

Veterans outpatient clinic growing

The Tampa Tribune | Veterans outpatient clinic growing

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NEW PORT RICHEY - Veterans in West Pasco proudly served their country. Now it's their turn to get better medical care through the Veterans Affairs Outpatient Clinic here, officials say.

With more than 54,000 veterans calling the county home, the clinic has added three satellite offices for specialty care in mental health, home-based primary care visits and dental disabilities.

The clinic at 9912 Little Road will get an addition of about 4,000 square feet to its main building, now about 40,000 square feet. Parking lot expansion will add up to 60 more spaces to the overcrowded main lot.

Several thousand veterans get help each year, according to William Miller, chief medical officer for the outpatient clinic. The facility registers some 14,000 trips by patients. Funding for the improvements was arranged through U.S. Rep. Gus Bilirakis, R-Palm Harbor, Miller emphasized.

"The congressman has been very instrumental," Miller remarked about the aid from Bilirakis. He and his staff are "very concerned about helping us ... to maximize" the services at the clinic.

"The VA recognized there needs to be more health care," Miller commented about the addition of the satellite offices.

Veterans must be registered as patients at the main clinic before they can be referred to the satellite clinics. Call 727-869-4100 for eligibility information.

Mental health

Office space in the Barrister Building, 7701 Little Road, will allow an expansion of VA mental health services. The branch office, which is across from the West Pasco Government Center, allowed the VA to double the number of mental health specialists based in the West Pasco area, Miller said.

A psychiatrist, three psychologists, and two social workers already are on board, with more staff to be added.

Home-based care

Home-based primary care for severely disabled veterans has set up shop at 7347 Ridge Road, in the former Visiting Nurses Association office near Lemon Road.

"It's a multidisciplinary team of folks" that see about 90 veterans in their homes, Miller said. "It's a terrific program."

In the past, an ambulance had to ferry the disabled veterans to the main clinic on Little Road, Miller explained. Specialized transportation had been necessary since the veterans often have to be moved via wheelchair or gurney.

It seemed to be much easier on the veterans to have medical staff make house calls.

Potential patients can ask for a home evaluation first to see if they might qualify.

Dental disabilities

Only a select few veterans with dental-related disabilities will qualify to see specialists at the satellite office at 5138 Deer Park Drive, Suites 101 and 102. Usually veterans who developed dental problems while serving in the armed forces can seek the extra help.

Miller stressed this branch office is not intended for general dental care for all veterans.

For more information on Gus's efforts to improve the services and facilities at the Pasco Clinic [click here](#).