



Keeping You Connected

VA Mobile Blue Button

Veterans who receive VA health care have a new, on-the-go way to access their health information in VA's Electronic Health Record (EHR).

With a smartphone, tablet or other internet-enabled device, the Mobile Blue Button app allows Veterans to monitor their health, share data with family or caregivers, and coordinate with their health care teams.

To use the Mobile Blue Button App, Veterans enrolled in VA health care need to have a My HealthVet Premium Account, DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) or ID.me credential.

Please visit the VA Mobile website at <https://mobile.va.gov/> for more information on this app and many others.

(Continued on Page 3)

VA Mobile Blue Button App Features



- View your VA medical information
- View current list of your diagnosis, medication, allergies and vitals
- Review contact information that VA currently has for you
- View and search medical information based upon a date range up to 6 years (lab reports)
- Print or share information with others

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

If you are a regular reader of VISN 4’s publications or website, you are already familiar with our key areas of focus: access to care, trust in VA care, and expanding health care in the community for Veterans. As you will read on pages 4 and 5 of this issue, we are improving in all three areas, but we still have a lot of work to do to achieve our goals.

VISN 4 staff continually strive to ensure that all Veterans who receive care in our network receive the kind of care they need when and where they need and want it. Our mission is to ensure that each experience a Veteran has at any of our facilities or clinics is characterized by compassion and outstanding care and service. As you will see in our feature story, Connected Care is one major initiative in VISN 4 to improve Veterans’ access to care.

I am proud to be a part of VISN 4’s team of dedicated professionals, working together to provide Veterans in our region with a health care network that offers reliable access and a satisfying care experience no matter how or where the care is provided.

On behalf of all VISN 4 employees, I thank all Veterans and their families in VISN 4 for entrusting us to fulfill your health care needs. I thank our service partners for your continued support of our network. And I thank all of our network’s employees for your skill and dedication in caring for America’s heroes.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Adelman, M.D.
Network Director



VA Healthcare-VISN 4 Leadership Team

Michael D. Adelman, M.D.
Network Director
Since January 2016

Charles R. Thilges
Deputy Network Director
Since January 2018

Timothy Burke, M.D.
Chief Medical Officer
Since March 2016

Beth Howard
Chief Financial Officer
Since April 2018

Moira M. Hughes, FACHE
Quality Management Officer
Since April 2014

David E. Cowgill
Communications Manager
Since January 2007

Jo Petro
Executive Assistant
Since January 2018



VA Healthcare-VISN 4 Fact Sheet

VA Healthcare-VISN 4 is a network of 9 VA medical centers, 44 outpatient clinics, 1 mobile clinic, and 17 vet centers.

Last fiscal year, VISN 4 served 304,608 Veterans, including 25,460 women Veterans, from across the Nation, primarily from Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey and Ohio.

With an operating budget of more than \$2.4 billion and a staff of 13,538, VISN 4 is working hard to transform toward personalized, proactive, patient-driven health care.

Get all the latest facts including a complete listing of all sites of care. Download the VISN 4 Fact Sheet at www.visn4.va.gov/VISN4/news/fact-sheet.asp.

(Continued from Page 1)

VEText

Text Message Appointment Reminders

VA's new automated text message system, VEText, is now available for Veterans enrolled at all VA medical centers in VISN 4.

Sometimes it may be difficult to cancel an appointment or it is hard to keep track of the times. More than 9 million health care appointments go missed for one reason or another. VEText will send timely text message alerts of upcoming VA appointments, and Veterans have the ability to confirm or cancel the appointment. By canceling appointments through VEText, these appointment times can then be offered to other Veterans.



Veterans do not need to do anything to use VEText. Text message appointment reminders will be automatic. Veterans who do not want to receive the text reminders can respond by texting the word STOP.

VEText does not show any personal information. It is just a simple reminder of an appointment and offers Veterans a tool to manage their appointments. VEText does not replace current automated phone calls reminding Veterans of their upcoming appointments. This new system serves as an additional reminder method.



VA Medical Images and Reports

VA is dedicated to giving Veterans increased access to their data. To help achieve this goal, My HealthVet recently released a new feature called VA Medical Images and Reports.

With this feature, Veterans with a premium My HealthVet account can view, download, and print many of their medical images and reports online for radiology studies such as x-rays, mammograms, CT scans and MRIs. Veterans can then share these images and reports with their providers, including non-VA providers.

The VA Medical Images and Reports feature is a new way to access your information online, instead of travelling to a VA facility to pick up copies of images and reports in-person.

For more information on the VA Medical Images and Reports feature or to register for a My HealthVet premium account, please contact your local VA medical center My HealthVet Coordinator.



"I can't make my appointment..."

We understand in life many things happen at once and you may not be able to keep your VA appointment. If that happens, we ask you to let us know so we can offer that appointment time to another Veteran.

Any one of the methods below can be used to cancel an appointment.

- VA online scheduling through My HealthVet at www.myhealth.va.gov
- VEText text message reminder system
- Clinic contact telephone number on your appointment letter

If you have a question about your appointments, please feel free to contact your local VA medical center.



Care in the Community

All VISN 4 medical centers continue to work to expand provider agreements in their local communities in order to improve access to health care for Veterans. We've partnered with more than 100 new providers this fiscal year.

During fiscal year 2018 to date, VISN 4 staff coordinated more than 43,000 consults in the community. Our goal is to provide the best care possible by combining what VA does the best and what the private sector does the best.

Provider Agreements	
October 2016	789
December 2017	1,617
April 2018	1,743

Community Consults	
Fiscal Year 2016	64,013
Fiscal Year 2017	70,193
Fiscal Year 2018*	43,806

* through April 30, 2018



Earning Your Trust

In 2016, VA's Veterans Experience Office lead a nationwide initiative to improve our customer experiences. The goal is to foster the delivery of effective and easy customer experiences in which Veterans feel valued. To achieve this goal, they developed a customer survey using the trust questions listed below.

VA believes that trust is built one interaction at a time, and trust is earned by knowing our Veterans and showing them that we care; by understanding and anticipating their needs; by providing fair benefits and timely services; by being there when they need us; and by keeping our promises.

Today, we continue to monitor Veterans' responses to questions related to effectiveness, ease, emotion, and trust on VA surveys. Our goal is to have 90% of Veterans respond that they agree or strongly agree with these four statements. We still have a lot of work to do, especially with our specialty care patients.

Statement for Response	Inpatients				Outpatients				Specialty Care Outpatients			
	FY16	FY17	FY18*	AVG	FY16	FY17	FY18*	AVG	FY16	FY17	FY18*	AVG
EFFECTIVENESS: "I got the service I needed."	88.1	87.8	89.0	88.2	85.9	86.0	88.1	82.3	84.2	84.8	85.8	82.2
EASE: "It was easy to get the service I needed."	83.4	83.5	82.1	82.5	79.1	80.2	81.0	73.9	75.8	77.9	77.8	73.1
EMOTION: "I felt like a valued customer."	84.3	84.0	86.6	84.2	80.5	81.7	82.0	76.2	79.2	79.3	79.7	76.5
TRUST: "I trust VA to fulfill our country's commitment to Veterans."	83.6	84.0	87.7	84.1	75.3	77.7	81.7	73.5	73.9	76.2	76.5	73.8

* compared to VA national average through May 2, 2018

Improving Access

So far in fiscal year 2018, more than 97% of appointments in VISN 4 were completed within 30 days of the Veteran's preferred date. Our facilities

have conducted more than 1.3 million appointments already this year, and the average wait time has been 3.9 days.

Clinics	Number of Appointments	Wait Time <30 days (#)	Wait Time <30 days (%)	Average Wait (days)
All Clinics	1,357,679	1,298,949	97.1%	3.9
Mental Health	197,460	191,410	98.5%	2.7
Primary Care	308,247	303,307	98.4%	3.7
Specialty Care	524,267	482,162	94.9%	5.8

"By using the VA's Tele dermatology program, I was able to get a diagnosis and treatment in less than 24 hours compared to trying to get an appointment with a civilian dermatologist who could not see me for 2 weeks."

~ Norman B., U.S. Army Veteran



Emergency Medical Care for Veterans

During a medical emergency, Veterans should immediately seek care at the nearest medical facility.

A medical emergency is an injury, illness or symptom so severe that without immediate treatment, you believe your life or health is in danger. If you believe your life or health is in danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department (ED) right away.

Veterans do not need to check with VA before calling for an ambulance or going to an ED. During a medical emergency, VA encourages all Veterans to seek immediate medical attention without delay. A claim for emergency care will never be denied based solely on VA not receiving notification prior to seeking care.

It is, however, important to promptly notify VA after receiving emergency care at a community ED. Notification should be made within 72 hours of admission to a community medical facility.

Visit www.va.gov/communitycare for more information about emergency care from community providers.

Average Wait Times at VISN 4 Facilities

The table below shows how many days new or returning patients waited for a primary care or mental health care appointment in the last 30 days as of April 23. Coatesville, Philadelphia, and Wilmington are all considered high Medicaid-accepting communities.

The data on the table was obtained from VA's access and quality website

located at www.accesstocare.va.gov. The website also shows the wait times for each outpatient clinic and specialty care clinics (where available), and it includes Veteran satisfaction data and some comparisons with other local hospitals. This information is not offered by any other major national hospital organization in the country.

VISN 4 Facility	Primary Care		Mental Health Care	
	New	Returning	New	Returning
ALTOONA	15	4	8	2
BUTLER	14	1	9	1
COATESVILLE	12 ⁽¹⁾	2	6	4
ERIE	24	8	7	1
LEBANON	13	4	13	2
PHILADELPHIA	19 ⁽²⁾	14	11	1
PITTSBURGH - UNIVERSITY DRIVE	28	8	6	2
PITTSBURGH - H.J. HEINZ	13	8	8	2
WILKES-BARRE	19	2	13	6
WILMINGTON	22 ⁽²⁾	3	9	2

⁽¹⁾ Coatesville's wait time of 12 days is less than the community's average wait time of 17 days.

⁽²⁾ Philadelphia's and Wilmington's wait times are above the same community average.

Above data routinely updated and obtained from www.accesstocare.va.gov.

AROUND the NETWORK

New Facility Leadership

ALTOONA

Sigrid Andrew, MS
Medical Center Director
Appointed: October 1, 2017



Sigrid began her VA career in 1991. Prior to her appointment as medical center director, she served as the associate director for operations at the Hampton VA Medical Center. Throughout her VA career she has held various positions in nursing and health care management.

Q: Why did you decide to dedicate your career to serving Veterans?

A: When I started at VA, I worked many night shifts. This provided me the opportunity to talk very personally to our Veterans about their experiences during various conflicts. These Veterans were proud to have served and thankful for the care they were receiving from VA. I was captivated by them and their service, so I stayed. Now, 27 years later when I talk to Veterans, I feel an empathy I would not otherwise know.

Derek Coughenour
Associate Director
Appointed: April 2, 2018



Derek previously served as the director of rehabilitation services at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. He also graduated from the Leadership Veterans Affairs Program for Executives in 2016.

Q: What one thing do you wish people knew about your job?

A: VA is a leader in the medical community and plays a critical role in informing American medicine. VA is forward-looking and identifies health trends unfamiliar to the public.

Dr. Richard Samuel Magee
Interim Chief of Staff
Appointed: April 11, 2018



Dr. Magee was born and raised in Altoona. He graduated from Temple Medical School in 1976 and completed his surgical residency at Geisinger Medical Center. Dr. Magee practiced surgery at UPMC Altoona for 35 years.

Q: What do you enjoy most about working with Veterans?

A: I enjoy talking with them about their life experiences. I am gratified about how much they appreciate the care they get at VA.

LEBANON

Jeffrey A. Beiler
Associate Director
Appointed: November 12, 2017



Jeffrey returned to VA in 2017 from Horsham Clinic where he was chief financial officer. From 2015-2016, he served as the chief financial officer in VHA's Chief Business Office for Purchased Care. He was also associate director at Philadelphia VA Medical Center from 2011-2015 and at Clarksburg VA Medical Center in West Virginia from 2009-2011.

Q: Why do you love your job?

A: My grandfather was a World War II Veteran and I can't think of a more noble mission than helping men and women who have served our country and made such great sacrifices. It's not about the bottom line or generating more revenue - we have the privilege of investing in our Veterans by providing high quality health care which they have earned and deserve.

Stuart A. Roop, MD, FCCP
Chief of Staff
Appointed: April 29, 2018



Dr. Roop previously served as interim chief of staff and deputy director for the National Capital Region Medical Directorate from 2016-2017. He also served as the director for medical services at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center from 2013 to 2016. He has 30 years of service in the U.S. Army and completed two combat tours of duty in Iraq with the 31st Combat Support Hospital (2004) and the 86th Combat Support Hospital (2010).

Q: Why did you decide to dedicate your career to serving Veterans?

A: As a recent retiree from the Army Medical Department, I am delighted to continue caring for our Veterans by joining the team at the Lebanon VA Medical Center. As a Veteran myself, I am honored to help provide the highest quality care to our American Heroes who have bravely served our nation.

BUTLER

Alan Petrazzi
Interim Director
Appointed: May 14, 2018



Alan is the program manager for primary care at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System and has served an extended detail as acting associate director at VA Pittsburgh overseeing human resources, financial management, health administration, logistics and voluntary service.

Q: Why did you decide to dedicate your career to serving Veterans?

A: I have several family members who are/were in the military including a great uncle who was killed in action. My biggest regret is not serving our country. The second best option is to honor Veterans by ensuring we exceed their expectations in all we do.

Dr. Kristen Veraldi, MD, PhD
Interim Chief of Staff
Appointed: March 26, 2018



Dr. Veraldi is currently a faculty member in the Division of Pulmonary, Allergy and Critical Care Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh and VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. Since 2016, she has served as the assistant vice president for operations for the Medicine Service Line at VA Pittsburgh.

Q: Why do you love your job?

A: My father is an Air Force Veteran. While it is impossible for us to ever truly “pay back” our parents or our Veterans for their service to our country, it is a privilege and an honor to work alongside the dedicated men and women of VA to provide outstanding care while continually striving to improve our care delivery systems.

PHILADELPHIA

Nancy Hofstetter
Interim Associate Director of Finance and Operations
Appointed: April 16, 2018



Nancy has been with VA since October 2013, starting as a labor relations specialist for the VBA Philadelphia Regional Office and then moved to the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center in June 2014 where she also served as an employee/labor relations specialist and human resources officer.

Q: Why did you choose to work for the VA?

A: My Dad proudly served in the Army as a physician and maintained his position with the Army Reserves while in private practice. After retiring from private practice, he became the chief of cardiology at the Lyons VA Medical Center. When I was fortunate enough to obtain my first position in VBA and let my Dad know, he told me it was the best decision I had ever made. He was right and I have never regretted it.

WILMINGTON

Kimberly Butler
Associate Director of Operations
Appointed: December 10, 2017



Previously Kim was the executive assistant to the network director in VISN 4 since 2012. She joined VA as a presidential management fellow in 2010, and in 2013, she completed a detail in the Veterans Health Administration’s Office of the Chief of Staff. She has also served as the acting assistant director at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center in Chicago and the acting deputy network director for VISN 4.

Q: Why do you love your job?

A: I am dedicated to public service and truly enjoy the “behind the scenes” operations of our hospital.

Kathleen Craige, MSN, RN-BC, NEA-BC, VHA-CM
Associate Director Patient Care Services
Appointed: May 14, 2018



Kathleen has 33 years of VA experience in a variety of roles including staff nurse, nurse manager, community-based outpatient clinic director, system redesign coordinator and, most recently, associate chief nurse for Ambulatory and Specialty Care at the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz Medical Center in Philadelphia, Pa.

Q: Why did you decide to dedicate your career to serving Veterans?

A: The Veterans that I have encountered through the years have had a lasting effect on my life on both a personal and professional level. I am honored to continue to carry out the VA mission to care for those who have served our country.

George L. Tzanis, MD
Interim Chief of Staff
Appointed: March 11, 2018



Dr. Tzanis has been a staff physician and chief of ambulatory care at the Wilmington VA Medical Center and was the associate director of the Jefferson Center for Vascular Disease at the Thomas Jefferson University Hospital. Currently he is the associate chief of staff for primary care at the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center in Philadelphia, the VISN 4 lead for primary care and is a clinical faculty member of the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania

Q: What do you most enjoy about working with Veterans?

A: I enjoy providing exceptional healthcare to America’s Veterans, ensuring they get the right care, at the right time, in the right place.

NEW VISN 4 LEADERSHIP & PROGRAM MANAGERS

Charles (Chuck) R. Thilges Deputy Network Director Appointed: January 29, 2018

Chuck has been with VISN 4 since November 2005 and he previously served as the VISN 4 chief financial officer. Chuck is 20-year U.S. Air Force Veteran, serving 10 years in financial management and 10 years as a fire fighter.



(Jo Petro continued)

Q: Why did you decide to dedicate your career to serving Veterans?

A: I had the good fortune to work in VA facilities for almost 30 years. Working in a VA facility is different than any other health care organization. When you walk through the doors of a VA, you are reminded of the sacrifices endured by so many. It is my honor to serve those who have served and I can't imagine working anywhere else.

Adam Bluth Connected Care Program Manager Appointed: January 19, 2018

Adam previously worked for the VHA Office of Rural Health as a program analyst where he managed the telehealth program portfolio, coordinated project performance reporting, and collaborated with Indian Health Service as the project lead for the VA-IHS Memorandum of Understanding.



Q: Why did you decide to dedicate your career to serving Veterans?

A: My Grandfather was a Marine Corps Colonel wounded on Iwo Jima. I always had tremendous respect for him and the military. I am drawn to organizations with a service-oriented mission.

Beth Ann Howard Chief Financial Officer Appointed: April 1, 2018

Beth has been with VA for 30 years and recently served as chief resource manager at Lebanon VA Medical Center since 2015. Previously, she served as CFO at VA Northern Indiana Health Care System, budget analyst for VISN 4 and VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, and chief of accounting at VA Maryland Health Care System and Coatesville VA Medical Center.



Natalie Bulger Compliance Officer Appointed: March 4, 2018

Ms. Bulger was previously the director of compliance at The Children's Institute of Pittsburgh.



Q: Why did you decide to dedicate your career to serving Veterans?

A: I grew up with a great appreciation for those who have served our country including my father and both grandfathers – one who was a World War II battalion surgeon. The combination of military service and health care has been a constant throughout my life and I'm thrilled to have found a home here at VA where I can make my own contribution to the organization and those it serves.

Q: What one thing do you wish people knew about your job?

A: As the CFO of VISN 4 I also work with various support staff to enable providers to give the best care for our Nation's Veterans. While I am not on the front line, I am definitely behind the scenes ensuring programs operate, shift resources to meet demands and to mentor and empower financial staff.

Jo Petro Executive Assistant to the Network Director Appointed: January 22, 2018

Jo Petro previously served as the executive assistant to the director of VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System since June 2010. Prior to this position, she was the business manager for the Clinical Support Service Line at VA Pittsburgh.



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VA

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We'd Like to Hear from You

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