



**Veterans Health
Administration**
VA NEBRASKA-WESTERN IOWA HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Office of Public Affairs, 4101 Woolworth Avenue Omaha, NE 68105
(402) 995-4719/3775

NEWS RELEASE

**NEWLY EXPANDED VA CLINIC OPENS IN HOLDREGE;
VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE TOUR NOW AVAILABLE**

Released by
Kevin Hynes
(402) 995-4719

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OMAHA, Neb. – For more than a year, Holdrege-area Veterans have been patiently waiting for their expanded medical clinic to be completed and fully reopened for business.

Several weeks ago, a portion of that became reality when the expansion of the VA's community-based outpatient clinic (CBOC) at 1118 Burlington Street in Holdrege was completed, adding roughly 2,400 square feet to the clinic. The expansion allowed the VA to dramatically increase patient waiting room space while also improving and modernizing such areas as patient exam rooms, tele-health spaces and staff working areas

Unfortunately, due to the novel coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, face-to-face visits by Veterans have been somewhat limited as the staff shifted to more virtual and telephone appointments with Veterans to help ensure their safety. That means many Veterans have not had a chance to see the new clinic.

Veterans can now get a virtual tour of the new clinic here: <https://www.facebook.com/NebraskaIowaVA/videos/274491257144317>

According to Kaitlin Boston, clinic manager of the Holdrege VA CBOC, after a year-long construction effort, the staff was excited to settle into their newly-expanded facility several weeks ago and begin seeing Veterans in the new space.

“It has been stressful on my team, but they have been incredibly flexible during this whole journey, and now we are reaping the benefits of this new facility.

Boston said the expansion essentially doubled the clinic's space. The increases can be felt in the newly refurbished waiting room, the hallways and the various clinic rooms where the VA offers such services as primary care, tele-health, tele-retinal, lab, hearing aid fittings, mental health and group therapy. The clinic also includes larger rooms for Veteran education and meetings with family members, as well as improved patient and staff flows throughout the facility.

“We were able to improve flow not only for my staff, but also for our Veterans, both when they enter or exit the building, or when they go into their appointments,” Boston said. “We were also able to add a tele-retinal service that will better serve our Veterans locally.”

The Holdrege clinic is just one of many projects currently underway within the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System. A similar clinic was recently constructed in Norfolk, while other projects are currently underway in North Platte, Shenandoah (Iowa) and Lincoln. VA NWIHCS is also in the final stages of opening a new \$86 million Ambulatory Care Center in Omaha.

The projects are part of the largest upgrading of VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System medical facilities in more than a generation, according to Julie Rickert, VA NWIHCS associate

director who oversees construction and infrastructure improvements. In the case of the Norfolk, Lincoln, Shenandoah and Holdrege clinics, which are all leased buildings, the end of the leasing contracts allowed VA officials to redesign and modernize the facilities to meet the changing needs of current and future Veterans.

“In the case of our clinics, many of them were aging facilities that, while functional, did not meet the changing ways that we provide health care to our Veterans,” said Rickert. “The fact that our leases at the older facilities were ending at approximately the same time allowed us to redesign and expand our clinics to better meet our Veterans’ needs and provide the care they deserve.”

In the case of the Holdrege clinic, Boston said the increase of space and modernization was desperately needed.

“Prior to the construction, things were tight. The hallways, the clinics rooms and staff space, everything was small. The waiting room was tiny. Things were jam-packed,” she said. “The expansion just gave everyone room to breathe. Everybody now has a home. We now have the space to give the best care that we can.”

“We have also changed the way that we see patients,” Boston added. “We are now focusing on a team model, so we now have brand new team space where we can work together to improve coordination and communications with the Veterans and their care.”

Like many other activities across Nebraska, the COVID-19 emergency has significantly curtailed the ability of the organization to conduct large public gatherings, such as open houses or ribbon cutting ceremonies. Additionally, COVID-19 also initially limited the way that the VA team in Holdrege was able to see and provide care to Veterans, due to concern about the virus and keeping Veterans safe.

“It was incredibly trying at first,” Boston said. “Our number one priority was determining the best safest way to take care of our Veterans. Through that, we have really utilized our (Veterans Video Connect) program to provide virtual appointments with our Veterans. We’ve really gotten used to and comfortable with that and we’re still encouraging that.”

“We have also done telephone appointments with our Veterans to keep them at home and safe if virtual care wasn’t an option due to internet connectivity,” she said. “And for those that needed it, we had a pretty stringent screening process and then we would bring them into the building utilizing (personal protection equipment) for them and staff to keep everyone safe.”

Recently, the clinic has been expanding face-to-face Veteran appointments. Boston said the local staff is excited to see their Veterans again and show off their new clinic space.

“We’re just so excited,” Boston said. “And we’re really ready to begin utilizing this clinic to take care of patients.”