

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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VA To Open 4 New Outpatient Clinics before Winter 2009

Locations include Katy, Lake Jackson, Richmond/Rosenberg, and Tomball.

HOUSTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs announced today it will open four new community-based outpatient clinics in southeast Texas to provide primary care, phlebotomy, social work, nutrition, and mental health services for veterans. Before winter 2009, VA clinics staffed by VA personnel will open in Katy, Lake Jackson, Richmond/Rosenberg, and Tomball.

"Our goal is to improve access to health care and these new clinics will greatly expand the VA's capacity for outpatient care in southeast Texas," said Edgar L. Tucker, Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center (MEDVAMC) director. "These new clinics will enable veterans outside of Houston to obtain primary and mental health care closer to where they live."

In the coming months, the MEDVAMC will firm up the exact locations, staffing, services to be offered, and a timetable for development.

In addition to on-site primary care and mental health staff, today's modern VA outpatient clinics frequently feature state-of-the-art telehealth systems permitting veterans to maintain regular contact with health care providers in specialties ranging from cardiac care to mental health.

A highly acclaimed national health records system allows practitioners at even remote VA clinics to review patient records stored at VA hospitals anywhere in the country. The importance of this system was demonstrated after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Medical information for every New Orleans VA patient was available at any VA medical center and by any VA physician nationwide.

In fiscal year 2007, the MEDVAMC served almost 120,000 enrolled veterans. There were 733,628 outpatient visits at the Houston facility, 60,540 outpatient visits at the Beaumont Outpatient Clinic, 11,447 outpatient visits at the Conroe Outpatient Clinic, 45,489 outpatient visits at the Charles Wilson VA Outpatient Clinic in Lufkin, and 35,025 outpatient visits at the Galveston/Texas City CBOCs. During the same timeframe, 13,275 veterans were admitted as inpatients and 243 veterans were admitted to the DeBakey VA Community Living Center.

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The Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center (MEDVAMC) is one of the largest and most complex medical centers in the Department of Veterans Affairs. Awarded Magnet Recognition for Excellence in Nursing Services in 2004, the Robert W. Carey Organizational Excellence Award in 2005, and the Robert W. Carey Circle of Excellence Quality Award in 2007, the MEDVAMC serves as the primary health care provider for almost 120,000 veterans in southeast Texas. Veterans from around the country are referred to the MEDVAMC for specialized diagnostic care, surgery, and medical treatment including cardiovascular surgery, liver transplant, and treatment of spinal cord injury and diseases. Including the outpatient clinics in Beaumont, Conroe, Galveston Lufkin, and Texas City, MEDVAMC outpatient clinics logged more than 885,000 outpatient visits in fiscal year 2007. For the latest news releases and information about the MEDVAMC, visit <http://www.houston.va.gov/pressrel.asp>.