



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

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**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Bedford VA Medical Center Unveils New Women's Clinic

*Ribbon Cutting Event Held To Showcase Clinic, Celebrate Women's History Month
And Honor Local Female Veterans*

Bedford, MA – Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital (Bedford VAMC) held a ribbon cutting event today to highlight its new Women's Health Clinic designed to provide female Veterans with privacy, dignity and sensitivity to their gender-specific needs.

The clinic includes a private waiting room and seating area as well as exam rooms specifically designed for female patients. Services at the clinic include primary care (including gender-specific primary care such as cervical cancer and breast cancer screens), mental health (including post-deployment adjustment or post-traumatic stress disorder and military sexual trauma support) and specialty care (including the management and screening of chronic conditions, reproductive health care, rehabilitation and long-term care.)

“VA strives to be a national leader in the provision of health care for women, thereby raising the standard of care for all women,” said Christine Croteau, Bedford VAMC's Acting Director, who also served as the master of ceremonies for the event. “Women Veterans are entitled to the same benefits male Veterans receive. Clinics such as this are a step in the right direction and ensure that VA continues to provide the high quality care for all those that have served, both male and female. This clinic is what was needed, and what was delivered.”

The number of women Veterans is growing rapidly, with increasing demands for health care as well as an influx of younger Veterans. VA is equally committed to and equipped to serve the health care needs of older women Veterans—the largest subpopulation of female VA health care users. Today, women comprise approximately 14.5 percent of all active duty military, 18 percent of all National Guard and Reserves and 6 percent of VA health care users.

Since 2000, the number of female Veterans using VA health care has more than doubled, from nearly 160,000 (FY00) to more than 337,000 (FY11). This growth has outpaced that of the male Veteran population. 55.5 percent of female Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi

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Bedford VAMC Ribbon Cutting

Freedom/Operation New Dawn Veterans have received VA health care. VA is stepping up to meet the needs of a growing women Veteran population and enhancing primary care to meet their needs. This is a major undertaking for VA.

“The Department of Veterans Affairs is dedicated to providing women Veterans with employment services, education and home ownership benefits, compensation for service-connected medical conditions, as well as the high-quality, gender-specific health care like that which is provided right here at this clinic,” said Congresswoman Niki Tsongas (D-MA), who attended the event and addressed the crowd which included Veterans, volunteers and staff. “It is clear to me that the exceptional team of professionals here in Bedford is dedicated to that mission and we are very fortunate to have such an outstanding facility here serving the Veterans from Massachusetts and across New England.”

Other notable attendees included Coleman Nee, Secretary for the Department of Veterans Services for Massachusetts, Denny Drewry, Regional Representative from the Office of Senator Scott Brown (R-MA), and VISN 1 Network Director, Michael Mayo-Smith, MD, MPH. The Lexington Minuteman Color Guard presented the Colors; Kevin Dougherty of Bedford VAMC’s Voluntary Services offered the musical prelude and National Anthem. The Pledge of Allegiance was lead by Army Nurse Corps Lt. Col., Denise Koutrouba who is also the facility Women Program Manager and a special recognition of Women in History was provided by Bedford VAMC’s Acting Nurse Executive, Mary Ann Petrillo, who also honored of her mother during the event. Petrillo’s mother, Frances E. Burke, served in the Coast Guard during World War II.

The ribbon cutting also served as an important way to honor Women’s History Month, and more specifically, Edith Nourse Rogers, for whom the Hospital is named. Bedford VAMC was the first VA hospital named after a woman. Edith Nourse Rogers was the first Congresswomen from New England and was dedicated to Veterans’ issues. She introduced the unprecedented bill to establish the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps in 1941. When the law passed in 1942, it opened up military service to thousands of women in countless occupations other than nursing. Edith Nourse Rogers dedicated her life to Veteran’s issues for more than 40 years. The Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps was just one of her many accomplishments, which also included the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (commonly known as the G.I. Bill) which provided educational and financial benefits for soldiers returning home from World War II.

To find out more about Bedford VAMC, contact Kristin Pressly at 978-855-2321 or kristin.pressly@va.gov or visit <http://www.bedford.va.gov/>.