



**Veterans Health Administration**  
Office of Patient Care Services

# Spinal Cord Injury / Disorders Services



**Health ■ Independence**

**Quality of Life ■ Productivity**

# Welcome

Letter from the Chief Consultant, Spinal Cord Injury and Disorders Services  
Office of Patient Care Services  
Veterans Health Administration



**Dear Active Duty Service Members, Veterans and Families,**

Welcome to the VA Spinal Cord Injury/Disorders (SCI/D) System of Care. Our mission is an unwavering commitment to support and maintain the health, independence, quality of life, and productivity of individuals with spinal cord injury and disorders throughout their lives.

This brochure is designed to provide you with information about our programs and services throughout all VA SCI/D Centers. We are proud of the services we provide to Active Duty Service Members and Veterans. I am especially appreciative of our medical rehabilitation teams for their energy and continuous pursuit of excellence in patient care.

On behalf of VA SCI/D Services, thank you for your tremendous sacrifice and dedicated service. Please do not hesitate to let us know how we can be of assistance to you.

**Sincerely,**

**Margaret C. Hammond, MD**

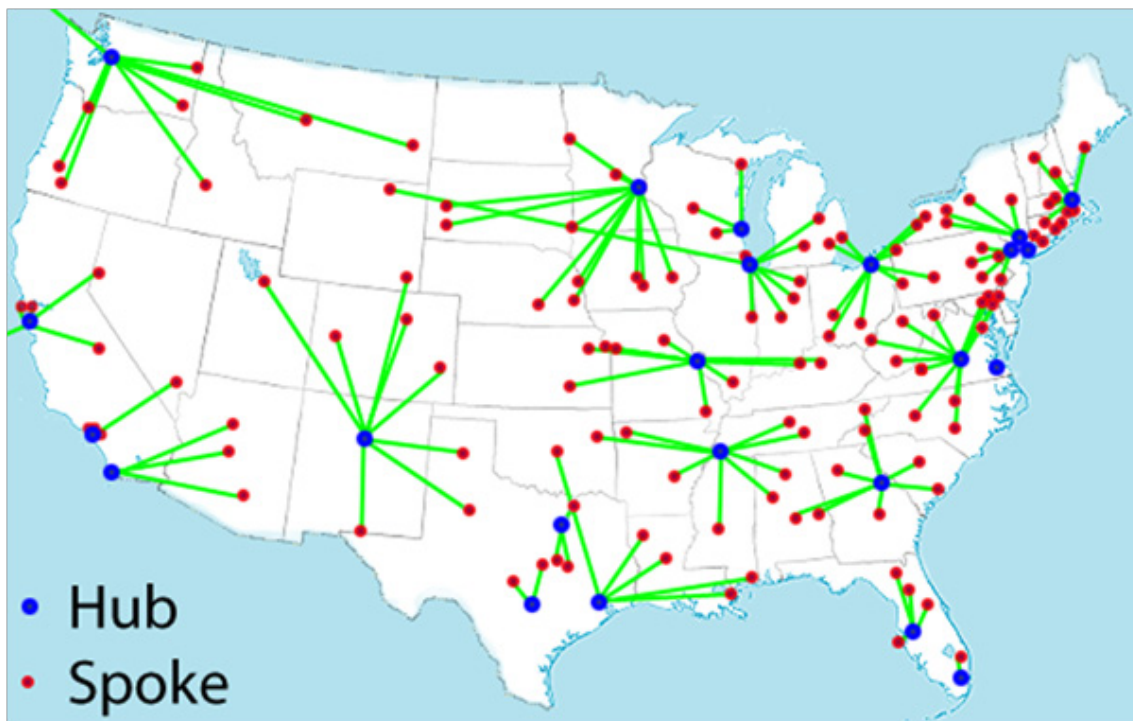
# VA Spinal Cord Injury & Disorders (SCI/D) System of Care

## SCI/D Program Mission

The **mission** of the VA Spinal Cord Injury and Disorders (SCI/D) Services is to support and maintain the health, independence, quality of life, and productivity of individuals with spinal cord injury and disorders throughout their lives. These objectives are accomplished through rehabilitation, sustaining medical and surgical care, patient and family education, psychological, and vocational care, education, and professional training.

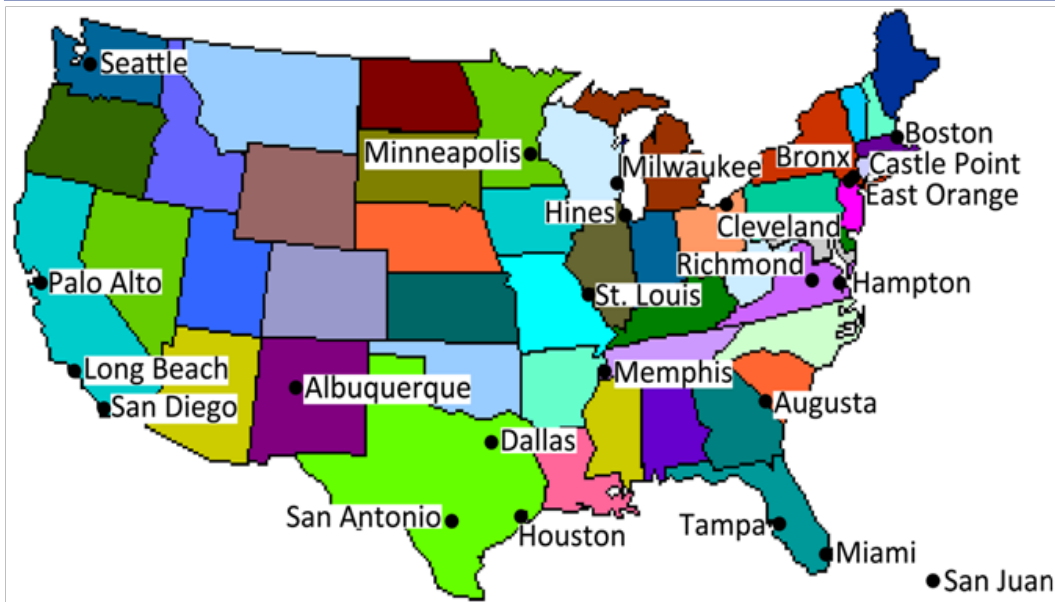
## National SCI System of Care: Hub & Spoke Model

**VA has the largest single network of SCI care in the nation.** VA services are delivered through a “hub and spoke” system of care, extending from 24 regional SCI/D Centers offering primary care and specialty care by multidisciplinary teams (hubs) to the 134 SCI/D Primary Care teams (spokes) at local VA medical centers. Each primary care team has a physician, nurse and social worker. Newly injured veterans and active duty service members are referred to a VA SCI/D Center for rehabilitation after being stabilized at a trauma center or military treatment facility. Each year, approximately 450 newly injured veterans and active duty service members receive rehabilitation at VA SCI/D Centers.



VA's SCI/D System of Care provides a **coordinated lifelong continuum of care and services** for eligible Veterans of all ages, including emergency care, medical and surgical stabilization, rehabilitation, primary care, preventive care, specialty sustaining care, surgical care, outpatient care, home care, and long-term care. VA's SCI Specialty care focuses on the prevention or early detection of complications of SCI, with multidisciplinary teams providing annual comprehensive evaluations.

# Largest single network of SCI care in the nation



## VA SCI Centers

### CALIFORNIA

**VA Long Beach Health Care System**  
5901 E. 7th St. Long Beach, CA 90822  
Main: 562-826-8000

**VA Palo Alto Health Care System**  
3801 Miranda Ave. Palo Alto, CA 94304  
Main: 650-493-5000

**VA San Diego Health Care System**  
3350 La Jolla Village Dr. San Diego, CA 92161  
Main: 858-552-8585

### FLORIDA

**James A. Haley VA Medical Center**  
13000 Bruce B. Downs Blvd. Tampa, FL 33612  
Main: 813-972-2000

**Miami VA Health Care System**  
1201 N.W. 16th St. Miami, FL 33125  
Main: 305-575-7000

### GEORGIA

**Augusta VA Medical Center**  
One Freedom Way. Augusta, GA 30904  
Main: 706-733-0188

### ILLINOIS

**Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital**  
5000 South 5th Avenue. Hines, Illinois 60141  
Main: 708-202-8387

### MASSACHUSETTS

**VA Boston Health Care System**  
West Roxbury Campus  
1400 V.F.W. Parkway. West Roxbury, MA 02132  
Main: 617-323-770

### MINNESOTA

**Minneapolis VA Medical Center**  
1 Veterans Drive. Minneapolis, MN, 55417  
Main: 612-725-2000

### MISSOURI

**St. Louis VA Medical Center Jefferson Barracks Division**  
1 Jefferson Barracks Dr. St. Louis, MO 63125  
Main: 314-652-4100

### NEW JERSEY

**VA New Jersey Health Care System**   
385 Tremont Ave. East Orange, NJ 07018  
Main: 973-676-1000

### NEW MEXICO

**New Mexico VA Health Care System**  
1501 San Pedro SE. Albuquerque, NM 87108  
Main: 505-265-1711

### NEW YORK

**James J. Peters VA Medical Center**  
130 West Kingsbridge Rd. Bronx, NY 10468  
Main: 718-584-9000

**VA Hudson Valley Health Care System**   
Hudson Valley Route D. Castle Point, NY 12511  
Main: 845-831-2000

### OHIO

**Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center**  
10701 East Blvd. Cleveland, Ohio 44106  
Main: 216-791-3800

**VA Caribbean Health Care System**  
#10 Casia Street  
San Juan, PR 00921-3201  
Main: 787-641-7582

### TENNESSEE

**Memphis VA Medical Center**  
1030 Jefferson Ave. Memphis, TN 38104  
Main: 901-523-8990

### TEXAS

**VA North Texas Health Care System**  
4500 South Lancaster Rd. Dallas, TX 75216  
Main: 214-742-8387

**Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center**  
2002 Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77030  
Main: 713-791-1414

**South Texas Veterans Health Care System**  
Audie L. Murphy Division  
7400 Merton Minter Blvd. San Antonio, TX 78229  
Main: 210-617-5300

### VIRGINIA

**Hampton VA Medical Center**   
100 Emancipation Dr. Hampton, VA 23667  
Main: 757-722-9961

**Hunter Holmes McGuire VAMC**  
1201 Broad Rock Blvd., Richmond, VA 23249  
Main: 804-675-5000

### WASHINGTON

**VA Puget Sound Health Care System**  
1660 S. Columbian Way. Seattle, WA 98108-1597  
Main: 206-762-1010

### WISCONSIN

**Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center**  
5000 W. National Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53295  
Main: 414-384-2000

# Points of Pride

## Leaders in Research

VA leads health care in defining new methods of rehabilitation through research and engineering. In addition to receiving direct funding for spinal cord research from VA, investigators at VA medical centers are supported by organizations such as the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Strokes and Paralyzed Veterans of America. VA research on SCI focuses on areas such as functional electrical stimulation, wheelchair and other adaptive technology, cell transplantation, treatment of medical complications of SCI, and rehabilitation methods and outcomes.

## Advanced Technology

VA SCI Centers have a multitude of technology available that assists an individual with any level of injury to maximize independence and help integrate daily tasks back into their lives. Equipment education and resources are available to accomplish: early standing and weight-bearing, body weight support and treadmill training, overground training for walking, electrical stimulation for weak and paralyzed muscles in the lower limbs for ambulation and upper limbs for hand function. Examples include: Lokomat, FES bike, FES LE orthotic, FES UE orthotic, Parastep, and GAMECycle.

## Gold Standard of Care

An external review conducted by a major consulting firm in 2000 comparing VA SCI services to those in the private sector and foreign country showed that VA's coverage was more comprehensive. VA SCI&D System of Care provides services that are:

- Uniquely organized
- Lifelong care
- Coordinated system
- Prosthetic equipment, adapted vehicle grant, Home Improvement Structural Alterations grant
- Medications and supplies
- Vocational rehabilitation

## Accreditation

Accreditation signifies that a hospital's program represents the highest quality, value, and optimal outcomes for the individuals served. All VA Spinal Cord Injury & Disorders Centers are accredited by:



**Commission of Accreditation for Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)** - an independent, international organization that promotes the standards of care for rehabilitation programs.



**The Joint Commission** - a private nongovernmental agency that establishes guidelines for the operation of hospitals and other healthcare-related organizations in the United States



**Medical & Psychosocial Care**

Rehabilitation

Primary Care

Medical Surgical Care

Urological Management

Electrodiagnostic Services

Clinical Psychology & Neuropsychology

Social Work

Chaplain

**Other Services**

Independent Living Services

Driver Training

Vocational Rehabilitation

Educational Classes

Peer Counseling

Peer Activities



**Therapeutic & Rehabilitative Care**

Physical Therapy

Respiratory Therapy

Prosthetic & Orthotics

Occupational Therapy

Speech & Language Pathology

Recreation Therapy

**Home & Community Services**

Home Care Services

Fee Basis Care

Respite

Telehealth

SCI/D Long Term Care Centers

Hospice

# VA Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Team

## Team Approach

You will always work with a team. Spinal cord injuries can be very complicated. The best results come from working with a team of experts with different skills.



**YOU** are the most important member of the SCI Rehabilitation Team.



**Physician** is a medical doctor and the team leader. This person will direct and coordinate your individualized medical and rehabilitation program. Providing ongoing care throughout the rehabilitation process, the M.D. communicates regularly with you, your family, and the rest of the rehabilitation team to ensure the best possible outcome.



**Rehabilitation Nurses** combine traditional patient care skills with expertise in rehabilitation nursing by managing complex medical issues, collaborating with other specialties, providing ongoing patient/caregiver education, setting goals for maximal independence, and establishing plans of care to maintain optimal wellness.



**Physical Therapists** provide services to help restore maximum function through increasing mobility and strength and decreasing pain. Treatment may include: muscle re-education, mobility training, gait training; wheelchair skills; therapeutic exercise; pain relief modalities; and other appropriate treatment techniques.



**Occupational Therapists** help you regain the ability to do normal everyday tasks. This may be achieved by restoring old skills or helping you learn new skills, or by helping with a variety of adaptive equipment, orthotics, and home modifications.



**Recreational Therapists** meet with you to assess your skills and abilities while addressing your interests and needs, paying special attention to the different kinds of things you like to do for fun. Personalized treatment plans are developed to address physical, social, and emotional needs and to help you return to familiar, or develop new, leisure activities.



**Social Worker** will assist you with many aspects of care, such as preparing and implementing your discharge plan, arranging meetings with you and your family, arranging a schedule for family training days and working with other interdisciplinary team members.



**Psychologist** is trained to assess and treat the many challenges facing spinal cord injured patients and their families. Psychologists provide clinical and counseling services for coping and adjustment problems related to traumatic injury/illness. Psychologists work with you and your family to identify and address specific issues (e.g.: mood/emotions, stress management, body image, quality of life, etc.) that may prevent you and your family from achieving the highest level of functioning after injury.

**There are also other specialists available that may help with your care, depending on your needs. These may include Speech & Language Therapists, Kinesiotherapists, Dieticians, Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists, Chaplains etc.**



# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***“They tell me I need to go to acute rehabilitation. What is acute rehabilitation?”***

The most important thing on which you will be working in acute rehabilitation is to gain back as much function as possible. Some persons with spinal cord injury are able to gain back most or all of their function and some are less able to do so. Once you get back as much function as possible, acute rehabilitation will help you make any adjustments necessary. Sometimes this involves learning how to use a wheelchair and related skills.

Acute rehabilitation will take time and your spouse, family, and even your friends may become involved. VA's SCI acute rehabilitation process is comprehensive; it looks after all of your needs. Depending on your injury, it may include help with:

- Learning about any new skills you may need to use
- Psychologically coping with the injury
- Getting you back to doing as many recreational and fun activities as possible
- Relationships with your spouse or sexual partner including planning for a family
- Housing options
- Job skills and finding a job, to get you back working as soon as possible

## ***“When can I begin rehabilitation?”***

Acute rehabilitation is one of the most important phases of spinal cord injury treatment. You should begin acute rehabilitation as soon as possible. Evidence shows the sooner individuals begin rehabilitation, the fewer the complications and the stronger your outcomes are likely to be.

## ***“I do not want to be far away from family and friends. Are there any VA Spinal Cord Injury Centers near where I live?”***

There are regional VA Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Centers nationwide that have the most comprehensive care for individuals with a spinal cord injury. They provide a full range of spinal cord injury primary care and specialty care and are staffed by multi-disciplinary teams that include physicians, nurses, psychologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, vocational therapists, recreational therapists, social workers, and others. You can choose to have your rehabilitation in the VA SCI Center that is the most convenient for you, your family, and your friends.

## ***“How long will I stay in rehabilitation?”***

Your length of stay will be determined by your needs and your progress. At VA SCI Centers, the treatment team will work closely with you and your family or caregiver to coordinate a safe, timely, and successful discharge.

## ***“What happens to me after rehabilitation?”***

The partnership that exists between the patient, family/support system, SCI staff and community gives patients the opportunity to reach their highest level of independence and productivity. We help facilitate additional services, if needed, following your rehabilitation stay. VA SCI Centers provides additional services through Home Health Services and Outpatient Services. Following discharge from rehabilitation, the VA's SCI/D System of Care will provide an integrated and coordinated lifelong continuum of services for eligible Veterans with SCI.



# Visit Us

To become more familiar with our VA Spinal Cord Injury Centers and the teams who will care for you, we encourage you and family members to tour the SCI Center before admission.



## VIRTUAL TOUR

“*Behind the Scenes of an SCI Center*” gives a short video tour of a VA Spinal Cord Injury Center and shows some of the clinical work done by the interdisciplinary team members. Visit our web site at [www.sci.va.gov](http://www.sci.va.gov) to view the video.

## FAMILY TOURS

Contact VA SCI Centers to arrange a private tour.