

MINNEAPOLIS VA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Member Handbook: Veterans Bridge to Recovery (VBR)

A Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center

Updated
November 2012



VA
HEALTH
CARE

Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century

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WELCOME!

We're glad you are joining the Veterans Bridge to Recovery program. We hope your time here will be rewarding. We want to provide a positive, encouraging environment in which everyone works together to reach their recovery goals.

RECOVERY

Recovery is defining your life and pursuing your goals even with the challenge of mental illness. Recovery means developing a new sense of meaning and purpose beyond the effects of mental illness. Recovery is different for everyone. Here are a few thoughts on recovery from VBR members and staff:

Recovery is...

...taking one day at a time. --Russ W.

...finding our strengths.—Steve F. and Pat K.

...staying on task.

...at our own pace. --Tim D.

...a wave and not a line.

...doing positive things.

...trying something different and getting different results.—John R.

...being sober.

...possible.



Another veteran added:

“Attitude is a little thing that makes a BIG difference.”

VBR MISSION STATEMENT

- “Working together toward recovery and community integration.”
- Programs like VBR have been started in many VA medical centers. They are:
 - transitional educational centers.
 - places that instill hope, validate strengths, teach skills, and facilitate community integration.
- The goal of programs like VBR is to offer veterans with serious mental illnesses an opportunity to:
 - define and pursue their vision of their future.
 - More fully integrate into the community of their choice.
 - Access services and supports needed for recovery and community integration.

LOCATION AND HOURS OF OPERATION

- At the VA Community Resource and Referral Center:
 - 1201 Harmon Place, Minneapolis, MN 55403
- Program hours: Monday-Friday 9a-3p
- Building hours: Monday-Friday 7am-6pm

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

- Main CRRC number 612-313-3240
**When you leave a message, please speak clearly, state your name and the reason you're calling, and leave a callback number.*
- Lisa Hoffman-Konn, PhD, LP, VBR Program Manager 612-313-3277
- Recovery Coaches:
 - Ben Fischer, LGSW, Social Worker 612-313-3280
 - Janis Johnson, MA, OTR/L, Occupational Therapist 612-313-3285
 - Kristin Enger, RN, BSN 612-313-3286
- Program Support Assistant (Leah Skrivseth) 612-313-3240
- *For after-hours assistance:*
 - EMERGENCIES: Call 911
 - URGENT: Call 612-725-2000 and ask for the psychiatrist on duty or
Call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255
 - NON-urgent: Leave a voicemail message on the CRRC voicemail or with your coach

VBR STAFF

- Strive to create a healthy, encouraging, supportive community.
- Are committed to providing ethical care in accord with the standards of their professional disciplines and our program code of ethics.
- Will work with you to help you define your personal vision of recovery.
- Will work with your outpatient mental health providers.
- Will work with your family members and/or other supporters if you want them involved in your care.

Program Manager/Psychologist: Lisa Hoffman-Konn, PhD, LP, CPRP

Lisa oversees the VBR program. She conducts informational and screening meetings, intake assessments, and educational classes such as Wellness Recovery Action Planning. She also accompanies veterans on trips into the community.

Nurse: Kristin Enger, RN, BSN

Kristin conducts wellness assessments, recovery coaching sessions, and educational classes. She also accompanies veterans on trips into the community.

Occupational therapist: Janis Johnson, MA, OTR/L

Janis conducts intake assessments, recovery coaching sessions, and educational classes such as Independent Living Skills. She can also do assessments of daily living skills. She also accompanies veterans on trips into the community.

Social worker: Ben Fischer, LGSW

Ben conducts intake assessments, recovery coaching sessions, educational classes, and accompanies veterans on community trips. He has experience helping people get and maintain employment, and has a strong interest in health and wellness.

Local Recovery Coordinator: Irene Harris, PhD, LP

Irene's roles at the VA are to consult with staff about how to provide recovery-oriented services and to evaluate mental health programs. Her primary role at VBR is supervising Peer Support Workers.

Peer support workers

Peer Support Workers provide support, encouragement and positive role modeling by sharing their personal mental health recovery stories and experiences. Peer Support

Workers lead groups and talk with members one on one. They also accompany veterans on trips into the community.

Recovery Coaches:

Your recovery coach will be your primary staff contact at VBR. S/he will help you develop your Recovery Plan. Your coach can help you think about your goals, break goals down into specific steps, identify resources, and solve problems. Please think of your coach as a consultant. S/he has information about resources and can help you think through your goals and how to reach them. S/he will also help you create a plan for how and when you will graduate from VBR.

ADMISSION CRITERIA (WHO CAN PARTICIPATE)

- Vets must have a diagnosis of a serious mental illness (e.g. schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, severe PTSD, recurrent & severe depression, or schizoaffective disorder).
- Vets must have trouble functioning in their community of choice (i.e. serious symptoms that interfere with daily living and/or difficulty maintaining a job, social network, or participating in school).
- Vets must have a primary mental health provider outside of VBR.
- Vets must want to make changes in their lives.
- Vets must be willing and able to learn new skills and work toward goals.
- Vets should not be actively abusing substances.
- Vets with a history of violence or other behaviors that would endanger a milieu-based treatment program may not be allowed to join.



COSTS

- VBR is considered a specialty service. If you have a copayment for services, you will be charged \$50 for each day that you use VBR services. If you do not know whether you have a copayment, you can contact the Means Test office by phone at 612-467-2022 or in person at room 1S-144 (near the Cashier). You can also contact the Patient Family Center by phone at 612-467-2106 or in person at room 1S-114.
- Some program-related activities require travel via public transit and/or admission fees to local attractions. If you choose to attend these activities you must pay your own way.

REFERRAL AND INTAKE PROCESS

- Veterans or their mental health providers can refer vets by calling the Program Manager at 612-313-3277
- After a veteran is referred, the Program Manager will review his/her medical record to make sure s/he meets admission criteria (see previous section for admission criteria).
- The Program Manager may speak with the veteran and/or the referring provider to gather more information about the veteran and assess whether VBR fits the veteran's needs.
 - If VBR does not appear to be a good fit, the Program Manager will talk with the veteran and/or the referring provider about other services in the community or at the VA that might better fit his/her needs.
- If VBR appears to be a good fit, the veteran will be invited to an intake appointment.
 - This appointment takes 2 hours and involves answering questions about your history, goals, strengths, and problems; filling out questionnaires; and reviewing information about the VBR program. The veteran will choose an orientation date and get the name of his/her coach.
- The veteran will meet with staff and other vets in the milieu for an orientation meeting. During the orientation meeting staff will review the program handbook and other relevant information with the veteran. The vet is welcome to start programming after completing orientation.
- Following orientation, the vet will meet with the program nurse for a wellness assessment.
- The veteran's coach will schedule an initial Recovery Planning meeting after the vet has completed his/her wellness assessment.
 - The veteran and coach will work together to complete the plan by the veteran's fifth visit to VBR.
 - The veteran and his/her coach will meet at least every 6 months to update the Recovery Plan, and will meet regularly between updates.
- Veterans will likely have questions as they begin attending VBR. Please ask questions when you have them. Staff and/or other veteran members can answer questions.

VBR SERVICES, ACTIVITIES AND CLASSES

VBR services include individual services, daily skill building groups, self-directed time to work on goals, workgroups, classes, and trips off hospital grounds (community integration outings). We emphasize group participation. A monthly calendar is available in the group room for members to take home: the calendar lists upcoming activities and should be used to help you plan when you want to be at VBR.

Individual services:

- Each veteran will be matched with a Recovery Coach who will meet with the veteran individually to help him/her develop a Recovery Plan.
 - Veterans are expected to
 - generate their own goals for the Recovery Plan
 - actively pursue recovery by working on Recovery Plan goals at VBR and on his/her own time
 - Coaches are expected to assist the veteran with:
 - Clarifying goals
 - Identifying 1-3 goals to serve as the focus of the Recovery Plan and the veteran's recovery efforts
 - Breaking goals down into steps the veteran needs to take in order to achieve goals
 - Identifying resources the veteran may need to achieve goals
 - Identifying personal strengths and barriers to achieving goals
 - Veterans will meet with their Recovery Coaches at least every 6 months to update their Recovery Plans. They will have additional scheduled check-ins to review progress toward goals, and can request additional meetings as needed.
- Each veteran will meet with the nurse who will do a wellness assessment and provide information about wellness-related resources.
- Veterans can meet with the occupational therapist or psychologist for additional assessment if needed. Occupational therapy evaluations may include leaving hospital grounds for observation of and coaching in daily living skills.

Daily group activities:

- 9a **Community Meeting:** daily goal-setting, announcements, review rehabilitation agreement, awards & graduations, stretching
- 10a-12p **Activities and Education:** During this time, we offer multiple activities and groups. Veterans can choose activities that meet their goals, or participate in a pre-planned activity. Examples include Walking Club, Volunteering, Skills Classes, Music Lab, and Peer Support.
- 12p-1p **Lunch:** VBR does not provide lunch. The multipurpose room is open during the lunch hour. There is a refrigerator available to store your lunch if you bring one from home. Please write your name and the date on your food. All items in the refrigerator will be discarded at the end of each day.
- 1p-3p **Classes/Activities:** During the afternoons we offer classes and activities to VBR members and others who use mental health services. Vets can sign up for these classes based on their interests & goals.

Classes, additional activities, and interest groups

CLASSES

Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP): This is a 10 session group that involves putting together a plan for monitoring your symptoms and taking daily action to maintain and enhance wellness.

Independent Living Skills: This class helps people with tasks such as choosing a place to live, budgeting, shopping for & preparing food, and daily self-care. It is helpful for people planning to move out of a supervised living situation or people living on their own who want to improve their skills.

Community Integration: 8 session group focused on using public transit to explore the Twin Cities. Participants are expected to help choose, plan, and carry out all activities. Participants are also expected to provide their own bus/train fare.

Social Skills Training In Vivo:For veterans who have been through SST classes. This is a 6 session small group that applies the skills learned in SST in community settings such as coffee shops & libraries.

Ending Self-Stigma: Weekly (9 session) class to help people develop skills for challenging negative self-evaluations related to mental health.

Wellness Management & Recovery (WMR) Group: Weekly (9 months) skill building group where veterans will learn about mental illness, how to cope with symptoms, how to advocate for oneself, how to use medications, & how to manage stress

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

Community garden plot: Each growing season (May-November) we rent a community garden plot. In 2012 veterans and staff worked together to grow tomatoes, peppers, green beans, cilantro, cucumbers, basil, carrots and broccoli.

Community integration trips: Trips into the community to enhance skills and enjoy some of the Twin Cities' many cultural & recreational offerings are an important part of the VBR mission. Veterans select and plan all community outings.

Volunteerism: Many members and staff are interested in volunteering. We have regular trips focused on providing services to people in need.

INTEREST GROUPS

One way to enhance recovery, meaning and purpose in life is to participate in work. While VBR does not provide paid employment, we do offer opportunities to work in groups with other veterans and staff in a number of areas. Specific interest groups may vary depending on the season and veteran/staff interests and abilities. We encourage veterans to create new groups based upon their interests. Here are the current workgroups as of June 2012:

Keys to Recovery newsletter group: This group researches, writes, edits and distributes a monthly mental health newsletter.

Ringin' Cavaliers: Several veterans and one staff person have joined together to form a chime choir. They practice on Tuesday mornings and have begun to perform at the VA and in the community.



OTHER SERVICES AVAILABLE TO VBR MEMBERS

VBR members have access to a variety of mental health services at the Medical Center. Coaches can work with veterans to identify services in the Medical Center that fit veterans' needs and goals, but we defer to the primary mental health team to make referrals. Additional mental health services include but are not limited to:

- Family Education
- Social Skills Training
- Vocational Services (including supported employment and work therapy)
- Dual Diagnosis groups such as Seeking Safety
- Anger Management
- Educational groups on sleep, anxiety, pain management, anger coping skills, and sexual trauma
- Evidence based therapies for post-traumatic stress disorder
- Medication management
- Individual psychotherapy
- Recreation therapy

PHASES OF PARTICIPATION

During the first few months to one year in VBR, veterans may participate intensively in VBR. This may include daily or near-daily attendance, participation in several educational classes, and enhancement of skills and confidence through participation in the milieu. As veterans become more confident in their skills and develop more connections in the community, they may participate less in VBR. Instead, they will begin to apply more of their skills in a setting related to their recovery goals. For example, veterans may become involved in volunteer work, recreational activities in the community, spiritual communities, or paid employment. As veterans achieve greater community integration they may choose to graduate from VBR or to attend VBR activities occasionally. There is no time limit on participation in VBR as long as the veteran has active recovery goals and is making progress toward those goals. In summary, there are 3 general phases of VBR participation:

Phase	Title	Time frame (approximate)	Activities
One	Building	Months 1-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intake, orientation, Recovery Plan • Participate in community outings • Actively working on recovery goals • Meet with Recovery Coach as needed, at least every 6 months • Take one or more classes • Participate in an interest group
Two	Transition	Months 13-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased community involvement • Plans community outings • Teach classes/activities in VBR • Take lead on an interest group • Less frequent meetings with Recovery Coach (at least every 6 months to update Recovery Plan) • Has met several recovery goals
Three	Graduation	Months 24+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has met most recovery goals • Attends VBR occasionally • May share recovery story in VBR milieu

BENEFITS/RISKS OF PARTICIPATION

- **Benefits:** Research shows that actively participating in rehabilitation and recovery programs can improve a person’s quality of life, social adjustment, ability to cope, knowledge about mental illness, reduce relapses, and reduce hospitalizations (Mueser, 2002). There is also evidence that talking with a peer support worker works well for increasing your sense of personal empowerment (Rogers et. al, 2007).
- Additional benefits include education about resources such as skills classes and local activities. You may better understand your own values and goals as a result of participating in VBR. You will also be encouraged to define your personal vision of recovery.
- VBR staff have noticed that some people who have been in the program for awhile start to talk more, make jokes, socialize with other veterans, teach other vets about the program and activities, encourage each other, and lead parts of meetings. People have told staff they feel supported at VBR.
- **Risks:** Being in VBR involves examining your life and making changes. This can result in discomfort because most people find it hard to change. You can cope with such discomfort by reminding yourself it is normal, talking with other veterans and staff about ways to handle the discomfort, and taking small steps toward big changes.

- Sometimes people you love get used to you being a certain way. When you try to make changes, even healthy ones, they may get scared or uncomfortable. They may react differently to you or become upset with you. Usually they just need time to adjust. Talking about their concerns may help. Sometimes people cannot adjust and relationships may change.
- Many veterans have questions about VA compensation benefits. You may call the Veterans Administration at 1-800-827-1000 to speak to a benefits counselor. You may also contact your local veterans' service officer (VSO) to get more information. You can locate a VSO in your county by going to the following website: <http://www.macvso.org/cvso.html>.
- Because we leave hospital grounds for trips, there are risks associated with being in the community. You can minimize risk to yourself on trips by using common sense, such as dressing appropriately for the weather and the activity and behaving in a safe, responsible manner. Staff on trips will always carry a cell phone and basic first aid supplies.

VBR REHABILITATION AGREEMENT (CODE OF CONDUCT):

1. We expect you to attend VBR at least once per week. If you don't attend regularly we will discharge you from VBR (but not without talking to you first).
2. We expect you to set a specific recovery goal. Examples are: "I want to make more friends," "I want to start volunteering," or "I will exercise regularly." We expect you to share your recovery goal with your coach and the VBR community. You must make progress on your goal to stay in VBR.
3. You can't use illegal drugs or abuse prescription medication while in VBR. Please limit alcohol use to the amount recommended by your treatment team. This includes evenings, weekends, and holidays. Alcohol and illegal drugs are not allowed on VA property or in VBR.
 - a. Staff may request urine and/or Breathalyzer screens if they believe you may be under the influence during programming.
4. You can't have financial/business arrangements with other veterans in the program or staff.
5. You can't have intimate or sexual relationships with other veterans in the program or staff.
6. Please show respect to other veterans in the program and to staff. VBR includes people from varying backgrounds. Each person has their own set of opinions, values and beliefs. Do not make negative comments based on race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, status as a veteran, political affiliation, or other personal characteristics.
7. VBR has zero tolerance for violence/abuse. You will be discharged from VBR if you engage in verbal abuse, harassment, physical violence, or threat of violence toward others. You will not be allowed to return to VBR if you have threatened or harmed others.
8. Weapons are not allowed on VA property or in VBR.
9. Privacy and confidentiality are important. Please do not talk about other vets outside group. This includes their names and what they say in group.

10. Hygiene is important for self-care and social connections. Please bathe, brush your teeth and wear clean clothes when you attend VBR. Staff will ask veterans who have not followed these guidelines to leave and come back after they have cleaned up.
11. Violations of the rehabilitation agreement may result in discharge. Staff will notify veterans if they become aware of rule violations, remind veterans of the rules, and discuss expectations for behavior. No veteran will be discharged without his/her knowledge or without notice.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR IN-PROGRAM BEHAVIOR

DRESS CODE

- Casual, clean
- Do not wear clothing with swear words, sexual language, references to drugs or alcohol, or discriminatory remarks of any kind.
- When going on community trips please dress appropriately for the weather and the activity. If you have questions about what is appropriate please discuss with staff and/or other veterans.

SMOKING/TOBACCO STATEMENT

Federal buildings and vehicles are tobacco free. You may not use any kind of tobacco while in the CRRC building or in government vehicles. Please do not smoke or discard tobacco-related litter near the doors of the CRRC.



CELL PHONE STATEMENT

Please turn off or silence cell phones while in VBR. If you need to make or take a call, please step out into the CRRC vestibule or just outside the building.



ATTENDANCE POLICY

- You must attend VBR a minimum of once per week. You may attend any day of the week.
- If you do not attend during a given week and do not inform us in advance, a VBR staff member will call you to assess your well-being and satisfaction with the program.
- If you miss 3 weeks in a row you will be discharged from VBR.
 - If you frequently miss weeks, even if you don't miss 3 weeks in a row, you may be discharged. Staff will talk with you before initiating discharge.

- Family members or significant others may attend programming with the veteran's (and the group's) approval. Veterans should discuss this with VBR members and staff in advance. Family members and significant others are expected to abide by the same rules of conduct as VBR members.

SICK POLICY

- Do not come to VBR if you are sick. If you need to see a doctor, call the Primary Care Call Center at 612-467-1100.
 - The toll-free number for the Medical Center is 1-866-414-5058, then dial extension 1100 for the Primary Care Call Center.
- If you are sick and need to cancel, please call the CRRC to notify us.
 - When leaving a message, please say your full name and why you are calling. Please say whether or not you would like staff to call back.
- If you are hospitalized for any reason, please notify VBR (or ask a family member or significant other if you are not able to). VBR staff will not tell other members you are hospitalized unless you give us permission.

DRUG, ALCOHOL AND PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION POLICY

- Do not attend VBR under the influence of drugs or alcohol. We reserve the right to refer you for a drug/alcohol screen if we suspect you are under the influence.
- If the drug screen is positive, the veteran will meet with his/her Recovery Coach and the Program Manager when not under the influence. They will develop a plan so that the veteran may continue to participate in VBR while maintaining sobriety. Violation of this plan or failure to submit a urine drug screen (UDS) upon request may result in discharge from VBR.
- Prescription and over-the-counter medications may be brought into VBR as long as they are labeled and in the original container or in a medication organizer/pill box with your name on it. Please do not share any medication with other veterans or with staff. Please do not ask anyone else for their medication. Please keep your medications with you at all times.

EMERGENCY CARE, SAFETY AND SECURITY

EMERGENCY CARE

- If there is a life-threatening emergency, please dial 911 immediately and describe the nature of the emergency.

- If a psychiatric emergency occurs during regular business hours, please notify your outpatient mental health providers and/or VBR staff. Staff will assist you with obtaining appropriate care. If staff are not available go directly to the Minneapolis VA Emergency Department.
- If you need psychiatric emergency care after 4:30pm, on weekends or holidays, please call 911, the veterans' crisis hotline (1-800-273-8255), or go to the nearest emergency room. You may also call the Minneapolis VA at 612-725-2000 and ask to speak with the Psychiatrist on Duty (P.O.D.).
- When you arrive at the emergency room tell the person at the check-in desk that you are having a psychiatric crisis and describe your symptoms (e.g. feeling suicidal, homicidal, having hallucinations).
- If you know of another person who is talking about suicide or homicide, or having a psychiatric crisis, please let staff know or call 911.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

- Your safety is important. Please tell us if you observe unsafe conditions or actions.
 - If you see unsafe conditions or actions you can also report them to the Patient Safety Manager at 612-467-3022 or the Patient Representatives at 612-467-2106.
- If an event occurs that requires serious medical attention or police assistance, staff will press one of the emergency buttons or call 911. Staff may also request veteran assistance in pressing the emergency button or calling 911. In the event of an emergency please stay calm and follow staff or police instructions.
- If there is a fire or other emergency, please remain calm and follow staff instructions. You may be asked to evacuate the building via the nearest safe exit or go to a safe area inside the building. Specific emergency procedures are posted in VBR.
- Weapons, drugs, violent behavior, threats, and sexual harassment will not be tolerated at VBR. If a veteran has weapons or drugs, or engages in threats or harassment, s/he will be asked to leave the CRRC immediately. If a veteran refuses to leave, the Minneapolis police will be called and will escort the veteran from VBR to a place that ensures the veteran's and others' safety (for example, the ER or a legal setting). Police methods of maintaining security and escorting veterans may involve restraint. *VBR staff do not practice restraint, nor do they place veterans in seclusion.*
- If a veteran has weapons or drugs at the VA, or threatens or harasses others at VBR, the veteran's Recovery Coach and the Program Manager will meet with the veteran when it is safe to do so. They will discuss whether it is safe for the veteran to remain

in VBR and what the veteran must do to continue in the program. If a plan to continue in VBR while maintaining safety cannot be developed or is violated, the veteran will be discharged from the program. If the veteran is discharged, VBR staff will attempt to help the veteran identify appropriate alternative services.

- The Patient Behavior Committee at the Minneapolis VA will be notified about the veteran's behavior and a flag may be placed on the veteran's chart informing providers about the history of and/or potential for disruptive behavior.

TRANSPORTATION

- Disabled American Veterans (DAV) operates vans with volunteer drivers. You may be able to get a ride to the VA hospital from the DAV. You must contact the DAV to arrange a ride. DAV has an office in room 1S-141, and their phone number is 612-467-2768.
 - DAV provides transportation only from some areas.
 - Drivers only work until early afternoon, so you won't be able to stay the whole day at VBR.
 - *You must have an appointment scheduled in advance in order to use the van.* Please tell VBR staff that you are using DAV transportation and ask to have your appointments scheduled in advance.
- Traveling from OUTSIDE the Twin Cities Metro area: some counties have vans that bring veterans to scheduled appointments at the VA. Please contact your county Veterans Service Officer (VSO) for information about rides from your area. You can find your county VSO by looking at the Minnesota Association of County Veterans Service Officers website: www.macvso.org (click on "CVSO directory"). *Please note there may be a fee to take your county van to the VA.*
- Service-connected veterans can ride public transportation in the Twin Cities for free. Veterans should show their VA identification card to Metro Transit drivers to verify they are service-connected veterans. A brief description of this benefit is available on the Metro Transit website: <http://www.metrotransit.org/fares.aspx>. You can also call Metro Transit at 612-373-3333. If you have questions about your ID card you can call 612-467-1991.
- ***Currently there is no VA shuttle between the CRRC and the VA hospital. Veterans can request assistance from VBR staff to learn how to use public transit to get to the CRRC.***

TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

- Travel reimbursement is meant to reimburse veterans for the costs of getting needed health care services. If you attend prescheduled appointments, you may be eligible for “round-trip” travel reimbursement. If you attend drop-in appointments, you may be eligible for “one-way” travel reimbursement.
- When we pre-schedule milieu participation so you can get travel reimbursement, this is a change from our normal practice. VBR is mostly a drop-in program. We normally only pre-schedule individual appointments (e.g. intakes, assessments, orientation, pre-planned recovery planning/coaching sessions), community trips, and curriculum-based groups (e.g. WRAP, ILS, WMR, MOVE!).
- If you want to pre-schedule your appointments to get round-trip travel reimbursement, talk to your coach. The two of you will decide which days you’ll come to VBR. Then our clerk will schedule the appointments (no more than 1 month in advance).
- “NO-SHOWING” is defined as not attending a previously agreed upon appointment, and not calling before the start of that appointment to let someone know. We will consider you to be a “no-show” if...
 - You do not call to cancel before the start time of an appointment (e.g. 9am) AND do not attend the appointment.
 - You don’t come to VBR during the week and you do not call your coach to discuss your absence BY 9am on Thursday.
- When you don’t come to an appointment and don’t call to cancel ahead of time, this creates extra work for staff (which means we can spend less time working with veterans on their goals). Also, calling to cancel an appointment is common courtesy and is a good skill to develop—this will help your social relationships and will be important for maintaining volunteer or paid employment.
- If you no-show **three** prescheduled appointments (that is, you don’t come and don’t call **before** the start time of your appointment to cancel), we won’t pre-schedule any more appointments.
- If you “no-show” three weeks in a row, you can be discharged from VBR as outlined in the Rehabilitation Agreement.

Collection of Travel Reimbursement

- Wait at least an hour after the end of your appointment to ask clerks for your pink slip, to give staff a chance to enter a note. If you ask before the appointment is checked out, you might not get a slip. Be nice to the clerks and come back later. If you still can't get a slip the day after your appointment, double-check that VBR staff checked out your appointment.
- If you're depending on travel reimbursement for income, talk to your coach. S/He can help you with a budget and/or problem-solving regarding financial resources.
- You don't have to get your travel reimbursement the same day as your appointment. You can wait up to 30 days to collect. You can redeem up to 3 slips at a time.
- You should take your pink slips to the Patient Family Center in room 1S-114 at the main hospital. They will give you vouchers to take to the cashier.
- You can also request that your travel reimbursement be direct-deposited to your bank account or mailed to you. Please discuss this with clerical staff.
- You are responsible for following national VA travel reimbursement rules. **You CAN be prosecuted, fined, and even imprisoned for wrongly collecting travel reimbursement.**
- If we learn that you are wrongfully collecting travel reimbursement, we will:
 - Not pre-schedule any VBR appointments until the matter is resolved
 - Notify the Patient Family Center that you should not be collecting travel reimbursement
 - **PLEASE NOTE THIS MAY RESULT IN NEGATIVE FINANCIAL AND/OR LEGAL CONSEQUENCES, SO DON'T BREAK THE RULES!!!**

LEAVING VBR (GRADUATIONS AND DISCHARGES)

GRADUATION: Ideally, each veteran will determine in collaboration with his/her coach and support system when s/he is ready to graduate from VBR. When a veteran is ready to graduate s/he should notify his/her coach. Staff will work with the veteran to plan a graduation that is consistent with his/her needs. Ideally a veteran will work with his/her coach to summarize the

goals s/he has accomplished while in VBR, share this summary with the VBR community, and receive a certificate of recognition from the staff and other members.

STAFF-INITIATED DISCHARGE: There may be times when staff will initiate a veteran's discharge from the program. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT VETERANS WILL ALWAYS BE INVOLVED IN THIS PROCESS. In the event of a staff-initiated discharge, staff will present concerns to the veteran orally (and in writing if desired), will document concerns in the medical record, and (if possible and safe) will work with the veteran to develop a plan that will allow the veteran to continue in VBR. The plan will be written down, documented in the medical record, and a copy will be provided to the veteran. The plan will include specific target behaviors to increase and/or decrease, suggestions for meeting behavior targets, responsibilities of the veteran and the staff in carrying out the plan, a timeline for implementation, and consequences of not adhering to the plan.

The following are example reasons a veteran may leave VBR:

- The veteran has met his/her goals (successful discharge or graduation).
- The veteran does not attend VBR for 3 weeks and has not initiated contact with staff to discuss his/her absence.
- The veteran does not attend VBR consistently over a prolonged period of time (e.g. in a 3-month period attends once every 2-3 weeks).
- It is unsafe for the veteran to continue to participate (for example, very inappropriate behavior, threats or actual harm to self or others).
- The veteran's goals and needs would be better met in another program and are not appropriate for VBR.
- The veteran attends but makes no effort to participate.
- The veteran no-shows or cancels an appointment, cannot be reached by phone and does not respond to written correspondence.
- The veteran no longer wishes to participate in VBR.
- The veteran refuses to participate in groups.

If a veteran is discharged from VBR and later wishes to rejoin, s/he may have to wait if the program is full. The veteran may be asked to meet with the Program Manager or his/her Recovery Coach to discuss changes that have occurred since leaving the program. This may include talking about changes in goals, motivation, or safety concerns.

MAKING VBR BETTER (PROVIDING FEEDBACK)

We welcome your feedback about VBR. We want to know what is going well and what needs improvement. You can give feedback in multiple ways:

- If you feel comfortable, please tell staff what you like & what you don't like.
- Please fill out Member Satisfaction Surveys when they are offered.
- Attend the monthly Open Forum Day to provide feedback and help plan programming for the following month.

COMPLAINTS/GRIEVANCES

Patient Rights and Responsibilities: We encourage all veterans to know their rights and responsibilities when using services at the VA. Brochures outlining patient rights and responsibilities are included with the intake materials. They are also available in the Patient Family Center (1S-114) at the main hospital. These brochures (“Speak Up”, “Patient Rights and Responsibilities”, “All Veterans and Their Families Have the Right to Request Protective Services”) will be reviewed with you annually with your Recovery Coach during your Recovery Plan update.

All veterans have the right to contact the Patient Representatives at the Patient Family Center. The Patient Family Center is in room 1S-114 of the hospital and their telephone number is 612-467-2106. We encourage you to also use the complaint guidelines below:

VBR COMPLAINT GUIDELINES

Purpose: VBR wants to have a consistent process to handle complaints in a timely, respectful manner. All veterans have the right to voice complaints/concerns in writing or orally without fear of reprisal. Making a complaint will not compromise a veteran's access to care. Complaints will be received and resolved at the most appropriate level. All complaints will be addressed with sensitivity to the needs of the person making the complaint.

Complaints about VBR staff:

- Talk to the VBR Program Manager if your complaint is about a staff person other than the Program Manager
- The Program Manager will try to work with the veteran and staff member to resolve the problem. The veteran will be notified of actions taken and outcomes within 5 days.

- If the veteran is not satisfied with the outcome s/he may contact the Patient Representatives at 612-467-2106.
- If the complaint is about the Program Manager or if the veteran does not feel comfortable talking with the Program Manager, s/he may contact the Patient Representatives at 612-467-2106.

VBR STAFF CODE OF ETHICS

Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch

General Principles

- Public service is a public trust, requiring employees to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws and ethical principles above private gain.
- Employees shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.
- Employees shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic Government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
- An employee shall not, except as permitted by subpart B of this part, solicit or accept any gift or other item of monetary value from any person or entity seeing official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by the employee's agency, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the employee's duties.
- Employees shall put forth honest effort in the performance of their duties.
- Employees shall not knowingly make unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the Government.
- Employees shall not use public office for private gain.
- Employees shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
- Employees shall protect and conserve Federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.

- Employees shall not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for employment, that conflict with official Government duties and responsibilities.
- Employees shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.
- Employees shall satisfy in good faith their obligations as citizens, including all just financial obligations, especially those—such as Federal State, or local taxes—that are imposed by law.
- Employees shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap.
- Employees shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that they are violating the law or the ethical standards set forth in this part. Whether particular circumstances create an appearance that the law or these standards have been violated shall be determined from the perspective of a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts.

Additional ethics guidelines for VBR Staff

VBR Staff:

- Consult with and adhere to guidance from Contracting, Fiscal, Compliance, Continuous Improvement, Business Office, Public Affairs, Privacy Officer, Regional Counsel, and other committees and officials when applicable.
- Do not use their official positions to engage in personal fundraising, and do not solicit donations for a particular agency or group in their official capacity.
 - VBR staff may present needs lists and requests for donations to the VBR program at meetings run by Voluntary Services, and may communicate with veterans' groups or other donors in follow-up to such meetings.
- Adhere to procedures for proper witnessing of documents such as research consent forms and advance directives, when applicable.
 - Research consent forms should be signed by witnesses who are not part of the research or VBR team.
 - Advance Directives cannot be witnessed by providers involved in a veteran's care.

- Provide recovery-based mental health services with the maximum application of knowledge, professional skill, competence, and advocacy.
- Undertake continual efforts to maintain their competence in providing recovery-based mental health services.
- Strive, with consent of the Veteran, to include family members and other support systems in the Veteran's care in order to promote recovery and rehabilitation.
- Will discontinue professional relationships with Veterans when it is in the best interest of the Veteran, when such service is no longer required, or in the event that continued service will result in a violation of the Code of Ethics.
- Will promptly notify the Veteran when an interruption in services is anticipated.
- Engages in graduation or discharge planning with Veterans, including an appropriate transfer to another professional or service when necessary.
- Do not knowingly harass or demean any persons with whom they interact in their work based on factors such as that person's disability, age, gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, language, socioeconomic status, or other personal characteristics.
- Strive to create an environment in which staff and veterans are free from abuse, financial or other exploitation, retaliation, humiliation, or neglect.
- Provide an appropriate explanation of their services, consider the Veteran's preferences and best interests, describe therapeutic alternatives and possible risks, and obtain the Veteran's consent to provide treatment.
- Protect confidential information pertaining to Veteran and their care. On rare occasions, VBR staff may have to release confidential information without the Veteran's permission in order to protect the safety of the Veteran and/or others.
- Release confidential information to facilitate treatment goals to providers outside of the VA with permission from the Veteran. VBR staff only access information in the Veteran's medical chart at the VA on a need-to-know basis.
- Maintain electronic medical records of VBR appointments and write notes in compliance with federal, legal, and accreditation-board requirements.

- Refrain from entering into a dual relationship if the dual relationship could reasonably be expected to impair that staff person's competence such as their objectivity, ability to be effective in performing his or her job in the VBR, or otherwise risks exploitation or harm to the Veteran. A dual relationship consists of a staff person having a professional role with a Veteran and at the same time having another role (social, romantic, financial, etc.) with the Veteran.
- Under most circumstances, VBR staff do not except gifts from Veterans. Gifts of small monetary value (under \$10) or perishable items may be acceptable depending on the circumstances.
- If the VBR staff acts on behalf of a Veteran who has been determined legally or financially incompetent, they safeguard the person's interests, rights, and his/her previously expressed choices.

REPORTING ALLEGED ETHICS VIOLATIONS

VBR and the Minneapolis VA Health Care System fully support the reporting of alleged ethics violations. Staff and veterans who report possible ethics violations will be protected from retaliation or reprisal. Reporting a possible ethics violation is not grounds for dismissal from a job or discharge from the VBR program.

How veterans can report possible ethics violations:

1. If a veteran feels comfortable talking to the staff person they suspect of violating the ethics code, they can present their concerns to that individual directly. The staff person is responsible for documenting the concern, responding to the concern within 5 business days, obtaining consultation or supervision as needed, and reporting the concern and action taken to the Program Manager.
2. A veteran may also report possible ethics violations to the Program Manager. The Program Manager is responsible for documenting the concern, responding to the concern within 5 business days, obtaining consultation or supervision as needed, and recording the concern and action taken for tracking purposes.
3. A veteran may also report possible ethics violations to the Patient Family Center. The Patient Family Center is located in room 1S-114. Their telephone number is 612-725-

2106. The Patient Family Center keeps track of veteran concerns, and also discusses the concerns with involved staff and their supervisors.

REFERENCES

Mueser, K. T. et. al (2002). Illness management and recovery: a review of the research. Psychiatric Services, 53, 1272-1284.

Rogers, S. et. al (2007). Effects of participation in consumer-operated service program on both personal and organizationally mediated empowerment: results of a multisite study. Journal of Rehabilitation Research and Development, 44, 785-799. (Free PDF download)



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