

Get free medical, dental and vision care for the next two weeks through this government initiative

For the next two weeks in Opelika and two Georgia cities, you have the opportunity to get free medical, dental and vision care while the military gets training in setting up a field hospital and providing care to communities.

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TRICE BROWN

From now until Aug. 18, the Valley Healthcare Mission is offering vision, dental and other basic medical services to community members free of charge, with no income or residency requirements.

As a part of the Innovative Readiness Training program, funded by the Department of Defense, the mission serves two purposes: serving the local community and training military personnel to be ready for disaster situations. The personnel providing the services are licensed medical professionals.

“Dentistry is usually the No. 1 most requested service,” said Lt. Col. Raymond Martin. “So we will go into a community ... and set up a mobile field unit to provide dental care, and we will provide care that we can deliver that will help the patient and usually get them out of pain or an infection situation by extracting teeth, filling teeth, things like that.”

In addition to dental exams and extractions, the mission provides vision exams and single vision glasses, as well as medical screenings and sports physicals.

“On the medical front, it’s more screening and wellness issues,” Martin said. “We don’t obviously have the ability to do invasive procedures ... so it’s screening for diabetes, high blood pressure, things like that, and then trying to get them a referral to entities such as Valley Healthcare.”

The mission is operating in three locations: Providence Baptist Church in Opelika, and in Georgia at the Columbus Civic Center in Columbus and Stewart County High School in Lumpkin.

Care is available at these times:

- Thursday, Aug. 4: 1 p.m.—5 p.m.
- Friday, Aug. 5: 8 a.m.—5 p.m.

- Saturday, Aug. 6: 8 a.m.—5 p.m.
- Sunday, Aug. 7: 1 p.m.—5 p.m.
- Monday, Aug. 8: 8 a.m.—5 p.m.
- Tuesday, Aug. 9: 8 a.m.—5 p.m.
- Wednesday, Aug. 10: 8 a.m.—5 p.m.
- Thursday, Aug. 11: 8 a.m.—5 p.m.
- Friday, Aug. 12: 8 a.m.—5 p.m.

“There is no limitation, no geographic limitation, no registration, no residency requirements for anyone to take advantage of these services that are being provided,” said Sarah Lang, CEO of Valley Healthcare System. “Whether you have insurance or you’re homeless and have no coverage whatsoever, it’s available to everyone.”

When community members walk into one of these locations, they will first answer a questionnaire to screen for COVID symptoms. After that, they will go through a registration where they will give a medical history and a dental history.

Following this, they will move to specific areas to address their chief complaint, whether that be a toothache, vision problems, or something else. After the services have been provided, they will be provided an avenue for continuing care.

“We try to find them a dental and medical home, and not just do episodic care to help them out one time and then leave them,” Martin said.

The mission is also seeking volunteers who can escort patients and assist them in filling out forms. Those interested in volunteering at the Providence Baptist Church location in Opelika can call the church at 334-745-4608.