

# **GULF COAST BLIND REHABILITATION CENTER**

## **VETERAN HANDBOOK**



## **Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System**

**The Gulf Coast Blind Rehabilitation Center promotes maximum independence through education and instruction of Veterans, their families and caregivers.**

**Our core values are integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect, and excellence.**

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# **WELCOME TO THE GULF COAST BLIND REHABILITATION CENTER (GCBRC)**

This handbook will give you information that will be helpful for your program. You should ask your Team Coordinator any questions that you may have. Your comments are helpful for developing goals for your program.

## **Mission Statement**

The mission of Blind Rehabilitation is to provide instruction to Veterans and military personnel who are blind or visually impaired. The goal is to promote independence, self-care, and improve the overall quality of life.

## **Vision Statement**

To help veterans and their families live more fulfilled and productive lives by providing the best rehabilitation experience possible. Veterans receive world class rehabilitation with access to the latest technology and proven techniques for living with vision loss surrounded by highly trained licensed and certified staff in a state of the art program.

## **THE REHABILITATION PROCESS**

Your training is a partnership between you and the staff. Your program will be focused on your needs. A review of your present abilities will be done. You will help set your own goals for your program. Then training will begin in your skill areas.

You are expected to take an active part the planning of your training program.

## **TEAM COORDINATOR**

You will be assigned a Team Coordinator. This person helps coordinate all the areas of your program. They will provide you with your weekly schedule and meet with you each morning. Your Team Coordinator will arrange for you to get to and from any appointments on VA Campus while at Blind Rehabilitation. Please inform your Team Coordinator if your program needs to be changed in anyway.

## **NURSING AND MEDICATIONS**

The nursing staff will coordinate all areas of your medical needs while you are here.

Self-medicating Veterans **MUST** keep their medications locked up at **ALL TIMES**.

Non-self-medicating Veterans go the Nursing Station to receive medications. Medications are given at scheduled times around meal and class times in order to not interrupt training.

The VA requests you respect the privacy of all Veterans concerning medications and medical conditions. After receiving your medications, please move to another area of the Blind Rehabilitation Center and allow Nursing to assist other Veterans privately.

Please do not ask **ANY** staff about other Veterans medications, medical conditions or rehabilitation progress.

Sick Call is Monday through Friday 7:30AM to 8:30 AM. The Nurse Practitioner covers other areas of the VA and may not be available at other times.

## **THE FIRST WEEK**

You will be requested to sign a “Rights and Responsibilities” when you arrive.

You will be given a physical exam, which may include lab work, when you arrive for your program.

You will meet your Team Coordinator. The Team Coordinator will give you a class schedule based on the referral of your VIST Coordinator.

During the first week, your instructors will designate a meeting place for each of your classes. They will show you how to get to the classrooms.

If you have orientation and mobility, an instructor will orient you to each area on your schedule.

Starting the second week, you may meet the instructors in the classrooms, upstairs waiting area or lobby.

## **WEEKDAY SCHEDULE**

Morning Medications 5:00 to 7:00 AM

Breakfast is at 7:00 AM

Lunch is at 12:00 noon

Supper is at 5:00 PM

Evening Medications 5:00 to 7:00 PM

### **Daily Class times are generally:**

- 8:00 to 8:50 AM
- 9:00 to 9:50 AM
- 10:00 to 10:50 AM
- 11:00 to 11:50 AM
- 1:00 to 1:50 PM
- 2:00 to 2:50 PM
- 3:00 to 3:50 PM

### **Weekly Special Events**

- **Monday** 2:45 PM to 3 PM: Graduations
- **Monday OR Tuesday** at 3 PM: (assigned to one)  
Group Coping with Blindness
- **Thursday** 3 PM to 4 PM- Group Lecture Series
- **Friday** 2 PM to 4 PM Shopping or Saturday AM
- **3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month** 1 PM to 2 PM -  
Resident Council Meeting with Social Worker

## **DAILY CLASSES**

Your daily classes may include:

- Computer Access Training (CATs)
- iCats Training (iPhone/iPad)
- Living Skills
- Manual Skills
- Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Training
- Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) Training
- Ultracane Training
- Visual Skills
- Recreational Therapy

You should attend all of your assigned classes as scheduled.

Depending on your personal health needs, you may also receive training from nursing in the following areas:

- Self-medication
- Diabetes Education
- Hypertension Education
- Nutrition Education

## **WEEKEND TIME**

Weekends are free time for you to practice your new skills or just relax. The local transit system has several stops on VA campus where you may catch a local bus for shopping or sightseeing. (Please see O&M Clearance and Pass Procedures in this handbook)

## **RECREATION**

Recreation may be available on the weekends through the Recreation Therapist and/or Blind Rehab Staff. You are strongly encouraged to be involved for both your opportunity to leave the building and for building relationships with fellow Veterans.

## **LIBRARY/TALKING BOOKS**

Talking Book players (digital and cassette) and books (digital and cassette) are available for check out from Living Skills. Your Living Skills instructor will teach you how to use the Digital Talking Book player or the tape player. Talking Books should be returned upon completion. All Talking Books, tape players, and books on tape must be returned before discharge.

## **TELEPHONES**

You will be able to make local telephone phone calls in your room and receive long distance calls until 9 p.m.

To make long distance phone calls you will need to buy a long distance phone card or ask your team coordinator if free long distance calling cards are available.

Your telephone lets you control the volume. It is also hearing aid compatible.

Please arrange for in-coming calls to your room after all classes have finished for each day.

### **EMERGENCY CALLS** received at:

The Blind Rehabilitation Center Office  
228-385-6777  
Monday-Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM

The Nurses Station  
24 hours a day  
228-385-6761  
(800) 296-8872

## **MAIL**

MAIL should be sent to:

Your Name

Your Room Number

Gulf Coast Blind Rehabilitation Center

Building 14

400 Veterans Avenue (124)

Biloxi, MS 39531

## **VISITING HOURS**

If you plan to have a visitor, please tell your Team Coordinator and the nursing staff.

VA has Open Visiting Hours. However, remember:

- that all visitors should respect your Rehabilitation process and wait until your classes are finished for the day
- to please escort your visitor inside the building

## LEAVE OR PASSES

You are able to go on pass after classes depending on your O&M clearance status at the end each day and on weekends.

To go on Pass you must:

1. Notify the Nursing staff when you exit the building and when you return.

To go on a Weekend pass you **must also**:

1. Make arrangements through your team coordinator by Wednesday morning
2. Inform nursing by Wednesday morning so that medication arrangements can be made

Under special circumstances, you may get up to a 96-hour pass. If you need this special pass, please notify your Team Coordinator as far in advance as possible. If you need to leave for more than 96 hours, you will be discharged. Then you will need to reapply to the program.

**If you are admitted to a hospital when you are out on pass, you must call the nurses' station immediately and they will notify the AOD.**

**You are Important to us,** and we worry if you leave without letting us know. We search for you. We call the police and tell them you're missing. We work very hard to make sure you're okay and safe. So, if you have to leave, don't feel bad, just let us know before you go.

**Here's who to tell: Nurses**

## **MEALS**

Meals are served in the Dining Hall. Please inform the Dietician if you have special dietary needs.

## **SNACKS**

A kitchen is provided in the Dining Hall where you can prepare snacks and meals at your own expense.

To use kitchen equipment, the veteran must be cleared by a living skills instructor.

Snacks are allowed to be kept in your room if they are stored unopened or in a sealed container.

## **REFRIGERATOR**

Veterans are able to store some food items in the Dining Hall refrigerator. All items need to be labeled with the Veterans name and the date.

Items with a printed manufacturer's expiration date can remain in the refrigerator until the Veteran leaves or the item expires—whichever happens first.

All other items have a time limit of three days in the refrigerator (such as restaurant/living skills leftovers).

## **HOUSEKEEPING**

You are responsible for making your own bed, keeping your room neat and picking clothes/towels up off the floor.

Housekeeping will clean Veteran rooms on Mondays and Thursdays. Garbage cans will generally be emptied each week day.

Clean sheets and pillowcases are provided on Tuesday. You may pick them up at the Nurses' Station. Please reuse blankets and bedspreads (which can be changed if visibly soiled).

## **LAUNDRY FACILITIES**

Washers and dryers are available on premises and free for you to use. Laundry hours are 6AM to 9PM (no machines running late). Laundry detergent and dryer sheets are available at the Nurses' Station.

Green Hampers are parked near the Laundry Rooms from 5 to 7:30 AM for used towels & linens.

A Living Skills instructor will provide training on the use of the machines.

## **CANTEEN, RETAIL STORE and ATM**

**Canteen** – serves breakfast and lunch

The Canteen is in building # 21

Monday - Friday, 7:00 AM to 2:00 PM

### **Patriot Store**

The Retail Store is in Building # 57

Monday - Friday, 7:00 AM to 3:30 PM

Saturday 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM

The Retail Store carries many items including:

snacks

soft drinks

clothing

batteries

electronics

health and beauty

### **ATM Location**

Building #21 (Canteen)

Building #1, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor by Starbucks

## **EMOTIONAL SUPPORT**

A Psychologist and Social Worker will meet with you when you enter the program. The Psychologist can be reached at ext. 36397 and the Social Worker at ext. 36396.

Your Team Coordinator or nursing staff can assist you in arranging other visits with the Psychologist and Social Worker.

Some specific services offered include:

- assistance with emotional adjustment to sight loss
- improving self-esteem
- confidential, individual therapy
- counseling for vocational needs
- assistance with other personal issues such as:
  - memory improvement,
  - weight loss
  - anger management

## RELIGIOUS SUPPORT

A Chaplain is available to meet with you when you enter the program, if you desire. Chaplains can be reached at ext. 34654.

Your Team Coordinator or nursing staff can assist you in arranging a visit with the Chaplain during the week. Some specific services offered include:

- Support and encouragement
- Confidential pastoral and spiritual counseling

### Sundays:

Catholic Mass is in the Chapel at 8:00 a.m.

Protestant service in the chapel at 9:00 a.m.

Protestant service at 10 a.m. Bldg 15, Magnolia Rm.

You must be able to independently walk to the service.

You may arrange transportation with local churches to attend their services.

You may view services on the TV in your room on Chaplain Service's Channel (17 Sunday's only) or from other local broadcasting services.

Assistance is available in observing specific holidays and rituals.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Please respect the ethnic, religious, and political differences within our veteran group and staff. Everyone is here for one goal: Blind Rehabilitation. Support and encourage one another and leave differences outside the front door. We are all expected to treat each other--the staff and the other Veterans--with respect at all times.

Excessive and/or unwarranted profanity is not allowed. Threats of violence toward other residents or VA staff, non-compliance with staff directions or program, and disruptive behavior that negatively impacts the Gulf Coast Blind Rehabilitation Center program are all potential grounds for discharge.

Violent or inappropriate behavior will not be accepted. The VA has a no tolerance policy, and violations may be grounds for discharge. Violations may result in legal charges being filed.

If a Veteran is suspected to be intoxicated or under the influence of un-prescribed/illegal drugs, then the Blind Rehab Service Chief will be contacted and the Veteran may be discharged.

## **TYPES OF DISCHARGE**

**Regular Discharge** shows that the Veteran has worked the blind rehabilitation program to completion. The staff of the Gulf Coast Blind Rehabilitation Center want all Veterans to receive a regular discharge.

**Irregular Discharge** is given to Veterans who are non-compliant with the program, or violate rules and regulations (such as the illegal drug policy, make threats against others, etc.). The reason for discharge will be documented in the medical record.

## **PROHIBITED ITEMS**

The following items are not permitted in any buildings and on VA grounds:

- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Firearms
- Weapons (Pocket knives with a blade over 3 inches are considered weapons)

## **HAND WASHING**

Hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of infection.

You **MUST** wash your hands carefully:

- After using the restroom
- Before and after meals
- Between classes

Waterless hand cleaner is available throughout the building hallways, on each dining table, and in your room.

## **DRESS CODE**

Dress code is casual.

Please do not wear inappropriate clothing that may offend other patients and staff.

Secure fitting shoes need be worn to both Manual Skills and Orientation and Mobility classes.

Flip-flops, slippers, pool shoes, and Crocks should not be worn to class.

## **GUIDE DOGS**

Veterans attending Blind Rehabilitation with a guide dog need to provide their own dog food, food-dish, water bowls and waste bags. If you arrive at the Blind Rehabilitation Center without these items, it will be your responsibility to purchase them.

Transportation will be provided for you to go shopping.

All guide dogs need to be in harness or on leash unless in the Veteran's private room.

There is a designated dog relief area available with clean up bags and garbage can. The guide dog user must clean up after the service animal.

Please be aware that all Orientation and Mobility Specialists are obligated to report any neglect or abuse of a guide dog to the issuing guide dog school.

## **SECURITY**

All of your personal items are your responsibility. Your room will have a drawer that locks. You should keep your valuable items and money locked in your room at all times. You should keep your room locked when you are not in it.

## **AGENT CASHIER**

You may open an account for your money with the Agent Cashier. Your Team Coordinator can assist you.

You should only carry enough money to meet your personal needs. It is suggested \$50 at the most.

The Agent Cashier is located in main hospital:  
Building 3, Room 1B113  
Monday through Friday  
8:30 AM to 4:25 PM

## **FIRE SAFETY/EMERGENCY DRILLS**

In case of fire or other emergencies, staff will instruct and assist you with exiting the building. Drills may be held during your program.

When not in class with the instructors, Nursing will inform the Veterans to go to the nearest exit by following the sounds of the alarm system.

## **SMOKING**

VA and Blind Rehabilitation Center are smoke free.

Smoking indoors is not allowed. Smoking is only allowed in marked Smoking Areas.

Smoking is also allowed 50 feet away from building entrances.

If requested, we will help you to locate approved Smoking Areas.

Violations may be grounds for discharge.

## **VETERAN GRIEVANCE PROCESS**

If you have a grievance please do the following:

1<sup>st</sup> Talk with staff at the point of care

2<sup>nd</sup> If you are unable to resolve your concern please talk with your Team Coordinator

3<sup>rd</sup> If you still are unable to resolve your concern, please talk with the Admissions Coordinator of the Gulf Coast Blind Rehabilitation Center who is the designated Patient Advocate for the program.

4<sup>th</sup> If further resolution is required please speak with the Assistant Chief or the Chief.

5<sup>th</sup> If even further intervention at the Gulf Coast Blind Rehabilitation Center is required, a Patient Advocate for the Hospital is available Monday – Friday 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM

The Patient Advocates for the Medical Center are located in Building 53, Rooms 1A-124 & 1A-126 and can be reached at the following phone numbers:

(228) 523-5760

(228) 523-5761

**The Joint Commission** – The purpose of the Joint Commission is to hold health care organizations accountable for providing quality health care and putting patient safety first.

Joint Commission Telephone:

Main number: 1 (630) 792-5000

**Office of Inspector General**—To report criminal activity, waste, abuse, mismanagement and safety issues to the OIG, call 1-800-488-8244 or write VA OIG Hotline (53E), 810 Vernon Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20420.

## **VETERAN RIGHTS**

Veterans may take part in civic rights such as voting and free speech.

## **VOTING ASSISTANCE**

To receive voting information, please contact the Voluntary Services Officer at extension 35763 or 35786.

# My HealthVet

## VA's Online Personal Health Record

Navigating through the process 24/7

### My HealthVet—VA's Online Personal Health Record

My HealthVet is the VA's award-winning online Personal Health Record (PHR), located at [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov). It offers users anywhere, anytime access to health care information, resources, and tools online 24/7.

**1** Type **[www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)** in the address bar on your web browser, and then select **Enter**.

**2** When the My HealthVet homepage opens, go to the green box in the right-hand column and select **Register Today! Start Here**.

**3** When the registration page opens, complete all the information, and review and accept the **Terms & Conditions** and the **Privacy Policy** for using the My HealthVet website. Then select the **Save** button at the bottom of the page.

4 After you have registered, go to **www.myhealth.va.gov** again. Then select the **Go to My HealthVet Enter Here** button at the top right corner of the page.

5 When the My HealthVet homepage opens, enter your **User ID** and **Password** in the **Member Login** box found in the right-hand column, and select **Login**. After you login on the My HealthVet homepage, check your Profile to be sure you are registered as a **VA Patient**. Bookmark **www.myhealth.va.gov** for future use.

## *View Your VA Appointments*

### **A New Tool on My HealthVet**

**VA Appointments** is a new tool on My HealthVet. **VA Appointments** gives you control over your health care. It helps you plan and focus on what is important to you. It gives you a detailed view of your VA clinic appointments 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you are a Veteran enrolled at a VA health care facility, are registered on My HealthVet

and have an upgraded account\*, you have the option to see your **VA Appointments**. You can find **VA Appointments** in the **GET CARE** section, under **APPOINTMENTS**.

My Health eVet **VA Appointments** is simple, easy to use, private and secure. You do not have to call your VA health care clinic for information about upcoming clinic appointments. You can view your **VA Appointments** anytime, anywhere you are, as long as you have Internet access.

### **VA Appointments:**

- `` Lets you see at a glance all your upcoming **VA Appointments**
- `` Lets you see at a glance your **VA Appointments** for the past two years
- `` Allows you to **view and print** your **VA Appointments**
  
- `` Gives you **appointment details** to help you plan your arrival time (for example, you may need to have an x-ray, blood drawn or an electrocardiogram (EKG))

`` Lets you set your **Health Calendar Preferences** so you receive an email notice of your upcoming **VA Appointments**

`` Shows your **VA Appointments** information on your personal **Health Calendar**

## **Share Your Information with Others**

You may want to share your **VA Appointments** information with family members or caregivers. With this information, they can help you manage your appointments. Use the **VA Blue Button** as another way to download or print your **VA Appointments**. You can also use **Secure Messaging** to send a message to your participating health care team requesting, canceling or rescheduling a VA clinic appointment.

\*Note: You can upgrade your account through **In-Person Authentication**. Learn more by going to My Health eVet. Select **In-Person Authentication** from **Quick Links**.

**Veterans Health Administration | Office of Informatics**