**[](https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=2wsERrrU&id=1C72819485E1915F5B642D32443F83F47B0F3AB5&thid=OIP.2wsERrrUnZPQ7ho_SGXP4QEsEs&q=the+american+legion+emblem&simid=608037744498051129&selectedIndex=0)Sioux Falls VA Health Care System**

**System Worth Saving Site Visit Report**

**FY 2022**

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**Date:** November 24, 2021

**Location:** Sioux Falls VA Health Care System (Virtual)

**Dept. of MN VA and Rehabilitation Committee Members:** Chairman Wilson Spence III, Secretary and DSO, Jeremy Wolfsteller, Dan Tengwall, Jim Finley, and Mike Rosecrans.

**American Legion VA&R Staff:** DSO Jeremy Wolfsteller and Benefits Coordinator Sarah Schlicht

The American Legion Department of Minnesota Department VA&R Committee conducts Site Visits throughout the year to locations that provide services to Minnesota’s veterans. These areas include Sioux Fall VA Health Care System, Fargo VA Healthcare System, St. Cloud VA Healthcare System, Minneapolis VA Healthcare System, St. Paul Regional Office, Fargo Regional Office, Minneapolis Veterans Home, Hastings Veterans Home, Luverne Veterans Home, Fergus Falls Veterans Home and Silver Bay Veterans Home. Additional Site Visits to CBOCs and Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans are conducted when the annual VA&R budget allows.

**Meeting Attendance:** Committee members present Chairman Wilson Spence, Jim Finley, Mike Rosecrans, Dan Tengwall, Jeremy Wolfsteller, and Dept. of MN Benefits Coordinator, Sarah Schlicht, and Sioux Falls VAHCS Director Lisa Simoneau.

**SFVAMC Overview**

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System includes a 98-bed medical center and five Community-Based Outpatient Clinics. It provides inpatient and outpatient care for Veterans in eastern South Dakota, southwestern Minnesota, and northwestern Iowa and sees approximately 450,000 outpatient visits per year. Services include primary and specialty medical care, mental health services, and rehabilitation. Affiliated with The Sanford School of Medicine of the University of South Dakota, it supports residency programs in internal medicine, psychiatry, and pathology, plus a fellowship in geriatrics. In addition, the facility also has a pharmacy residency. The Dakotas Regional Office is co-located with the medical center.

**Meeting Minutes**

* **Patient Wait Times:** Per Mission Actaccess standards, 20 days for primary care and mental health and 28 days for specialty care. Does your facility fall within these standards?
  + SFVAHCS
    - The average wait time for primary care is 17.4 days
    - The average wait time for specialty care is 19.8 days
    - The average wait time for mental health is 13.7 days
  + CBOCs
    - The average wait time for primary care is 20.2 days
    - The average wait time for specialty care is 32.8 days
    - The average wait time for mental health is 14.7 days
  + Medical Services with longer wait times:
    - Optometry, Oncology, Endocrinology, and Audiology have the longest wait times.
    - Anytime the wait is longer than these guidelines, veterans are eligible for care in the community although the community wait times may be longer.
* **Panel Sizes:** VHA patient-centered management module (PCMM) standard via Directive 1406 for primary care range 1,000-1,400. Recommended baseline for FTE Physician PACT is 1200. For mid-level FTE PA or NP, recommended range is 800-900. Panel sizes refer to the assigned veterans a PCP has per year.
  + SFVAHCS
    - FTE Medical Doctors are currently at 92.68% capacity
    - FTE Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants are currently at 97.89% capacity.
  + CBOCs
    - FTE Medical Doctors are currently at 88.3% capacity
    - FTE Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants are currently at 98.97% capacity.
* **Facility Demographics:**
* SFVAHCS offers extensive comprehensive clinical health care through a wide range of services including audiology, speech pathology, chronic disease management, extended care & rehabilitation, Home Based Primary Care, mental health, MST counseling, nutrition, oncology, pharmacy, primary care, prosthetics, social work, specialty care, women’s health program, low vision clinic, whole health, medical foster home program, caregiver support, clinical video telehealth, neurology, orthopedics, pulmonary medicine, endoscopy, urology, general surgery, podiatry, dermatology, substance abuse, emergency care, optometry and ophthalmology, nephrology, CWT, orthopedic surgery, pain management, GI and cardiology.
* SFVAHCS authorized bed capacity is 98 with 54 currently occupied
* The Community Living Center is currently restricted to accepting LTC patients from the community. CLC is adding a 10-bed hospice cottage unit in FY23.
* **Enrollment:**
* The total number of veterans in SFVAHCS is 59,124 although not all may be eligible for enrollment.
* SFVAHCS has 34,084 enrolled veterans
* Men: 32,084
* Women: 2,000
* Total unique veterans are 27,812 (been seen at least once, counted once)
* Counties included in the SFVAHCS catchment area include:
  + - Sioux Falls: Brown, Edmunds, Spink, Marshall, Fault, McPherson, Brookings, Union, Clay, Kingsbury, Sanborn, Jerauld, Hand, Buffalo, Beadle, Miner, McCook, Hanson, Hutchinson, Aurora, Brule, and Davison.
    - Iowa: Plymouth, Woodbury, Cherokee, and Ida.
    - Minnesota: Lincoln, Lyon, and Pipestone
    - Nebraska: Dakota and Dixon.
* **Funding Allocations for the last two fiscal years: (***Internal vs Community Care)*
  + Internal:
    - FY2020Operating Expenses were $202,711,427
      * Personnel: $119,951,138
      * Services: $17,101,659
      * Supplies & Equipment: $54,582,611
      * Other: $11,076,019
    - Operating Expenses FY2021 $217,333,758
      * Personnel: $123,503,222
      * Services: $21,945,676
      * Supplies & Equipment: $55,394,794
      * Other: $16,490,066
  + Community Care:
    - FY2020 Community Care Program Expenses were $55,316,462
      * For Preauthorized Care per (MISSION ACT)Primary Care, specialty care, community nursing home program, homemaker health care services expenses were $53,555,636
      * For Unauthorized and Authorized Emergency Care per (MISSION ACT)38CFR 17.2040 CC, USC 1725 and USC 1728 expenses were $1,760,826
    - Community Care Program Expenses FY2021 $66,368,801
      * For Preauthorized Care per (MISSION ACT)Primary Care, specialty care, community nursing home program, homemaker health care services expenses were $65,139,060
      * For Unauthorized and Authorized Emergency Care per (MISSION ACT)38CFR 17.2040 CC, USC 1725 and USC 1728 expenses were $1,229,741
* **Staff Vacancies:** 
  + Currently, there are 49 clinical vacant positions, 29 clinical support positions, and 20 housekeeping positions.
  + SFVAHCS is in a competitive market for hire which has a direct impact on their staffing shortages.
  + Hired a new Experience Officer that will oversee the climate amongst enrolled veterans and VA employees.
* **Mental Health Program:**
  + SFVAHCS operates a model called Neighbors which incorporates mental health providers embedded with primary care for quick mental health intakes.
  + Currently, there is 8 FTE Psychologist and 5 Psychiatrist
  + Modalities offered within the HCS are: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT) Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) Prolonged Exposure (PE) Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
* **Women Veteran Program:**
  + SFVAHCS does not have a separate women’s clinic, but they do have a designated team of 4 Primary Care Providers trained on gender-specific healthcare and 2 Gynecologists.
  + 80% of the women enrolled are using the women’s program team.
  + The Aberdeen and Watertown CBOCs have one designated women’s health PCPs at each location. Sioux City and Spirit Lake CBOCs each have two designated women’s health PCP’s
  + Gender-specific services offered are mammograms, Pap, preconception counseling, birth control, menopause care, gynecology/surgery, mental health.
* **Outreach Events:**
  + SFVAHCShosted 12 vaccine clinics located throughout SD, MN, and Iowa.
* **Facility Remodeling Projects:**
  + Completed in FY21
    - Floor in surgery
    - Administrative offices
    - VBA building
    - Halls and Walls
    - Laundry Building
    - MRI machine replacement
    - New Laboratory space on 2nd floor
  + Current Projects
    - Outpatient Mental Health BLDG
    - Pre-op and same-day surgery
    - Auditorium
    - Prosthetics space
    - Hospice cottage

**Committee Chairman:***Wilson Spence*

**Committee Secretary and MN DSO:***Jeremy Wolfsteller*