St. Cloud VA Health Care System
SWS Site Visit Report

Date: September 19, 2019

Location: St. Cloud VA Health Care System

Dept. Rehab Committee Members: Chairman Wilson Spence, Gary Munkholm, Bill Brockberg, Roy Bressler and Dan Tengwall. Dept. Service Officer, Jeremy Wolfsteller.

RE: The American Legion Dept. Rehabilitation Committee is tasked with staying engaged with agencies that aid Minnesota veterans. The committee does this by conducting System Worth Saving Site Visits throughout the year. These locations include Sioux Falls, Fargo, St. Cloud and Minneapolis VA Health Care Systems, St. Paul and Fargo Regional Offices, Minneapolis, Hastings, Luverne, Fergus Falls and Silver Bay Veterans Homes. Additional Site Visits are conducted at VA CBOC’s, Vets Centers, and Minnesota nonprofits that serve veterans when the budget allows.

Meeting Attendance: Chairman Wilson Spence, Bill Brockberg, Gary Munkholm, Dan Tengwall and DSO Jeremy Wolfsteller.
SCVAHCS Overview:


The Health Care System began serving Veterans in 1924 and now delivers care to more than 39,000 Veterans in the upper Midwest region.

Areas of care include primary and specialty care, mental health care, surgical and specialty care including ambulatory surgery, urgent care, acute psychiatric care, telemedicine, extended care and rehabilitation, imaging, laboratory and pharmacy services. Specialty care services include audiology, cardiology, dentistry, hematology, oncology, optometry, orthopedics, podiatry, pulmonology, urology and rheumatology.

The Health Care System offers extensive mental health programming, including acute psychiatric care, Residential Rehabilitation Treatment programs and an outpatient mental health clinic. The programs use a recovery model to treat post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse and a variety of mental health conditions. Outpatient programming includes treatment for serious mental illness, vocational rehabilitation and supported employment.

The Health Care System’s Community Living Center (extended care and rehabilitation) provides skilled nursing care through home-based primary care, nursing home care, adult day health care, ventilator-dependent care, memory care, hospice care and a variety of rehabilitation programs.
SCVAHCS FY20 System Worth Saving Site Visit

Meeting Minutes:

- **Patient wait times**: VHA’s standard for primary care, mental health care & non-institutional extended care services is 20 days and 28 days for specialty care from request date.
  - **SCVAHCS**: Mental health new patient average is 10 days and 2 days for established patients. Primary care new patient average is 17 days and 4 days for established patients. Specialty care new patient average 19 days and 5 days for established.
  - **Longer wait time medical services include**: Audiology, orthopedics, pain clinic, podiatry, GI and occupational therapy. Because of long wait times veterans can choose to use the VCCP although wait times in the private sector may be longer.
  - **Community Contract Provider**: CentraCare handle’s most referrals for specialty care services when longer wait times accrue, services not available or veterans choose not to drive to Minneapolis VA Medical Center.

- **Panel Sizes**: VHA patient centered management module (PCMM) standard via Directive 1406 for primary care range 1,000-1,4000. Recommended baseline for FTE PACT is 1200. (Panel sizes are very important as they can contribute to physician burnout)
  - **SCVAHCS**: MD’s, NP, PA panels. MD’s can be up to 1400 and lower level NP, PA’s 800-900.
  - St. Cloud Medical Center MD’s average 1175 per one FTE.
  - The Brainerd and Montevideo CBOC’s MD’s have a higher panel size of 1354 & 1210. Although with new providers starting September 30th the panel sizes will reduce. Alexandria MD has 936 and is helping Brainerd till new higher starts. Brainerd and Alexandria added additional specialty services in audiology and vision. These services may have increased the panel sizes.
  - MD’s tend to stay at the CBOC longer while mid-level NP, PA’s have a higher turnover rate.
SCVAHCS FY20 System Worth Saving Site Visit

Meeting Minutes Cont.

- **Staff Vacancies:** Nursing Assistants continue to be a challenge just because of the low numbers in the career field and high demand of services that require their skills.
  - EC&R nursing staff
  - PCP both MD’s and mid-level
  - Mental Health Psychiatrist
  - Housekeeping
  - Medical Support Assistants (MSA’s)

- **Facility Demographics:**
  - Authorized and Operating Bed Capacity, daily census for all inpatient programs: Authorized beds 431, currently operating 388, unavailable beds 43. Average daily census is 334. These beds consist of CWT/TR, Domiciliary, Acute Psych and Nursing Home.
    - SCVAHCS seen 549,197 outpatient visits last year

- **Enrollment:**
  - SCVAHCS has approximately 62,621 veterans within their geographical market, although only 53,245 may be eligible for VA health Care.
  - Current enrollment is 40,306 which leaves an estimated 13,000 still eligible for care.
  - SCVAHCS market penetration is 75.7% which ranks 3rd in the nation for market penetration.
  - Enrollment consists of 1,979 females and 38,325 males.
  - Unique patient totals for FY18 was 39,551 although only 32,728 were within SCVAHCS market of enrolled veterans.
  - In FY18 39,551 veterans used SCVAHCS for services 549,197 times.
  - SCVAHCS has 27 Counties within its market.
SCVAHCS FY20 System Worth Saving Site Visit

Meeting Minutes Cont.

- **Non-VA coordinated Care:**
  - Authorized care under the discontinued Choice program SCVAHCS paid close to 80 million.
  - Unauthorized care which include emergencies under 38 UFC 1728 and 1725, SCVAHCS paid close to 4 million.

- **VHA is currently conducting a market assessment under The Mission Act.**
  - SCVAHCS plans on using this information to capture some of the remaining eligible veterans within their market, (approx. 13,000).

- **Women Veteran Program**
  - Approximately 1,500 of 1,979 enrolled female veterans use SCVAHCS for their primary care.
  - A new stand-alone women veteran clinic is estimated to be completed by the end of FY2020.
  - SCVAHCS has one FTE provider that only see’s female patients. There’re another ten providers designated to see female veterans.

- **Suicide Prevention Efforts**
  - Doubled staff in FY19
  - Established a coalition of community partners in prevention efforts
Meeting Minutes Cont.

- SCVAHCS Comments:

  o VA O I&T Increased Telehealth Access Through Partnerships with T-Mobile and Verizon VA’s new partnerships with T-Mobile and Verizon give Veterans mobile access to VA telehealth—for free. Veterans using these mobile network providers can now access VA systems and telehealth resources using VA Video Connect (VVC) via the public internet without being billed for the data used, removing cost barriers for participating and receiving the VA health care they need.

  o Tele-Health services, IT infrastructure specifically bandwidth in certain areas CBOC’s are located is lacking. This is preventing the ability to offer more telehealth services.

  o Should VA offer childcare services VIA contracts or offer vouchers to pay for child-care so more veterans, specifically female veterans can use their health care benefits.

Chairman: Wilson Spence
Secretary: Jeremy Wolfsteller
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Department of Veteran Affairs Health Care Facility Questionnaire

Executive Leadership

Please address the following:

- **Facility Name:** St. Cloud VA Health Care System

- **Wait times:**
  - What are the average wait times for primary care patients?
  - What are the average wait times for specialty care patients?
  - What are the average wait times for mental health patients?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patient Wait Times</th>
<th>Average New Patient from Create Date</th>
<th>Average Established Patient Wait from Preferred Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(3V23) (656) St. Cloud, MN HCS</td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3V23) (656) St. Cloud, MN HCS</td>
<td>Primary Care</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3V23) (656) St. Cloud, MN HCS</td>
<td>Specialty Care</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- What specific services/care do most veterans have to wait for?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stop Code</th>
<th>HCS</th>
<th>Total Pending GT 20 from Preferred Date</th>
<th>All Patient Wait % GT 20 Days from</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(321) GI ENDOSCOPY</td>
<td>(3V23) (656) St. Cloud, MN</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>61.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(203) AUDIOLOGY</td>
<td>(3V23) (656GA) Brainerd, MN</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>57.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(409) ORTHOPEDICS/JOINT SURGERY</td>
<td>(3V23) (656) St. Cloud, MN</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>55.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(203) AUDIOLOGY</td>
<td>(3V23) (656GB) Montevideo, MN</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>52.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(206) OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY</td>
<td>(3V23) (656) St. Cloud, MN</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>45.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(420) PAIN CLINIC</td>
<td>(3V23) (656) St. Cloud, MN</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>39.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(411) PODIATRY</td>
<td>(3V23) (656GA) Brainerd, MN</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>34.30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Panel Sizes:**

- What are your current PCP panel sizes

**St. Cloud**

MD: 934 average panel size including all MDs. 98.8%. 1175 is the average for just 1.0 FTE MDs. 99.1%

NP/PA: 860 average panel size. 99.2% (this is with current staff, we have 1 additional provider starting on 9/30)

*we will have a new NP starting on 10/14 and another in January which will also help with Panel sizes.*
Brainerd
MD: 1354 average panel size. 115%  
NP/PA: 877 average panel size. 107.9%

*This is with current staff, we have 1 additional provider starting on 9/30 and  
this site receives support via TMED from MTE and soon ALX

Montevideo
MD: 1210 average panel size. 101%  
NP/PA: 527 average panel size. 77.7% (Mostly with Sieg due to Olson ramp up)

*MD panel size will be reducing, new NP/PA is in the ramp up period and  
will reduce his overall panel size

Alexandria
MD: 936 average panel size. 82.8%  
NP/PA: 803 average panel size. 97.4%

*Right sized panels and helping to assist BRD for coverage

➢ Staff Vacancies (by occupation):

- What is your total number of vacant positions?
  We have 163 vacancies, 10 are not yet in recruitment as of 9/12/219 for reasons  
  that include: position description update/approval and waiting on service line  
  decisions.

- How long have the positions been vacant?
  The length of time positions are vacant varies by position. We maintain  
  continuous job postings for positions such as: Extended care and Rehabilitation  
  nursing staff; Primary Care physicians and mid-level providers as well as Mental  
  Health psychiatrists and recruit for over ceiling positions in high turnover areas  
  such as housekeeping and medical support assistants.

- Reason for vacancies?
  Position vacancies are occurring for a variety of reasons and the most common  
  reasons are:
  • Voluntary retirements or resignations  
  • Involuntary removal or separation actions  
  • Transfers to other VA facilities or federal agencies  
  • Promotions, transfers or reassignments within the facility  
  • Establishment of new positions or department reorganizations
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- Competitive recruitment environment for health care providers in the local labor market

  o Do you have a succession plan in place to address your current and future vacancies?
    Yes. Succession planning is an ongoing activity guided by the workforce strategic plan. Our current health care system Workforce Strategic Succession Plan is attached.
    It includes leadership development programs, upward mobility and career ladder positions; details and stretch assignments; mentor relationships; LPN to RN transition; education cooperation with local universities and colleges for student experiences; WOC and student appointments; education reimbursements; position management and both on-the-job and formal training programs. The Workforce Development Committee focuses on broad succession planning initiative to include programs for employee and leadership development. Both a Physician Recruitment Committee and a Nurse Recruitment and Retention Committee were established to address strategies to increase recruitment and retention.

Final WFD Plan - St. Cloud 2017.pdf

➢ Facility Demographics:

  o What type of care/services does your medical center offer?
    The St. Cloud VA HCS provides primary and subspecialty medical, urgent, specialty and surgical, and mental health care; acute psychiatry services; and extended care and rehabilitation services. Specialty outpatient services offered include audiology, dental, general surgery, endoscopy, ambulatory surgery, laboratory, orthopedics, optometry, podiatry, pulmonology, radiology, urology, otolaryngology, respiratory therapy, rheumatology, hematology/oncology, cardiology, neurology, nephrology, and women Veteran’s health care.

    The HCS does not maintain an inpatient medical unit. Those needs are met by utilizing the local St. Cloud Hospital and transfers to the Minneapolis VA HCS 80 miles to the south.

    The HCS also provides a number of special emphasis services including residential and outpatient mental health and substance abuse programs, a Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) treatment program, a Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program, outpatient programming for serious mental illness, homeless Veterans programs, a suicide prevention
program, an Operation Enduring and Iraqi Freedom program, a Women Veterans program, an Incarcerated Veteran Program, a Veterans Justice Outreach Program, Native American sweat lodge ceremonies to meet diverse spiritual needs, Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment programs, Adult Day Health Care, Home-Based Primary Care, and ventilator care. Extended Care and Rehabilitation services include Home-Based Primary Care, Adult Day Health Care, Memory Care, Hospice Care, Short Stay and Nursing Home Care. Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) services are currently located in Alexandria, Brainerd and Montevideo, Minnesota, and provide: Primary Care services; Specialty Care referrals to both St. Cloud and Minneapolis VA HCS; Mental Health services including individual, group and family counseling; Psychological assessment and testing; Medication management; Social Work services; Clinical Pharmacy services; Home-Based Care; Tobacco cessation counseling; Prescription processing; Laboratory blood drawing services; Chronic disease management; Care Coordination for Home Telehealth; and Telehealth classes for diabetes and weight loss. Additionally, Brainerd has Podiatry Services.

- What is your authorized and operating bed capacity?
  Services are delivered through outpatient clinics and the following beds: 15 acute psychiatry beds, 225 nursing home beds, and 148 Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (RRTP) beds (with up to 23 more RRTP beds approved).

- What is your average daily census for each inpatient program?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Operating Beds</th>
<th>Total Unavailable Beds</th>
<th>Authorized Beds</th>
<th>ADC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Bed Service</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWT/TR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domiciliary</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>128.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acute Psych</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing Home</td>
<td>225</td>
<td></td>
<td>225</td>
<td>194.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- How many outpatient visits did you see last fiscal year?
  549,197

- Please provide a breakdown of your funding allocations for the past three fiscal years.
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➢ Enrollment:

  o What is the total number of veterans in your catchment area?

  There are an estimated 62,621 Veterans in the Minnesota Central market in FY18 with an estimated 53,245 eligible for services.

  o What is the total number of enrolled veterans in your catchment area?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrolled Veterans</th>
<th>All Gender</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(V23) (V23) Minnesota Central</td>
<td>40,306</td>
<td>1,979</td>
<td>38,325</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

  Current market penetration (enrolled Veterans out of estimated eligible Veterans) is 75.7%. St. Cloud ranks 3rd in the nation for market penetration.

  o Of the number of enrolled veterans, please provide the number of:

    - Men – 38,325
    - Women – 1,979

  o What is the total number of unique veterans in your catchment area?

  Total uniques seen at St. Cloud in FY18 was 39,551 of which 32,728 live within the Minnesota Central market.

  o Please identify the counties included in your catchment area?

    Aitkin, Benton, Big Stone, Cass, Chippewa, Crow Wing, Douglas, Grant, Isanti, Kanabec, Kandiyohi, Lac Qui Parle, McLeod, Meeker, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Pope, Redwood, Renville, Sherburne, Stearns, Stevens, Swift, Todd, Wadena, Wright, Yellow Medicine.

➢ Non-VA Coordinated Care Program:

  o What was your last year’s NVCC budget for the following:

    - Authorized Care
      o Authorized outpatient $52,741,413
      o Authorized inpatient $27,667,629

    - Unauthorized Care
      o Unauthorized outpatient $2,057,440
      o Unauthorized inpatient $1,816,801
The American Legion

- SC Emergency Care
- NSC Mill Bill Emergency Care

➢ Outreach Activities:

  o How many outreach events did your medical center participate in during last fiscal year?
    In FY19 there were approximately 300 events in which the medical center participated in.

  o How many outreach events is your medical center planning to participate in this fiscal year?
    Approximately 300 events are anticipated again for FY20.

➢ Women Veteran Program Manager:

  o How many women veterans utilize the Women’s Clinic?
    The St. Cloud VA Healthcare System sees about 2,400 women Veterans annually. 1,500 of these women receive their primary care from the VA. There are several construction projects going on in Primary Care one of which involves remodeling space to relocate our Women’s Clinic which is estimated to be completed by the end of fiscal year 2020. Once completed this area will offer additional space to allow for additional supportive services to be offered inside our women’s clinic.

  o Has this number of utilizations increased from the previous year?
    The number of Women Veterans has been steadily increasing over the last several years.

  o How many female physiologists/psychiatrists, gynecologists, and primary care physicians are staffed at the Women’s Clinic?
    There is one primary care provider in the St. Cloud VA Healthcare System that sees only women. There are an additional ten designated women’s health providers throughout the healthcare system who see women Veterans and an additional provider will be starting by the start of fiscal year 2020.

  o How many women veteran events are held at your facility?
    There have been seven women Veterans events hosted by the Women’s Program. These events were held in St. Cloud, Granite Falls and Brainerd. Events included
a baby shower, a women Veterans expo, a pregnancy and infant loss awareness walk and breast cancer awareness events.

Comments:

Capital Improvements:
OIT Building
A new building has been constructed as an addition to Building 4 that will substantially improve the facility IT infrastructure. The building construction was completed in April 2019 and the transfer phase of the project where all of the data connections are moved from the old building to the new is expected to continue through November 2019.

Building 29 Primary Care Renovation
The ongoing remodeling of Primary Care space on the first floor of building 29 is nearing completion. The remodeled space will give Primary Care new rooms designed to accommodate the care model delivered by a Patient Aligned Care Team. The construction is anticipated to be completed by December 2019.