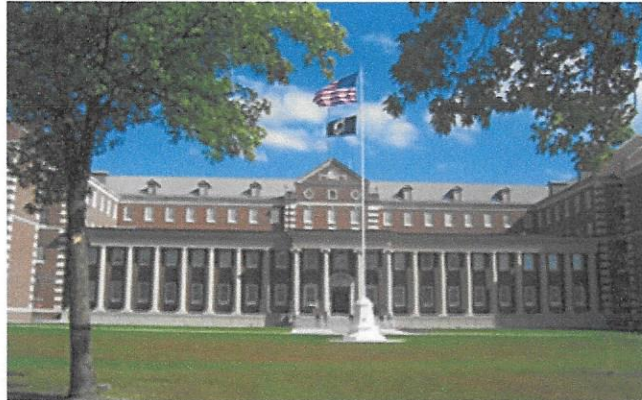




Fargo VA Health Care System SWS Site Visit Report



Date: April 3, 2018

Location: Fargo VA Health Care System (Conference Call)

Dept. Rehab Committee Members: Wilson Spence, Darrel Redepenning, 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 Healthcare 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, Roy Bressler, Jeremy Wolfsteller, Jeff Burth MDVA. Director Lavonne Liversage & Public Affairs Officer Ross Tweten.

FVAHCS Overview:

Since 1929, VAMC Fargo has been improving the health of the men and women who have so proudly served our nation. We consider it our privilege to serve your health care needs in any way we can. Services are available to more than 89,000 veterans living in North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota.

Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

In addition to our main facility in Fargo, we offer services in nine community-based outpatient clinics. These clinics are located in —

- Bemidji, Minnesota
- Bismarck, North Dakota
- Devils Lake, North Dakota
- Dickinson, North Dakota (New Contract)
- Fergus Falls, Minnesota
- Grafton, North Dakota
- Grand Forks, North Dakota
- Jamestown, North Dakota
- Minot, North Dakota
- Williston, North Dakota (New Contract)

Mission

VAMC Fargo, exists to honor America's veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

Vision

VAMC Fargo strives to be a patient centered, integrated health care organization for veterans providing excellent health care, research and education; an organization where people choose to work; a community partner and a backup for national emergencies.

FVAHCS 2018 System Worth Saving Site Visit

Meeting Minutes:

Fargo VA Healthcare System continues to lease an offsite facility for their Non-VA Fee Services Billing Office. Total FTE has grown from 40 to 60 over the last year. Non-VA care billing office helps facilitate non-VA care services for veterans like Choice program services and paying certain bills. Fargo has a space within the facility, but it currently can only space up to 40 FTE, Fargo will continue the lease till they can expand the space within the facility.

Complementary and Alternative Therapies continue to be a choice veterans' choose for pain management. Fargo continues to look at ways to increase its modalities and initiated a whole health approach. Currently certain therapies like chiropractic care are only offered 6 times for acute conditions and 1 time for chronic. This has been the most common complaint from veterans as they would like to see it offered as maintenance service.

VA transparency: Does the leadership use the VA's Access to Care website to see how they compare to private facilities around them? How do you use the information to provide better services?

Leadership does not use VA's Access to Care website because it believes the information regarding wait times are inaccurate. The day of the meeting, the website indicated anywhere from 9 days to 20 days to receive a new first time primary care appointment. Fargo leadership believed it was closer to 2 days.

2017 Strategic Analytic for Improvement and Learning, (SAIL) Report Star Rating system which compares VA facilities within one another rated Fargo a 5 star facility.

Recently numerous construction projects began which include a community living center, primary care exam rooms, dental spaces, emergency department and front lobby just to name a few. Because of the construction, parking spaces have been impacted but primarily for employees. Although Fargo is leasing a lot just across the street and provide free shuttle transportation.

FVAHCS 2018 System Worth Saving Site Visit

Meeting Minutes Cont.

March 30, 2018 Fargo VA Healthcare System announced new contract awarded for VA Community Based Outpatient Clinics in Dickinson and Williston N.D. STG International, Inc is the contractor awarded to maintain these CBOC's. Veterans are slated to transition to the new facilities for their appointments beginning summer of 2018.

Fargo's Main Facilities Primary Care Panel Sizes are down around 100 patients from last years, 11,112. Currently at 11,001 and can expand to 11,358 patients at its current staffing levels. The CBOC's PCP size is 17,942 with a total capacity of sustaining 20,710 veterans for primary care.

Fargo's FY 2018 Operating Budget has increased to (\$246 million) to assist with care in the community for rural veterans. This funding was approved by VISN 23.

2017 FY budget for the Choice Program, which was separate from the operating budget was approximately \$24 million.

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:** Fargo VA Health Care System (HCS)

- **Wait times:** Average Wait Times in days from the Preferred Date for FY18 are the following:
 - What are the average wait times for primary care patients?
 - New Patients = 2.27days
 - Established Patients = 2.09 days
 - What are the average wait times for specialty care patients?
 - New Patients = 6.96 days
 - Established Patients = 4.40 days
 - What are the average wait times for mental health patients?
 - New Patients = 2.67 days
 - Established Patients = 2.06days
 - What specific services/care do most veterans have to wait for?
Optometry, Audiology, Ophthalmology, Urology

- **Panel Sizes:**
 - 1. Fargo VA Medical Center Primary Care Panel Size is currently 11,001. Fargo's PCP capacity to expand to 11,358 patients at its current staffing levels.
 - 2. Fargo VA HCS CBOCs' current Primary Care Panel size is 17,492. The total capacity of all CBOC is currently at 20,710 veterans for the Primary Care Panel.



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3. The following is a list of Primary Care Panels by CBOC with their maximum capacity and number of providers at that clinic.

CBOC	Current PCP	Max PCP Capacity	# Providers
Dickinson	963	1,078	1
Devils Lake	479	498	0.5
Jamestown	851	1,203	1
Grafton	765	1,035	1
Bismarck	3,787	3,879	4
Fergus Falls	1,525	2,093	2
Minot	2,248	2,561	2.5
Bemidji	2,908	2,977	2.8
Williston	956	982	1
Grand Forks	3,010	3,662	3

➤ **Staff Vacancies (by occupation):**

- What is your total number of vacant positions?

Total vacant positions: 99.7

- How long have the positions been vacant?

Length of vacancy varies from a few days to several months depending on the qualifications required and the availability of candidates

- Reason for vacancies?

Some occupations are difficult to recruit due to special skill requirements and lack of competitive salary compared to private industry. Additional factors are the rural nature and climate of North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota.

- Do you have a succession plan in place to address your current and future vacancies? Yes

➤ **Facility Demographics:**

- What type of care/services does your medical center offer?

- American Indian Traditional Services
- American Indian Veteran Outreach
- Army Wounded Warrior (AW2 Advocate)
- Behavioral Health Programs
- Cardiac Rehabilitation Program
- New Veteran Orientation
- No Veteran Dies Alone
- Nursing Integrative Healing Therapies
- Nutrition Education/Walk-In Nutrition
- Occupational Therapy



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- Caregiver Support Program
- Care in the Community Coordination
- Community Living Center
- Complementary Integrative Health
- Dementia Clinic
- Diabetes Education
- Dialysis (inpatient)
- Domestic Violence/Intimate Partner Violence
- Emergency Department
- Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program
- Home Based Primary Care
- Home Health services
- Homeless Veteran Outreach Services
 - HUD/VASH
 - Project HART
 - Veteran Justice Outreach (VJO)
- Honor Escort
- Hospice & Palliative Care Program
- Homelessness grant Per diem program
- Respite Care
- Intensive Care Unit
- Medical Foster Home (MFH)
- Mental Health Inpatient/Out Patient
- Military Sexual Trauma Program
- Minority Veterans Program
- My HealtheVet Program
- Laboratory Services
- Primary Care
- Medical subspecialties, general surgery, surgical subspecialties, inpatient medicine, critical care medicine
- PACT Social Work
- Pastoral Care/Pastoral Counseling
- Patient Advocacy Program
- Pharmacy Services
- Physical Therapy/Occupational Therapy/Speech Therapy
- Post 9/11 Transition Care Management Program
- POW/MIA Advocate
- Prosthetics
- Radiology Services
- Recreation Therapy
- Rehabilitation Therapy
- Renal Transplant Coordination
- Safe Patient Handling
- Social Work Walk-In Visit
- Speech and Language Pathology
- Spinal Cord Injury & Disorders Clinic
- Suicide Prevention Program
- Surgical Services
- Telehealth Services
- Tobacco Cessation Treatment
- Veterans Health Education Program
- Visual Impairment Services
- Volunteer Companion Program
- Veteran Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) program
- Voluntary Service
- Walk In Clinic
- Women Veterans Health Services
- Wishes on Wings

- What is your authorized and operating bed capacity?

	Authorized	Current
Internal Medicine	30	22
Surgery	10	10
ICU	4	4
Psychiatry	10	10
Community Living Center	50	34
CWT/TR	10	0



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- What is your average daily census for each inpatient program?
Cumulative as of February 2018

Average Daily Census:

3M: 16.8
4B: 6.4
ICU: 2.0
CLC: 29.9

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

Fargo Facility – 232,225
CBOCs – 78,040
TOTAL - 310,265

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

	FY16	FY17	FY18
OPERATING BUDGET	\$ 228,827,295	\$ 229,065,268	\$ 246,765,416
NRM/MINOR CONSTRUCTION	\$ 11,245,631	\$ 2,735,240	\$ 6,219,697

➤ Enrollment:

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

62,060 FY17

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

41,000 FY17

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

- Men: 38,191 FY17
- Women: 2,809 FY17

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

32,858 FY17



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- Please identify the counties included in your catchment area?

COUNTY	STATE	CAUNTY	STATE	COUNTY	STATE	COUNTY	STATE
Becker	MN	Red Lake	MN	Foster	ND	Renville	ND
Beltrami	MN	Roseau	MN	Grand Forks	ND	Richland	ND
Clearwater	MN	Traverse	MN	Griggs	ND	Rolette	ND
Hubbard	MN	Wilkin	MN	La Moure	ND	Sargent	ND
Kittson	MN	Barnes	ND	McHenry	ND	Stutsman	ND
Lake of the Woods	MN	Benson	ND	McKenzie	ND	Towner	ND
Mahnomen	MN	Bottineau	ND	Mountrail	ND	Traill	ND
Marshall	MN	Burke	ND	Nelson	ND	Walsh	ND
Norman	MN	Cavalier	ND	Pembina	ND	Ward	ND
Otter Tail	MN	Dickey	ND	Pierce	ND	Wells	ND
Pennington	MN	Divide	ND	Ramsey	ND	Williams	ND
Polk	MN	Eddy	ND	Ransom	ND	Roberts	SD

➤ Non-VA Coordinated Care Program:

- What was your last year's NVCC budget for the following:
 - Authorized Care - \$24,457,564
 - Unauthorized Care
Mill Bill - \$3,148,360
Contract Nursing Home - \$10,894,439
 - SC Emergency Care - This cannot be ascertained from financial data.
 - NSC Mill Bill Emergency Care
Medical Emergency Transportation (Mill Bill Ambulance) - \$425,695

➤ Outreach Activities:

- How many outreach events did your medical center participate in during last fiscal year? Approximately 80.
- How many outreach events is your medical center planning to participate in this fiscal year? 80 or more in FY18.



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➤ **Women Veteran Program Manager:**

- How many women veterans utilize the Women's Clinic?

The Fargo VA does not currently have a clinic that is devoted exclusively to women's health, but is in the process of developing a Model 2 Women's Health Clinic (separate but shared space). Designated Women's Health Providers located at the Fargo VA and each CBOC currently address female Veterans' medical issues.

- Has this number of utilization increased from the previous year?

At this time, we do not have a dedicated woman's health clinic to measure the utilization. However, we monitor the number of women assigned to a Designated Women's Health Provider and the Fargo VAHCS is currently at 85%.

- How many female physiologists/psychiatrists, gynecologists, and primary care physicians are staffed at the Women's Clinic?

Women's Health is currently embedded within Primary Care with patients having access to female specialists within the VA or through community partners. Many Primary Care and Emergency Department Providers have had the opportunity to attend the Women's Health Mini-Residency to gain specialized training and education in caring for women Veterans.

- How many women veteran events are held at your facility?

We consistently have three annual events:

- Breast Cancer Awareness
- Go Red for Women
- Sexual Assault Awareness

We are collaborating with community partners to host our first annual VA Baby Shower.



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Comments:

Construction projects include Dialysis, Community Living Center, Interventional Radiology, Dental, Primary Care, Emergency Department/Front Lobby.

New Leases:

- Bemidji – Opened February 23, 2018
- Grafton – Opened March 15, 2018
- Minot – Opening this Fall/Winter

North Dakota Federal Cemetery (NCA) – Design is complete; construction to begin as soon as the frost is out of the ground





DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR
HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON DC 20420

February 12, 2018

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT LETTER NO. 05-18-03

Direct Hire Authority for Critical Occupations Under 5 CFR 337.205

1. Purpose. The purpose of this Human Resources Management Letter (HRML) is to provide guidance to Human Resources (HR) Professionals regarding the use of Direct Hire Authority (DHA), 5 C.F.R. 337.205, Critical Needs. This HRML rescinds HRML No. 05-18-01.

2. Background. On January 24, 2018, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) granted direct hire authority to VA for 15 critical occupations. These occupations are essential to help VA expand its capacity to deliver care to Veterans and improve its medical facilities.

3. Covered Positions. The direct hire authority covers career, career-conditional, temporary, and term appointments in the competitive service. The number of occupations for which OPM granted direct hire authority has been lowered to 14 occupations, as Biomedical Equipment Support Specialist, GS-1601 is very near the end of the process for conversion to the Hybrid Title 38 system in the excepted service and, therefore, was removed. A list of the occupations and grades for which this direct hire authority may be used is as follows:

Accountant (all specialties), GS-0510-9/11/12/13/14/15
Boiler Plant Operator, WG-5402-9
General Engineer, GS-0801-5/7/9/11/12/13
Health Science Specialist (Veterans Crisis Line), GS-0101-5/7/9/11/12
Health Technician (all specialties), GS-0640-4/5/6/7
Histopathology Technician, GS-0646-5/6/7/8/9
Human Resources Assistant (all specialties), GS-0203-5/6/7
Human Resources Specialist (all specialties), GS-0201-7/9/11
Information Technology Specialist (all specialties), GS-2210-7/9/11/12/13/14/15
Personnel Security Specialist, GS-0080-7/9/11/12
Police Officer, GS-0083-5/6
Realty Specialist, GS-1170-9/11/12/13/14
Utility Systems Operator, WG-5406-8/9
Utility System Repair, WG-4742-9/10/11