



SECURE MESSAGING PHASE 1 RELEASE

SM Web Team (Front End) on VA.gov

November 2023

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Information and Technology



Phase 0 recap: Launching on VA.gov

Phase 0 Goal: Collect feedback from trusted users and make improvements.



Phase 0: Trusted Users

- The new Secure Messaging application exists in an authenticated state on VA.gov, but can only be found if users know URL.
- Public websites and My VA continue to point users to My HealtheVet Classic.
- Trusted users are invited to try the application.
- Users can provide feedback, and VA will incorporate suggestions.

Recap | Phase 0 Launch



July 2023 - Trusted Users Phase

- Launched to production; shared direct link to trusted users for feedback and monitoring
- Features the **same core functionality** of SM Classic rebuilt on VA.gov, moving towards a more unified home for all VA apps on VA.gov.
- Just like in the Classic version, patients can send and receive messages, view in an inbox, print, use folders, create drafts, and more.



What's new: Classic SM → Phase 0

- Features were **visually refreshed** using the VA Design System for a **consistent look and feel** across VA.gov.
- The new **mobile-first design** makes it easier for Veterans to access and manage their health— from wherever they are, on whatever device they use.
- Just like modern email, the new SM supports **full threading** of messages. Patients can see the full context of a conversation with a provider so that nothing is lost.
- The new SM is **accessible-beyond-compliance** through rigorous usability testing with sighted and screen-reader users to improve the UX for *all* veterans.
- The new SM is built to support a **more secure** sign-in experience with modern standards to better protect Veterans' data.
- The new SM **improves auto-saving** for drafts (every 10 seconds vs. 2 minutes) and lets the user know when a draft has saved, creating greater trust in the system.



Moving from Phase 0 to Phase 1

Phase 1 Goal: Begin encouraging the transition to VA.gov while continuing to collect feedback and make improvements.



Phase 1: “Try Me”

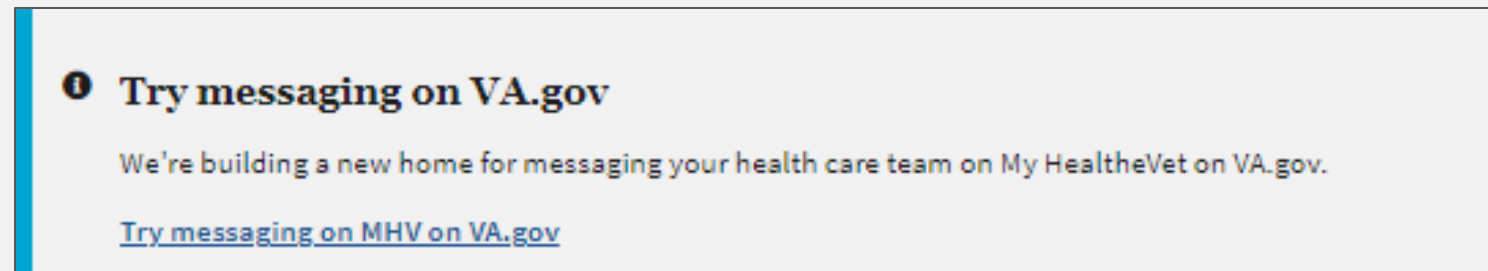
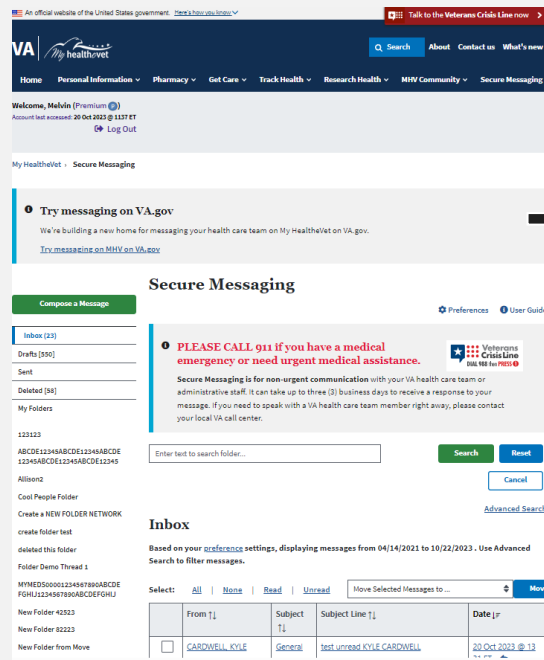
- A new “Try Me” link will be added in My HealtheVet Classic inviting users to Secure Messaging on VA.gov.
- It will also be featured on the MHV What’s New Page.
- The My HealtheVet newsletter will encourage users to try the new version and give feedback.
- My HealtheVet users can still use the old version of Secure Messaging on MHV Classic.

Phase 1 Release Overview



November 2023

- All enhancements and bug fixes from Phase 0 deployed to production.
- Try Me banner with link goes live for all users landing on SM Classic page (~500k visitors/day).
- Communications blast: announcement on My HealtheVet's "What's new" page and Listserv special announcement sent.



Preview | Phase 1 Release Notes

Along with bug fixes, Phase 1 changes are mostly front-end iterations that improve the user experience versus net-new functionality.

What's new: Phase 0 → Phase 1 enhancements

- Increased size of call-to-action link for starting a new message to support easier navigation.
- Cleaner inbox layout ("list view") to support better scanning and reduce visual clutter.
- Added structure to "details view" of a message thread to improve scanning and make it clearer what is an actual message.
- Success alert added when adding an attachment to increase a user's confidence when uploading for both sighted and screen reader users.
- Renamed "Edit contact list or signature" button to "Edit Preferences" and moved location on page to reduce confusion around its function when sending a message.
- Changes to make multiple drafts more clearly organized and editable for a user
- Changes to make sure a user at a Cerner facility is made aware of needing to My VA Health to send messages
- Changes to make autosaving clearer to users.
- Alert to make user aware of unsaved changes when they attempt to log out.

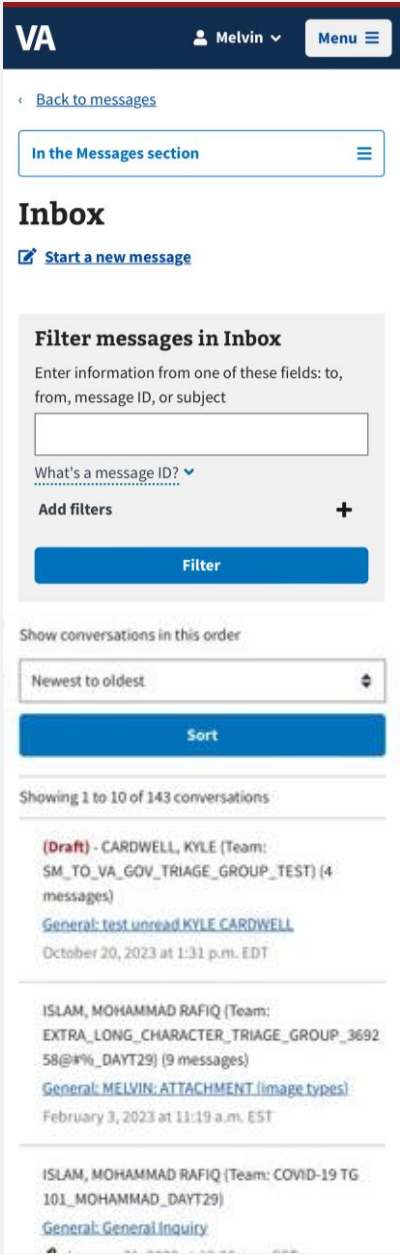
Bug fixes

- Fix Error message bugs: in Phase 0, a relatively high number of users reported an error message immediately upon hitting the SM landing page and well as "Back end Service Outage" bug on draft page.
- Fix to make sure user is directed to correct page after message is sent.
- Fix so that user can remove empty custom folders.
- Fix to handle when a message is older than 45 days and contains a reply draft.
- Fix to bug on date not matching what user specified on Advanced Filter.
- Fix to draft folder erroneously holding onto messages already sent to a patient.
- Fix to correct focus issue when Veteran Crisis Line modal is closed.
- Fix to include a warning message when a user navigates away from composing a message.
- Fix related to bug when canceling a draft.
- Fix to defect in print thread layout.

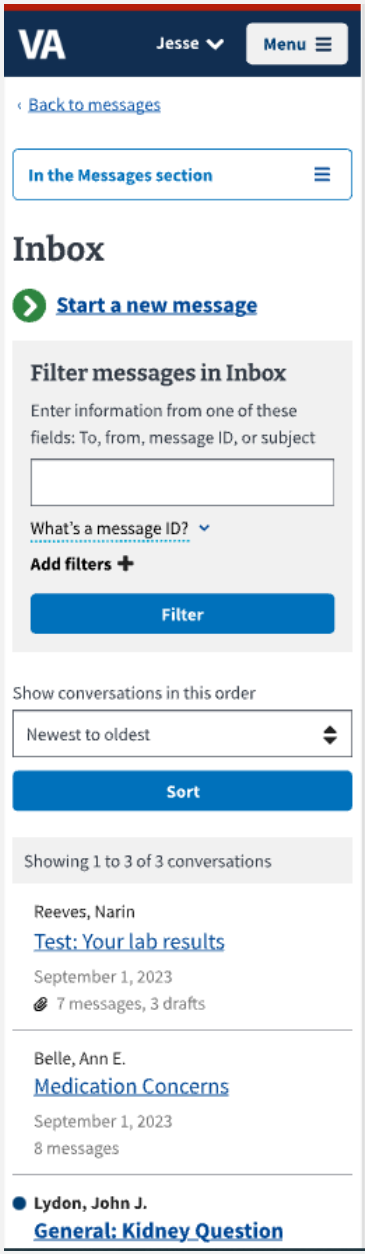
Examples of Phase 1 iterations

- 1. Increased size of key call-to-action link for starting a new message to be easier to find.
- 2. Cleaner inbox layout (“list view”) to support better scanning and reduce visual clutter.

Before: Phase 0



After: Phase 1



1

2

Before and after

Classic SM → Phase 1

Inbox view

Classic SM

The screenshot shows the classic My HealthVet Secure Messaging interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like Home, Personal information, Pharmacy, Get Care, Track Health, Research Health, MHV Community, and Secure Messaging. Below this, a welcome message for Mark (Premium) is displayed. The main content area is titled 'Secure Messaging' and includes a 'Compose a Message' button. A sidebar on the left lists folders: Inbox (3), Drafts (34), Sent, Deleted (21), and My Folders. The 'Inbox' section is highlighted, showing a list of messages with columns for From, Subject, Subject Line, and Date. A search bar is located above the message list.

	From [1]	Subject [1]	Subject Line [1]	Date [1]
<input type="checkbox"/>	MORGUN, CLEKSI	Education	Move Thread API	13 Oct 2023 @ 1115 ET
<input type="checkbox"/>	TRAN, AN	Medication	test before maintenance	12 Oct 2023 @ 1523 ET
<input type="checkbox"/>	MORGUN, CLEKSI	Education	Move Thread API	15 Sep 2023 @ 0916 ET
<input type="checkbox"/>	MORGUN, CLEKSI	Education	Move Thread API	15 Sep 2023 @ 0916 ET
<input type="checkbox"/>	MORGUN, CLEKSI	Education	Move Thread API	15 Sep 2023 @ 0913 ET
<input type="checkbox"/>	TRAN, AN	COVID	Covid Inquiry	13 Sep 2023 @ 1742 ET
<input type="checkbox"/>	TZVETANOV, DIMITAR A	General	General Inquiry/Test	11 Sep 2023 @ 0841 ET
<input type="checkbox"/>	TZVETANOV, DIMITAR A	General	General Inquiry/Test	11 Sep 2023 @ 0841 ET
<input type="checkbox"/>	TZVETANOV, DIMITAR A	General	General Inquiry/Test	11 Sep 2023 @ 0839 ET
<input type="checkbox"/>	CARDWELL, KYLE	General	Kyle Cardwell - Test Unread/Count 1	06 Sep 2023 @ 1639 ET

SM on VA.gov Phase 1

The screenshot shows the new SM on VA.gov Phase 1 interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like VA Benefits and Health Care, About VA, Find a VA Location, My VA, and My HealthVet. The main content area is titled 'Messages' and includes a 'Messages' sidebar with links to Inbox, Drafts, Sent, Trash, and My folders. The 'Inbox' section is highlighted, showing a count of 23 unread messages. A search bar is located above the message list. A 'What to know as you try out this tool' section is also present, providing information about the new version of My HealthVet secure messaging.

Messages

Communicate privately and securely with your VA health care team online.

23 unread messages in your inbox

[Go to your inbox](#)

[Start a new message](#)

What to know as you try out this tool

You're using the new version of My HealthVet secure messaging on VA.gov. And we need your feedback to help us keep making this tool better for you and all Veterans.

Send us your feedback and questions using the Feedback button on this page.

Questions about this messaging tool

- Who can I send messages to?
- What if I have an emergency or an urgent question?
- Will VA protect my personal health information?
- What happened to my settings from My HealthVet secure messaging?
- Will I need to pay a copay for using this messaging tool?

The screenshot shows the new SM on VA.gov Phase 1 interface, specifically the 'Inbox' view. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links like VA Benefits and Health Care, About VA, Find a VA Location, My VA, and My Health. The main content area is titled 'Inbox' and includes a 'Start a new message' button. A search bar is located above the message list. The 'Inbox' section is highlighted, showing a list of messages with columns for From, Subject, Subject Line, and Date. A search bar is located above the message list.

Inbox

[Start a new message](#)

Filter messages in [h1]

Enter information from one of these fields: to, from, message ID, or subject

What's a message ID?

Add filters

Filter

Show conversations in this order

Newest to oldest

Sort

Showing 1 to 10 of 80 conversations

- General: Kidney Question**
Lydon, John J.
August 31, 2023
6 messages
- General: Kidney Question**
Lydon, John J.
August 31, 2023
6 messages
- General: Kidney Question**
Lydon, John J.
August 31, 2023
6 messages, Draft

1. For Phases 0 and 1, the new SM will have a temporary landing page that provides a count of unread messages and SM-specific FAQs
2. Users can start a new message from the top of the Inbox page.
3. Users can filter messages by subject, sender, recipient, message ID, category, and date range.
4. Users can see a list of all threaded conversations.

Compose and send a new message

Classic SM

The screenshot shows the 'Secure Messaging' page in the classic interface. On the left is a sidebar with navigation links: 'Compose a Message', 'Inbox (3)', 'Drafts (34)', 'Sent', 'Deleted (37)', 'My Folders', and 'Manage Folders'. The main content area has a header 'Secure Messaging' with links for 'Preferences' and 'User Guide'. A prominent red banner states: 'PLEASE CALL 911 if you have a medical emergency or need urgent medical assistance.' Below this, a 'Compose Message' section explains that messages are for non-urgent communication and may be saved to the health record. It includes fields for 'From' (pre-filled with 'MHVCAVMARK, MARK'), 'To' (a dropdown menu), 'Subject' (a dropdown menu), and a 'Message' text area. At the bottom, there are buttons for 'Send', 'Save as Draft', and 'Cancel'. A 'Notes' section at the very bottom explains the purpose of Secure Messaging.

SM on VA.gov Phase 1

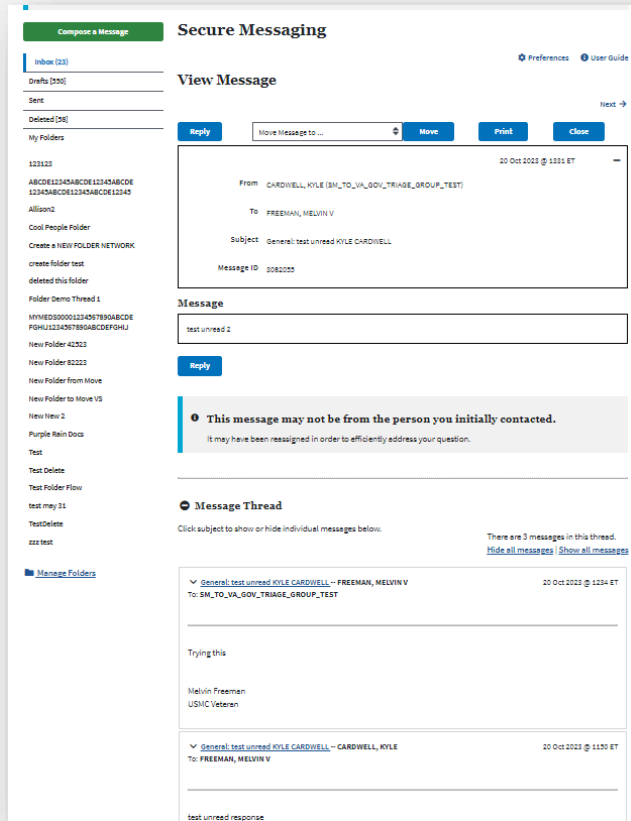
The screenshot shows the 'Start a new message' page in the Phase 1 interface. The top navigation bar includes 'VA Benefits and Health Care', 'About VA', 'Find a VA Location', 'My VA', and 'My Health'. A large blue banner with a red circle containing the number '1' reads: 'Only use messages for non-urgent needs'. Below this, it states: 'Your care team may take up to 3 business days to reply.' and provides a link 'Continue to start a new message'. A section titled 'If you need help sooner, use one of these urgent communication options:' lists two scenarios: 1) 'If you're in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, connect with our Veterans Crisis Line. We offer confidential support anytime, day or night.' with a 'Connect with the Veterans Crisis Line' button. 2) 'If you think your life or health is in danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.'

The screenshot shows the 'Start a new message' form in the Phase 1 interface. The left sidebar shows 'Messages' with links to 'Inbox', 'Drafts', 'Sent', 'Trash', and 'My folders'. The main form area has a title 'Start a new message' and a link to 'Edit preferences' with a red circle containing the number '2'. The 'To' field is pre-filled with '***MEDICATION_AWARENESS_100% @ MOH_DAY23'. The 'Category' section has radio buttons for: 'General: Ask questions about non urgent, non-emergency issues' (selected), 'COVID: Ask COVID related questions', 'Appointment: Request an appointment or ask about an existing appointment', 'Medication: Request to renew a medication or ask a question about medication', 'Test: Ask a question about a test/lab result or about a future test or procedure', and 'Education: Request health education information'. The 'Subject' field is pre-filled with 'Medication question'. The 'Message' text area contains the text: 'I had a quick question about my' followed by 'Melvin Freeman USMC Veteran'. At the bottom, there is an 'Attachments' section with a link 'What to know about attaching files' and an 'Attach file' button. A green banner with a red circle containing the number '3' and a checkmark states: 'Your message was saved on November 13, 2023 at 3:39 p.m. EST.' Below this are buttons for 'Send', 'Save draft', and 'Delete draft'. A 'Back to top' link is at the bottom right.

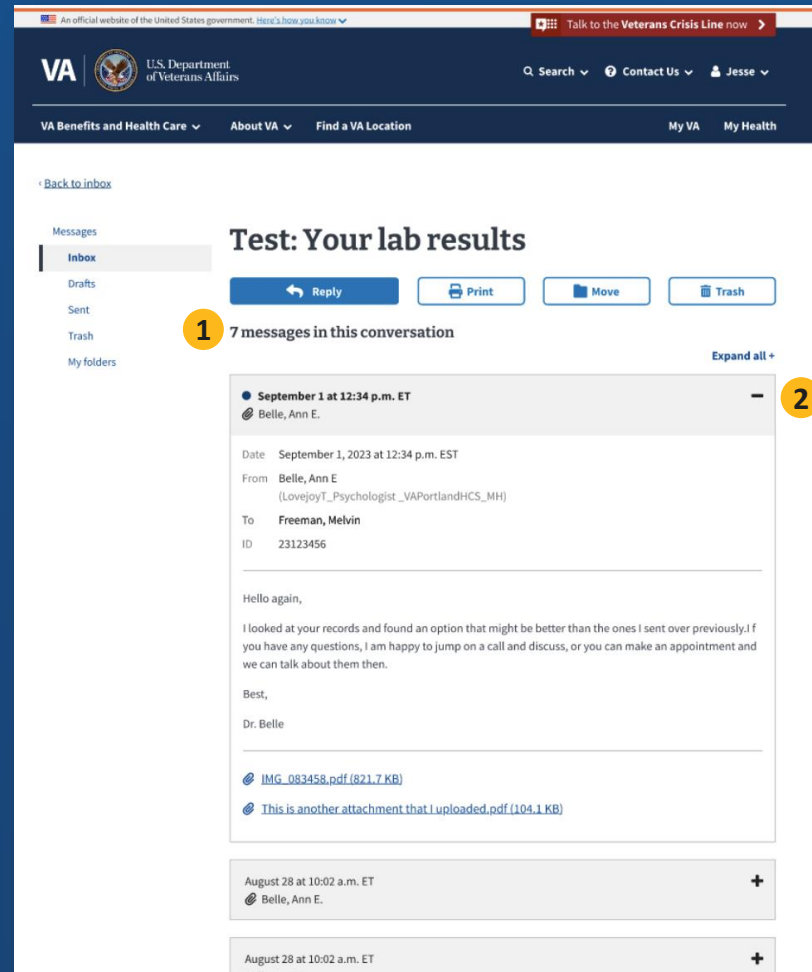
1. On VA.gov, users are told to only use secure messaging for non-urgent needs.
2. Users can navigate to Edit preferences directly from Start a new message. Edit preferences still resides in MHV Classic. Changes to preferences in MHV Classic will be respected by SM on VA.gov.
3. Message drafts will auto-save every 10 seconds. Users will be notified of an auto-save via an inline alert.

Read a message within a conversation

Classic SM



SM on VA.gov Phase 1



1. All messages associated with a conversation will be threaded in the new experience. This is the biggest change in functionality overall. In the Classic experience, clicking into a message in the middle of a thread will only show history up until that point (i.e. it will not capture newer replies or messages sent on that thread).
2. Each message in the conversation will be expandable and collapsible by the user.

Classic SM



VA

U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Talk to the Veterans Crisis Line now >

Search > Contact Us > Jesse >

VA Benefits and Health Care > About VA > Find a VA Location >

My VA > My Health >

Back to my folders

MessagesInboxDraftsSentTrashMy folders

Cardiologist

This is a folder you created. You can add conversations to this folder by moving them from your inbox or other folders.

Edit folder nameRemove folder

Filter messages in [h1]

Enter information from one of these fields: To, from, message ID, or subject

Filter

What's a message ID? >

Add filters +

Show conversations in this order

Newest to oldestSort

Showing 1 to 5 of 5 conversations

● General: Kidney Question

Lydton, John J.
August 31, 2023
6 messages

Test: Your lab results

Reeves, Narin
September 1, 2023
7 messages, Draft

Before and after

Reference: Classic SM → Phase 0

For historical context of how the product has evolved, the following captures a snapshot of differences in Classic vs. VA.gov **at the time of Phase 0** launch in July 2023.

Inbox view

Classic SM

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SM on VA.gov in Phase 0

The screenshot shows the new VA Secure Messaging interface in Phase 0. The top navigation bar is similar to the classic version. The main content area is titled 'Messages' and includes a 'Start a new message' button. A sidebar on the left shows a list of folders: Messages, Inbox, Drafts, Sent, Trash, and My folders. The 'Inbox' folder is selected, showing a message count of '1 unread messages in your inbox' and a 'Go to your inbox' button. Below this, a section titled 'What to know as you try out this tool' provides information about the new tool and a link to provide feedback. A 'Questions about using messages' section is also present, with links to various topics like 'Who can I communicate with in messages?' and 'What if I have an emergency or an urgent question?'. A footer at the bottom includes a link to learn about the PACT Act.

The screenshot shows the new VA Secure Messaging interface in Phase 0, specifically the inbox view. The top navigation bar is similar to the classic version. The main content area is titled 'Inbox' and includes a 'Start a new message' button. A sidebar on the left shows a list of folders: Messages, Inbox, Drafts, Sent, Trash, and My folders. The 'Inbox' folder is selected, showing a message count of '1 unread messages in your inbox' and a 'Go to your inbox' button. Below this, a section titled 'What to know as you try out this tool' provides information about the new tool and a link to provide feedback. A 'Questions about using messages' section is also present, with links to various topics like 'Who can I communicate with in messages?' and 'What if I have an emergency or an urgent question?'. A footer at the bottom includes a link to learn about the PACT Act.

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4. Users can filter messages by date, and see a list of all threaded conversations.

Compose and send a new message

Classic SM

The screenshot shows the 'Secure Messaging' page in the classic MHV interface. On the left is a sidebar with 'Compose a Message' and a list of folders. The main content area has a 'Compose Message' section with a 'Subject' field and a 'Message' text area. A prominent red banner at the top states: 'PLEASE CALL 911 if you have a medical emergency or need urgent medical assistance.' Below the message area are 'Send', 'Save as Draft', and 'Cancel' buttons. A 'Notes' section at the bottom explains the purpose of Secure Messaging.

SM on VA.gov in Phase 0

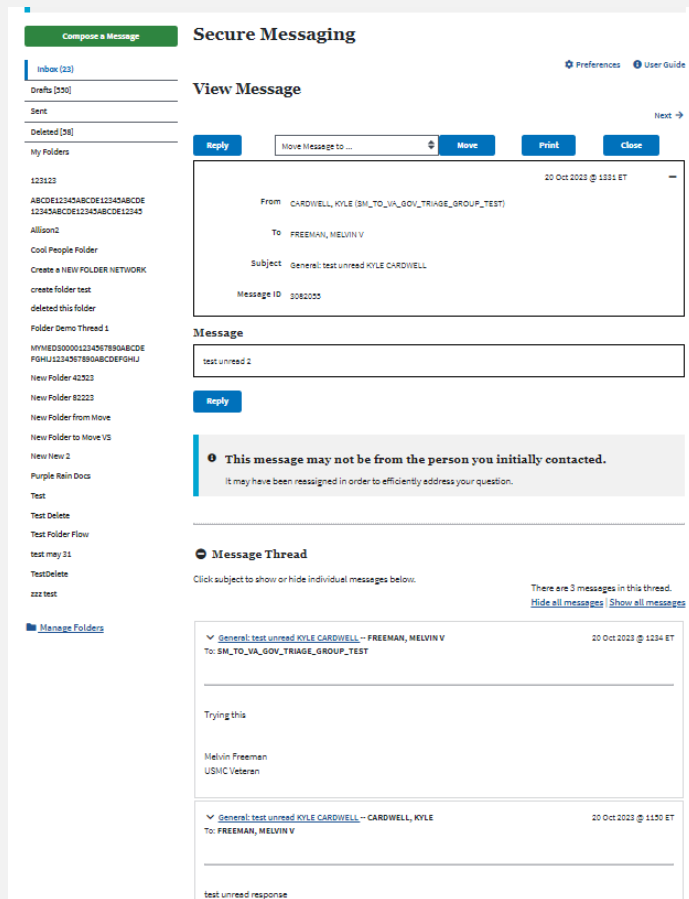
This screenshot shows the 'Secure Messaging' page in the new Phase 0 interface. A large yellow circle with the number '1' is overlaid on the top left. The main heading reads 'Only use messages for non-urgent needs'. Below this, it states: 'Your care team may take up to 3 business days to reply. If you need help sooner, use one of these urgent communication options:'. Two bullet points provide instructions for emergencies and urgent needs, each with a corresponding button: 'Connect with the Veterans Crisis Line' and 'Continue to start message'.

The screenshot shows the 'Start a new message' form. A large yellow circle with the number '2' is overlaid on the 'Edit preferences' button. The form includes a 'To' field with a dropdown menu, a 'Category' dropdown, and a 'Subject' field. A large text area for the 'Message' is present, with a yellow circle and the number '3' overlaid on the bottom right corner. Below the message area is an 'Attachments' section with an 'Add file' button. At the bottom, there is a green status bar indicating the message was saved, and buttons for 'Send', 'Save draft', and 'Delete draft'.

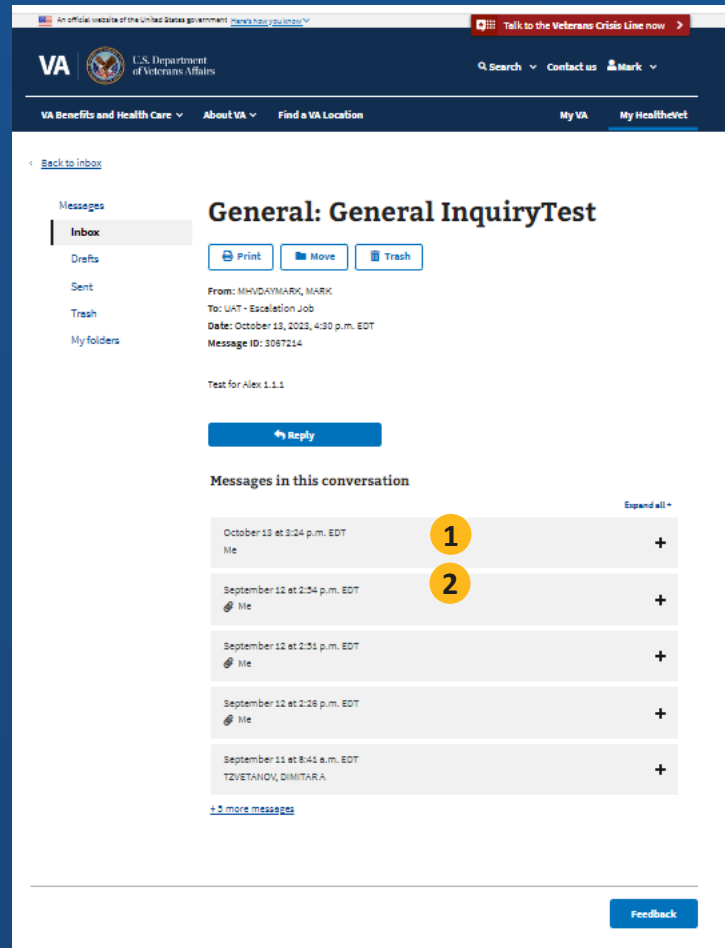
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SM on VA.gov in Phase 0



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Classic SM

1. Read Receipts will not be supported in Phase 0 or Phase 1.

Back to messages

Messages

Inbox

Drafts

Sent

Trash

My folders

Sent

Filter messages in Sent

Enter information from one of these fields: to, from, message ID, or subject

What's a message ID? ▾

Add filters +

Filter

Show conversations in this order


Newest to oldest ▾

Sort

Showing 1 to 10 of 662 conversations

To: SM_TO_VA_GOV_TRIAGE_GROUP_TEST (Team: SM_TO_VA_GOV_TRIAGE_GROUP_TEST)

[Test: k](#)

 October 21, 2023 at 9:24 p.m. EDT

To: SM_TO_VA_GOV_TRIAGE_GROUP_TEST (Team: SM_TO_VA_GOV_TRIAGE_GROUP_TEST)

(4 messages)

[General: test unread KYLE CARDWELL](#)

October 20, 2023 at 12:34 p.m. EDT

To: ***MEDICATION_AWARENESS_100% @ MOH_DAY29 (Team: ***MEDICATION_AWARENESS_100% @ MOH_DAY29)

(3 messages)

[COVID: nlb](#)

October 20, 2023 at 12:33 p.m. EDT

To: MELVIN FREEMAN OERR TG_DAY29 (Team: MELVIN FREEMAN OERR TG_DAY29)

Phase 0 UAT Use Cases

Creating and Reading Messages in a Conversation

- Starting a new message
- Sending a message
- Find existing message
- Reply to existing message
- Expand accordions in details view (thread)
- Close accordions in details view
- Expanding all accordions in details view
- Closing all accordion in details view
- Differentiating between a read/unread messages
- Adding and removing attachments
- Opening a sent message
- Opening a sent message that has a draft
- Expand and collapse patient safety message

Drafts

- Saving a draft
- Resuming a draft, making changes where it can't be saved, trying to save
- Resuming a draft, making changes and saving it
- Resuming a draft and sending it
- Deleting a draft

Printing

- Printing a conversation – single
- Printing a conversation - all

Moving/Deleting Conversations

- Moving a conversation from inbox to a custom folder
- Moving a conversation from a custom folder to inbox
- Moving a conversation from trash to inbox

- Moving a conversation from trash to a custom folder
- Trashing a conversation from inbox
- Trashing a conversation from a custom folder

Folders

- Creating a folder
- Renaming a folder
- Deleting an empty folder
- Attempting to delete a non-empty folder

Fringe/Edge Cases

- Editing contact list
- Opening a conversation from list view (> 45 days old)
- Opening a conversation from list view (< 45 days old)
- Opening a conversation with a draft from list view (> 45 days old)
- Opening a conversation with a draft from list view (< 45 days old)
- Back to top button
- Link back to MHV Classic on temporary landing page

Filter/Sort Conversations/Navigating Messages

- Sort messages inbox / draft / sent / custom folder
- Simple filter inbox / draft / sent / custom folder
- Advanced filter inbox / draft / sent / custom folder
- Clearing filters
- Clicking on individual numbers in pagination
- Clicking on Next in pagination
- Clicking on Previous in pagination
- Clicking last page in pagination