



VISN 23 SWS Site Visit Report



Date: April 17, 2019

Location: VISN 23 Eagan, MN

Dept. Rehab Committee Members: 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 Bill Brockberg, Roy Bressler, Wilson Spence, Gary Munkholm, and DSO Jeremy Wolfsteller. Robert McDivitt, Network Director.

2019 VISN 23 System Worth Saving Site Visit

Meeting Minutes:

SECVA Priority	Priority 1: Customer Service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The top priority Ensure all staff are trained & equipped to successfully assist Veterans 	Priority 2: Implement the Mission Act <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consolidated Community Care into a single program Expands assistance for family caregivers to eligible Veterans Provides VA with flexibility to allow its infrastructure to match Veterans' needs 	Priority 3: Electronic Health Record <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modernize the appointment system Automate the disability and payment claims system Connect VA to DoD, private healthcare providers & private pharmacies – enable seamless care transitions & care coordination 	Priority 4: Transform Our Business Systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transform the financial management system Transform supply chain Modernize HR mgmt Give VISNs/HCS more leeway to manage budgets, recruit, retain & relocate staff to serve Veterans. Includes robust partnerships with state & local communities to address challenges like veteran homelessness and suicide prevention – the top clinical priority.
VHA Priority Alignment	Building Trust	Creating a Learning organization	Modernize our Systems	Modernize our Systems

- The American Legion Dept. of Minnesota donated a total of \$158,000 to Minneapolis VA and \$207,000 to St. Cloud VA Health Care Systems.
- In Minnesota there is a gap in community based out-patient clinic, (CBOC) coverage that creates a challenge for many of our veterans accessing their VA Health Care provider. The areas of challenge in Minnesota start in the Twin Cities and ranging as far north as Duluth, MN. Because Minnesota being a large rural state and the location of the current CBOC's could lead to more veterans choosing to use the new "Veterans Community Care Program" in June 2019. Another factor in veterans choosing to use community care under the new programs rules is better access to specialty care services. Currently, only the Minneapolis VA Medical Center provides specialty care for the surrounding VA Health Care Systems like St. Cloud, Sioux Falls and Fargo. Could specialty care go into CBOCs to prevent veteran from using community program? This is being considered as VA is directing more funding into the CBOC's.
- All current provider agreements need to be converted to a Veterans Care Agreement (VCA) under the new Veterans Community Care Program by June 6, 2019.
- In FY19 we are completing a 2-year plan that added over 100 FTE to our community care operations and close to 50 FTE in Primary Care and Mental Health (Suicide Prevention) services.

2019 VISN 23 System Worth Saving Site Visit

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- VHA Pilot Project Atlas was discussed, which is a partnership between VSO's like The American Legion and VFW to utilize their Post as community access points to offer veterans a place to have their medical appointment virtually through VA provided tele health equipment. VISN 23 currently has 16 atlas sites. In Minnesota there are several county veterans service
- 2019 VA Healthcare budget 76.5 billion: 14.2 billion for community care. VISN
- The annual expenditures in VISN 23 for community care have increased 75% over the last three years to over \$600m annually.

VISN 23 FY19 Rural Health EWI's		
Program Name	Locations	FY19 Funding Request
Advanced Care Planning via Group Visits	Fargo, Des Moines	\$94,874
Clinical Pharmacy Specialist (CPS) Providers	St. Cloud, Chip Valley, Des Moines, Iowa City	\$1,072,391
Home Based Primary Care (HBPC)	Fargo, Omaha, Mason City, Knoxville, Ottumwa	\$3,469,844
National Telestroke Program	Fargo	\$145,061
PACT Health Advocate, Scribe, DMNE Model	Des Moines, Iowa City, Mason City	\$323,214
Rural Health Training Initiative	Grand Island	\$194,997
State Veterans Homes Telehealth Initiative	Jamestown, Minneapolis, Marshalltown	\$230,364
Technology-based Eye Care Services (TECS)	Omaha	\$553,006
Teledermatology Hub	Iowa City	\$201,000
TeleICU Hub	Minneapolis	\$1,143,684
Telemental Health Hub	Minneapolis	\$2,096,547
Tele-Primary Care Hub	Minneapolis	\$1,964,120
Telerehabilitation Hub & Spoke	Minneapolis, Sioux Falls, Mason City	\$696,233
Transitions Nurse Program	Minneapolis, Iowa City	\$326,879
Women Veteran Care Coordination and Management	Fargo, Fort Meade, St. Cloud, Grand Island, Des Moines, Iowa City	\$712,087
	TOTAL	\$13,224,301

- VISN 23 will have a national market assessment conducted in the next couple months. This could assist with enrollment, and an understanding to why veterans may be choosing care in the community rather than a VA facility.

2019 VISN 23 System Worth Saving Site Visit

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- Challenges: declining number of users with increased utilization of services, growth in community care program, coverage gaps with new access standards & rurality limited CBOC access and mobile phone service.
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VISN 23	Uniques	All Enrollees	Women Veterans	Outpatient Visits	Outpatient Encounters
FY15	333,977	442,681	17,310	3,671,477	5,063,608
FY16	333,049	442,153	17,904	3,697,213	5,069,297
FY17	331,318	443,541	18,391	3,715,811	5,069,843
FY18	330,231	442,527	18,972	3,857,186	5,203,925
	down	down	increasing	increasing	increasing

- Entry points to attract veterans to the VA Health Care System could be through audiology and optometry being such a high demand service. If VA makes these services readily available throughout their CBOC's, it could lead to increased enrollment.
- Podiatrist pay scale has recently improved which will assist with hiring challenges.
- The 16 billion-dollar Cerner Electronic Health Record (EHR) will complete implementation to all VHA facilities by 2028. VISN 23 will be the later side of implementation timeline. Dec 2018 VA terminated its \$624 million-dollar scheduling package with Epic and adopted Cerner's patient scheduling system. VISN 23 should be made available this scheduling package prior to full EHR implementation.

2019 VISN 23 System Worth Saving Site Visit

Meeting Minutes:

- Current wait time average for veterans in VISN 23:
 - New Patients: All HCS's
 - Primary Care < 24 days
 - Specialty Care < 23 days
 - Mental Health < 18 days
 - Established Patients: All HCS's
 - Primary Care < 9 days
 - Specialty Care < 9 days
 - Mental Health < 8 days

- Future Expansion Projects:
 - 1. Minneapolis VA**
 - Rochester CBOC, replacement & expansion, occupy July 2019
 - Hayward CBOC, replacement & expansion, occupy August 2019
 - Shakopee & Albert Lea CBOCs convert from contract to VA-staffed clinic, occupy 2020
 - Outpatient Mental Health expansion, under construction
 - Comprehensive Women's Clinic and Mammography addition, construction ~ 2021
 - New private patient Med/Surg bed ward, construction ~ 2020
 - Renovate Transitional Care Center to private beds for Women & Complex Rehabilitation Veterans, construction ~ 2022
 - Outpatient Mental Health Center, construction ~ 2022
 - Expand Spinal Cord Injury Disorder (SCI/D) Center for Long Term Care (LTC), construction ~ 2023

 - 2. St. Cloud VA**
 - Women's Clinic, construction starting Summer 2019
 - Renovation for RRTP, construction ~ 2021
 - Acute Diagnostic Imaging Center, construction ~ Fall 2019
 - Outpatient MH clinic expansion, construction Summer 2019
 - Adult Day Health Center, construction ~ Fall 2019
 - Optometry expansion, construction ~ 2020
 - Outpatient Primary Care Clinic, construction ~ 2021

2019 VISN 23 System Worth Saving Site Visit

Meeting Minutes Cont.

Future Expansion Projects

3. Fargo VA

- Urgent Care remodel & expansion, construction complete Fall 2019

4. Sioux Falls:

- Watertown CBOC replacement & expansion, occupy October 2019
- ED expansion with addition of Infusion/Oncology Center, construction complete Summer 2019
- Lab addition, construction ~ Fall 2019
- Outpatient Mental Health, construction ~ Fall 2019
- New Sterile Processing Service, construction ~ 2021

Chairman: *Bill Brockberg*

Secretary: *Jeremy Wolfsteller*