

# WELCOME & INFORMATION HANDBOOK



## **VA Mission Statement**

**To fulfill President Lincoln's promise "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans.**

## **Values**

**Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence (I CARE) define "who the VA is," VA's culture, and help guide the actions of staff across VA. Staff - at every level within VA - play a critical role to support VA's commitment to care and serve our Veterans, their families, and beneficiaries.**

## **Purpose, Goals and Objectives**

**Purpose: Provide exceptional health care services to visually impaired and legally blind Veterans.**

**Goals: To provide education, training, strategies, and devices to be more independent regardless of vision loss**

**Objectives: To Increase Veteran's confidence and quality of life.**

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

In case of Emergency.....	CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY
Veterans Crisis Line.....	800-273-8255
VA Central Iowa HCS.....	515-699-5999
VA Toll Free Number.....	800-294-8387
VA Nurse (Afterhours, Weekends, Holidays).....	866-687-7382
Wes Hodgson (VIST).....	515-699-5410
Low Vision Clinic (7M Annex).....	515-699-5942
Kate Johnson (LVT).....	515-242-4768
Kandace McCue (BROS).....	EXT. 24843
Audiology.....	515-699-5609
DAV Transportation.....	EXT. 25876
Eligibility.....	EXT. 5915 OR 5888
Eye Clinic (Bldg. 1, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor).....	EXT. 25815

**My HealthVet.....EXT. 23938**

**Patient Advocate.....515-699-5421**

**Patient Advocate .....515-699-5522**

**Pharmacy Assistance.....515-699-5832**

**Prosthetics.....EXT. 4071**

**Travel Payment Reimbursement.....EXT. 4149**

**VA Benefits Administration.....800-827-1000**

## **Our Website**

**[www.centraliowa.va.gov/Advanced\\_Low\\_Vision\\_Clinic\\_and.asp](http://www.centraliowa.va.gov/Advanced_Low_Vision_Clinic_and.asp)**

## **WELCOME TO BLIND REHAB SERVICES**

**The staff of the VA Central Iowa Advanced Low Vision Clinic (ALVC) welcomes you to our unique and comprehensive program. The ALVC is a part of the National Blind Rehabilitation Services (BRS) Program,**

**which serves those with visual impairments. The purpose of this handbook is to provide you and your family with basic information about the Blind Rehabilitation Services Program, our staff, the services we provide, and our policies. Please ask a staff member if you have a question.**

**We will work together (with you) to make your experience, and training, both beneficial and life-changing. Our goal is to provide quality, comprehensive, and compassionate care to you by utilizing an interdisciplinary team approach to achieve your highest level of function. We encourage you to emphasize your positive potential rather than your limitations.**

**Low Vision means that you have trouble seeing and your eyesight cannot be corrected with regular glasses, contact lenses, surgery, or medication. The term "legal blindness" is a very deceiving term, as most persons retain a good deal of usable, functional vision.**

**Together we will develop an individualized treatment plan with emphasis on your personal goals. Your active participation in this**

process is essential to achieve optimal results. We also desire and request the participation of family members, or caregivers, in the rehabilitation process in order to attain the desired outcome for both you and those closest to you.

## **THE ALVC STAFF**

Please plan to spend a full day to meet with your team of staff members.

**Low Vision Optometrist** – evaluates your vision through a specialized exam, helps you to understand your condition, and places orders for helpful optical and non-optical devices.

**Low Vision Therapist** – teaches you new ways to read, write, and do other activities like watching TV, or home repairs. Training includes adaptive strategies for using devices and other tactics for utilizing your remaining vision.

**Blind Rehabilitation Specialist** – teaches you safe travel, protective techniques, and the use of devices to enhance independent travel.

**Additionally, they will assist with development of skills and use of adaptive devices for kitchen safety, medication management, personal grooming, communication skills and leisure activities.**

**Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialist (BROS) – provides lessons in your home, community environment, or at a local VA facility. BROS broad-based knowledge includes: Orientation & Mobility (O&M), Activities of Daily Living (ADL), low vision therapy, and basic computer access.**

**Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) Coordinator – Serves as case manager for all legally blind Veterans and is responsible for coordinating all services for those Veterans and their families. Services include provision of general VA information, adjustment counseling, support groups and benefits counseling.**

**The ALVC Team is accredited by the Commission for Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). This is a voluntary accreditation requiring strict adherence to policies, standards, and quality patient care. This will ensure we achieve and maintain nationally accepted**

standards of practice and expected outcomes. The Central Iowa ALVC Team is here to help you regain and maintain functional life skills, and to understand that life does continue with hope and dignity.

### **Blind Rehabilitation Service (BRS) Scope of Service**

**Our Customers: Any Veteran or active duty Service Member who is 18 years and older, identified as having functional vision loss, and eligible for VA medical center care and services. The ALVC Team serves those with the following conditions: macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, glaucoma, traumatic brain injury, stroke, and other conditions causing vision loss.**

### **Services/Hours of Operation/Access**

Following referral, the ALVC Team provides interdisciplinary and collaborative outpatient blind rehabilitation services to Veterans and Active Duty Service Members. The ALVC is located in the Northeast

**end of Building 7M on the Des Moines VA Medical Center campus. Services are offered on Monday from 7:00AM to 3:30PM and from Tuesday through Friday from 7:00AM to 5:30PM. Staff members may provide some services in a Veteran's home or apartment. Currently, services are provided at no cost in either the home or VA. However, BROS appointments may require a \$15.00 co-pay.**

**Inpatient and outpatient VA providers refer Veterans into the Low Vision Clinic via an internal consult. The ALVC Team also accepts referrals from the surrounding community. All referrals require a current dilated eye exam. The estimated number of appointments and duration of initial care is based on visual acuity, motivation, and goals. Prospective Veterans are called and informed of the available services; they are also offered the opportunity to visit the ALVC in person to learn more about the services offered.**

## **Transitional services**

**Transitional planning and services occur due to a change in one's life situation. Moving to a new living environment, or post discharge from a medical or rehab facility are examples of when transitional services might occur. The goals of the transitional services are defined on an individual basis. The local team works in close collaboration with the other VA services or nursing care facilities etc. to set the veteran up for success.**

## **Discharge from services**

**In certain circumstances, the ALVC Team may discharge you when you disregard policies of the Medical Center or jeopardize the safety of others. However, you are not typically discharged from the program.**

## **Collaboration with Other Departments and Services**

**Collaboration with Physicians, Advanced Level Practitioners, and other disciplines or services all play an integral role in maintaining the physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual well-being for all Veterans who receive care from the ALVC Team.**

## **PATIENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is pleased you have selected us to provide your healthcare. We want to improve your health and well-being. We strive to make your visit as pleasant for you as possible. As part of our service to you, to other Veterans, and to the Nation, we are committed to improving healthcare quality. We also train future healthcare professionals, conduct research, and support our country in times of national emergency. In all of these activities, our employees will respect and support your rights as a patient. Your basic rights and responsibilities are outlined below:**

**You have a right to:**

- **Be cared for and treated with dignity, compassion, humility, and respect.**
- **Your privacy and it will be protected.**
- **Confidentiality of information pertaining to you.**
- **Receive care in a safe environment.**
- **Information about your healthcare communicated to you in a manner that you can understand.**
- **Questions and concerns will be readily addressed. Your vision problems, and implications, as well as recommended solutions will be explained so you can understand.**
- **Have your rights communicated to you prior to receiving services and at least yearly thereafter.**
- **Have your rights available for review or clarification at any time.**
- **Receive your care without being subjected to any abuse, neglect, humiliation, retaliation, or financial or other exploitation.**
- **Express spiritual beliefs and cultural practices.**

- **Have your personal and religious values honored.**
- **Prompt and appropriate treatment.**
- **Know each provider and the services they provide in the Advanced Low Vision Clinic, VIST Coordinator, and/or BROS. Information pertaining to immediate, pending, and potential future services will be provided and you will have ample time to make decisions about treatment.**
- **Be involved in developing your treatment plan.**
- **Agree or refuse treatment offered.**
- **Access to legal assistance, self-help, and advocacy assistance.**
- **Information regarding resources related to your legal status, when this is appropriate.**
- **Make a complaint if you feel your rights have been denied.**

**You have a responsibility to:**

- **Treat all staff with courtesy and respect.**
- **Provide accurate information regarding your health, and financial issues.**

- **Ask questions and receive answers about your care, services, needs, and expectations.**
- **Actively participate in an agreed treatment plan. Please inform staff if you are having problems following instructions, or decide not to follow any part of outlined service/treatment plan.**
- **Maintain appropriate personal behavior.**
- **Respect the property of the VA and its service providers.**
- **Understand and accept consequences for the outcomes if you do not follow the care, services, or treatment plan.**
- **Inform staff of any unsafe activity in the area, when you are receiving care in your home.**
- **Contact the Office of Inspector General by phone 1-800-994-6610**

### **RELEASE OF INFORMATION**

**Veterans are encouraged to contact the Release of Information (ROI) if you want copies of your medical information released to a specific agency or person. You may contact ROI at 515-699-5802.**

## **INFORMED CONSENT**

**You are encouraged to participated fully in all decisions involving your health care. Staff will provide sufficient information so that you may make informed decisions concerning risks, benefits, potential problems related to therapy, likelihood of success, and other treatment alternatives.**

## **COMPLAINTS**

**You are encouraged and expected to seek help from your treatment team, or a Patient Advocate, if you have problems or complaints. You will be given understandable information about the complaint process. You may complain verbally or in writing, without fear of retaliation.**

**We encourage Veterans to reach out to the Patient Advocates with any concerns, complaints, or positives to share about the VA Central Iowa staff, or personal experiences while here. Names and contact numbers are below.**

# **Patient Advocates**

**Lori Clair**

**Jennifer Barry-Burton**

**Stephanie Fuller**

**515-699-5522**

## **ADVANCE DIRECTIVES**

**Advance Directives is a legal document permitting your designated person to make medical decisions pertaining to your preferences for health care treatment when you are not able to do so yourself. Advance Directives consist of:**

1. Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care – names an adult as your “Health Care Agent” to make health care decisions for you if you are not able to do so.

2. Living Will – contains the treatments you want or do not want when you cannot make those decisions for yourself. It informs healthcare workers of your medical preferences when you are unable to communicate.

Talk about these options with your treatment team and those close to you before you make these important decisions. If you would like to complete the VA Advance Directive form, please contact us, and we will refer you to the appropriate staff.

### COPAY INFORMATION

All ALVC appointments, except for BROS, have NO COPAYS! While you may still have a copay for other services within the hospital, you will not have a copay for you appointments with Dr. Meeks, Kate, or Wes. Additionally, you will not pay for any of the devices issued to you from

**the Advanced Low Vision Clinic staff. BROS services may have a \$15 copay per appointment. If you should have a question about a VA copay or bills, please call the Health Recourse Center at 1-866-347-2352.**

## **How Are We Doing?**

**The ALVC Staff want to know how we are doing, to ensure we are providing the best possible blind rehabilitation services. Following your appointment in our clinic you have an opportunity to provide comments pertaining to the services you received. We encourage you to provide your honest feedback in order that we may better serve you and improve the quality of services for you.**

## **My Health eVet**

**Get more from VA with My Health eVet! That is a VA website. Refill VA prescriptions online 24/7. Send and receive non-urgent health related secure messages with your VA health care team. Input, store, and track Personal Health Information. Use VA Blue Button to downloaded currently available VA Health Record Information. Get**

reliable health information and resources. Get started! All you need is a computer with internet access and a My Health eVet Account.

Register for a basic My Health eVet Account at [www.MyHealth.va.gov](http://www.MyHealth.va.gov). Learn more by contacting your My Health eVet Coordinator, at 515-699-5999, extension 23419.

### National Blind Consumer Organizations

Many of the organizations listed below offer local support groups. Contact the specific organization for additional information.

American Council of the Blind 800-424-8666  
[www.acb.org](http://www.acb.org)

American Foundation for the Blind 800-232-5463  
[www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org)

Blinded Veterans Association 202-371-8880  
[www.bva.org](http://www.bva.org)

National Federation of the Blind 410-659-9314  
[www.nfb.org](http://www.nfb.org)