



The Vet Center Quarterly

HELLO FROM THE STAFF

The staff here at the Vet Center hopes this newsletter finds you all doing well. We understand the past few months have been challenging for everyone and there has been many adjustments to what we all would consider normal life. I'm sure there is a deep desire in all of us to try and get back to as close to the pre COVID-19 normal as possible. If you are an active client receiving Vet Center services, hopefully you all have been able to stay in touch with the staff here. We are working very diligently to fully open our services back up while also taking necessary precautions to keep our Veterans, their families, and our staff as safe as possible. This newsletter will outline the operations in the Vet Center as well as community access points. You'll notice the services may vary by location and we just want you to know that is due to facility access. Some of the agencies who are gracious enough to allow our staff space to see Veterans are not yet allowing public access. We will update clients immediately when this changes.



VETERAN SERVICE OFFICER SERVICES

As many of you know, there are Veteran Service Officers (VSO) who use an office in the Vet Center in Escanaba to help Veterans with various benefits related items. Keep in mind, these services are not Vet Center employees so their guidance and operations may vary between agency. With that, the daily operations for these VSOs could change at any time so if you have questions you can reach out to them or call the Vet Center for an update as well as to obtain their contact information. VFW VSO, Pat Holcomb will be on site the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month, DAV VSO Matt Witte will begin Jun 29th and be here every Monday and Friday. Both are working by appointment only. To set an appointment with Matt Witte, call (906) 202-0533 and for Pat Holcomb call (906) 225-6890. Other agencies are currently working from home and I'm sure they will update their Veterans when they have approval to resume operations at the Vet Center.



VET CENTER OPERATIONS

The Vet Center is excited to announce we are starting to offer face to face appointments as well as groups in most of our locations. There is a supply of personal protective gear on hand to include masks, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant wipes. As always, if a person is not feeling well we encourage them to call and reschedule any face to face appointments they may have. In addition, we are discouraging things such as shaking hands and rather encouraging people to slightly expand their personal space. In addition to what is outlined below, we continue to offer VA Video Connect as well as telephone appointments from all locations for those who would prefer to limit exposure.

In **Escanaba**, Veterans are able to see a Therapist in person if they wish and this includes both individual as well as groups. Counselors are currently in the process of contacting those who were previously attending to bring the groups back on line.

In **Marquette**, individual Veterans are able to be seen face to face by appointment only at the County Veteran Service Officers building in downtown Ishpeming. Groups which were previously being held at Jacobetti Veterans Home are now being held at the VVA Chapter 380 building in Negaunee.

In **Houghton & L'Anse**, Veterans are able to be seen face to face by appointment only and groups are now going again, all in the Copper Country Mall office and American Legion where services were previously offered.

In **Sault Ste. Marie & Newberry** Veterans are able to be seen face to face by appointment only and groups are now going again in the Tribal Counsel and Luce County EDC sites as normal.

In **Menominee**, the CBOC is not allowing access at this time. Alternate plans are trying to be developed and we will inform Veterans in this area as soon as that plan has been worked out.

NOTE: Group schedules are on the last page of this Newsletter.





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Tips to Boost Energy Naturally (By Travis Leland, LMSW)

⇒ **Get organized** Some basic tips for getting organized may seem simple in mind but for some they take determination to put into routine. Organizing is simplifying life. Clearing out the clutter you don't need; learning how to say "no, I have enough"; dealing with paperwork right now rather than putting it off (same thing with the dishes); and pre-planning for the next day the night before. There are plenty of articles on the internet discussing these concepts.

*The VA offers a Mobile App "Store" providing Apps geared toward our veteran population and needs.

⇒ **Control stress** Stress-induced emotions consume huge amounts of energy. Talking with a friend or relative, joining a support group, or seeing a psychotherapist can all help diffuse stress. Relaxation therapies like meditation, self-hypnosis, yoga, and tai chi are also effective tools for reducing stress.

⇒ **Lighten your load** One of the main reasons for fatigue is overwork. Overwork can include professional, family, and social obligations. Try to streamline your list of "must-do" activities. Set your priorities in terms of the most important tasks. Pare down those that are less important. Consider asking for extra help at work, if necessary.

⇒ **Exercise** Exercise almost guarantees that you'll sleep more soundly. It also gives your cells more energy to burn and circulates oxygen. And exercising causes your body to release epinephrine and norepinephrine, stress hormones that in modest amounts can make you feel energized. Even a brisk walk is a good start.

⇒ **Restrict your sleep** If you think you may be sleep-deprived, try getting less sleep. This advice may sound odd but determining how much sleep you really need can reduce the time you spend in bed not sleeping. This process makes it easier to fall asleep and promotes more restful sleep in the long run. Here's how to do it:

- Avoid napping during the day
- The first night, go to bed later than normal and get just four hours of sleep

• If you feel that you slept well during that period, add another 15 - 30 minutes of sleep the next night.

• As long as you're sleeping soundly the entire time you're in bed, slowly keep adding sleep on successive nights.

⇒ **Eat for energy** It's better to eat small meals and snacks every few hours than three large meals a day. This approach can reduce your perception of fatigue because your brain needs a steady supply of nutrients. Eating foods with a low glycemic index — whose sugars are absorbed slowly — may help you avoid the lag in energy that typically occurs after eating quickly absorbed sugars or refined starches. Foods with a low glycemic index include whole grains, high-fiber vegetables, nuts, and healthy oils such as olive oil. In general, high-carbohydrate foods have the highest glycemic indexes. Proteins and fats have glycemic indexes that are close to zero.

⇒ **Use caffeine to your advantage** Caffeine does help increase alertness, so having a cup of coffee can help sharpen your mind. But to get the energizing effects of caffeine, you should use it judiciously. It can cause insomnia, especially when consumed in large amounts or after 2 p.m.

⇒ **Limit alcohol** One of the best hedges against the midafternoon slump is to avoid drinking alcohol at lunch. The sedative effect of alcohol is especially strong at midday. Similarly, avoid a five o'clock cocktail if you want to have energy in the evening. If you're going to drink, do so in moderation at a time when you don't mind having your energy wind down.

⇒ **Drink water** What's the only nutrient that has been shown to enhance performance for all but the most demanding endurance activities? It's not some pricey sports drink. It's water. If your body is short of fluids, one of the first signs is a feeling of fatigue.

VA Medical Center Billing

On a national level the VA is not sending our bills for co-pays due to COVID-19. To avoid large bills coming in the future, Veterans can still make payments and check balances by calling 906-774-3300 X 33530 or mailing in payment to 325 East H street, Iron Mountain, MI ATTN: Agent Cashier.



Letter from the Director

Dear, Veterans/Family/Stakeholders,

“We are living in unprecedented times.” I recall another such “unprecedented” time in my life. That was in 2005 to 2008 when I was training for and deployed to Iraq. As Veterans we have experienced many of those times in our life especially for those who experienced trauma from a warzone or other military trauma such as MST. We recently honored those who served and died by remembering Memorial Day, each in our own way, saluting those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

In some ways I feel like the past three months have been somewhat of a deployment in the sense that I have been forced to change my routine due to something that I have no control. I have been “ordered” to shelter in place, like taking cover in a bunker waiting for the mortar rounds to stop. Or in the case of the COVID -19, attempting to go about my normal routine with additional protective equipment. I recall field training where we were required to wear our pro mask and have it ready just in case we came under a chemical attack. I hated carrying that protective mask, yet I knew it could save my life.

In Iraq I recall becoming numb to some of the things happening. I recall thinking by the time you heard the sound you knew you were safe because the sound usually came after the rocket impact. Whether that was my numbness or not I am not sure. Those were my thoughts at the time.

Now that things seem to be opening and we are “coming out of the bunker” to assess the situation, remember the Vet Center is here for you. It is easy to become numb to the COVID-19 virus especially with everything going on in our nation. Remember that the Vet Center is open for you to come in and talk with someone about the stress of these challenging times. We will be with you on this journey together.

Jim Harsh, MSW, LCSW
Director, Escanaba Vet Center



Group Schedule

Escanaba

Tuesday Vietnam Vets - 11:00am to 12:30pm

June 30th
July 14th & 28th
August 11th & 25th
September 8th & 22nd

Wednesday Vietnam Vets - 10:00 to 11:30am

July 1st, 15th & 29th
August 12th & 26th
September 9th & 23rd

Thursday Vietnam Vets - 4:00 to 5:30pm

July 2nd, 16th & 30th
August 13th & 27th
September 10th & 24th

Newberry

Tuesday Combat Vets - 1:00pm

July 7th & 21st
August 4th & 18th
September 1st, 15th & 29th

Sault Ste. Marie

Thursday Combat Vets - 2:00pm

July 2nd, 16th & 30th
August 13th & 27th
September 10th & 24th

Marquette

Wednesday Spouse/Sig Oth - 10:00am

July 1st, 15th, & 29th
August 12th & 26th
September 9th & 23rd

Marquette

Wednesday Combat Vets - 1:00pm

July 1st, 15th, & 29th
August 12th & 26th
September 9th & 23rd

Houghton

Tuesday/Thursday CrossFit – 5:00pm

Group meets every Tuesday & Thursday

Tuesday Gardening - 11:00am

June 30th
July 14th & 28th
August 11th & 25th
September 8th & 22nd

Thursday Vietnam Vets - 1:00pm

July 2nd, 16th & 30th
August 13th & 27th
September 10th & 24th

Friday Spouse/Sig Oth - 11:00am

Group meets every Friday

Friday Foreign Service - 2:00pm

June 26th
July 31st
August 28th
September 25th

Friday Narrative Therapy - 2:00pm

July 10th
August 14th
September 11th

L'Anse

Tuesday Foreign Service - 1:00pm

July 7th & 21st
August 4th & 18th
September 1st, 15th & 29th

Questions: Call (906) 233-0244