You should come to the Emergency Unit if you have a medical emergency. You may be admitted for continued medical care. If admission is not needed, the ER staff will observe you, treat your problem and give you an outpatient appointment. If you do not feel well, but do not think it is an emergency, call your Primary Care Physician.

At the Brooklyn Campus, the Emergency Triage area is located on the Ground Floor of the main building. The Emergency Triage area at the New York Campus is located on the first floor of the main building. Patients may either enter through the main doors on 23rd Street or the ambulance entrance on 1st Avenue. The St. Albans Campus does not have an emergency care area.

ADMISSION PROCEDURES

The Admissions support staff help you when you are admitted. They will ask you for information to verify that you are eligible for VA health care.

If you are admitted to any of the inpatient services of VA NYHHS, please be sure to bring necessary items like eyeglasses, hearing aids, dentures, or other prosthetic devices. Do not bring excess clothing, personal items and valuables such as jewelry or large amounts of cash. If you must bring cash with you, please deposit it with the Agent Cashier for safekeeping. You will receive a cash receipt, which you should keep in your personal records. The VA is not responsible for any loss of property kept at your bedside. Please note: If you deposit a large amount of cash with the Agent Cashier, the full amount may not be available on your day of discharge. If this occurs, you must return in a day or two to pick up your cash or the cashier will send you a check by mail.

The staff will give you VA pajamas and a robe but you may bring your own from home.

Do not bring any medications from home. Please bring a list of the medications you are taking. Your doctor will write new orders for medications (which may change because of your present illness). If you take vitamins or herbal medicine of any kind, tell a member of your health care team.

YOUR UNIT

Most rooms at VA NYHHS have two to four beds with bedside stands. Many have private bathrooms shared between two patient rooms. Otherwise, the showers and bathtubs are located in a central room. VA NYHHS staff understand your need for comfort, caring and excellent treatment during your stay. They will be happy to assist you in any way they can. Each unit has a patient day room where you may mingle with other patients or visit with family. At the Brooklyn and New York campuses, it is important that you remain on the unit so you do not miss a visit from your care team. At the St. Albans Campus, patients are encouraged to take advantage of off-ward activities. For your safety, you should tell staff where you are at all times.

DISCHARGE FROM INPATIENT SERVICES

Discussion about your discharge begins on the day of admission to any unit of VA NYHHS. On the day of discharge, your care team will discuss your ongoing care with you. Your physician will prescribe any medications you will need. Before you are discharged your nurse will:

- give you written discharge instructions
- discuss your follow-up care
- answer your questions

Your pharmacist or nurse will explain how to:

- take your medications as prescribed

Your nurse will explain or remind you how to:

- follow your diet plan
- carry out self care procedures
- use equipment properly
- reach your Primary Care physician to report any problems

Other members of your care team (for example, your social worker or dietitian) may also give you information. If you anticipate the need for home care or referrals to community agencies, tell someone on your health care team.

For your comfort and safety, please tell your family or a friend when you expect to leave the hospital. You are responsible for planning your travel home. You will be provided with discharge instructions, medications, and follow-up appointments. Please do not leave without them.

YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM

All VA New York Harbor Healthcare System staff wear ID badges. You may always ask to see a staff member's ID badge. The staff who care for you are part of an interdisciplinary team. You should talk to them about any questions, concerns, fears or anxieties regarding your health care.

Physicians

Your Attending Physician is responsible for your treatment, whether you are receiving care in an outpatient clinic or you are admitted to an inpatient unit. The Attending Physician may give instructions for your care to a member of the House Staff. House Staff are Residents and Fellows who are physicians pursuing advanced studies. Attending Physicians supervise them. In the outpatient clinics, you may be assigned to the care of a Physician's Assistant or Nurse Practitioner, who also work under the direct supervision of an Attending Physician.

Nursing Staff

Registered Nurses (RNs) have specialized patient care training. They work on the inpatient wards and in the outpatient clinics. Patient Care Team Coordinators (PCTCs) or Nurse Managers lead each inpatient unit. They work with your physician and other health care providers to plan, coordinate and implement your care. Other nursing staff assigned to your care may include Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), Nursing Assistants (NAs) and Health Care Technicians (HCTs).

Social Workers

Social Workers assigned to the inpatient wards and outpatient clinics provide individual, family and group counseling to address the emotional and social concerns relating to your illness. They provide information and referrals for community services and entitlements, and will assist with discharge planning. Referrals can be made for home care services or for placement in facilities such as adult homes, assisted living programs, community nursing homes or terminal care facilities.

Clinical Nutrition Staff

Your Primary Care provider may refer you to a Dietitian. If you are admitted to the hospital, a dietitian may assess your nutritional needs, food preferences and food allergies. As a member of your treatment team, the Dietitian will design the correct diet for your condition and will provide you and your family with diet counseling as needed.

NOTE: If you need translation services, contact a member of your health care team.

VA NYHHS SERVICES

HEALTH EDUCATION FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

You have the right to know about your illness and health. Your health care team will help you understand the medical information you need to know. They will also help you consider healthy lifestyle choices to promote better health. Please ask questions to make sure you understand the information provided.

You may choose to:

- Discuss your health problems in one-to-one meetings with health care staff
- Read books or pamphlets
- Attend a class or group
- Log on to the Library computer health programs
- Watch HealthTV on the inpatient units
- Watch a video on a ward or in the Library.

Ask our staff to direct you to health programs that interest you. The people closest to you, your family and friends, are welcome to attend most programs with you. A list of programs is posted on bulletin boards at all VA NYHHS campuses. Please share your ideas for health education programs with Patient/Family Health Education at extension 4218 (New York Campus).

Pain Management

Our goal is to reduce pain and suffering for the veterans we care for. We recognize your right to have your pain appropriately assessed and managed. We ask about your pain when you visit as an outpatient, or are admitted to the hospital. Your treatment team will talk to you about your pain, treat it, or refer you for other care as clinically needed. Discuss your pain and pain treatment with your treatment team. You need to be actively involved in the management of your pain. We assess pain on a scale of 0-10 with 0 being no pain and 10 being the worst pain you can imagine.

Ambulatory Surgery

Procedures that can be performed safely and effectively in just one day are called ambulatory or outpatient surgery. Once you and your doctor have decided that surgery is needed, you will come to the hospital as an outpatient for all laboratory work, x-rays, anesthesia clearance and medical clearance. A nurse will call you on the day before the procedure (or on Friday if the procedure is scheduled for Monday) to confirm what time you must arrive for your surgery. Ambulatory surgery is done at the Brooklyn and New York campuses.

On the day of surgery, you will report to the Ambulatory Surgery Suite. At the Brooklyn Campus, the suite is located on 4 West; at the New York Campus, it is on 10 South. The staff will give you hospital clothes to wear for the surgery and a locker for your clothing. The surgical staff will see you before the procedure and answer your questions.

After the procedure, you will be moved to the Recovery Room, where you will be observed and monitored while you recover from sedation. You will stay in the Ambulatory Procedures Suite until you are ready to go home. A nurse will review your discharge instructions with you. You must have a responsible adult (usually a family member or friend) to take you home. You will need to arrange this before surgery. You must give us the name and telephone number of your escort before your surgical procedure.

The nurse will contact you the day after your surgery to see how you are feeling. He or she will answer your questions and talk with you about any concerns you may have.

Hoptel

VA NYHHS provides free, overnight accommodations - the Hoptel - at the Brooklyn and New York campuses. This service is for veterans undergoing surgery or therapeutic/ diagnostic procedures on an ambulatory basis. The Hoptel is also used to increase access to services for patients who live far from VA NYHHS sites. Under special circumstances, family members may be allowed to stay in the Hoptel while the veteran is staying there. The Hoptel is a self-care program. You need to make arrangements to use the Hoptel with your Primary Care Physician or Surgeon in advance, if you believe you will need to stay overnight.

At the Brooklyn Campus, the Hoptel is open from 3:30 pm Sunday to 11 am Friday. It is located on 4 East, and is open for check-in, 12 noon-8:30 pm. A Hoptel Desk Clerk is on duty, 8 am-4:30 pm, Monday-Friday. A service representative is on duty 24 hours a day.

At the New York Campus, the Hoptel is located on 10 South. It is open, 4:30 am Sunday until 7 pm Friday. It is open for check-in 4 pm-9 pm Sunday-Thursday. A service representative is available 24 hours a day.

Nurses Helpline

CALL-A-NURSE is a VISN-wide telephone helpline service, available to all patients evenings and nights from 3:30pm - 8:00am, and on weekends and holidays 24 hours a day. Registered Nurses answer these phones. Call 1-800-877-6976 or 1-718-579-3390 and talk to a nurse if you have a question about your care and you are unable to reach your provider.

If you need to reach someone in the Primary Care clinics during regular clinic hours (8am-4pm), you can call:

Brooklyn Campus: 1-718-630-3773 or 1-718-439-4185,
New York Campus: 1-212-686-7500, extension 3828, and
St. Albans Campus: 1-718-298-8400.

Pharmacy Services

Inpatient Pharmacy Service

Upon admission, please tell the Physician, Nurse or Pharmacist about all your allergies. A Pharmacist is on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The pharmacist reviews, and prepares all your medications as your physician orders them. The Pharmacy will provide you with your outpatient medications to take home from the hospital.

Outpatient Pharmacy Service

The Outpatient Pharmacy is located:

Brooklyn Campus: in the Outpatient Addition. It is open Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5:30 pm.

New York Campus: on the Main Floor, in the Main Lobby. It is open Monday through Friday, 8 am to 7 pm. It is also open on Saturdays, 9 am to 4 pm.

St. Albans: on the First Floor, main corridor. It is open 8:30 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday.

Pharmacists review and fill your prescriptions and counsel you about your medications at all three sites.

New Prescriptions

Patients who are given new prescriptions can bring them directly to pharmacists in the following clinic areas:

Brooklyn Campus: located in the POD areas on the Ground Floor of the Outpatient Addition

New York Campus: in Area B-Primary Care (Basement-Outpatient Addition), in the Emergency Room, and in the Psychiatry-Lobby area on the Second Floor

St. Albans: located at the Pharmacy window on the Ground Floor.

Your pharmacist will input your prescriptions and review your medication profile. He or she will check for drug interactions, medication dosage, and your drug allergies. Pharmacists will counsel you on how to take your medications safely.

When you pick up your prescription, it will be filled in the outpatient Pharmacy. When your medication is ready, your name will flash on television monitors in the Outpatient Pharmacy area. You can pick up your prescription after 30 minutes. Any medication not picked up in 5 business days will be returned to pharmacy stock.

Refills

If your Physician orders refills for you, you will receive refill slips with your medication. Return this slip to the Pharmacy at least two weeks before you expect your current supply to run out. You can use the mail address label given with your prescription. Fax the refill slip to (212)951-5490, or drop it into the refill box in the following locations:

Brooklyn Campus: at the Pharmacy window, Ground Floor in the Outpatient Clinic Building

New York Campus: across from the Pharmacy window on the Main Floor
St. Albans Campus: near the Pharmacy window on the First Floor.

You should receive your medication, mailed to your address, within 7-10 days.

You may also use the toll-free Dial-A-Refill Number 1-888-207-2004 (Brooklyn and St. Albans campuses) and 1-888-216-9094 (New York Campus). You can use it twenty-four hours a day to refill medications or check the status of refills.

Chaplain Service

Chaplains provide spiritual/religious care to patients of various faiths. VA NYHHS will make every effort to arrange for a spiritual care provider of most faiths when the patient's faith tradition is not represented by our chaplains. For a scheduled of services, or to speak with a chaplain, please call extension 3396 at the Brooklyn and St. Albans campuses, and extension 7016 at the New York Campus.

Each campus has a chapel for meditation, silent devotion, and services. Patients, relatives, and visitors are welcome to use the Chapel. The chapels are located in the following areas at the three main campuses of VA NYHHS:

Brooklyn Campus: The Chapel is located on the Ground Floor at the rear of the main building.

New York Campus: The Chapel is located on the Ground Floor at the rear of the main building.

St. Albans Campus: The Chapel is located on the first floor, B Wing.

Patient Representative Program

The Patient Representative can help you with concerns that cannot be resolved by staff on your unit or in your clinic. The Patient Representative can answer questions about hospital policy and procedures.

Brooklyn Campus - 1st Floor Room 1-208

Telephone Number: (718) 630-3510

From the inpatient units, dial "#", then 4, then 3510.

New York Campus - 3rd Floor Room 3037 West

Telephone Number: (212) 686-7500, extension 7080; (877) 845-3246

From the inpatient units, dial extension 7080.

St. Albans Campus - We encourage you to have issues resolved on the unit. St. Albans staff will assist you if you need to reach the Patient Representative at the New York or Brooklyn campuses.

Veterans Benefits Counselor

The New York State Veterans Benefits Counselor provides helpful information on possible benefits. The Benefits Counselor can help with information and applications for Government Life Insurance, education benefits, on-the-job training or vocational retraining, GI loans for homes and VA disability payment for service connected and non-service connected conditions. The locations and schedule of service are listed below. It is best to call for an appointment.

Brooklyn Campus - 5th Floor, Room 536

Telephone Number: (718) 836-6688, extensions 3709 or 3710. The counselor is available Monday-Friday, 9 am to 4 pm.

New York Campus - 9th Floor, Room 9144

Telephone Number: (212) 686-7500, extension 7086

The counselor is available Monday-Friday, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm.

St. Albans Campus - 1st Floor, Room S101

Telephone Number: (718) 526-1000, extension 2217

The counselor is available on Monday-Thursday, from 9 am to 5 pm.

Veterans Service Organizations

At the **Brooklyn Campus**, you may contact representatives of veteran service organizations by leaving a message at the Voluntary Service Office located on 5 East, or by calling extension 6788.

To contact representatives of the veteran and service organizations at the **St. Albans Campus**, you can call Voluntary Service at extension 2295 or 2235.

You may contact representatives of veterans and service organizations at the **New York Campus** by visiting the Service Organizations Office, Room 1-089 South or by calling extension 3962 or 3597. You can also visit the Voluntary Service Office on the First Floor, in the South Wing or by calling extension 7920.

Cafeteria

The Cafeteria serves a variety of hot and cold foods to staff, visitors and outpatients.

Brooklyn Campus - The Cafeteria is located on the First Floor. It is open Monday through Friday, 7:00 am - 3:30 pm and Saturday, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm. There is also a cappuccino cart (open 7:00 am - 2:30 pm Monday through Friday) and a vending machine area on the Ground Floor.

New York Campus - The Cafeteria is located on the Second Floor in the Clinical Addition. It is open Monday through Friday, 7:00 am - 2:30 pm. There is a vending machine area in the main building on the Second Floor near the elevators.

St. Albans Campus - The Cafeteria is located on the Ground Floor. It is open Monday through Friday, 7:30 am - 3:00 pm. A vending machine area is located on the First Floor, near the main entrance.

Retail Store

The retail store has many personal and gift items for sale including clothing, toiletries, perfumes, watches, electronics and snacks. You may pay with cash, Canteen coupons, VISA, MasterCard and Discover cards.

Brooklyn Campus - The Retail Store is on the First Floor. It is open Monday through Friday, 7:30 am - 4:00 pm and Saturday, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm.

New York Campus - The Retail Store is located on the First Floor South Wing. It is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.

St. Albans Campus - The Retail Store is located on the Ground Floor. It is open Monday through Friday, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm.

Library Service

The Patient Library has a large selection of patient health education materials and general information available in printed form as well as on computer. For the blind or handicapped, there are large print books, talking book machines and tapes.

Library Service Locations and Hours:

Brooklyn Campus

2nd floor, Room 2-110, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm

New York Campus

2nd Floor, Room 2225N, Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 5:30 pm

St. Albans Campus

1st Floor, Room A-131; please call Library for hours.

Telephones

All patient rooms on the medical and surgical units have telephones. You may use the telephone at your bedside to receive or place calls. Long distance calls (outside area code 718, 212, 917 or 646) must be placed either collect or with your credit card. In the intensive care units, telephones are brought to the patient's bedside. Patient rooms on psychiatry and substance abuse units do not have phones at the bedside. There are pay phones on the units for patients to use. If you are hearing impaired, speak with a nurse on your unit regarding an assisted listening device.

To place a local telephone call on the inpatient units at the **Brooklyn Campus**, dial 9 and the number, and for calls inside the hospital, dial #, then 4, then the extension. For long distance, collect, or credit card calls, dial 0.

At the **New York Campus**, to place a telephone call outside the hospital (including local), dial 9, then 0, then area code, then the telephone number (outside calls must be made through a calling card, collect or third party payer). For telephone calls inside hospital, dial the 4-digit extension.

To place a local telephone call from the inpatient units at the **St. Albans Campus**, dial 9 and the telephone number. For calls within the facility, dial the 4-digit extension.

VA REGULATIONS

Safety and Security

VA Police enforce VA rules for a safe, secure and healthy environment at VA NYHHS. VA regulations prohibit:

- Possession, consumption, and being under the influence of alcohol or drugs while in any facility of VA NYHHS
- Possession of weapons in the facility
- Threats, verbal abuse, or attempts at physical assault
- Theft or damage of government property
- Patients hospitalized at the **Brooklyn** and **New York** campuses should not leave their unit without an escort.

These regulations apply to all persons, including patients, their families and other visitors, volunteers and employees.

Because VA NYHHS is a federal institution, increased security initiatives have been implemented to ensure the security of all patients, visitors and staff. Operators of motor vehicles are required to present identification prior to entering the grounds of the **Brooklyn**, **New York** and **St. Albans** campuses. All persons are required to present identification upon entrance to any of the facilities of VA NYHHS, and are required to enter through x-ray machines at the **Brooklyn** and New York campuses.

Patients and visitors are asked to follow all instructions given by VA Police. Please respect the treatment, comfort or safety of other patients.

Violation of posted VA rules may lead to disciplinary action in keeping with the gravity of the offense. Disciplinary action also considers the physical and mental condition of the offender. These may include restriction to unit or disciplinary discharge (for inpatients), ejection from the grounds, fines, and/or prosecution in Federal Court.

The safety of all patients is of utmost importance. Occasionally you may hear alarm bells for fire or disaster drills. Drills help to keep the staff prepared should a real fire occur. In the rare event of a real fire or disaster, the nursing staff will help you. Remain calm and follow directions.

Other Safety Suggestions:

- Please obey all posted regulations.
- Please call the nurse if you see that another patient is confused, unsteady, or has fallen.
- Please use corridor handrails when walking on the unit.
- Be alert for other people, equipment, or hazards in your path.
- Report any spills or wet areas to the staff.
- If you need any personal electronic items, please discuss with the unit staff

Parking Regulations

Those driving on VA NYHHS grounds must observe the posted speed limits and parking signs. Persons who operate or park cars in violation of the regulations are subject to a notice and a fine.

At the New York Campus there is limited handicapped parking. Patients and visitors are encouraged to use public transportation.

At the Brooklyn and St. Albans campuses, parking space is limited and patients' cars cannot be left during hospitalization. Visitors may park only during visiting hours in designated visitor parking areas. Please do not park in spaces reserved for handicapped patients and staff. Outpatients with scheduled clinic appointments or emergency room visits may park in the lot.

Smoking

The mission of VA NYHHS is to promote wellness and preserve good health. Therefore, the Brooklyn and New York campuses of VA NYHHS are smoke-free facilities. Smoking is not permitted anywhere inside the hospital or near entrance/exit doors.

Residents of the St. Albans Campus are permitted to smoke ONLY in designated areas.

Smoking Cessation classes are offered at all three campuses.

Veteran Co-payments and Health Insurance

Health care provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is paid with:

- Funds appropriated by Congress (tax dollars)
- Reimbursements from a patient's health insurance
- Co-payments from patients.

Tax dollars provide a large amount of the money needed to provide health care services to our country's veterans. Congress and the President determine the amount to be allocated to the VA on a yearly basis.

By law, the VA is required to bill health insurance carriers for treatment provided to veterans for non service-connected conditions. This means VA must bill any health insurance plan that provides coverage. To do this, VA needs information about your health insurance coverage. The VA may call you at home to ask for the information. They may also ask you for it when you come for treatment. Always bring your insurance card with you when you come for a visit. It provides most of the information needed.

All of the money collected by the VA from health insurance companies and co-payments is returned to VA NYHHS to pay for programs for veterans.

Eligibility for VA medical care is not affected by your insurance coverage.

Most non service-connected veterans and non compensable 0% service-connected veterans are required to complete an annual Means Test. The Means Test is a measure of your family's income and assets. This must be updated every year.

If your income and assets fall below the Means Test threshold, you will not be charged co-payments for medical treatment or fees for facility use. VA will charge your insurance carrier for your non-service connected care and for medication refills.

If your income and assets exceed the threshold, you will be charged co-payments for non service-connected medical treatment and fees for facility use. If you have insurance, the VA will charge your insurance carrier for your non service-connected treatment and for medication refills.

VA charges three co-payments:

- The Means Test (Treatment) Co-payment - for inpatient, outpatient and extended care treatment
- The Per Diem (Facility) Co-payment - a daily charge for inpatient care
- The Medication Co-payment-for each 30-day (or less) supply of outpatient medication.

If you have a question about your eligibility or responsibility for co-payments, you can contact Eligibility at the following locations:

Brooklyn Campus:

Ground Floor, Room G-100
Telephone: (718) 836-6600, extension 1807

New York Campus:

Booths C and D in the Admitting Area
Telephone: (212) 686-7500, extensions
4411, 7181, 3691

St. Albans Campus:

Room S-107
Telephone: (718) 526-1000, extension 2612

If you have a question about your hospital bill, please call the MCCF Call Center at 1-888-440-9587 (toll-free) or extension 4034 (at the Brooklyn Campus), Monday-Friday, 8 am-4:30 pm. Please have your bill on hand when you call.

VA NYHHS Organizational Ethics

VA New York Harbor Healthcare System operates according to a code of ethical behavior, which respects the rights of residents and patients. If you or members of your family have any ethical concerns relating to care received at any of our facilities, we can help you resolve them. First, speak with your physician, nurse, or other members of your care team for explanations of treatment, procedures and to answer your questions. You can also speak with your personal spiritual advisor or member of the Chaplain Service to review religious aspects of the issue, if this is a concern. You have the right to request an ethical consultation. The purpose of an ethical consultation is to assure that you, your family and your treatment team are communicating effectively and that the personal values of all parties are considered. The consultation team does not make treatment decisions. It assists with choices that you and your treatment team make. If you wish to have an ethical consultation, please notify a member of your treatment team. You may also contact the office of the Chief of Staff. The number at the Brooklyn/St. Albans campuses is ext. 3310. The number at the New York Campus is ext. 7104.

VA Advance Directives

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recognizes the rights of patients to have an Advance Directive. This is a legal document provides guidance for your future care. It includes three sections as follows (any or all sections may be completed):

- **Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care** - When you use this part of the form you are able to name a person or persons to act on your behalf if you were ever so ill or disabled that you could not make your wishes known.
- **Living Will** - A Living Will allows you to document in advance your wishes regarding life-sustaining treatments.
- **Treatment Preferences** - This section is used to address your wishes with regards to treatment you would or would not want to receive. You have the right to accept or refuse any medical treatment.

You may make or change your Advance Directive at any time.

PATIENT SAFETY

- Speak up if you have questions.
- Pay attention to your care.
- Educate yourself about your diagnosis and treatment.
- Ask a trusted person to be your advocate.
- Know what medications you take and why you take them.
- Use an accredited hospital (VA New York Harbor Healthcare System is accredited).
- Participate in all decisions about your treatment.

(Excerpted from The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations SPEAK UP Campaign, 2002)

Important VA NYHHS Telephone Numbers

Main Switchboard	Brooklyn 718-836-6600	New York 212-686-7500	St. Albans 718-526-1000
Admitting	3259	3691	2417
Billing	888-440-9587 (all Campuses)		
Cashier	3053	7344	2231
Chaplain	3396		3396
Eligibility	1796	3691	2612
ER	3124	3800	N/A
Library	3387	7682	2394
Nursing	3515	3205	2334
Patient Education	4218		
Recorded Health Education		6806	
Patient Information	6395	3704	6395
Patient Representative	3510	7080	3510/7 080
Pharmacy	6451/3 637	6860/6 861	2343 (Inpt)/2668 (Outpt)
Pharmacy Automated Refills	888-207-2004	888-216-9074	888-207-2004
Pre-Admitting Unit	3897	3685/3 697	N/A
Prosthetics	3750	7945	2439
Primary Care	1331/6 245	7135/6 312	718-298 -8400
Release of Information	3616	3640	2224
Social Work	3411/3622	7870	2351/2 352
Travel Unit	3256/3257	3646	2585
Veterans Benefits	3709/3710	3771/8	00-827-1000 2587/2217
Voluntary Service	6788	7920	2295/2 235

If you are calling from outside VA NYHHS, dial the main switchboard number and then enter the 4-digit extension.

This patient handbook was created by the VA New York Harbor Healthcare System to help our veterans, their families and friends.

Provider Information

Physician(s): _____

Nurse(s): _____

Social Worker: _____

Other Staff: _____