



# Healthcare for *Heroes*



## Annual Report to the Community

*Fiscal Year 2013*

**VA**



**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs**

Erie VA Medical Center



## Integrity

Act with high moral principle. Adhere to the highest professional standards. Maintain the trust and confidence of all with whom I engage.

## Commitment

Work diligently to serve Veterans and other beneficiaries. Be driven by an earnest belief in VA's mission. Fulfill my individual responsibilities and organizational responsibilities.

## Advocacy

Be truly Veteran-centric by identifying, fully considering, and appropriately advancing the interests of Veterans and other beneficiaries.

## Respect

Treat all those I serve and with whom I work with dignity and respect. Show respect to earn it.

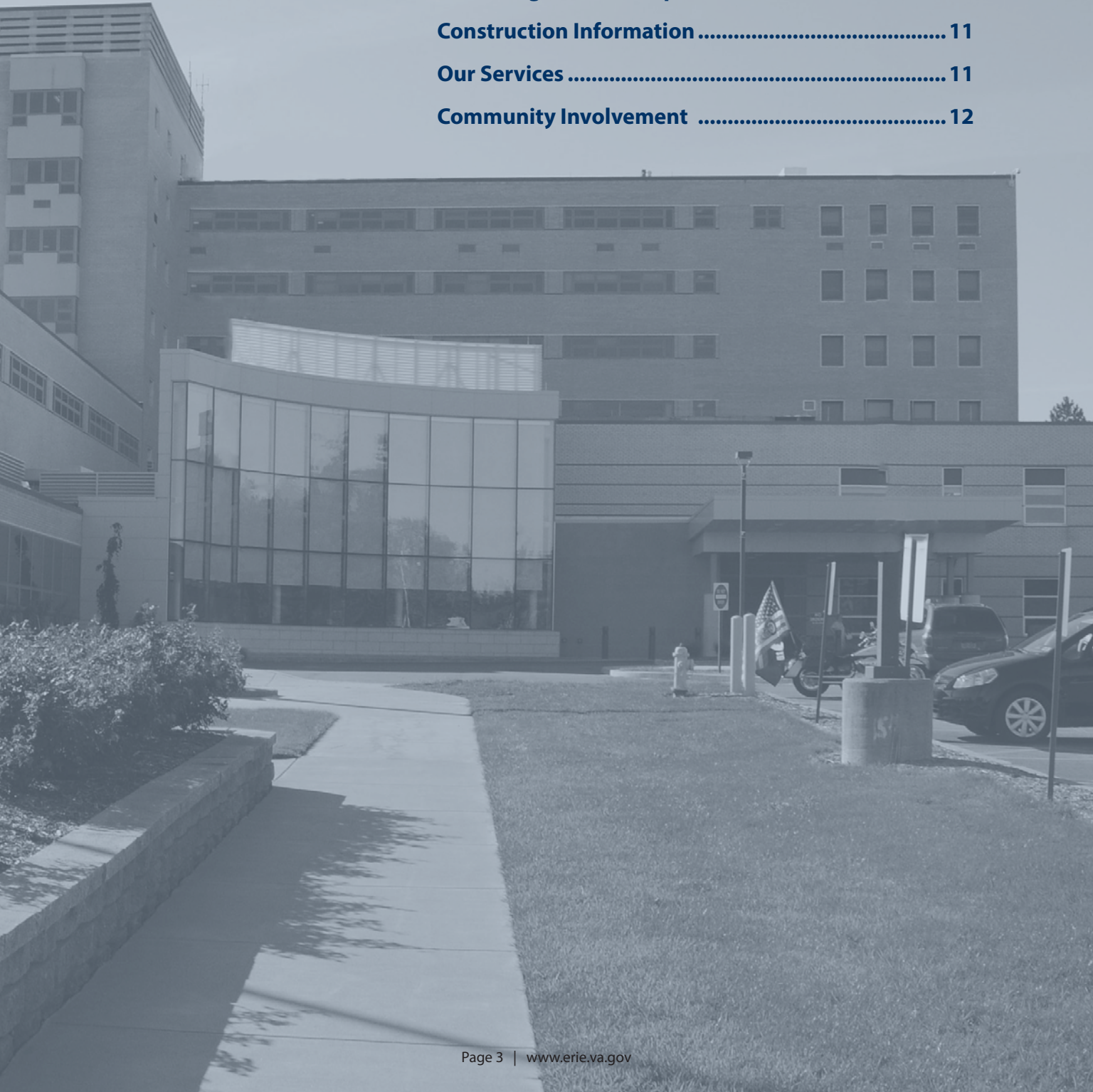
## Excellence

Strive for the highest quality and continuous improvement. Be thoughtful and decisive in leadership, accountable for my actions, willing to admit mistakes, and rigorous in correcting them.



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*Dr. Adelman talks with Veteran and long-time volunteer, Ron Lord.*



## Message from the Director

**Dear Veterans, families, and community partners,**

I am pleased to present our annual report to the community which celebrates our medical center's accomplishments. This past year, I am proud to say we took patient-centered care to the next level.

This report details an increase in home-based primary care services and telehealth services. These were expanded to break down barriers to health care for rural Veterans. Services to support homeless Veterans were expanded giving Veterans in the Ashtabula area more safe and reliable housing. Primary care clinics and the Behavioral Health Clinic added night and weekend hours to provide more convenient appointment times for Veterans. As we added new programs and services, we based our practices

on patient-feedback to ensure we added value to Erie VA Veterans.

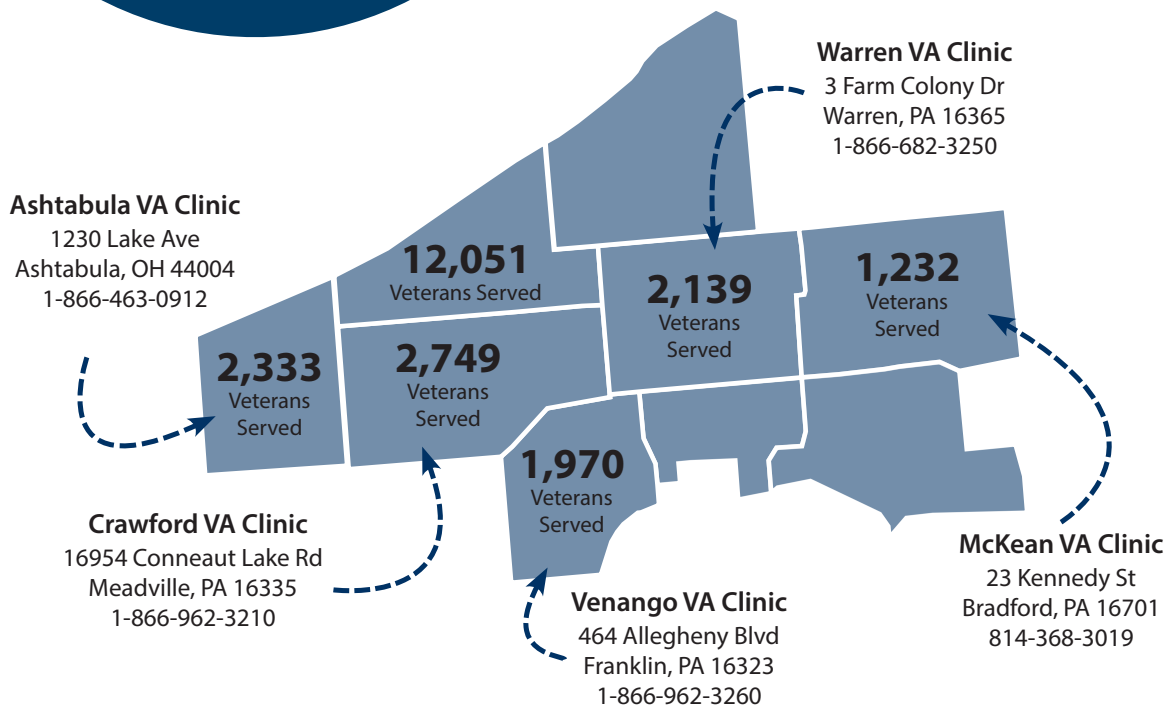
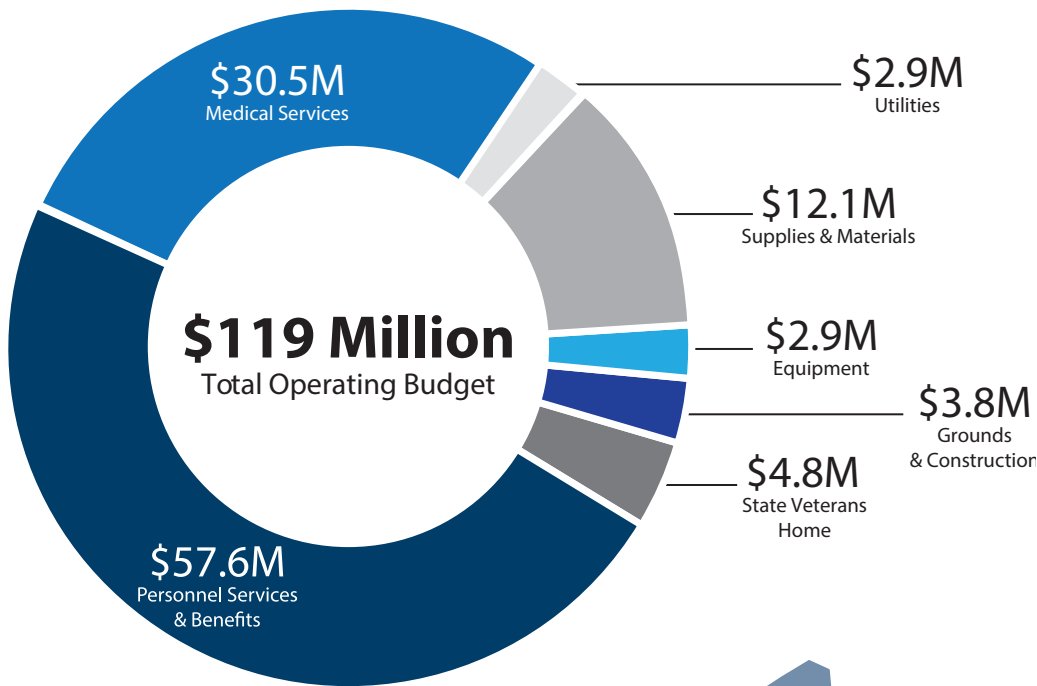
While we have come a long way, we face many challenges – a changing health care market, a decreasing Veteran population, and a limited pool of resources. Now more than ever, it is important for us to not only meet Veteran needs but to exceed their expectations. To accomplish that, we are focusing on improving access, engaging Veterans in their care, and personalizing their health care plan so that we can be the premier health care provider for Veterans.

With the steadfast support and tireless efforts from community partners like you, our volunteers, our Veterans, and our employees we will continue moving forward to redefine the patient experience and empower Veterans in their health care.

*Michael P. Adelman MD*

# Erie VA Heartbeat

We believe our programs, services, and resources should reflect the needs and expectations of our Veterans. Through patient feedback, we've identified areas of improvement and have taken action by adding staff, expanding programs, and increasing access to better meet the needs of Veterans.



**7,573**  
UCC Visits



**22,474**  
Unique Patients



**1,354**  
Women Veterans



**282,174**  
Outpatient Visits



**646**  
Employees



**1,826**  
OEF/OIF/OND Veterans



**\$386,549**  
Donations



**631**  
Volunteers



**79,654**  
Volunteer Hours

# Focused on Recovery: Behavioral Health Services Expand

The Erie VA Behavioral Health Clinic is the premiere facility in the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the tri-state area leading the way in expertise for evidence based practices. In 2013, the Behavioral Health Clinic continued pursuing excellence by training and certifying 15 staff members on evidence-based practices to provide only the best care for local Veterans.

## Expanding Supportive Services

Erie VA recognized a need to make mental health services available within primary care appointments for those patients needing brief solution-focused interventions. To meet this need, Erie VA implemented the primary care/mental health integration (MH/PCI) program for patients needing a little extra support. Behavioral Health staff work hand-in hand with the primary care clinics to provide brief emotional/mental health support. This collaboration between services has proven to be very successful as the more than 670 sessions were conducted in Fiscal Year 2013.

Erie VA also hired two additional peer support specialists to bring an added level of support to Veterans. Peer supports assist Veterans in their recovery journey by using their own journey through recovery to assist and motivate others. They also play an integral role in supporting Erie VA's Psychosocial Rehabilitation & Recovery Center.

## Caring for Homeless Veterans

Our commitment to eliminating homelessness among local Veterans by 2015 remains strong. In 2013, we received an additional 15 housing vouchers specifically designated to help homeless Veterans living in Ashtabula, OH, secure and maintain safe and reliable housing. We also hired an additional staff member that focuses on increasing outreach to communities and to assist in providing more timely access to services for homeless Veterans.

## Behavioral Health At a Glance

# 4,559

Unique Patients



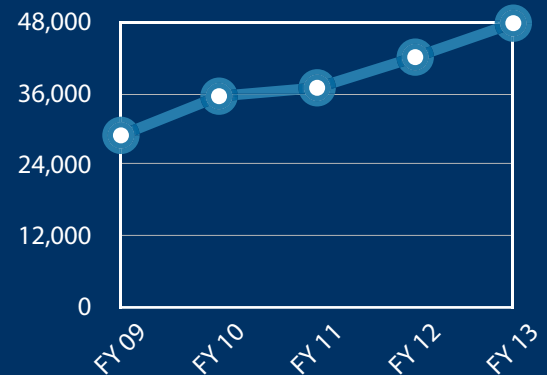
9%  
Women



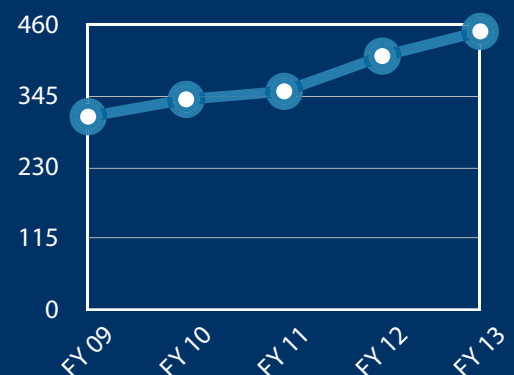
91%  
Men

Served by **66** Staff Members

### Total Annual Behavioral Health Visits



### Veterans Served by the Homeless Care Team



*In 2013 we completed construction of our new Behavioral Health Clinic that provides more space to expand services and provide a more therapeutic environment for our Veterans receiving care.*



## Providing Support to Family and Friends

Mental illness affects the whole family. That's why Erie VA believes it's critical to not only involve family and friends in the Veterans recovery process, but to provide support to them as well. In 2013, the Behavioral Health Clinic rolled out a monthly support group for family and friends of Veterans coping with mental illness. This support group provides education and support throughout a Veteran's recovery. The group is co-led by a behavioral health clinician and a family member of a Veteran so participants can get the clinical overview along with peer-support. Topics include everything from PTSD symptoms and treatment, to how to create a low-stress environment and minimize crises, to coping skills and communication skills for family members.

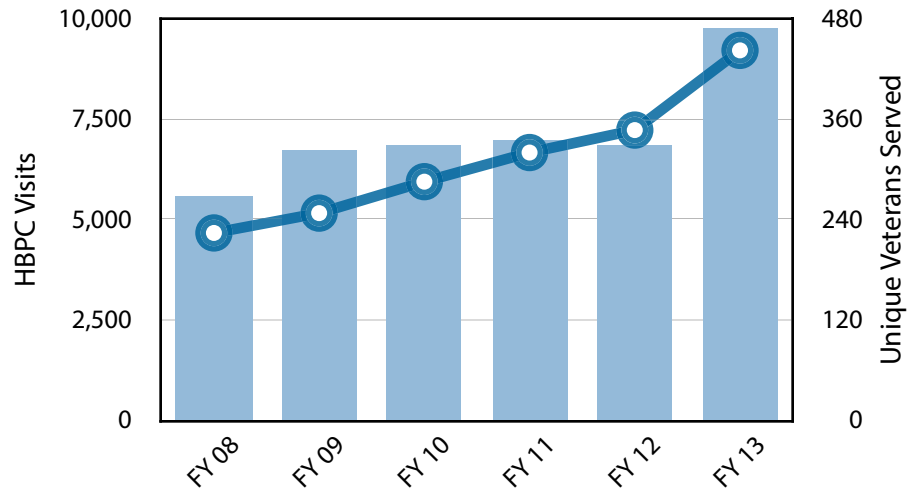
## Collaborating with Community Partners to Eliminate Mental Health Stigma

Erie VA hosted a community-wide Mental Health Summit to bring together community partners and collaborate on enhancing access to mental health services and to address the mental health needs of Veterans and their family members in the Erie area. More than 40 community partners attended – dignitaries, congressional representatives, city mission representatives, local homeless organizations, Veteran county service officers and more.

# Home-Based Primary Care Services

Patients with chronic conditions or those with limited mobility are able to receive top-notch VA health care services in the comfort of their own home through Erie VA's Home-Based Primary Care (HBPC) services. Serving more than 460 patients, the Home-Based Primary Care team conducted more than 9,200 visits last year alone.

As part of the Non-Institutional Care program, HBPC hired two new Registered Nurses (RN). One RN was hired specifically to expand services to Veterans living in Warren County in order to provide seamless access to care regardless of location.



# Home Telehealth Services

Home Telehealth services allow for patients with chronic health conditions such as diabetes, congestive heart failure, hypertension, and depression to be monitored from the comfort of their own homes and has been proven to keep patients out of the hospital and prevent decline. Patients enter daily information into a small, easy-to-use piece of equipment. That information is then monitored by a health care team that addresses issues that arise. The program has dramatically cut hospital admissions and keeps patients healthier at home.

**646**  
Home  
Telehealth  
Patients

**469**  
HBPC  
Patients



*TeleRetinal imaging was one of the first telehealth programs rolled out and is available to diabetic patients at the Erie VA and our community clinics. This is a sight-saving screening that allows VA staff to take a photo of the retina, store the image, and forward the image to specialists so patients can get faster results and save time on travel. Dr. Margaret Harrington, Optometrist and Certified Retinal Reader, demonstrates the screening with Melinda Bell, Ocular Imager.*





**Erie VA had the highest Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) enrollment rate of patients using home telehealth within VISN4 for Fiscal Year 2013.**

# Telehealth Services Opens Access to Rural Veterans

Four out of every ten Veterans enrolled at the Erie VA has used some form of telehealth services in 2013. Telehealth care provides convenient non-face-to-face care using technology to connect patients and providers who are miles away.

Before telehealth services were offered, patients living in rural areas had to drive long distances to see a specialist. Now, patients can drive to a clinic closest to them and be evaluated and examined by a specialist — everything from dermatology, speech therapy, education classes, dietary services, and more — without the inconvenience of long wait times or long driving distances. Using telehealth technology, health care providers can even monitor patient’s chronic health conditions from the comfort of the patients’ own home.

Telehealth services provide the right care, at the right time, in the right place and with a 94.5 percent satisfaction rate, these services will continue to expand to meet patients needs and exceed their expectations.



<b>1 in 3</b> Erie Veterans have a Premium Account	<b>7,685</b> Erie Veterans with a Premium Account	<b>3,330</b> Erie Veterans use Secure Messaging with PACT
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## My HealthVet – Online Access to VA Health Care

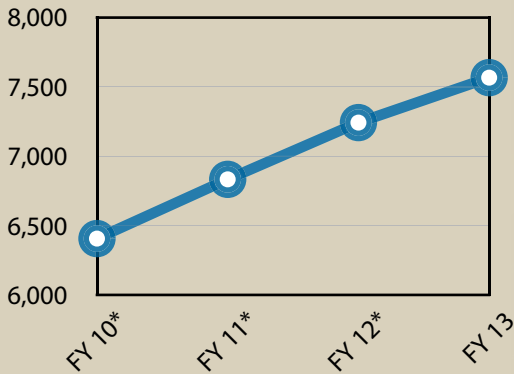
In 2013, the My HealthVet (MHV) Program made great strides in increasing Veterans access to VA health care by connecting them to online tools through [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov). Veterans enrolled and authenticated in this program are able to refill prescriptions, send secure messages to their health care teams, view lab results, view upcoming appointments, view doctors notes and much, much more.

To increase access, Erie VA hired a My HealthVet Assistant to work in collaboration with the MHV Coordinator. The MHV program opened a My HealthVet Lab during regular business hours to help more Veterans enroll, authenticate, and learn how to use the features MHV has to offer.

The My HealthVet Team also rolled out the secure messaging feature to additional Erie VA health clinics to open access between Veterans and their health providers. The Erie VA started the year with 54 health care teams using secure messaging and ended the year with 103. New secure messaging teams include behavioral health providers, prosthetics, dental, social work, and pharmacy among others.

# Urgent Care Center

Since the transition from the Emergency Room to the Urgent Care Center last year, the Erie VA has had a record breaking year of 7,573 visits in 2013. The Urgent Care Center is open every day from 8am-8pm including weekends and holidays and provides convenient access to healthcare for local Veterans.



\* Indicates 24-hour Emergency Room



## Extending Hours to Improve Patient Access

Health concerns aren't confined to an 8am-4:30pm shift. So why should health care services be? In 2013, the Erie VA revisited our operational hours looking at the hours through a patient-centered lens. Drawing on patient feedback, several departments decided to extend their hours and added evening and even weekend hours to better meet the needs of patients.

In addition to Monday through Friday from 8am-4:30pm, our extended hours include:

**Behavioral Health Clinic** *NEW!*  
Thursday 8am-7pm  
Saturday 8am-noon

**Primary Care Clinic** *NEW!*  
Monday 8am-6pm  
Saturday 8am-11:30am

**Radiology Department**  
Monday-Friday 8am-10pm  
Weekends and Holidays  
10am-6:30pm

**Urgent Care Clinic**  
7 days a week, 8am-8pm

**Pathology & Laboratory Medicine**  
Staffed 24 hours a day to support extended hours. Lab performs blood draws when needed in the clinics.



# Construction

Over the next couple of years, the Erie VA will be breaking ground on several upcoming construction projects as we expand our campus. These additions, renovations, and upgrades aim to greatly improve our Veterans' overall VA experience.

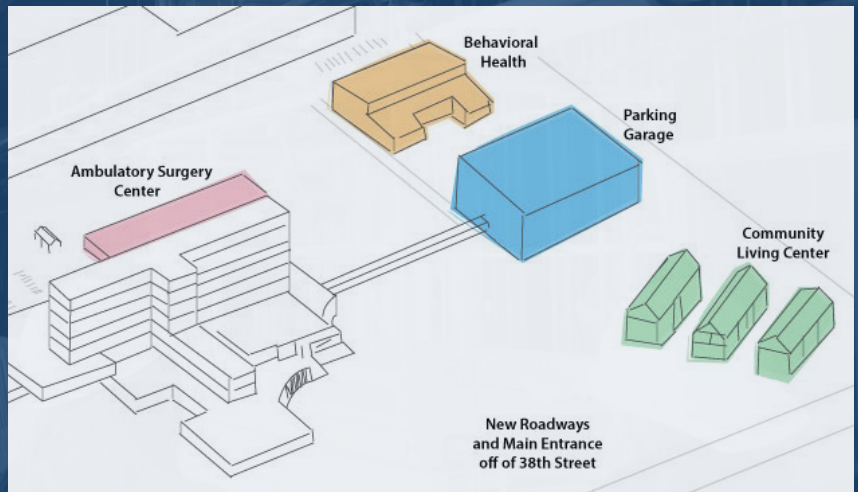
## Upcoming Projects

A new stand-alone Parking Garage is expected to be built where the old behavioral health facility once stood. This project should greatly alleviate patient and visitor parking issues once it is opened.

A new Ambulatory Surgery Center is currently underway. This center will be added on to the back of the facility near the second floor entrance and will provide easier access to patients using ambulatory surgery services.

The new stand-alone Community Living Center will be built on the west side of campus. This building will provide more home-like environment for residents, including gardens, private rooms for friends and family to visit, bigger community rooms, and more.

Visit [www.erie.va.gov/construction](http://www.erie.va.gov/construction) for all the latest construction news.



# Our Services

## General Information

814-868-8661  
1-800-274-8387 (toll free)

## Appointments

814-860-2124  
1-888-860-2124 (toll free)

## Medication Refills

814-868-6284  
1-800-274-8387 (toll free)

## Eligibility

814-860-2970

## Release of Information

814-860-2212

## Patient Advocate

814-860-2500

## My HealthVet Program

[www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)  
814-860-2821

## Caregiver Support

814-860-2657  
1-855-260-3274 (toll free)  
[www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov)

## Returning Service Members (OEF/OIF/OND)

814-860-2965

## Women Veterans Program

814-860-2907

## MOVE! (Weight Management)

814-860-2554

## Behavioral Health Clinic

814-860-2038

## Homeless Care Team

814-860-2392

## Homeless Veterans Hotline

1-877-424-3838

## Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-8255  
Text to 838255  
[www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net)

## Hospice/Palliative Care (Unit 5)

814-860-2480

## Community Living Center (Unit 4)

814-860-2332





...an  
integral part  
of the Erie  
community.

General Gray, 1951



**VA HEALTH CARE** | Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century

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