

YOUR HEALTH IS
OUR TOP PRIORITY



VA HEALTHCARE—VISN 4 ANNUAL REPORT

2023

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Healthcare—VISN 4

MESSAGE FROM THE NETWORK DIRECTOR

Dear Veterans, fellow employees, volunteers and friends of VISN 4:

I am pleased to present the 2023 VISN 4 Annual Report.

During another monumental year, VISN 4 opened a state-of-the-art VA outpatient clinic in Monroeville, Pa. This new multi-specialty clinic has improved Veterans' access to primary and specialty outpatient services and reduced drive times for many Pittsburgh area Veterans.

Two separate memorandums of understanding were signed with the University of Pennsylvania, one to explore leased space to relocate ambulatory care, inpatient mental health, and Community Living Center care currently provided at the Coatesville VA Medical Center, and a second to strategize expansion and modernization of the Philadelphia VA Medical Center using leasing authorities provided through section 704 of the PACT Act.

Our staff continued to find new ways to reach out and serve Veterans with military environmental exposures. As of December 31, a total of 229,035 Veterans (59.1% of enrolled Veterans) in VISN 4 have received a toxic exposure screening. In addition, Veterans who needed follow-up screenings were cared for in a timely manner.

We also continued to make significant progress toward achieving our goal of hiring staff faster and more competitively. Pay authorities granted in the PACT Act have allowed us to recruit and retain top talent at all levels within our medical centers. In FY2023, our workforce grew by 6.1% with a net increase of 1,015 full-time employees, and our total loss rate was 8.2% which is the lowest in more than 7 years.

VISN 4 continues to make advances toward accomplishing our key strategic priorities to connect Veterans to the soonest and best care. In fiscal year 2023, we completed more than 475,000 telehealth visits, allowing Veterans to be seen in their homes, reduce travel, and avoid inclement weather.

Our Veterans continued to trust us to provide them with exceptional and well-coordinated care. VISN 4 has consistently received the highest trust score in the nation at 94.1%. Our network also has the highest number of compliments at 78% and the lowest number of recommendations at 10.5% as well as concerns at 11.4%.

It is our honor and privilege to serve Veterans.

Sincerely,

Timothy W. Liezert
Network Director, VISN 4

VISN 4 Network Director Timothy Liezert and Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center Director Karen Flaherty-Oxler (left) meet with VA Secretary Denis McDonough (right).



Timothy W. Liezert
Network Director

Charles R. Thilges
Deputy Network Director

Timothy Burke, M.D.
Chief Medical Officer

Denise Boehm, MSN, RN, NEA-BC
Chief Nursing Officer

Kelly O'Connell
Quality Management Officer

Teresa Waksmonski-Frye
Chief Financial Officer

Amber Mesoras
Chief Human Resources Officer

David E. Cowgill
Communications Manager

Kristy Kralik
Executive Assistant



Period of Service



WHO WE SERVE

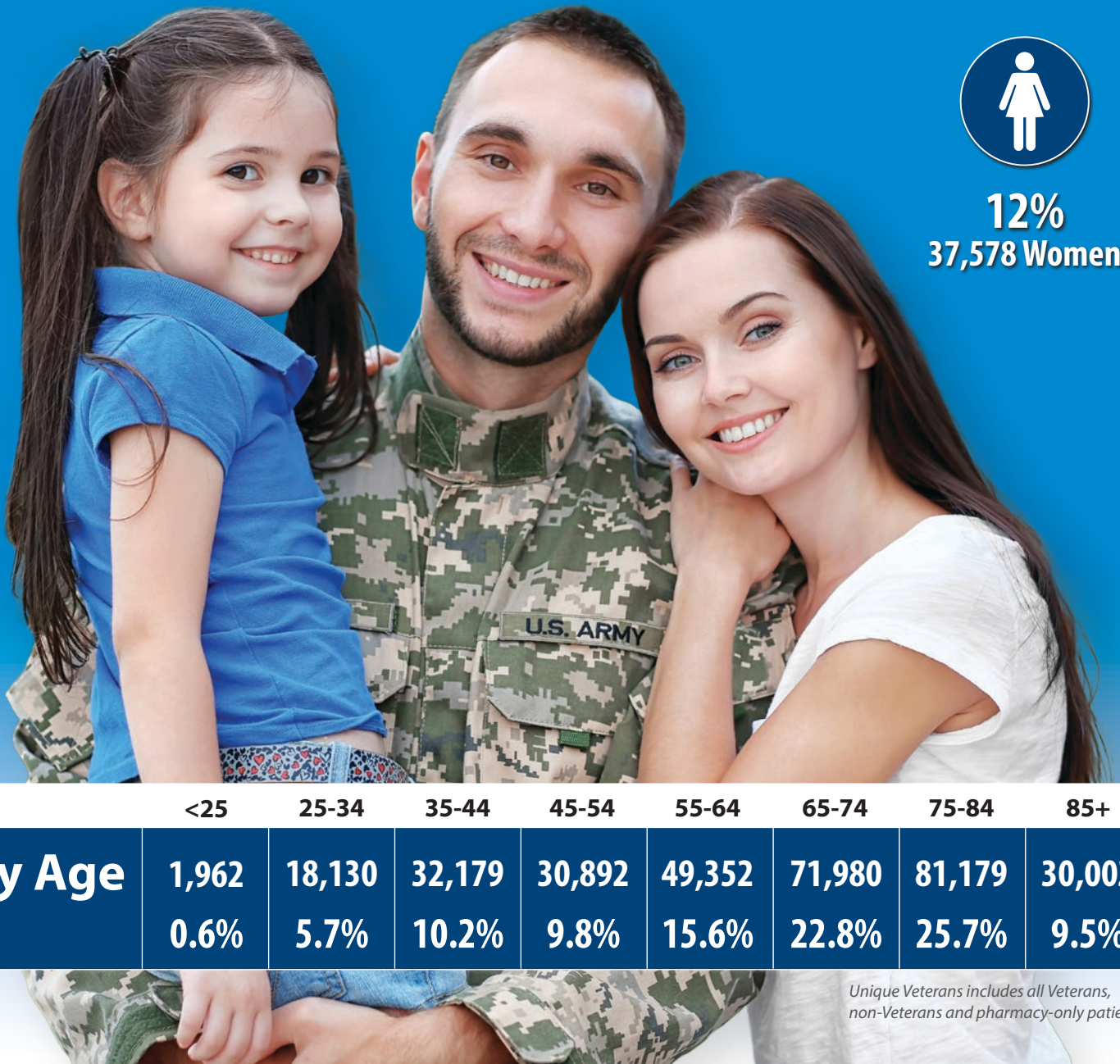
315,699 Veterans



88%
278,119 Men



12%
37,578 Women



	<25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85+
By Age	1,962	18,130	32,179	30,892	49,352	71,980	81,179	30,002
	0.6%	5.7%	10.2%	9.8%	15.6%	22.8%	25.7%	9.5%

Unique Veterans includes all Veterans, non-Veterans and pharmacy-only patients.

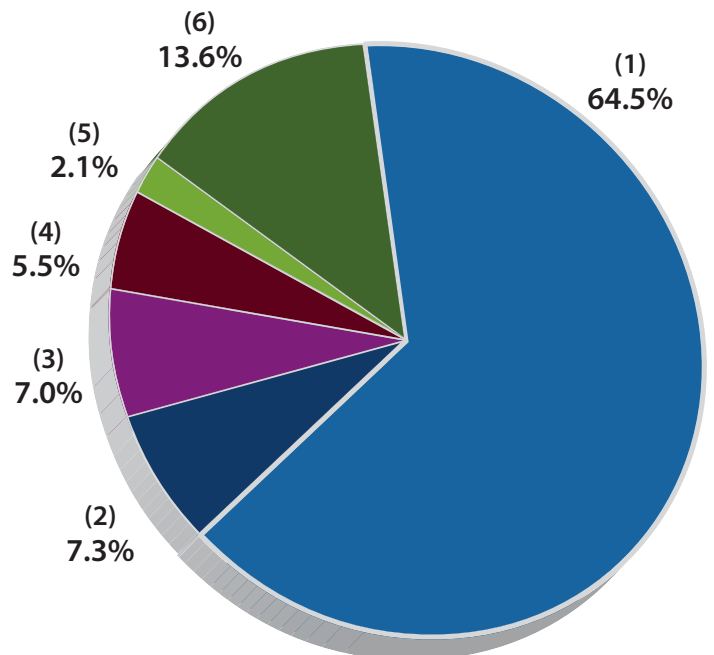


OPERATING STATISTICS

Operating Budget

1) Salary and Benefits.....	\$2,297,211,065
2) Services	\$260,528,808
3) Consolidated Mail-out Pharmacy	\$249,010,861
4) Drugs and Medicines.....	\$196,769,806
5) Equipment.....	\$74,673,276
6) All Other Costs	\$483,441,606
TOTAL.....	\$3,561,635,422

Medical Care Collection Fund.....	\$134,230,260
Lands and Structures.....	\$117,019,372



Research

Total Funding for Research	\$34,109,460
Investigators	339
Projects	623

Operating Beds

Total Number of Beds	2,014
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Workforce

Total Number of Employees.....	18,024
Physicians	1,265
Veterans.....	3,666
Nurses	3,957

Volunteers

Total Volunteer Hours.....	180,181
Volunteers	1,991
Avg. Hours.....	90

Workload

Inpatient Admissions	20,935
Outpatient Visits	3,795,791
Prescriptions Filled.....	13,471,674
Surgical Procedures.....	18,533

Gifts and Donations

Monetary	\$716,514.70
Activity.....	\$158,584.02
Items.....	\$2,227,743.70
Total Value	\$3,102,842.42



David's Drive donates bicycles several times each year to Coatesville VA Medical Center. These bicycles go to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) and Homeless Outreach teams.

The bikes not only promote the benefits of cycling but are a practical mode of transportation for Veterans to appointments, employment, and many other needs.



VHA Priority

HIRE FASTER AND MORE COMPETITIVELY

One of our top priorities in VA is to improve our hiring processes. To hire the best, we must speed up the hiring process.

PACT Act pay authorities have allowed us to recruit and retain top talent at all levels within VISN 4's medical centers. Our workforce grew by 6.1% in fiscal year 2023, with a net change of 1,015 FTEE.

VISN 4's total loss rate was 8.2%, which is the lowest in more than 7 years. This workforce stabilization is due in large part to the new pay flexibilities offered by the PACT Act. Examples include:

- Offering critical skills incentives to employees in 11 shortage occupations, impacting 1,800 employees in our VISN.
- Narrowing the salary gap with the community for key occupations. In FY23, VISN 4 implemented 156 new Special Salary Rates.
- Retaining and attracting highly-qualified employees by offering student loan repayment.

VISN 4 has 18,024 total employees on staff, and we are proud to have 3,666 Veterans employed across VISN 4 positions participating in care and services for Veterans.



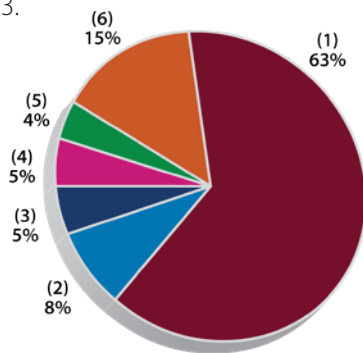
Educational Debt Reduction Program

VA offers medical professionals a powerful recruitment and retention incentive through one of the most comprehensive education support programs in the nation. With the Educational Debt Reduction Program (EDRP), employees with qualifying student loans who are in specific, difficult-to-recruit direct patient care positions may receive up to \$200,000 over a five-year period (not to exceed \$40,000 per year).

EDRP is a reimbursement program—participants receive annual reimbursements for payments made to lenders. Education debt includes funds spent on tuition and other reasonable educational and living expenses such as fees, books, supplies, equipment and materials, and laboratory costs.

In fiscal year 2023, VISN 4 approved 226 new EDRP applications (listed below), bringing our total active participants to 513 and our total award distributions to \$46,950,991. This amount includes 262 recruitment awards for \$30,130,278 and 251 retention awards for \$16,820,713.

- 1) Nurse143
- 2) Physician 18
- 3) Pharmacist 11
- 4) Psychologist 11
- 5) Physician Assistant9
- 6) All Others.....34



Physician Provider Recruiters

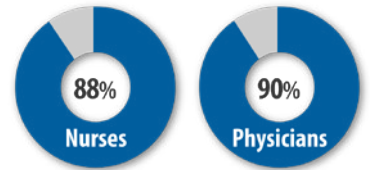
In fiscal year 2023, VISN 4 hired six physician provider recruiters. Their role is to find the best person for the job and persuade him or her to join VISN 4. They have attended numerous career fairs, and one of the fairs by CareerMD focused solely on medical residents and trainees. There were more than 70 attendees at this event, and the recruiters collected information on 15 candidates in specialties such as Hematology/Oncology, Hospitalists, Primary Care, Rheumatology, and Endocrinology. Recruiting advertisements were also placed in various career sources and journals including Practice Link, Career MD, LinkedIn, 3RNet, Indeed, Naylor and Healthcareers.

The recruiters are proactively recruiting and have referred candidates for positions that are not yet vacant. It is critical that they provide quick responses to potential candidates. They generally connect with physician candidates the same day, and in one case, a recruiter was able to keep an interested candidate on the line and expedited the hiring process.



Provider Retention Rates

We continually monitor key data to assess our success in hiring and retaining a world-class diverse and inclusive workforce. In VISN 4, our one-year retention rate for nurses is 88% and physicians is 90%.



Onboarding and Hiring Fairs

To aid in the hiring process, every facility in VISN 4 conducted at least one onboarding surge event in the past year. These events focused on candidates already selected but need to finish their pre-employment steps (background check, fingerprinting, license verification, etc.) so they can start their career with VA. Holding a hiring fair either prior to or simultaneously with an onboarding surge event is considered a best practice.

In fiscal year 2023, there were 11 onboarding surge events and 33 hiring fairs across VISN 4 resulting in 341 new hires from these in-person events.





VHA Priority

CONNECT VETERANS TO THE SOONEST AND BEST CARE

VISN 4 Connected Care strives to provide Veterans the “Soonest and Best Care.” We offer various tools such as video-to-home, self-care mobile apps, texting, and secure messaging to ensure Veterans can access their care even without traveling to a medical center or clinic. Most of our clinical services now offer convenient, virtual options for patients, and the expanded use of VA Video Connect allows Veterans to undergo medical appointments from home.

In fiscal year 2023, more than 121,000 patients – or 42% of all patients served in VISN 4 – had at least one (1) telehealth visit. This was an increase of 9,000 patients in fiscal year 2023 compared to fiscal year 2022. Saving time and travel, 76,000 or 26% of Veterans in VISN 4 completed video-to-home appointments as well.

Telehealth Support Across the Country

Our network has a long history of delivering care through telehealth regardless of where Veterans live. VISN 4 provided more than 475,000 encounters of care to ensure Veterans in our network and across the country can receive the services they need. Of those encounters, more than 13,000 Veterans were served from outside our network.

We offer telehealth programs like TeleDerm, TeleSleep, TeleEye, and the National TeleNeurology Program to ensure Veterans in all parts of our network receive the services they need. We also offer these services in nearly all our outpatient clinics.

My HealtheVet

My HealtheVet is VA's private and secure online personal health record. More than 142,000 or 47% of VISN 4 patients use My HealtheVet to take an active role in managing their health care. Users can review, refill, and track VA prescriptions; send secure messages; view, print and download portions of their VA medical record; view VA lab results including COVID-19 test results; and manage VA appointments.

For fiscal year 2023, more than 74,600 Veterans or 25% of patients in VISN 4



are active users of secure messaging through My HealtheVet. Veterans have sent 658,648 secure messages to their providers and care teams, often negating the need to make an appointment. Veterans need a Premium My HealtheVet Account to communicate through Secure Messaging. If you need help upgrading to Premium, contact your local My HealtheVet Coordinator listed at www.visn4.va.gov/myhealthevet.asp.

Annie

Annie is VA's text messaging service that empowers Veterans to stay focused on their self-care. Veterans can launch Annie by logging in to the My HealtheVet home page. With Annie, you can sign up for automated text messages that may include reminders to take your medication, tips for reducing stress, instructions to prepare for health care appointments, and more. Annie can also send general broadcast messages from your VA medical center on topics of interest. Any information sent to Annie is available to your VA health care team. For fiscal year 2023, VISN 4 had 4,207 patients enrolled to receive Annie text messages, an increase of 47% from 2022.

Remote-Patient Monitoring – Home Telehealth

Our Remote Patient Monitoring-Home Telehealth (RPM-HT) Program applies case management principles, health informatics, disease management, and technologies such as in-home and mobile monitoring, messaging, and/or video technologies to deliver care to almost anywhere a Veteran chooses.

For fiscal year 2023, our RPM-HT team served 6,194 unique Veterans and conducted more than 3,200 video visits. The program delivered impressive results by reducing bed days of care for participants by 52%. The Veteran experience scores with RPM-HT prove the program's value, as 95% of Veterans enrolled in the program trust the RPM-HT program as an essential part of their overall health care.

Clinical Resource Hubs

Clinical Resource Hubs (CRH) offer VA networks a wide variety of clinical services to meet Veterans' needs primarily via telehealth. The VISN 4 CRH and Clinical Contact Center (CCC) continue to partner with all 9 VISN 4 medical centers to complement their services. Most of our clinical services now offer convenient, virtual options for patients, and the expanded use of VA Video Connect allows Veterans to receive care from home.

- The CCC serviced 2,346,402 calls across the 4 core services of nursing triage, pharmacy, tele emergency care, and scheduling & administration—a 380% increase.
- The nursing triage team expanded next day mental health appointments for non-urgent needs during weekend, evening, and holiday hours to nearly 500 Veterans.
- 12,984 Veterans were referred to on-demand tele emergency care and 5,443 Veterans were referred to a same day/next day appointment with their PACT team.
- Nursing triage and scheduling & administration utilized the VA Health Chat app to serve more than 1,600 Veterans—a 300% increase—with a 98% satisfaction rate.
- The CRH served 82,278 unique Veterans (64% increase) through 95,138 visits (60% increase) this past fiscal year.
- The CRH added the following new programs: low vision rehabilitation, transdisciplinary pain program, advanced liver disease cancer screening, caregiver support, and endocrinology.



VA Health Chat:

Receive VA care without stepping into a VA facility.

Learn more:

mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-chat



VA Mobile

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



VHA Priority

SERVE VETERANS WITH MILITARY ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES

PACT Act Expands VA Care and Benefits for Toxic-Exposed Veterans

On August 10, 2022, President Biden signed into law the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022. The new law fulfills the president's top priority of addressing military environmental exposures and keeping our nation's promise to care for Veterans and their survivors who suffer from those conditions.

The PACT Act is one of the largest health and benefit expansions in American history. It recognizes toxic exposure as a "cost of war" by addressing the full range of issues impacting toxic-exposed Veterans, ensuring generations of Veterans who suffer from toxic exposure-related conditions get the benefits and care they've earned. This new law also expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 era.

Honoring Our Promise to Veterans

History was made on June 27, 2023, as a momentous public-private partnership was announced and commemorated through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration (VHA) and the University of Pennsylvania Health System (UPHS).

The MOU signed during the ceremony (pictured above) was possible under section 704 of the historic 2022 PACT Act which allows for VA to partner with its academic affiliates and other entities to acquire space for the purpose of providing health care resources to Veterans, including infrastructure improvement projects in order to address the anticipated growth in newly eligible Veterans seeking healthcare services under the provisions of the PACT Act. MOUs were signed by UPHS at both the

Coatesville and Philadelphia VA medical centers signaling a commitment to partner to expand services to Veterans.

The most immediate impact of the PACT Act from a capital standpoint is approval of the Allentown Major Lease. This building will expand space for outpatient services including specialty clinics in Allentown, PA. Contracting has advertised a solicitation to acquire this new leased space as of January 2024.

VISN 4 Accomplishments

As of December 31, 2023, a total of 229,035 Veterans (59.1% of enrolled Veterans) in VISN 4 have received a toxic exposure screening (TES). In addition, Veterans who needed follow-up screenings were cared for in a timely manner. Out of 95,870 follow-up appointments in 2023, 95,366 have been resolved putting VISN 4 in the 99th percentile of completed TES follow-up.

Honoring the SERVICE Act, which expands breast cancer screening eligibility for Veterans and ensures research continues to advance our knowledge of toxic exposures and breast cancer, providers in VISN 4 began offering breast cancer and toxic exposure risk assessments to identified Veterans in March 2023.

Our staff continues to find creative new ways to reach out and serve Veterans with military environmental exposures.

For more information about the PACT Act, please go to www.va.gov/PACT or call 1-800-MyVA411.

To learn more about the SERVICE Act, go to www.news.va.gov/122448/breast-cancer-screening-through-service-act.



**Under the new
2022 PACT Act**

**all enrolled Veterans will
be able to receive
a toxic exposure screening
at VA**

TOXIC EXPOSURE DURING MILITARY SERVICE?

Learn more at VA.gov
1-800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411)

  U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Veteran Voices



"I'm grateful for the PACT Act because it's allowing myself and Veterans like me, who deployed in the Middle East around burn pit's locations, get the much-needed health care we hoped for."

~OEF/OIF Veteran, Butler PA

"(My Dad) was never the person that like(d) hospitals or doctors, but he has got an amazing PCP (at VA that) he truly likes and that cares. Trying to get him to come to the VA was a struggle, but he has done it."

~Caregiver of a Vietnam Veteran, Purple Heart and Bronze Star recipient, Pittsburgh PA

"The benefits (I received under PACT Act) are helping me and my family and have lifted a huge burden off of myself knowing that my family will be provided for following the service-connected exposure that caused my illness."

~Gulf War Veteran, Philadelphia PA

"I spent time in Africa around burn pits and was curious if I was eligible for treatment. (After contacting VA) I went from having no health care and skipping the doctor's office to having my first VA appointment scheduled at no cost to me."

~OEF/OIF Veteran, Wilmington DE





VHA Priority

ACCELERATE VA'S JOURNEY TO A HIGH RELIABILITY ORGANIZATION

Every day at VA, we work to deliver safe, high-quality health care to our Veterans. Since the 1990s, leading health care systems including VA have started to adopt high reliability practices.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is on a journey to become a High Reliability Organization (HRO). HROs employ procedures and protocols to maximize safety and minimize harm. VHA's journey is transforming its culture by cultivating and spreading HRO principles and values across the enterprise as it pursues Zero Harm.

HRO foundational practices of safety huddles, leader rounding, safety forums and visual management systems which have been implemented within all VISN 4 medical centers have further strengthened our organization's culture of safety.

In VISN 4, we have made great strides in improving safety and quality of care this past year. Here are just a few of the accomplishments, innovations, and improvements we've made towards this journey:

ERIE

The Erie VA Medical Center has implemented provider cards at primary care and community-based outpatient clinic appointments. The cards, given to Veterans at check-in, allow the Veteran and their caregiver the opportunity to circle items they would like to discuss during their visit that day. Providers will discuss items circled at the time of their appointment. At the end of the appointment, the Veteran marks on the card if their needs were met and staff then collects the cards. Veteran and caregiver feedback helps to ensure the quality of care as well as improve services provided.

BUTLER

Butler VA Health Care System identified a training need for caregivers and now offers in-person hands-on CPR instruction as well as virtual CPR refresher courses. Caregivers can also use the CPR Anytime Kits which include a DVD training video and inflatable mannequin to practice and show other family members after the course to reinforce what they have learned.

PITTSBURGH

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System introduced aromatherapy in treating pain and nausea for post-operative patients and for treating patients experiencing anxiety. Pain and anxiety medication can have adverse effects, and the use of aromatherapy has provided a very successful and complementary approach for symptom management.

LEBANON

A project team at Lebanon VA Medical Center wanted to look for ways to reduce noise at night on inpatient units. Using detailed and timely information obtained from Veterans completing surveys on the Get-Well Network, customized Quiet at Night Toolkits were created for each unit. Inpatient units have been able to reduce noise disruptions at night to enable better rest for Veterans.

VHA'S JOURNEY TO HIGH RELIABILITY

COMMITTING TO ZERO HARM

By striving to become a high reliability organization (HRO), where harm prevention and process improvement are second nature to all employees, we can dramatically improve the way we deliver care to our Veterans. By empowering all staff to focus on safety and reliability, we can reduce errors that cause patient harm. To get there, we must change the way we do business across VHA.

PHILADELPHIA

The Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center in Philadelphia has accelerated their HRO journey with an annual HRO Safety Fair which showcases and recognizes great process improvement work across the facility. The event in its 3rd year continues to grow and inspire staff to improve processes in their work areas.

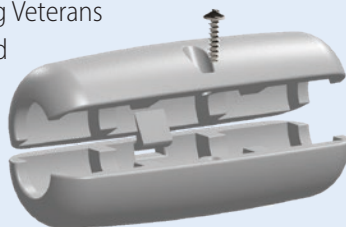
WILKES-BARRE

The staff members at Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center participated an "HRO Cup Challenge" with departments competing for the top spot in HRO engagement and a trophy. The friendly competition was highly successful in increasing staff engagement in activities associated with our HRO mission of zero harm as well as process improvement techniques.



Upon hearing that approximately 20% of Veterans in VISN 4 on home oxygen therapy were removing the thermal fuse after installation, our Prosthetics Manager Doug Hilliard became quite concerned. While a few incidents of fire and several close calls had occurred in the VISN in the past, Doug knew he had to take immediate action.

Doug developed—in his own garage—a prototype clamshell lock that would essentially lock the fire valve to the oxygen tubing once in place, preventing Veterans from removing the fire valve and thus ensuring the protective device would remain in place. He worked closely with the University of Pittsburgh



Human Engineering Research Lab to further develop the prototype and secure a patent.

He also worked with the VISN 4 Respiratory and Patient Safety teams to trial the device, and at the end of the 3-month trial, these oxygen fire valves and locks remained in place with no fires or other issues identified.

Doug and the VISN 4 Quality and Patient Safety team are working on a roll out plan to ensure our approximately 900 high risk Veterans on home oxygen therapy remain protected with oxygen fire valves and the accompanying clamshell locks.

Thank you, Doug, for devoting your own time and resources (and garage!) to ensure the safety of hundreds of Veterans. For his efforts, Doug has received the National HeRO Award, the highest HRO recognition bestowed to staff in VA.



*Doug Hilliard
VISN 4 Prosthetics Manager*



VHA Priority

SUPPORT VETERANS' WHOLE HEALTH, THEIR CAREGIVERS AND SURVIVORS

Whole health is a holistic approach that marries traditional medical care with self-care, skill building, and prevention, and in VISN 4 we are seeing promising results for Veterans and staff. All facilities in VISN 4 have whole health aligned care and complementary and integrative health offerings available. We more than doubled the national expectations with nearly 30% of Veterans in our service area participating in whole health care.

Our approach to implementing whole health has allowed for multiple shared opportunities. All facilities have a whole health program manager and employee whole health coordinator to oversee implementation and integration of whole health concepts for Veterans and staff.

We're also adding to our menu of offerings for in person, virtual, and hybrid whole health and complementary and integrative health programs. The Tele Whole Health hub has expanded from two routine offerings to 8 this fiscal year, including whole health coaching, tai chi, guided imagery, and clinical hypnosis. Laughter yoga is also available at Butler and Wilmington for staff and Veterans.

Millennium Health and Fitness

VISN 4 contracted with Millennium Health and Fitness, an online health and wellness platform, to expand self-care opportunities for Veterans and staff. Millennium provides a robust catalog of live, virtual classes as well as an on-demand library in strength, cardio, yoga, tai chi, and more.

By the end of fiscal year 2023, 1,687 staff and 1,115 Veterans have active accounts, and more than 16,000 classes were completed. Not registered? Sign up for your free account today at www.millenniumhealthandfitness.com/vsn-4-registration.

Whole Health Across VISN 4

BUTLER

At the VA2K "Walk and Roll" event in Butler, Pa., more than 161 participants raised over \$14,000 in monetary and in-kind donations for local homeless Veterans. It was a record-breaking year for the 2-day event. Congratulations to the Michael A.

Marzano VA Clinic in Mercer County (pictured at left) for the most donations, earning a National Recognition Award for employee participation.

PITTSBURGH

Gerofit is a supervised exercise program for Veterans aged 65 and older. The goal of the program is to increase improvement of overall health, mental well-being, and physical function of aging Veterans. Exercise prescriptions are individually tailored to the functional limitations and Veteran's goals.

As a result, Veterans are able to age within their own home, decreasing the need for long-term inpatient care and creating an overall cost savings for VA. Gerofit is offered both face-to-face at VA Pittsburgh and virtually across the VISN 4 western market.



ALTOONA

The Seed to Supper Program is a collaboration between Whole Health and Nutrition and Food Service. A variety of new items were planted including zucchini, squash and cucumbers. Those items, in addition to tomatoes, did not need purchased from the end of June through October.

Vegetables harvested included over 300 yellow beans, 137 cucumbers and 13 pints of cherry tomatoes. Community living center residents assisted in planting, maintaining, and harvesting the vegetables and herbs.



Caregiver Support Program

Caregivers in both the Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS) and the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregiver (PCAFC) have access to a variety of education and support services within VISN 4.

- Healthy Teaching Kitchen
- Tai Chi, Mindfulness, Guided Imagery, Sound Healing, Ear Acupuncture
- Caregiver Burnout Workshop
- Educational series on variety of caregiving topics
- Caregiver Relationships: Incorporating whole health interventions when caregivers experience Intimate Partner Violence Workshop
- Support groups related to caring for Veterans with a specific diagnosis (PTSD, Dementia, Parkinson's Disease)
- Laugh therapy and chair yoga
- Coffee chats
- Art groups (painting, therapeutic drawing)
- Events to honor caregivers of Veterans who passed away during the year

In fiscal year 2023, VISN 4 implemented a Mental Health Hub for caregivers participating in the PCAFC. The Caregiver Support Program, in conjunction with the Clinical Resource Hub (CRH), hired and trained three mental health clinicians who specialize in working with caregivers. The program is currently offered in Wilmington, Erie and Pittsburgh and offers individual, group and couple therapy to caregivers. The program will roll out to the remaining VISN 4 sites in fiscal year 2024.

Currently we are offering Caregiver Health and Wellbeing coaching to all sites across VISN 4. This program assists caregivers in developing a personalized health plan, partners with the caregiver to take action toward behavior change, and supports the caregiver in achieving optimal health.

Several counties within VISN 4 were declared "Hidden Heroes" cities and counties during the year. VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System and Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center both participated in their county's respective events which signified their dedication to increasing awareness and support for their local military caregivers.



VHA Priority

PREVENT VETERAN SUICIDE

Across VISN 4, suicide prevention coordinators and other suicide prevention team members serve as Risk ID Champions at each facility. They work to disseminate information on Risk ID and the concept that “suicide prevention is everyone’s business,” no matter your role within VA. These Risk ID Champions have also educated service line Risk ID Champions to assist in this process, ensuring that all Veterans receiving care in VHA will be screened and/or evaluated at least annually for suicide risk.

In fiscal year 2023, VISN 4 exceeded the Comprehensive Suicide Risk Evaluation (CSRE1) national adherence rate (VISN 4: 90%, National 85%). This represents the percentage of Veterans having the timely completion of the comprehensive suicide risk evaluation following a positive suicide screen.

VISN 4 also exceeded the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (CSSRS1) national adherence rate (VISN 4: 65%, National 60%). This represents the percentage of Veterans who had the timely completion of the suicide screening when it was due.

No matter what you're going through,
help is just a call away.

Veterans Crisis Line
DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

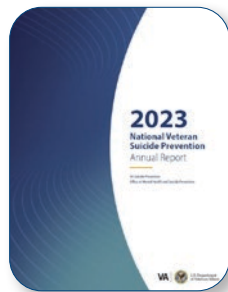
Veterans Crisis Line

In 2022, the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) transitioned to 988, a new 3-digit number. Veterans can now use this new option by dialing 988 then pressing 1 to contact the Veterans Crisis Line.

In fiscal year 2023, we had a 99.11% success rate for successful closure—within 3 days of the initial call—to the Veteran Crisis Line. In VISN 4, there have been 6,304 total requests from the VCL for Veteran follow-up, and 1,225 resulted in dispatch of emergency service to the Veteran.

National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report

Released on November 16, 2023, the National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report is the largest national analysis of Veteran suicides through 2021 (the latest year for which we have data). The report shows that 6,392 Veterans died by suicide in 2021, which is 114 more than in 2020. The number of non-Veteran suicides also increased to 40,020 deaths in 2021, which is 2,000 more than in 2020.



2021 was the first full year of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to greater financial strain, housing instability, anxiety and depression levels, and barriers to health care – all of which are known to be associated with increased risk of suicide for Veterans and non-Veterans alike.

“There is nothing more important to VA than preventing Veteran suicide—nothing. One Veteran suicide will always be too many, and we at VA will use every tool to our disposal to prevent these tragedies and save Veterans’ lives.”

~ Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis McDonough

For more detailed information about Veteran suicide, view the full report at www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/data.asp.

VA also developed a new website intended for Veterans and the public to learn how VA is preventing Veteran suicide and why it matters. The new website offers connections and messaging between the data, strategic plans, actions taken, outcomes seen, plans, and available resources. To learn more, visit department.va.gov/suicide-prevention-annual-report.

COMPACT Act of 2020

Under Section 201 of the COMPACT Act of 2020, eligible Veterans and individuals in acute suicidal crisis are now able to go to any VA or non-VA health care facility for emergency health care at no cost. This includes inpatient or crisis residential care for up to 30 days and outpatient care for up to 90 days. Veterans do not need to be enrolled in the VA system to use this benefit.

If you received a bill for community care after receiving emergency care during or after a suicidal crisis that you believe should be covered by VA, you should contact the VA customer service center as soon as possible at 877-881-7618.

The COMPACT Act increases access to emergency suicide care to an additional 9 million unenrolled Veterans and reduce the number of Veteran suicides by offering immediate care when they are at their most vulnerable. We must ensure Veterans in crisis receive this care seamlessly, whether in a VA or community facility.

Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinators

Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinators (CEPCs) serve as subject matter experts in public health approaches, coalition development and facilitation, and other community-based models for Veteran suicide prevention. They work to develop, facilitate, and strengthen community-based interventions for suicide prevention at community, state, and regional levels.

In fiscal year 2023, all 12 CEPC positions across VISN 4 facilities were filled. These CEPCs established 54 new suicide prevention community coalitions, and a total of 110 community coalitions have been established since the launch of the program.

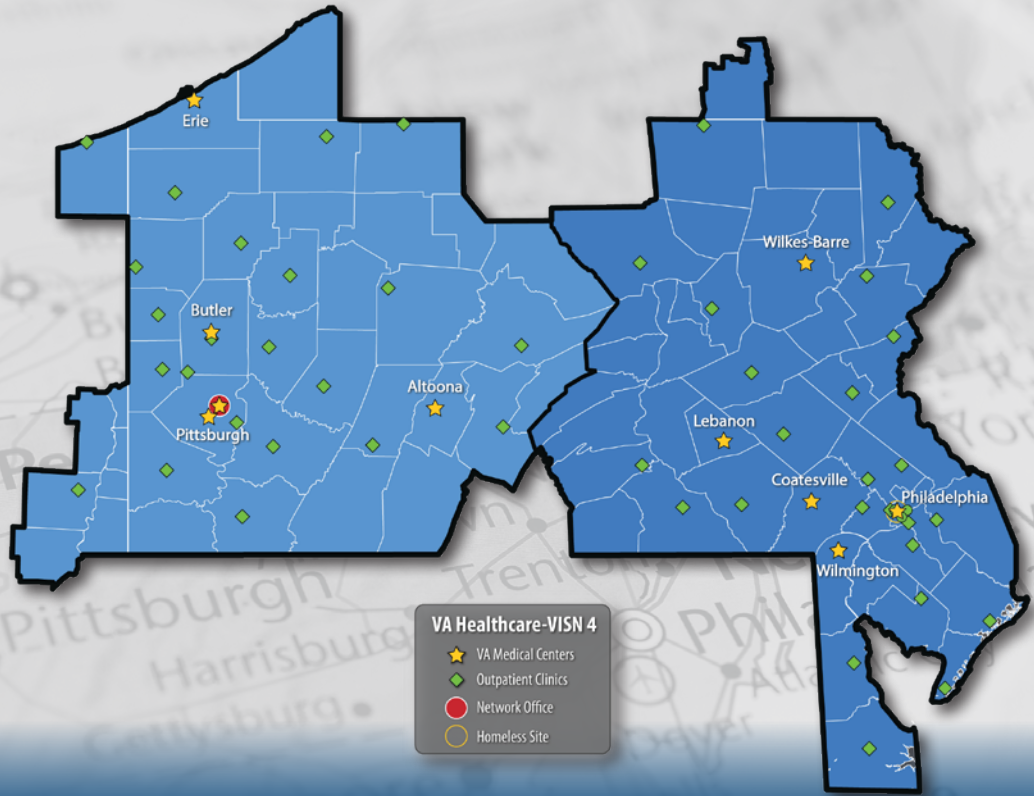


Suicide Prevention Outreach

During fiscal year 2023, our suicide prevention coordinators, suicide prevention case managers, and other staff conducted 939 community outreach events with 82,274 participants. This included 3,558 participants attending 161 community suicide prevention Gatekeeper trainings, known as VA S.A.V.E. Targeted populations for some of these events included: 15 LGBTQ+ outreach events and 209 Rural or Highly Rural outreach events. “Caring Communications” were also mailed via the U.S. Postal Service to 10,188 identified high-risk recipients.

VA Healthcare–VISN 4 is a fully integrated network of 9 VA campuses, 46 outpatient clinics, and 16 Vet Centers.

In fiscal year 2023, VISN 4 served 315,699 Veterans from across the nation, primarily from Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, Ohio, West Virginia and New York.



AROUND VISN 4



Altoona, PA

James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center
2907 Pleasant Valley Blvd.
Altoona, PA 16602
877-626-2500

www.va.gov/altoona-health-care
www.facebook.com/VAAaltoona
twitter.com/VAAaltoona

🇺🇸 Total Veterans Served	23,018
♀ Female Veterans Served	1,641
💰 Operating Budget	\$352,238,000
🏢 Admissions	643
🏥 Outpatient Visits	370,071
👥 Employees	1,379



Butler, PA

Butler VA Health Care System
353 North Duffy Road
Butler, PA 16001
800-362-8262

www.va.gov/butler-health-care
www.facebook.com/VAButlerPA
twitter.com/VAButlerPA

🇺🇸 Total Veterans Served	25,348
♀ Female Veterans Served	2,546
💰 Operating Budget	\$208,232,522
🏢 Admissions	300
🏥 Outpatient Visits	208,912
👥 Employees	797



Coatesville, PA

Coatesville VA Medical Center
1400 Blackhorse Hill Road
Coatesville, PA 19320
800-290-6172

www.va.gov/coatesville-health-care
www.facebook.com/CoatesvilleVAMC
twitter.com/coatesvillevamc

🇺🇸 Total Veterans Served	17,004
♀ Female Veterans Served	1,089
💰 Operating Budget	\$260,466,000
🏢 Admissions	1,160
🏥 Outpatient Visits	198,568
👥 Employees	1,226



Erie, PA

Erie VA Medical Center
135 East 38th Street Blvd.
Erie, PA 16504

📞 800-274-8387

🌐 www.va.gov/erie-health-care

📘 www.facebook.com/VAMCErie

🐦 twitter.com/ErieVAMC

🇺🇸 Total Veterans Served	21,758
♀ Female Veterans Served	1,567
💰 Operating Budget	\$265,200,000
🏢 Admissions	135
🏥 Outpatient Visits	266,530
👥 Employees	952



Lebanon, PA

Lebanon VA Medical Center
1700 South Lincoln Avenue
Lebanon, PA 17042

📞 800-409-8771

🌐 www.va.gov/lebanon-health-care

📘 www.facebook.com/VALebanon

🐦 twitter.com/VALebanon

🇺🇸 Total Veterans Served	47,729
♀ Female Veterans Served	4,071
💰 Operating Budget	\$673,509,758
🏢 Admissions	3,384
🏥 Outpatient Visits	546,628
👥 Employees	2,328



Philadelphia, PA

Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VAMC
3900 Woodland Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19104

📞 800-949-1001

🌐 www.va.gov/philadelphia-health-care

📘 www.facebook.com/PhiladelphiaVAMC

🐦 twitter.com/VAPhiladelphia

🇺🇸 Total Veterans Served	64,218
♀ Female Veterans Served	8,366
💰 Operating Budget	\$835,995,000
🏢 Admissions	8,091
🏥 Outpatient Visits	526,684
👥 Employees	3,846



Pittsburgh, PA

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System
University Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15240

📞 866-482-7488

🌐 www.va.gov/pittsburgh-health-care

📘 www.facebook.com/VAPHS

🐦 twitter.com/VAPittsburgh

🇺🇸 Total Veterans Served	91,202
♀ Female Veterans Served	10,572
💰 Operating Budget	\$1,003,662,000
🏢 Admissions	10,833
🏥 Outpatient Visits	763,930
👥 Employees	4,566



Wilkes-Barre, PA

Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center
1111 East End Blvd.
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711

📞 877-928-2621

🌐 www.va.gov/wilkes-barre-health-care

📘 www.facebook.com/VAWilkesBarre

🇺🇸 Total Veterans Served	38,376
♀ Female Veterans Served	4,400
💰 Operating Budget	\$511,451,434
🏢 Admissions	2,919
🏥 Outpatient Visits	411,285
👥 Employees	1,623



Wilmington, DE

Wilmington VA Medical Center
1601 Kirkwood Highway
Wilmington, DE 19805

📞 800-461-8262

🌐 www.va.gov/wilmington-health-care

📘 www.facebook.com/WilmingtonVAMC

🐦 twitter.com/WilmingtonVAMC

🇺🇸 Total Veterans Served	43,313
♀ Female Veterans Served	3,051
💰 Operating Budget	\$443,000,000
🏢 Admissions	1,916
🏥 Outpatient Visits	383,773
👥 Employees	1,466

We'd Like to Hear from You

This annual report is published for the employees, volunteers, patients and friends of VA Healthcare-VISN 4. Unless noted, fact and figures represented in this report are fiscal year 2023 data. For more information about this publication, contact David Cowgill at david.cowgill@va.gov.

VA Healthcare-VISN 4
1010 Delafield Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15215
412-822-3316

www.visn4.va.gov

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Healthcare-VISN 4