



James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center
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News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center Transitions Emergency Department to Urgent Care Center

Altoona, Pa. – After careful review and consideration, the Altoona VA Medical Center announced today the four-bed Intensive Care Unit (ICU) will be closing and the Emergency Department (ED) will transition to an Urgent Care Center open daily from 8 a.m. - 8 p.m., effective April 21. While the level of care provided to Veterans in the ICU has been excellent, the decision to transition to an Urgent Care Center was made after a three-year evaluation of demand for services and referral patterns.

This transition is part of the medical center's shift to a progressive delivery system including enhanced access to primary care, expansion of Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) and specialty care, telehealth, outpatient rehabilitation medicine and home based primary care. These programs are designed to prevent hospitalizations by monitoring significant changes in the Veteran's health in an outpatient setting or from his or her home. These changes will improve Veteran care and ensure services are provided in the clinical setting best equipped to meet Veterans' individual needs.

“Our goal is to ensure Veterans have the appropriate delivery of critical care

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available to them,” said Altoona VA Medical Center Director, William H. Mills. “We have high standards and believe in providing the best health care to Veterans. We will continue that high quality standard with our staff and in partnership with local community hospitals to provide critical care services to local Veterans.”

Based on the complexity level of the medical center, Veterans with complex medical issues, such as heart attack and stroke, have been transferred for a number of years to a community hospital that offers a higher level of care. As a result, Altoona VA already has the necessary processes in place with community hospitals for the transfer and care of patients requiring critical care. Altoona VA’s inpatient Acute Care Unit will remain open.

The few employees affected by the change are being offered reassignments so they can support and enhance other growing programs.

The James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center has four locations and offers services to more than 87,000 Veterans living in a 14 county area of Pennsylvania including Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Huntingdon, Indiana, Jefferson, Juniata, Mifflin, and Somerset. The medical center is a member of VA Healthcare – VISN 4.

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