



Department of
Veterans Affairs

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News Release

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VA Launches Facebook Pages for All 152 Medical Centers *Strategy Enables Returning Vets to Engage with VA at the Local Level*

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today that all of its 152 medical centers are now actively represented on Facebook, the world’s largest social networking site.

“This event marks an important milestone in the overall effort to transform how VA communicates with Veterans and provide them the health care and benefits they have earned,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “Veterans and their families told us from the beginning that they want to engage and they want relevant information delivered at the local level. By leveraging Facebook, the Department continues to expand access to VA, and embrace transparency and two-way conversation.”

The process that began with a single Veterans Health Administration Facebook page in 2008 has now produced over 150 Facebook pages, 64 Twitter feeds, a YouTube channel, a Flickr page, and the *VAntage Point* blog. Additionally, in June 2011, VA produced a Department-wide social media policy that provides guidelines for communicating with Veterans online. The overarching strategy is designed to help break down long-perceived barriers between the Department and its stakeholders.

“Veterans of all eras are depending on us to get the right information to the right person at the right time,” said Brandon Friedman, VA’s director of online communications, and a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan. “With more troops returning home, we also have a responsibility to connect with the thousands of Servicemembers who have been—and will be—entering our system. They’re using social media, so that’s where we need to be. Facebook helps us do that.”

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“We are very pleased to have pioneered social media in VA, and now our VA medical centers across the nation are all engaged,” said Dr. Robert Petzel, under secretary for health. “We are committed to helping Veterans understand their benefits and receive the health care their service has earned them.”

VA clinicians can’t discuss the specific health concerns of individual Veterans on Facebook, but that doesn’t prevent staff from monitoring VA’s sites closely each day—and providing helpful information to Veterans when they can. In the last year, for instance, VA’s Crisis Line counselors have successfully intervened on Facebook in cases where Veterans have suggested suicidal thoughts or presented with other emotional crises.

“Facebook’s mission is to make the world more open and connected and we are excited to see government agencies using our service to better to connect with citizens, provide information, and deliver services,” said Don Faul, Facebook’s vice president of online operations, a former U.S. Marine and a veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan. “We want to do all we can to support Veterans, so we’re pleased to see the Department of Veterans Affairs using Facebook connect with Veterans in an authentic and engaging way.”

VA currently has over 345,000 combined Facebook subscribers (or, “fans”). The Department’s main Facebook page has over 154,000 fans and its medical centers have a combined subscribership of over 69,000. The Department plans to continue expanding its Facebook presence while also focusing on bringing Twitter to every VA medical center as well.

For more information, please visit the sites below:

- Directory of All VA Social Media Sites:
www.va.gov/opa/SocialMedia.asp
- VA Facebook Page Directory:
www.facebook.com/VeteransAffairs?sk=app_7146470109

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