VA CARIBBEAN HEALTHCARE SYSTEM (VACHS)
RECOVERY FROM HURRICANE MARIA - KEY MESSAGES AND OPERATIONAL STATUS
UPDATE: 2017 1006/0900hrs

VACHS General Situation:

- Recovery operations from the impact of Hurricane Maria are ongoing.
- Our main goal is to reestablish normal operations at all VA facilities to continue providing health care services to Veterans in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands.
- The Emergency Room and the VA Hospital at the San Juan Medical Center are operational.
- 8 Outpatient Clinics are open providing services with certain limitations, these are:
  - San Juan
  - Ceiba
  - Comerio
  - Guayama
  - Mayaguez
  - St. Croix
  - St. Thomas
  - Utuado
  - Vieques
- Arecibo Outpatient Clinic is closed. However, a Medical Mobile Unit is providing services on site Mon – Fri, from 9am – 1pm
- Ponce Outpatient Clinic is closed. However, a medical shelter system has been installed in the premises of the clinics to provide services. In addition, Medical Mobile Units will be deployed starting Tuesday, October 10th to augment services provided in Ponce.

By the numbers - Providing service to Veterans:

- Current number of Veterans admitted in the San Juan VA Hospital: 250
- Current number of Community Living Center (Nursing Home) Residents: 103
- Number of veterans seen throughout VA Outpatient Clinics on October 5: 2,049
An important objective is to reach out to vulnerable Veteran population to assure they are safe and well. The number of veterans reached as of October 3, is:

- Homeless Veterans 198
- Hemodialysis 38
- Home Based Primary Care 453
- Spinal Cord Injury 247
- Veterans on Oxygen and or Ventilator 187
- Veterans on Chemotherapy 37
- Veterans on State Veterans Home 136
- Mental Health Intensive Case Management 128
- Home Telehealth 10
- Hemodialysis in the community 89
- Medical Foster Home 19
- Community Residential 87
- Cardio-vest 8

Support to the recovery of VA Caribbean Healthcare System. The Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System (DEMPS) is the Veterans Health Administration's main deployment program for clinical and non-clinical staff to an emergency or disaster. DEMPS has deployed a total of 183 staff to support VA’s recovery operations. Staff includes:

- 67 Nurses
- 8 Social Workers
- 28 Police Officers
- 5 RCS
- 5 Pharmacy
- 3 PDAS
- 5 OI&T
- 1MD
- 2 General Tech Electricians
- 5 Drivers
- 4 DAT
- 5 AEM

Information to Veterans and Visitors:

Patients should bring list of their active medications and or empty medication bottles when visiting any of the VA clinics.

*Veterans impacted by closures will be contacted by VA staff to reschedule their appointments as soon as possible. In the event of a medical and mental health emergency, Veterans are encouraged to dial 911 or visit the closest emergency room.

Patient visitations at the San Juan VA hospital will be Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 2:00 pm to 3:00pm until further notice. Only two visitors per patient will be allowed.
The VA Caribbean Healthcare System has established a Patient Family Assistance Program hotline for relatives interested in finding out information on the health conditions of their hospitalized veterans. The number is **787-641-7582 or 1-800-449-8729, extension number: 19400**.

In addition to the hotline, relatives also have the option of contacting this institution by email at **sajfamilyassistance@va.gov**

**Important information about pharmacy and medications:**

VA has activated the Pharmacy Disaster Relief Plan through Heritage Health. Eligible patients with Veterans Health Identification (VHIC) in need of an emergency supply of medications can go to any retail pharmacy open to the public with a written prescription or active VA prescription bottle, not older than 6 months and with refills available, to receive a 30 day supply. This does not include controlled substances.

For participating pharmacies currently opened please see “additional information section”. Alternatively, the following link is available during emergency disaster situations to see which pharmacies are open: [https://www.healthcareready.org/rxopen](https://www.healthcareready.org/rxopen). (Link will take you to a non-VA website).

Heritage Health’s customer care representatives can be reached at **1-866-265-0124**, option 1. The telephone line is open for Veterans Monday through Friday, 8am – 10pm, and Saturday and Sunday, 9am. to 6pm.

If a Veteran is displaced, has lost his or her medication, and no longer has a written prescription or bottle, they can contact the Health Resources Center at **1-877-752-0650**. A representative will qualify the request by asking a few questions and provide the Veteran with a prescription number.

For updates on the operational status of all VA Caribbean Healthcare System facilities, please visit: www.caribbean.va.gov/emergency

**Summary of telephone numbers available and web links resources:**

VA Caribbean Healthcare System main switchboard 787-641-7582 | Toll free 1-800-449-8729  
VISN8 Telcare: 1-877-741-3400  
Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255  
Patient/Family Assistance Hotline: 1-800-449-8729 ext. 19400. (sajfamilyassistance@va.gov)  
Pharmacy Emergency Program/Heritage Health’s customer care: 1-866-265-0124  
Health Resources Center at 1-877-752-0650  
National Employee Accountability Hotline: 1-866-233-0152  
Tele-care, Pharmacy and Appointments: 1-877-737-8820  
[www.caribbean.va.gov](http://www.caribbean.va.gov)  
[www.facebook.com/vacaribbean](http://www.facebook.com/vacaribbean)  
[www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)
For employees:

Our employees are our most important asset. They are the reason the VA Caribbean is currently up and providing the best services to our Nation’s Heroes.

All Employees are expected to report to work (since Monday, October 2, 2017). Employees are encouraged to contact their supervisor to report their status.