



Servicemember Transitional Advanced Rehabilitation (STAR) Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Program Purpose, Admission Criteria, Benefits, and Length of Stay

★ *What is the main purpose of the STAR program?*

The STAR program provides comprehensive rehabilitation and reintegration services with a special emphasis on community integration and helping Servicemembers and Veterans explore meaningful and satisfying work that can lead to a successful career path.

★ *How do I qualify for admission to the STAR program?*

All referrals are evaluated on a case by case basis. In general, referrals must meet the following criteria: be an active duty Service member or Veteran; have an illness or injury with residual physical limitations; be medically able to participate in rigorous therapy programs; have the potential to benefit from a structured transition program in a residential living setting; and have goals that indicate a strong potential for rehabilitation and return to gainful employment.

★ *How will I benefit from participating in the STAR program?*

The STAR program includes a team of professionals who will assist each client with their individual needs. The program offers a very structured and intensive experience focused on providing the opportunity to either smoothly transition out of the military or successfully remain on active-duty in a new role. Veterans who may be experiencing challenges in their community transition will benefit from additional supportive services. At the completion of the program, it is anticipated that injured Servicemembers and Veterans will be ready to transition into the community and will have a rewarding career path which will provide long-term success and satisfaction.

★ *How long will I be in the program?*

The program is individualized to each patient, and length of stay is determined by each patient's rehabilitation goals. All patients go through a 2-week evaluation period, after which length of stay is determined. Historically, the average length of stay is around 90 days.



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Location, Facilities, and Local Area

★ *What type of VA Medical Center is this and where is it located?*

The Richmond VA Medical Center is one of 5 national VA Polytrauma Rehabilitation Centers and provides a full-spectrum of medical and rehabilitation services with the highest level of specialized clinical care and technology capable of providing comprehensive rehabilitation care. The medical center is located on the Southside of Richmond, Virginia. It is a large facility with multiple buildings located on the campus.

★ *What is the Richmond, Virginia area like?*

Richmond, Virginia is a city full of historical sites, educational museums and beautiful parks. There are 10 universities and colleges within an 8 mile radius of center city Richmond. For more information on attractions and upcoming events in the city of Richmond, please go to: <http://www.visitrichmondva.com/Plan/Visitor-Center>.

★ *Where is the STAR Program located, and what is the facility like?*

The STAR Program is located within the Polytrauma Transitional Center (PTC). The PTC is a 20-bed facility nestled in the back of the medical center campus with an adjacent parking lot. The STAR program has a wing in the PTC building with 10 beds. The other 10 beds are served by the Polytrauma Transitional Rehabilitation Program (PTRP).

The building is a state-of-the-art facility that includes individual rooms with a private bathroom for each Service member participating in the program. The building has several common areas with recreational and leisure opportunities as well as a full-kitchen.

★ *How many other Service members / Veterans will be in the program with me?*

You will participate with up to 9 other Service members and Veterans while in the STAR Program, and you will share the building common areas with up to 19 other building residents.



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Cost for Participation, Meals, Personal Care Products, Laundry, Medications

★*Is there any expense for participating in the program?*

There is no out of pocket expense for participation in the STAR Program. Once you have been referred, you or your case manager will work with the admissions coordinator to coordinate authorization with your insurer.

★*Are meals provided?*

The hospital provides food for the community kitchen, and participants will be cleared by the Occupational Therapist to prepare their own breakfast and lunch. A buffet-style dinner is provided each evening by the hospital. In addition, community volunteer organizations periodically provide meals during lunch and dinner times. The Service member is responsible for purchasing any specific/special food that he/she may desire. Family members staying in the Fisher or Hospitality House will have to provide their own food and personal care items during their stay.

★*Are personal care products provided?*

A limited stock of travel size toiletry products are available if a Service member were to forget a specific item but, ultimately, service members are responsible for purchasing personal care products while in the program. An iron is available upon request. Laundry detergent and cleaning supplies are provided by the facility.

★*Where can I wash my clothes?*

Washers and dryers are available for independent resident use within the facility. Laundry detergent is available at no charge. If you prefer a specific type of detergent, you may purchase your own.

★*How will I get my medications?*

All medications are kept at the nurses' station in a secured cabinet. Your medications will be in an individual drawer within the cabinet that you will have a key to access. The self-medication policy will be reviewed with you upon admission to the STAR Program. Please keep in mind that alcoholic beverages, illegal substances, and medications that are not prescribed by your doctor are strictly prohibited on campus.



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Types of Therapy

★ *What type of physical therapy services are available?*

You will receive an individualized Physical Therapy program to support your rehabilitation goals. The program offers a full spectrum of exercise equipment within the rehabilitation therapy area that will be used during therapy time. With the approval of your treatment team, you may also have the opportunity to participate in an exercise program at a local community facility.

★ *Will I be able to participate in recreation activities and adaptive sports?*

A variety of recreation activities and adaptive sports are available in the program both through the VA and community partners with the Recreation Therapy program. You may have access to various adaptive sports such as cycling, skiing, racquetball and other activities (based on the season) once granted approval by your treatment team. You may also participate in canvas painting, creative writing, music therapy, service dog training, and other activities.

Review our video on *Paws for Purple Hearts* for one example of opportunities provided through recreation therapy. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OZQyCHVB-Jw>)

★ *What types of Vocational Rehabilitation opportunities are available in the program?*

The program is specifically designed to meet each individual's work interests and goals. The program will provide a start to a successful career and long-term rewards. Almost any career field or interest can be explored in the program. Vocational rehabilitation services include an intake and assessment process to determine viable employment goals based on interests and abilities, in-depth vocational exploration, the development of up-to-date and accurate job search documentation, on-the-job skills development, job development and retention training, and an introduction to and participation with community and employment resources.

★ *Is this a PTSD Program or Substance Abuse Rehab Program?*

The STAR Program's primary focus is vocational and physical rehabilitation. Though some participants have concerns related to PTSD or substance abuse, these are not the primary focus of the STAR Program. If PTSD or substance abuse are the primary diagnosis, it would be beneficial to address those prior to referral to the STAR Program.



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What to Bring, What to Wear

★ *What do I need to bring to the program?*

For a full list of what to bring, please refer to the “Items to Bring” list for necessary medical information, identification, personal items including clothing, personal care products, and other items to bring with you to the STAR Program.

While participating in the STAR program, you can expect to participate in a variety of therapies and community outings, in addition to “down time” where you are relaxing as if at home. For this reason, it is recommended that you bring clothing that is appropriate for a variety of settings including exercise and physical therapy sessions, and casual clothing. In addition, include business casual (i.e. khaki pants, polo shirt, button shirt with a collar) and business attire for networking events and employment-related meetings.

It is requested that you bring any employment-related documents and college transcripts with you to expedite the preparation of vocational materials.

★ *Will I have to wear a uniform?*

It is recommended that you bring a uniform. A part of your therapy may involve visiting a military base, in addition, there are times when dignitaries visit the program and uniform would be appropriate.

While in the STAR Program, your uniform of the day will be clothing that is appropriate for participation in physical therapy, recreational therapy, occupational therapy, etc. (i.e. PT gear, shorts, t-shirts, athletic pants, tennis shoes, etc.). You will also participate in vocational therapy outings and should have business casual clothing (i.e. khaki pants, polo shirt, loafers) and/or business clothing (dress shirt and tie).

Medical Board

★ *Will I be able to complete my medical board (MEB) while I am in the program?*

It is ultimately the decision of the military doctor managing the Service Member's treatment whether or not a MEB will be initiated. Should the Service Member be referred for a MEB, the VA compensation and pension exams can be completed while in the program.



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Rules of Conduct, Passes, Tobacco / Alcohol Policy, Weapons

★ *What are the rules regarding conduct?*

A copy of the rules and expectations are included on our website. In addition, the rules and expectations will be reviewed and signed on the day of program admission. Please note that violation of program rules and expectations could result in immediate dismissal from the program.

★ *Am I required to obtain a pass before leaving the building / grounds?*

After being admitted to the program, the team will assess your ability to navigate both on and off campus. Once cleared, you will be able to sign in and out of the building and leave campus in your free time. You are required to adhere to a nightly curfew, which is contained in the program rules and expectations.

★ *Is smoking, vaping, or use other tobacco products allowed?*

Smoking, vaping and use of other tobacco products (i.e. chewing tobacco) are permitted outside of the building in designated areas. Smoking, vaping, etc. are prohibited in the building and in patient rooms.

★ *Am I allowed to drink alcohol while on community outings, or in the evenings and weekends during my leisure time?*

Use of alcohol is not permitted while on community outings, or while away from the program on evenings and weekends. Patients should not return to the program inebriated as this could be grounds for dismissal from the program. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted on the VA campus.

★ *Am I allowed to have my weapon while I am in the STAR Program?*

No weapons are allowed on the VAMC grounds or in any VAMC buildings.



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Family-related Questions and Visitation Policy

★ *Will my family be able to come with me to the program?*

Families are able to visit with STAR participants while they are in the program. There is a Fisher House on campus and families/caregivers are able to stay for a total of two weeks while a patient is in the program. Please note that Fisher House is not guaranteed and is offered on a first come first served basis. Your social worker can assist you with alternative arrangements should Fisher House lodging be unavailable.

Because one goal of the rehab process is to foster independence, families/caregivers should not expect to be present for a patient's entire course of treatment.

★ *What is the visitation policy?*

Visiting hours are 1200-1300 and 1630-2100 on weekdays, weekend/holiday hours are 0900-2100. Visiting hours may be affected by your therapy schedule. Visitors are expected to conduct themselves in a quiet and orderly manner, so as not to interrupt routine operations or disturb other patients. Children under the age of 12 must be supervised by an adult at all times. All visitors must sign in and out. You are responsible for your visitors at all times. Guests are not permitted in your room.