

# VA Healthcare—VISN 4 2017 Annual Report

★ Access ★ Quality ★ Trust ★ Engagement ★



**VA**



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration  
VA Healthcare – VISN 4

[www.visn4.va.gov](http://www.visn4.va.gov)

# MESSAGE FROM THE VISN 4 LEADERSHIP TEAM

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

It is our privilege to welcome you to VISN 4's 2017 annual report. We are honored to serve our nation's Veterans and the outstanding staff across VISN 4. In this report, you can read about some of the work our facilities have been doing to provide excellent care for Veterans, and about a few of our many accomplishments during the past year.

Our goal is to assist and support VISN 4 facilities in the continued improvement of quality, access, satisfaction, and efficiency of the care we provide Veterans. In fiscal year 2017, our leadership team visited each of our nine medical centers, and many of our 44 outpatient clinics. We are deeply appreciative of what every network employee has done for Veterans — and, especially, what every Veteran has done for our country.

In 2017, we focused on five priorities: Greater Choice for Veterans, Modernize our Systems, Focus Resources More Efficiently, Improve Timeliness of Services, and Suicide Prevention. In working to achieve these priorities, our staff provided Veterans safe, high-quality, personalized, and timely care wherever they receive the services they have earned and deserve.

We want to thank our Veteran patients and their families for choosing VISN 4 to be their health care provider. In the coming year, we look forward to providing you world-class health care through engaged, collaborative teams in an integrated environment that supports learning, discovery, and continuous improvement. We thank our service partners for your continued support of our network. And we thank all of our network's employees as well as dedicated volunteers for your skill and dedication in caring for America's heroes.

Sincerely,

VISN 4 Leadership Team

## Our Top Five Priorities



**Greater Choice  
for Veterans**



**Modernize  
Our Systems**



**Focus Resources  
More Efficiently**



**Improve  
Timeliness  
of Services**



**Suicide  
Prevention**

**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

**Vacant**

Chief Financial Officer

**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

# WHO WE SERVE

**304,608  
Veterans**

**5%**

World War II

**9%**

Korean War

**23%**

Persian Gulf War

**6%**

Post-Korean War

**8%**

Operations Enduring Freedom,  
Iraqi Freedom, and New Dawn

**42%**

Vietnam Era

**3%**

Other  
(Active Duty, Allied Veterans,  
Merchant Marine, Non-Veteran,  
Desert Shield, Spanish-American,  
World War I, Pre-Korean, Unknown)

Post-Vietnam Era

**11%**



**278,601**  
Men



**25,460**  
Women

**92%**

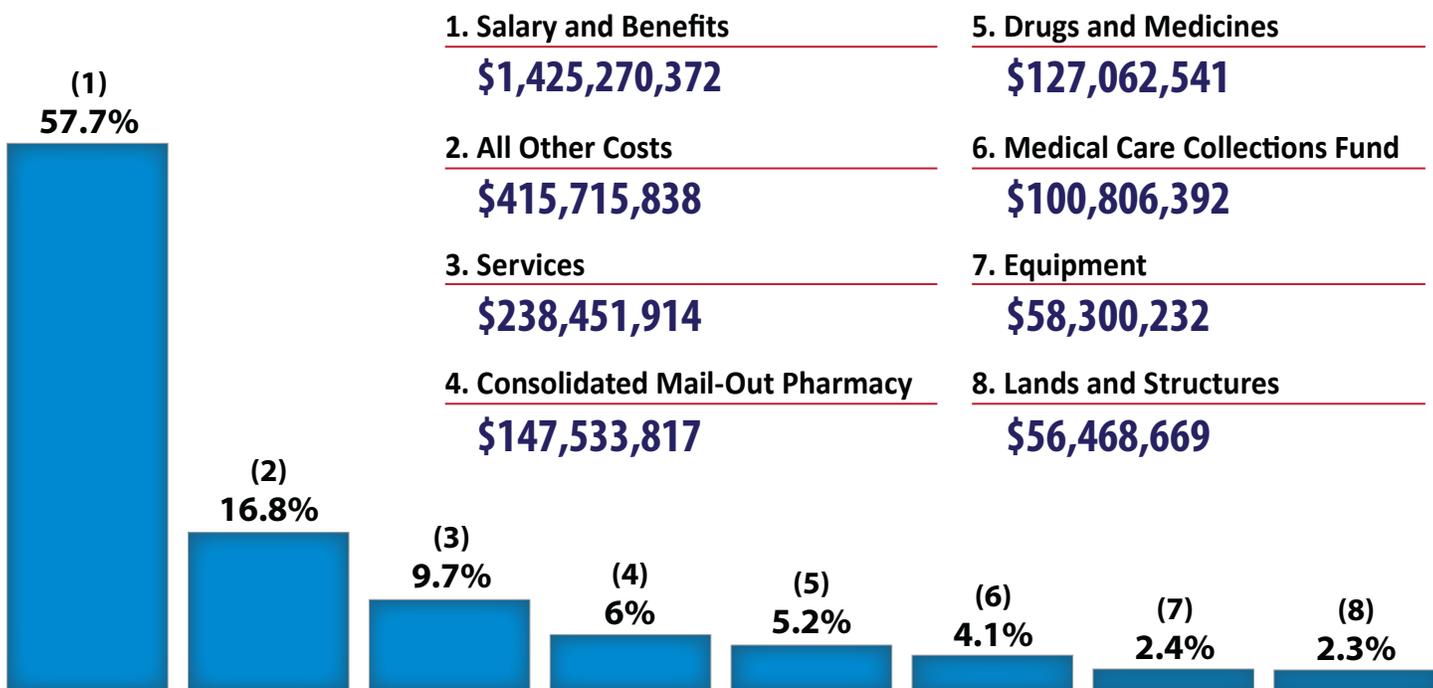
**8%**

	<25	25-34	35-44	45-44	55-64	65-74	75-84	85+
<b>By Age</b>	2,262	20,508	20,264	30,680	47,976	99,137	47,823	35,411
	0.7%	6.7%	6.7%	10.1%	15.8%	32.6%	15.7%	11.6%



# OPERATING STATISTICS

**\$2,468,803,927**  
Total Operating Budget



◀ A physician demonstrates the two-way real-time video link between an intensive care room at the Wilmington VAMC and ICU specialists at the Cincinnati VA Medical Center.

**\$4,466,658.73**  
Total Value of Gifts & Donations

**Monetary Donations**

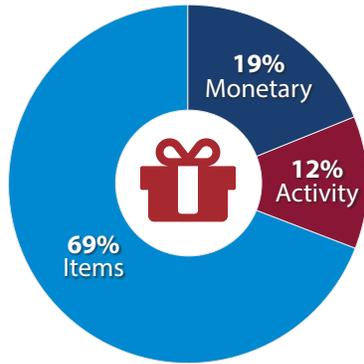
**\$846,551.06**

**Activity Donations**

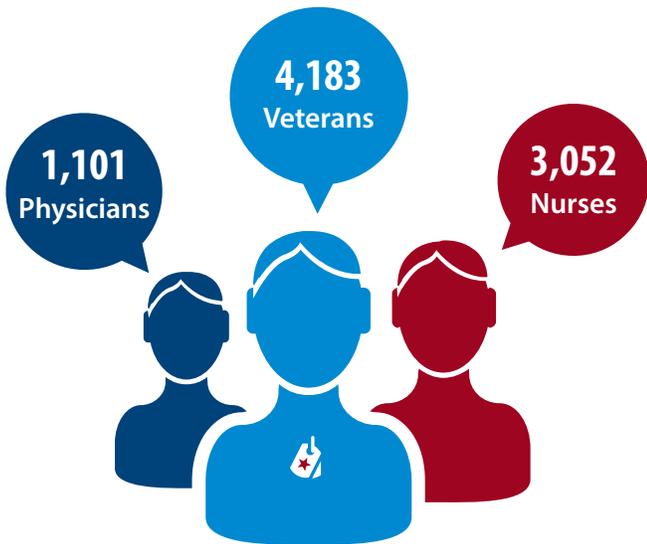
**\$515,128.66**

**Item Donations**

**\$3,104,979.01**



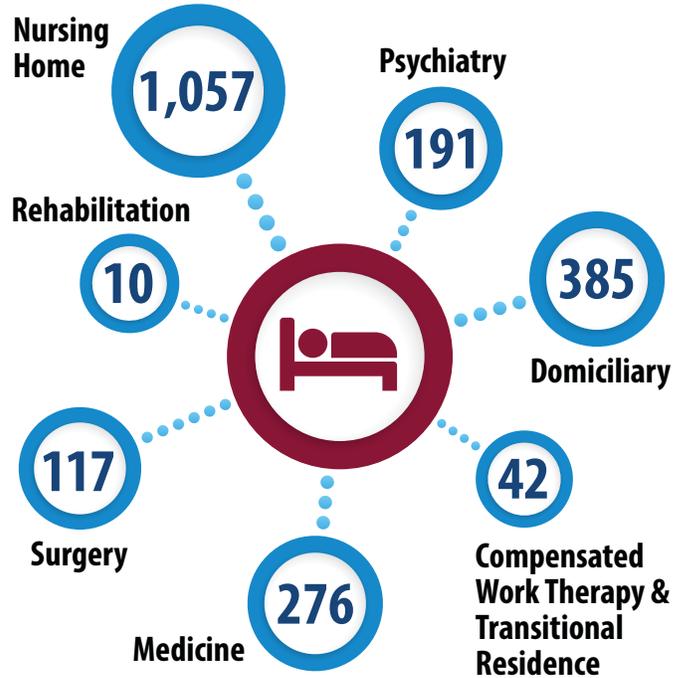
**13,538**  
Total Number of Employees



**465,263**  
Total Volunteer Hours



**2,078**  
Total Operating Beds



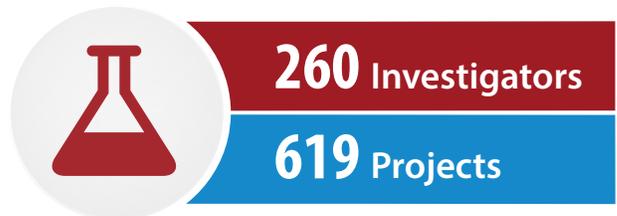
**32,083**  
Inpatient Admissions

**3,389,325**  
Outpatient Visits

**6,295,972**  
Prescriptions Filled

**20,530**  
Surgical Procedures

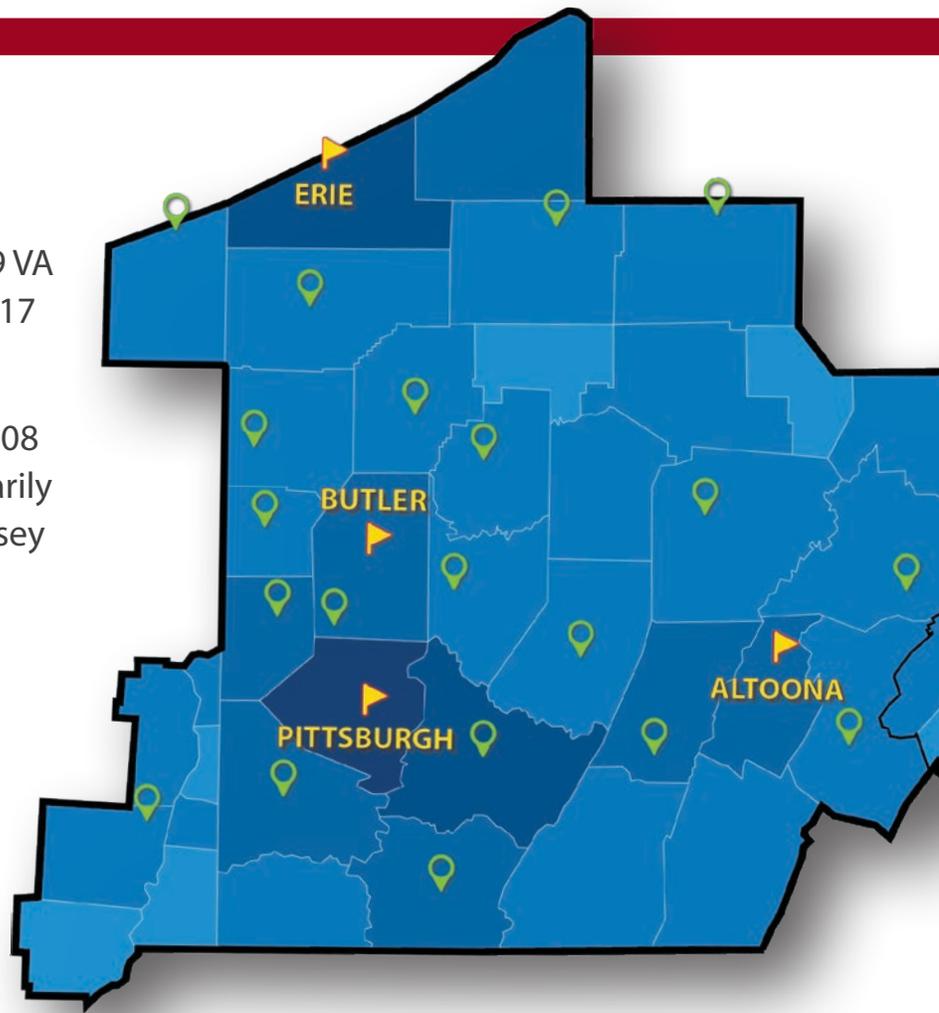
**\$37,855,812**  
Total Research Funding



# AROUND VISN 4

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

In fiscal year 2017, VISN 4 served 304,608 Veterans from across the nation, primarily from Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey and Ohio.



## WESTERN MARKET

### Altoona, PA

James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center  
2907 Pleasant Valley Blvd.  
Altoona, PA 16602  
877-626-2500  
www.altoona.va.gov  
www.facebook.com/VAAaltoona  
twitter.com/VAAaltoona

Total Veterans Served	26,457
Female Veterans Served	1,244
Operating Budget	\$112,400,000
Admissions	222
Outpatient Visits	236,550
Employees	788

Number of Veteran Enrollees by County  
End of Year FY 2017



VA Medical Center (yellow triangle icon)    Outpatient Clinic (green location pin icon)

### Butler, PA

VA Butler Healthcare  
353 North Duffy Road  
Butler, PA 16001  
800-362-8262  
www.butler.va.gov  
www.facebook.com/VAButlerPA  
twitter.com/VAButlerPA

Total Veterans Served	22,504
Female Veterans Served	1,103
Operating Budget	\$93,226,006
Admissions	454
Outpatient Visits	198,854
Employees	682

### Erie, PA

Erie VA Medical Center  
135 East 38th Street Blvd.  
Erie, PA 16504  
800-274-8387  
www.erie.va.gov  
www.facebook.com/VAMCErie  
twitter.com/ErieVAMC

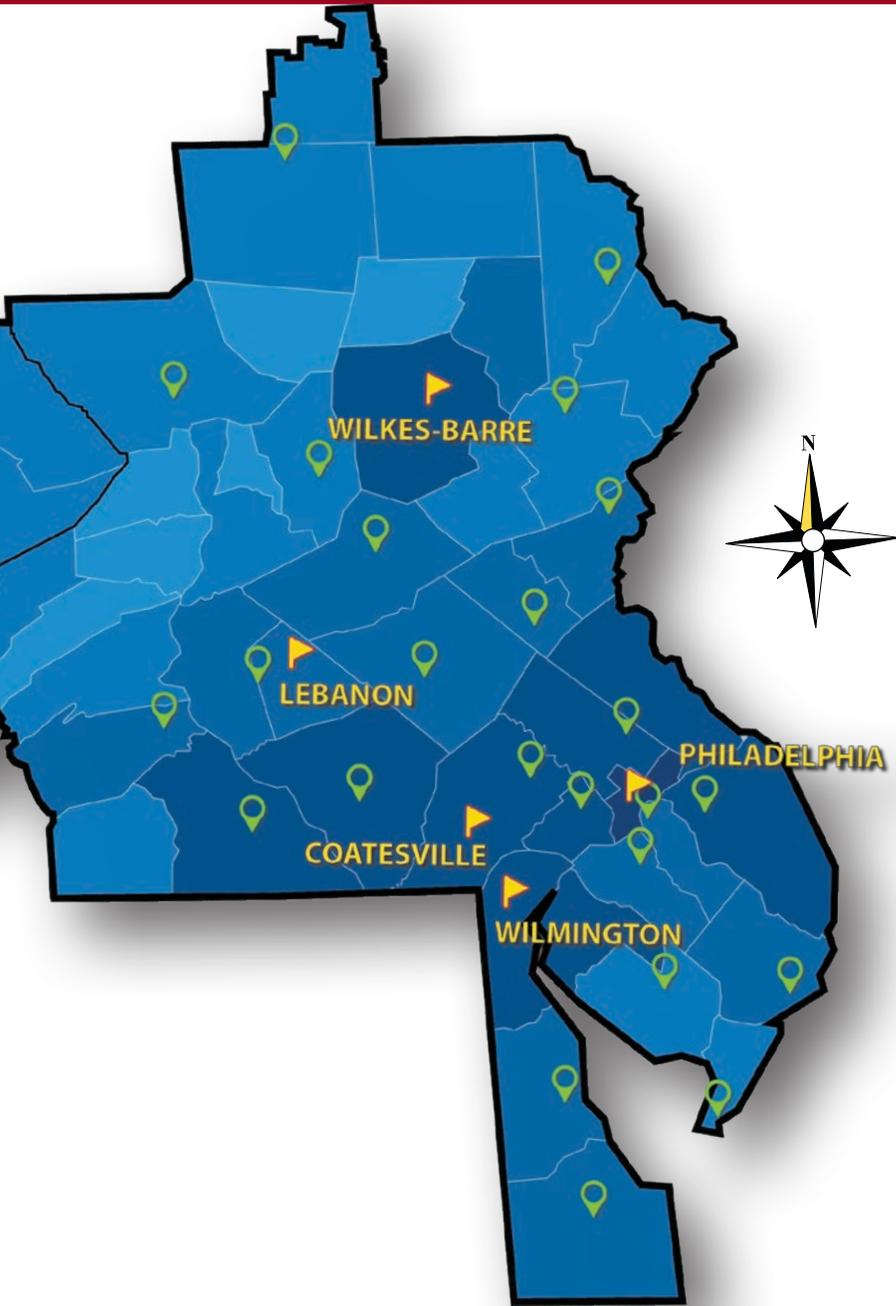
Total Veterans Served	21,666
Female Veterans Served	1,167
Operating Budget	\$140,000,000
Admissions	509
Outpatient Visits	261,243
Employees	768

### Pittsburgh, PA

VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System  
University Drive  
Pittsburgh, PA 15240  
866-482-7488  
www.pittsburgh.va.gov  
www.facebook.com/VAPHSPittsburgh  
twitter.com/VAPittsburgh

Total Veterans Served	73,908
Female Veterans Served	6,302
Operating Budget	\$644,430,000
Admissions	13,099
Outpatient Visits	713,019
Employees	3,744

## 📍 EASTERN MARKET



### Lebanon, PA

Lebanon VA Medical Center  
 1700 South Lincoln Avenue  
 Lebanon, PA 17042  
 📞 800-409-8771  
 🌐 [www.lebanon.va.gov](http://www.lebanon.va.gov)  
 📘 [www.facebook.com/VALebanon](https://www.facebook.com/VALebanon)  
 🐦 [twitter.com/VALebanon](https://twitter.com/VALebanon)

🇺🇸 Total Veterans Served	44,226
♀ Female Veterans Served	2,881
💰 Operating Budget	\$279,463,000
🏠 Admissions	3,175
🏥 Outpatient Visits	484,721
👤 Employees	1,635

### Philadelphia, PA

Corporal Michael J. Crescenz  
 VA Medical Center  
 3900 Woodland Avenue  
 Philadelphia, PA 19104  
 📞 800-949-1001  
 🌐 [www.philadelphia.va.gov](http://www.philadelphia.va.gov)  
 📘 [www.facebook.com/PhiladelphiaVAMC](https://www.facebook.com/PhiladelphiaVAMC)  
 🐦 [twitter.com/VAPhiladelphia](https://twitter.com/VAPhiladelphia)

🇺🇸 Total Veterans Served	58,370
♀ Female Veterans Served	5,704
💰 Operating Budget	\$540,164,000
🏠 Admissions	7,413
🏥 Outpatient Visits	526,641
👤 Employees	2,757

### Wilmington, DE

Wilmington VA Medical Center  
 1601 Kirkwood Highway  
 Wilmington, DE 19805  
 📞 800-461-8262  
 🌐 [www.wilmington.va.gov](http://www.wilmington.va.gov)  
 📘 [www.facebook.com/WilmingtonVAMC](https://www.facebook.com/WilmingtonVAMC)  
 🐦 [twitter.com/WilmingtonVAMC](https://twitter.com/WilmingtonVAMC)

🇺🇸 Total Veterans Served	30,606
♀ Female Veterans Served	2,356
💰 Operating Budget	\$228,175,000
🏠 Admissions	1,305
🏥 Outpatient Visits	317,618
👤 Employees	1,105

### Coatesville, PA

Coatesville VA Medical Center  
 1400 Blackhorse Hill Road  
 Coatesville, PA 19320  
 📞 800-290-6172  
 🌐 [www.coatesville.va.gov](http://www.coatesville.va.gov)  
 📘 [www.facebook.com/CoatesvilleVAMC](https://www.facebook.com/CoatesvilleVAMC)

🇺🇸 Total Veterans Served	19,533
♀ Female Veterans Served	1,032
💰 Operating Budget	\$208,435,962
🏠 Admissions	2,642
🏥 Outpatient Visits	243,606
👤 Employees	1,294

### Wilkes-Barre, PA

Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center  
 1111 East End Blvd.  
 Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711  
 📞 877-928-2621  
 🌐 [www.wilkes-barre.va.gov](http://www.wilkes-barre.va.gov)  
 📘 [www.facebook.com/VAWilkesBarre](https://www.facebook.com/VAWilkesBarre)

🇺🇸 Total Veterans Served	38,527
♀ Female Veterans Served	3,046
💰 Operating Budget	\$272,001,347
🏠 Admissions	3,264
🏥 Outpatient Visits	407,073
👤 Employees	1,384



# ACCESS TO VA CARE

## Timeliness of Care

In fiscal year 2017, more than 97% of appointments in VISN 4 were completed within 30 days of the Veteran's preferred date.

Our facilities conducted more than 2.3 million appointments, and the average wait time was 3.5 days.

Clinics	Number of Appointments	Wait Time <30 days (#)	Wait Time <30 days (%)	Average Wait (days)
All Clinics	2,354,623	2,299,759	97.6%	3.5
Mental Health	335,310	329,989	98.4%	2.8
Primary Care	526,126	519,045	98.7%	3.3
Specialty Care	896,199	861,218	96%	5.2

## Online Scheduling Now Available in My HealtheVet

The new online scheduling tool allows Veterans to self-schedule or request help scheduling a primary care appointment. Some facilities will soon offer online scheduling in outpatient mental health, audiology, and optometry.

To use online scheduling, Veterans must:

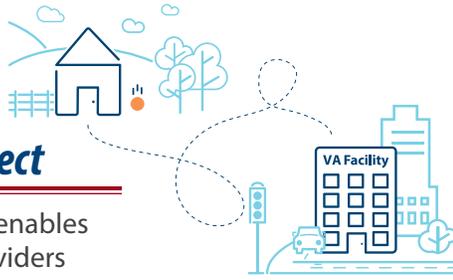
- Be a current VA patient.
- Have a Premium My HealtheVet Account or a DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) Account.
- Verify if their VA facility offers online scheduling.
- Have had a primary care appointment at their participating facility within the last two years.

▲ The new Abie Abraham Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Center in Butler, Pennsylvania opened for Veterans on Sept. 5, 2017.

## VA Video Connect

VA Video Connect enables VA health care providers to conduct virtual visits with Veterans in a private and secure virtual medical room. This software uses encrypted video to ensure the session is secure and private. It allows Veterans to see and talk to their health care team from anywhere, making VA health care more convenient and reducing travel times for Veterans.

VA Video Connect can be used for on-demand visits (“Video on Demand”) or visits that are scheduled in the future. To meet the needs of Veterans, “Video on Demand” can be offered instead of cancelling an appointment due to weather, transportation, or other issues.



## Same Day Services

VISN 4 facilities offer same-day services for urgent primary and mental health care needs. Depending upon what best meets the needs of the Veteran, same-day services means a Veteran with an urgent need for primary care and mental health care receives services that may include one of the following:

- a face-to-face visit with a clinician
- advice provided during a call with a nurse
- a Telehealth or video care visit
- an appointment made with a specialist
- or a prescription filled the same day

## VISN 4 Care in the Community

In January, VA implemented a series of actions to improve the timeliness of payments to community providers, including both short- and long-term actions.

Additionally, all VISN 4 medical centers continue to work to expand provider agreements in their local communities to improve access to health care for Veterans.

**Your Life  
Your Health  
Your Schedule**

**Get the Apps.**

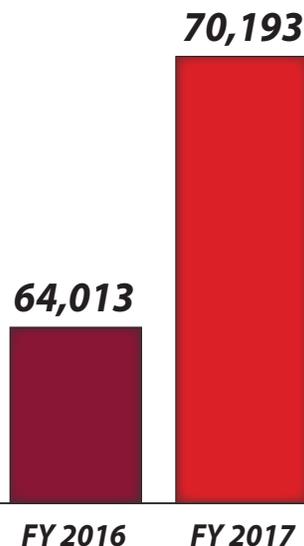
Visit the VA App Store to learn more:

[mobile.va.gov/appstore](http://mobile.va.gov/appstore)

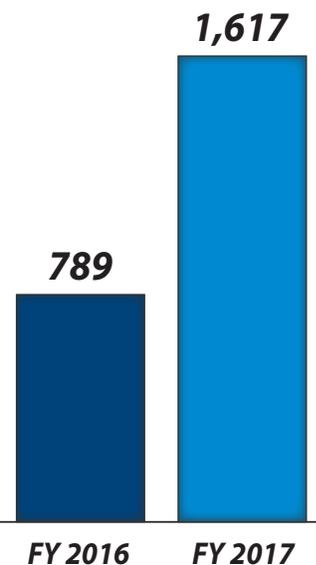


U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

**Scheduled and Completed Consults**



**Provider Agreements**





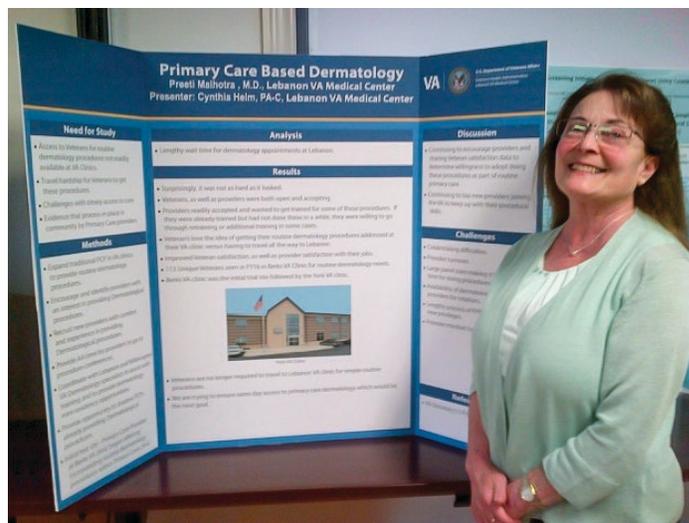
# IMPROVING QUALITY

## *Vision for the Future: VISN 4 Best Practice Forums*

In April 2017, VISN 4 Quality, Safety and Value held the first annual Vision for the Future: VISN 4 Best Practice Forums. The half-day conferences, held on the Eastern and Western sides of the VISN 4 market, provided a platform to showcase the innovative practices created by staff at the medical centers and outpatient clinics across VISN 4.

Thirty-six best practices were submitted in total, and were presented either verbally or in poster format during the forum.

The Best Practice Forum also provided participants an opportunity to share and exchange ideas and network with staff from other facilities across the VISN. The positive feedback received from all attendees has led to a continuation in a Best Practice Forum for 2018.



▲ Cynthia Helm, PA-C presented a poster at the VISN 4 Best Practice Forum about Primary Care Based Dermatology that uses existing VA staff to provide increased access to Veterans for dermatology needs. A Dermatology Mini-Residency is also available to primary care providers through the talent management system and training is on site with no additional cost to VA!



**“Our goal is to provide the best care possible by combining what VA does the best and what the private sector does the best.”**

*~David J. Shulkin, M.D., Secretary of Veterans Affairs*



## Sterile Processing Services

Tracking of surgical instruments as they are reprocessed, used and transported through the healthcare system is critical to assuring that the correct instrument is ready for use when needed. VISN 4 began the implementation of CensiTrac surgical instrument tracking to modernize from a paper to an electronic tracking system in all VISN 4 Sterile Processing Services.

## Patient Safety Program

Patient Safety Managers strive to improve patient safety across VISN 4 by exploring vulnerabilities that may cause harm, reviewing adverse events and close calls and implementing initiatives or actions to prevent adverse events. Seven of 9 VISN 4 facilities received National Center for Patient Safety Cornerstone Recognition for Fiscal Year 2017.

## FY17 Patient Safety Analyses

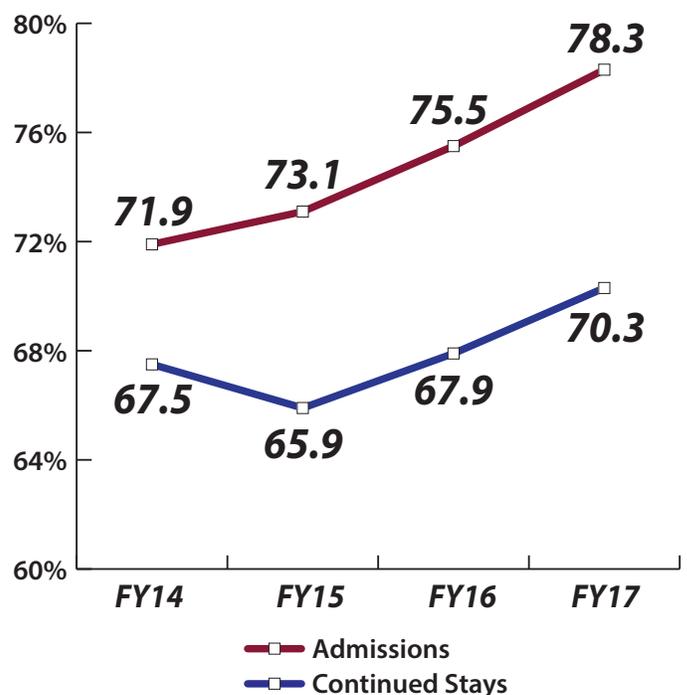


## Utilization Management

Utilization Management is the evaluation of the appropriateness and medical need of health care services, procedures, and facilities according to evidence-based criteria or guidelines. The goal is to be sure Veterans are receiving care in the most appropriate location.

In FY17, VISN 4 Utilization Management was focused on changing the current UM culture within our facilities by engaging both leadership and staff. The UM program continues to improve significantly the percentages meeting InterQual criteria across the VISN. This translates into a decrease in avoidable hospital days, an increase in health care efficiency, improvement in overall access and results in higher value care for our Veterans.

**Percentage of Veterans Meeting Admission and Continued Stay Reviews**



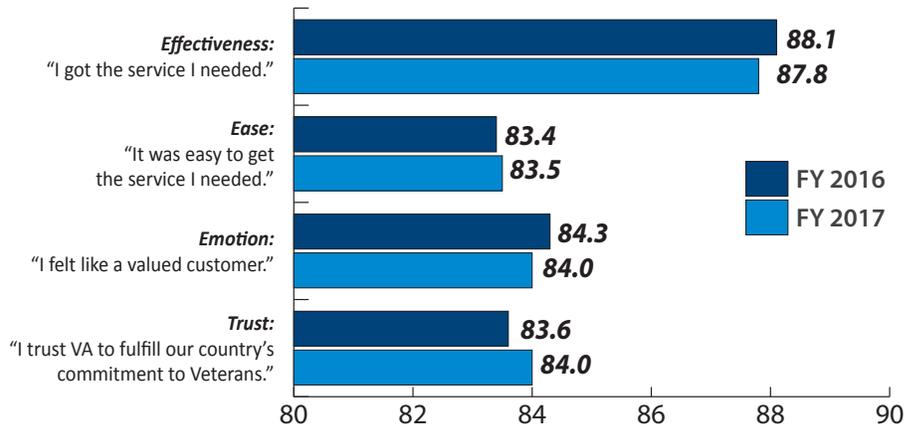
# EARNING YOUR TRUST



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 work to do, especially with our outpatients.

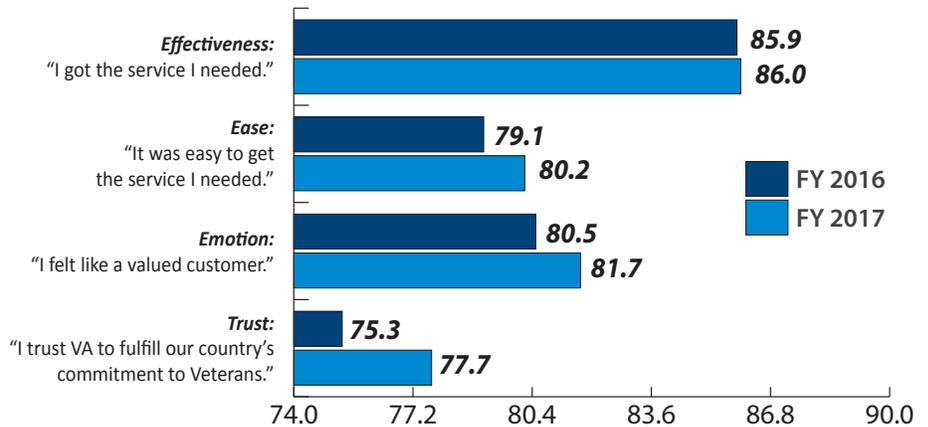
## Inpatients

Currently, 84% of inpatients trust VISN 4 to fulfill our country's commitment to Veterans.



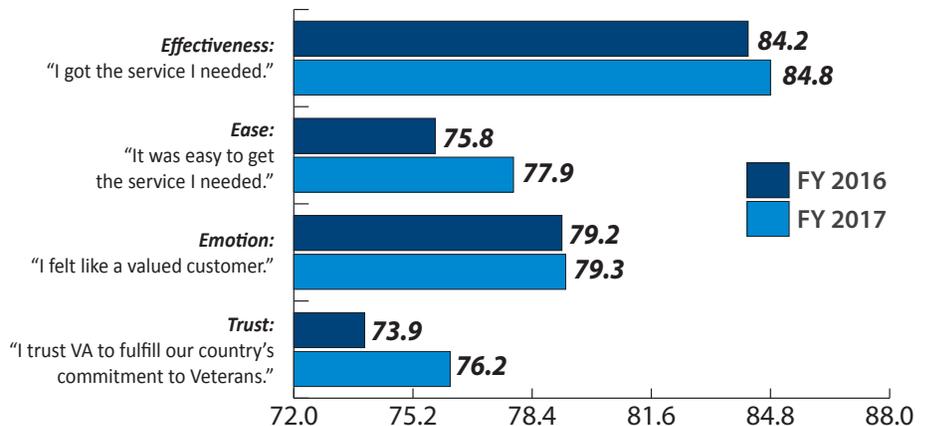
## Outpatients

About 78% of outpatients trust VISN 4 to fulfill our country's commitment to Veterans, which is an improvement over last fiscal year.



## Specialty Care Outpatients

About 76% of specialty care outpatients trust VISN 4 to fulfill our country's commitment to Veterans, which is also an improvement over last fiscal year.



# EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT



## Employee Rounding Initiative

In the fall of 2017, VISN 4 implemented a network-wide employee rounding and 1:1 meeting initiative to enhance communication and transparency between supervisors at all levels and their direct reports.

Anticipated outcomes of this process include enhanced communication, recognition of employees and best practices, and early identification of issues and barriers, with the ultimate goal of improving employee engagement and psychological safety.

## Leadership Development Institute

In FY17, seventeen high-performing emerging leaders participated in the VISN 4 Leadership Development Institute (LDI). This year-long intensive training initiative consisted of multiple face-to-face and virtual opportunities, where the participants interacted with peers from medical centers across the network, and with differing job responsibilities and career aspirations.

These future leaders were given the opportunity to collaborate and develop their leadership skills with every member of the class, and also learned about change management, budget processes, performance management, and public speaking techniques.

## All Employee Survey Results

In FY17, more than 59% of VISN 4 employees completed the All Employee Survey, surpassing last year's response rate as well as exceeding the VHA average.

The survey results indicate that VISN 4 employees connect strongly to the VA mission, report high organizational pride, and believe that our Veterans and other stakeholders are highly satisfied with the services we provide.



◀ VISN 4 employees and instructors gather for a group photo following the 2017 Leadership Development Institute graduation ceremony at VA Butler Healthcare.



# SUICIDE PREVENTION

## Enhanced Suicide Prevention Programs

Veteran suicide prevention is everyone's job in VA, and we empower and remind our staff that there is no wrong door to VA health care for a Veteran in crisis.

VISN 4 is working with each medical center to ensure they have the necessary staffing resources. We currently have 17 full-time employees dedicated exclusively to suicide prevention across VISN 4, and this number is expected to increase.

Each facility's suicide prevention team will also develop community partnerships throughout their catchment area to facilitate identification of Veterans in crisis who do not use VA facilities.

## Robust Suicide Prevention Outreach

We recently standardized the work of our suicide prevention teams that work with other outreach staff to identify transitioning Servicemembers and Veterans who need assistance with managing a crisis. We also ensure and encourage all of our outreach staff to share the Veterans Crisis Line information with community contacts.

## #Be There

Many Veterans may not show any signs of intent to harm themselves, but some actions can be a sign that a Veteran may need help.

If you are a Veteran or know a Veteran who is showing any warning signs, please reach out for help.

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified and caring VA responders through a confidential, toll-free hotline, online chat, or text.

Veterans and their loved ones can call **1-800-273-8255** and **Press 1**, chat online, or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

## **REACH VET**

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The REACH VET program is based upon a statistical algorithm that identifies Veterans at high risk of unforeseen events, including death by suicide. Currently, there are 293 Veterans in VISN 4 who are within the top 0.1% risk stratum in our population. Staff at each medical center review care plans and reach out to these Veterans to discuss any unmet care needs.

As of today, VISN 4 staff reviewed the care plans for 89% of at-risk Veterans and attempted outreach in 81% of the cases, much higher than the national average.

## **Care Transitions**

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VISN 4 is working diligently to ensure Veterans leaving residential and acute mental health settings receive the necessary follow-up care immediately following discharge, which is the time they are considered most vulnerable. We also strive to ensure Veterans identified by a clinician as being at high risk for suicide have frequent mental health visits and robust safety plans in place.

## **Partnering with State Colleagues**

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VISN 4 is working on a project designed to encourage state colleagues and partners to assist Veterans in crisis. We expect to develop and distribute suicide prevention information statewide and to local communities.

## **Access to Mental Health Care**

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Numerous, ongoing efforts are underway to ensure Veterans can access mental health care when they need it. This multi-faceted effort ensures adequate resourcing, productivity and staff utilization.

For new patients in fiscal year 2017, 90% of mental health appointments were completed within 30 days of the date the appointment was created. For established patients, 98% of mental health appointments were completed within 30 days of the preferred date.

Efforts are ongoing to review and further improve access in specific divisions, including effective use of telemental health visits to overcome staffing challenges.

***Suicide is preventable.***

***We can all help someone who may be at risk through simple actions that can make a big difference. Our actions can save a life.***



# **Connect** with support.

No matter what you're going through, resources are available.

**VeteransCrisisLine.net**



**Veterans  
Crisis Line**  
1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**

### **We'd Like to Hear from You**

This annual report is published for the employees, volunteers, patients and friends of VA Healthcare-VISN 4. For more information about this publication, contact David Cowgill at 412-822-3318.

**VA Healthcare-VISN 4  
323 North Shore Drive  
Suite 400  
Pittsburgh, PA 15212  
412-822-3316**

**[www.visn4.va.gov](http://www.visn4.va.gov)**

**VA**



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

Veterans Health Administration  
VA Healthcare – VISN 4