



2022 Annual Report

VA GREAT LAKES HEALTH CARE SYSTEM – VISN 12



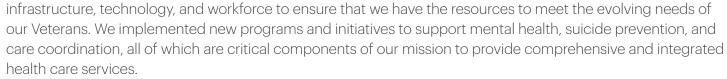
Message from the **Executive Director**



Greetings, fellow advocates for our nation's heroes! As the proud Executive Director of Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 12, located in the heart of Westchester, Illinois, it is my pleasure to share with you the highlights of VISN 12's progress and achievements in fiscal year 2022.

VISN 12 offers healthcare services to over 800,000 Veterans in Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan's Upper peninsula, and Northwest Indiana. Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we remained steadfast in our commitment to provide the highest quality of care for our patients. Our dedicated staff worked tirelessly to ensure our patients received timely and safe care, both in-person and through telehealth services. We are proud to report that our patient satisfaction scores remained high, a testament to our team's unwavering dedication to our Veterans.

In fiscal year 2022, we focused on improving access to care and expanding our services. We continued to invest in our





As we move forward, we remain focused on continuous improvement and innovation. We will continue to leverage technology to improve access to care and enhance the patient experience. We will also work closely with our community partners to ensure that our patients receive the care and support they need to thrive.

We extend our gratitude to you, our stakeholders, for your continued support and partnership. It is an honor to serve those who have selflessly served our country, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to providing exceptional care.

Sincerely, **Daniel S. Zomchek, Ph.D., FACHE**Executive Director









Leadership **Team**

Executive DirectorDaniel S. Zomchek, Ph.D., FACHE

Deputy Network Director Ike Lusk

Chief Medical Officer Gregg Meekins, MD

Chief Nursing Officer Shavetta Williams, MSPH, RN

Quality Management Officer Barbara R. Kelly, MS, RN

Our Philosophy

Mission

To serve the health care needs of America's Veterans. This is accomplished through a comprehensive, integrated health care delivery system that provides excellence in health care value, excellence in service as defined by customers, and excellence in education and research.

Core Values

- →Integrity
- →Commitment
- →Advocacy
- →Respect
- →Excellence

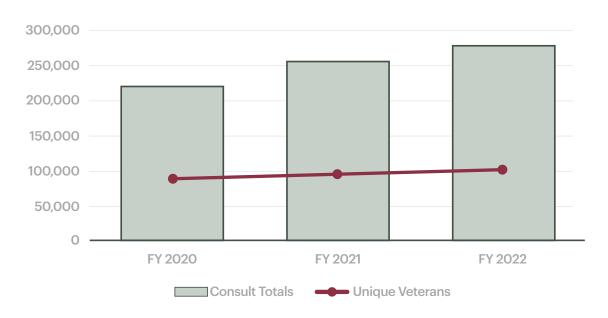
Vision

To be a Veterans' health care system that supports innovation, empowerment, productivity, accountability, and continuous improvement. Working together, a continuum of high-quality health care is provided in a convenient, responsive, caring manner.

VISN 12 at a Glance



FY 2020-2022 Totals



Operating Budget

Total Operating Budget:	\$4,979,939,353
Salaries and Benefits:	\$2,508,418,314
Community Care:	\$948,891,600
Supplies & Equipment:	\$399,333,662
Contract Services:	\$287,704,425
Consolidated Mailout Pharmacy:	\$228,272,042
In-House Drugs & Medicine:	\$216,140,147
Lands & Structures:	\$205,479,592
All Other:	\$122,632,657
Research:	\$63,066,914

Workforce

Total Employees:	21,305
Total Veteran Employees:	4,388
New Hires:	3,589
Total Veteran Employee New Hires:	1,682
Nurse:	4,743

Operating Statistics

Total Veterans Served:	321,531
Outpatient Visits:	3,929,513
Total Admissions:	28,875
Operating Beds:	2,166
Total Surgical Cases:	17,946



FY22 Enrollees

Male:	296,483
Female:	25,003

Military Era

Unspecified:	203,222
Pre 911:	12,745
Post 911:	94,613
Vietnam War:	10,754
Korean War:	148
World War II:	4

Volunteers

Total Volunteers:	1,694
Total Volunteer Hours:	184,179.26
Average Hours Per Volunteer:	109

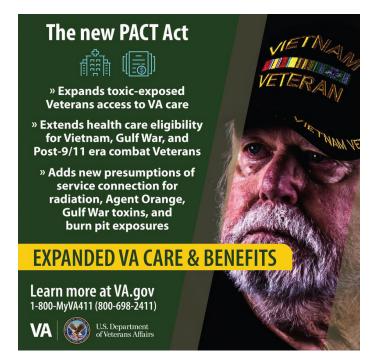
Donations

Monetary Donations:	\$1,048,777.56
Activity Donations:	\$80,661.38
Non-Monetary Donations:	\$2,479,287.87
All Donations:	\$3,608,726.81

PACT Act

The PACT Act is an acronym for the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022. This law was signed into effect on August 9, 2022 and empowers the VA to provide much-needed benefits and care to millions of Veterans who experienced exposure to toxic substances during their military career.

The PACT Act is a large and complex piece of legislation with multiple titles and sections.



This historic legislation includes:

- Expansion and extension of eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 combat Veterans
- Addition of more than 20 new presumptive conditions for burn pits and other toxic exposures
- Addition of more presumptive locations for Agent Orange and radiation exposure and
- Provision of toxic exposure screenings to every Veteran enrolled in VA health care.

In addition to these additional benefits and services, it provides resources for VA to deliver them. New authorities for hiring, recruitment, and retention, as well as for infrastructure modernization and new healthcare partnerships will ensure that VA provide Veterans with the right care, at the right time, in the right place.

Fiscal year 2022 marked just the beginning of the impact of the PACT Act on the VA and on the Veterans that we serve. VISN 12 is honored to provide excellent benefits and services to our Veterans and looks forward to expanding more care to more Veterans because of the PACT Act. More information can be found at www.va.gov/PACT.



VA Video Connect (VVC)





VA Video Connect (VVC) is a convenient solution that allows Veterans to receive clinical care in the comfort of their own homes. By enabling Veterans to see and talk to their healthcare team from anywhere, VVC reduces travel times and makes VA healthcare more accessible. VISN 12 is committed to increasing access to Veterans by providing care where the Veteran chooses.

The encrypted video ensures that the appointment is private and secure, and Veterans can participate using a laptop, desktop, tablet, or smartphone, as long as they have a camera, microphone, speakers, and high-speed internet access. For those who need equipment, VA-loaned devices are available, and peripheral equipment such as stethoscopes, pulse oximeters, weight scales, blood pressure cuffs, and thermometers can be provided.

Whether it's bad weather, a bad day, or chronic pain, VVC appointments eliminate many of the issues that keep Veterans from making their appointments. VVC makes it possible to receive healthcare at the time and place that is most convenient, making it ideal for those who work, are in school, or live in rural areas with limited access to VA healthcare facilities. For Veterans who find it difficult to walk, VVC gives them access to the help they need.

VVC is easy to use. Just ask one of the 54,000+ Veterans in VISN 12 who had a VVC appointment in FY 2022. The scheduler makes the appointment, and the provider and Veteran receive a secure link via email or text to enter the virtual medical room at the scheduled time.

Most Veterans like and trust VVC appointments. FY 2022, one out of every five Veterans in VISN 12 had a VVC appointment, and VA providers are increasingly adopting the technology. Research shows no differences in mental health treatment for inperson or telehealth. VA providers determine which services are clinically appropriate for VVC. Veterans can choose between VVC and in-person care, but increasingly, they are opting for VVC because it's more convenient.

VISN 12 has been actively expanding VVC, training nearly all staff in FY 2022. More than 97% of Mental Health, nearly 95% Primary Care, and more than 88% of Specialty Medicine, Surgery, Rehabilitation, and Geriatric providers in VISN 12 had completed VVC appointments. The most common clinical areas that provided care to Veterans in their homes were:

- Mental Health
- Primary Care and Women's Primary Care
- Whole Health
- Rehabilitation
- Clinical Pharmacy
- Caregiver Support Program
- Medical Specialties
- Weight Management and MOVE! and Nutrition/Dietetics
- Social Work Service
- Remote Patient Monitoring-Home Telehealth
- · General Internal Medicine
- Surgery

VVC groups are also available. In FY 2022, over 1,000 Veteran appointments in VISN 12 occurred in Substance Use Disorder Group, RRTP Group, Weight Management and MOVE! Program Group, PTSD Group, PRRC Group, and Mental Health Integrated Care Group.

In FY 2022, VISN 12 had nearly 100,000 VVC visits with Veterans who live in rural and highly-rural areas. VISN 12 is committed to providing care to Veterans at their preferred location and plans to expand the VVC program in FY 2023.





Caregiver Support Program (CSP)



The VA Caregiver Support Program (CSP) offers clinical services to caregivers of eligible and covered Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system. The program's mission is to promote the health and well-being of family caregivers who care for our Nation's Veterans, through education, resources, support, and services.

VISN 12 was selected to participate in the Respite Champion Pilot Program and Hines VA Hospital was also awarded a Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS) Innovative Position, along with nine other VA facilities. Hines VA will focus on Creative Arts & Body Movement programming. VISN 12 is approved for 95 staff, including the Centralized Eligibility and Appeals Teams (CEAT) as well as all facility administrative and clinical staff.

Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC)

PCAFC offers enhanced clinical support for caregivers of eligible Veterans who are seriously injured. The Improvements and Amendments Under the VA MISSION Act of 2018, Final Rule, RIN 2900-AQ48, effective October 1, 2020, expanded eligibility and improved upon the application and evaluation process for the PCAFC. Benefits under PCAFC include education and training, enhanced respite care, counseling, a monthly stipend, CHAMPVA (if eligible) and certain travel expenses, among others.

On March 25, 2022, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit issued a decision that set aside VA's

definition of "need for supervision, protection, or instruction." As a result of this decision, VA has made changes to the criteria used to evaluate eligibility for PCAFC when making determinations issued under PCAFC regulations that became effective on October 1, 2020. This is the only criteria that has changed.

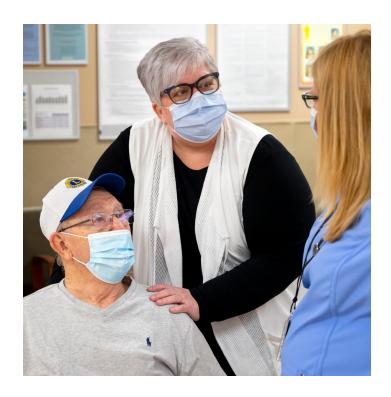
Evaluation of PCAFC eligibility includes, among several other criteria, whether the individual is in need of personal care services based on any one of the following as seen in this graphic:



If Veteran or caregiver received a decision under PCAFC based, in part, on VA's definition of need for supervision, protection, or instruction and disagree with that decision, individuals have options to seek further review of that decision

VA announced that it extended the amount of time that Legacy Participants, Legacy Applicants and their Family Caregivers within the PCAFC will remain eligible for the Program. This will include all services, supports and benefits for another three full years. Specifically, this new rule will extend program eligibility for legacy participants, legacy applicants and their family caregivers, by three years. A legacy participant is a Veteran or servicemember who was participating in PCAFC as of Sept. 30, 2020, and a legacy applicant is a Veteran or servicemember who applied for PCAFC before Oct. 1, 2020, and was accepted into the program on or after Oct. 1, 2020. VA initiated a suspension on certain discharges, reductions, and reassessments in PCAFC as of June 9, 2022, as the VA continues to review and examine the eligibility and stipend level criteria. This means that annual reassessments for identified needs can move forward based on increased need for personal care services, but no Veteran will receive a reduction in stipend level or discharge until further notice.

In FY 2022, VISN 12 received and processed 2060 new applications with 92% of those applications processed within 90 days, and approved 585 new Primary Family Caregivers. VISN 12 received 152 clinical appeals in FY 2022 that were reviewed by the Mid-West Consortium CFATs. Sixteen of those appeals were overturned, meaning the Veteran and caregiver were granted their appeal.



Program of General Caregiver Support Services (PGCSS)

The PGCSS mission is to serve caregivers with respect and service excellence through a wide range of support, education and tools that empower them to care for themselves and the Veteran. Caregivers who participate in PGCSS are called General Caregivers. A General Caregiver is a person who provides personal care services to a Veteran enrolled in VA health care who needs assistance with one or more activities of daily living; or needs supervision or protection based on symptoms or residuals of neurological care or other impairment

or injury. General Caregivers do not need to be a relative or live with the Veteran. The four core elements of PGCSS are education and support, collaboration and partnerships, training, outreach, resources and referrals.

VISN 12 currently has 717 Approved General Caregivers. Last FY, 327 referrals were received from the National Caregiver Support Line and answered by the facilities

High Reliability Organization





High Reliability Organization (HRO) is not a new concept in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). While VHA has led and continues to lead many successful initiatives to prevent harm, this transformation is not an initiative with an end date, but a culture change that requires dedicated attention as it continues to progress in a coordinated fashion across all of VHA. VHA's enterprise wide HRO journey is a long-term commitment to Veterans and the workforce to continuously improve and drive to Zero Harm. The HRO journey requires the transformation of the workplace culture to empower our invaluable resource: our dedicated, compassionate VA employees. Improving safety and reliability requires a Just Culture of transparency and trust where errors and near-misses are regarded as opportunities to improve processes that could cause harm.

Part of the HRO journey is to leverage strong practices already in place across VHA, as well as introduce new improvement efforts. During 2022, VISN 12 continued to use high reliability principles to assist our staff to safely move forward and to provide the best possible care to our Veterans during the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our staff created and utilized many high reliability tools to enable a coordinated effort throughout VISN 12 as well as across the VHA enterprise, in areas such as medication administration, patient falls, equipment management, telehealth, employee safety, patient visitation, scheduling and providing patient appointments and procedures as well as improving the employee workforce enabling them to provide the best possible care to Veterans. The dedicated work of our employees in VISN 12 has been demonstrated by the high Veteran experience and patient safety ratings with our VISN 12 facilities receiving multiple awards and sharing best practices across VHA. High reliability tools such as huddles, visual management boards, safety forums, leadership rounding, town halls, process improvement initiatives and patient safety reporting and improvement mechanisms allowed VISN 12 employees the opportunity to address and improve key concerns across our VISN 12 medical centers.

By striving towards high reliability where harm prevention and process improvement are second nature to all employees, we can dramatically improve the way we deliver care to all Veterans served in VISN 12. VISN 12 leadership recognizes that greater reliability requires a work environment where employees at every level of our organization – clinical and non-clinical – are empowered to speak up for safety. To get there, everybody from leadership to front line staff are participating in high reliability training that will assist VISN 12 employees to incorporate into our daily work, the high reliability, pillars, principles and values.

Individual Benefits

- A psychologically and physically safe environment
- Empowerment to speak up and effect positive change
- A greater voice in improving your work environment
- Partnership in something bigger than yourself
- Being respected for your expertise

Organizational Benefits

- Shared leadership vision and approach
- Better outcomes and happier Veterans / family
- VHA viewed more positively by public and media
- More Veterans choose VA

Veteran Benefits

- Improv
- Improv
- Greate



Awards VISN 12 won in 2022.

VHA HeRO Award - Milwaukee VA Identifying a syringe defect

VHA HeRO Award - Lovell FHCC Identifying medication labeling vulnerability

Multiple VISN 12 medical facilities won C20 **CHAI Care Awards**

Milwaukee VA, Madison VA, Iron Mountain VA, Illiana VA, Hines VA, Lovell FHCC.

Patient Experience Awards

Iron Mountain VA - 4 years in a row for Level 3, Madison VA - Best Overall Patient Experience Award



Whole Health & Well-Being



Whole Health

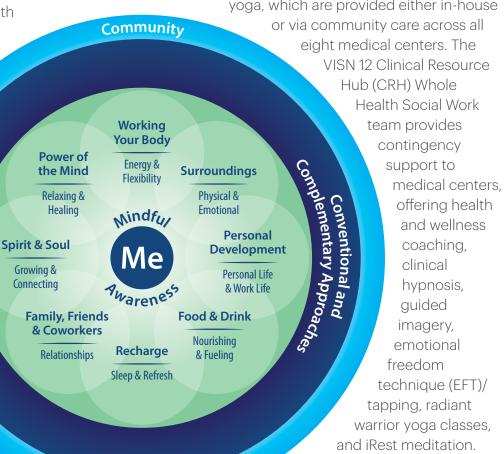
VISN 12 is committed to supporting the whole health of Veterans, their caregivers, and survivors. To advance the Whole Health System of Care, over \$1.8 million in special funding was distributed to VISN 12 medical centers in FY 2022. During this time, 14.55% of all Veterans receiving care in VISN

12 were provided with whole health services. Nearly 41,000 Veterans participated in whole health, which is a 35% increase from FY 2021, and there were 213.506 whole health encounters in FY 2022, which is also a 35% increase from FY 2021 Telewhole health saw growth as well, with 7.498 Veterans participating in 46,432 encounters, an increase of 51% in patients and 50% in encounters from

FY 2021.

team also trained 125 staff across the network during 11 VISN-wide educational offerings.

VISN 12 supports alternative modalities as part of patients' medical benefits, including acupuncture, biofeedback, guided imagery, hypnotherapy, massage therapy, meditations, Tai Chi/Qi-Gong, and yoga, which are provided either in-house



To support the integration of whole health in primary care (PC) and mental health (MH), 37% of PC and MH teams across the eight VISN 12 medical facilities completed foundational training. Additionally, a whole health mandatory training requirement for all new employees was implemented in September 2022. The VISN 12 whole health education faculty

grevention and Treatment

VISN 12 entered a contract with Millennium Health & Fitness to offer free virtual on-demand and live streaming interactive whole health classes, such as Beginner Yoga, Meditation, Pilates, Tai Chi, Zumba and so much more. This provides an opportunity for patients to integrate regular fitness and wellness into their routine at no cost.

Well-Being

VISN 12 is committed to the well-being of its employees. The network held a strategic planning session in May 2022 to increase professional fulfillment and decrease burnout. In alignment with VHA's Reduce Employee Burnout and Optimize Organizational Thriving (REBOOT) initiative, VISN 12 medical facilities adopted eight initiatives, including shortened meetings, the recruitment referral reward program, and the hiring of a Chief Well-Being Officer.

To promote well-being among VISN 12 employees, well-being advisories were included in the VISN 12 High Reliability Organization (HRO) Newsletter, which is sent out quarterly to all VISN employees. Additionally, VISN 12 established the Health & Wellness Coaching Community of Practice in January 2022 and the Increasing Fulfillment & Decreasing Burnout Out Community of Practice (CoP) in August 2022.

VISN 12 employees also had the opportunity to participate in the 'Take 15' program, where they could meet with a volunteer writer to share something important in their lives. In return the writer provided a poem for gifting, sharing or a treasured keepsake. Feedback from employees has been exceptional.

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"The entire experience was very rewarding as a VA employee. I felt heard, cared for, and understood. I came forward feeling vulnerable and open to sharing who I am, during the session I felt heard, and encouraged that my voice and my joy mattered."



"The process of having someone write a poem about your lived experiences will stay with me forever."





"I have recommended this to my peers and coworkers. This was a very enlightening and powerful experience, and my hope is that all VA employees get the opportunity to feel heard, share their story and receive the gift of the poem."



Veteran Experience



The Veteran Experience offices throughout VISN 12 are dedicated to promoting a culture where every Veteran receives an exceptional experience that is easy, effective, and emotionally resonant, to build trust. VISN 12 prioritizes delivering services in a way that makes customers feel honored and valued in their interactions with VA



FASE

VA will make access to care, benefits, and memorial services smooth and easy.



EFFECTIVENESS

VA will deliver benefits, care, memorialization, and services to the customers satisfaction.



EMOTION

VA will deliver benefits, care, memorialization, and services in a manner that makes customers feel honored and valued in their interactions with VA. The combination of these factors impact the overall trust Veterans have in VA.

The combination of these factors impacts the overall trust Veterans have in VA. VISN 12 used VSignals, a platform that identifies and informs opportunities for immediate and short-term service recovery and long-term program system improvements, to collect and analyze insights from Veterans.

In FY 2022, VISN 12 sent out 362,748 surveys, received 68,699 surveys, and had a response rate of 18.9%. The number of free-text comments received was 27,596. The results showed outpatient trust in VISN 12 was greater than the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) average, ranking fourth across all VHA. Similarly, inpatient trust in VISN 12

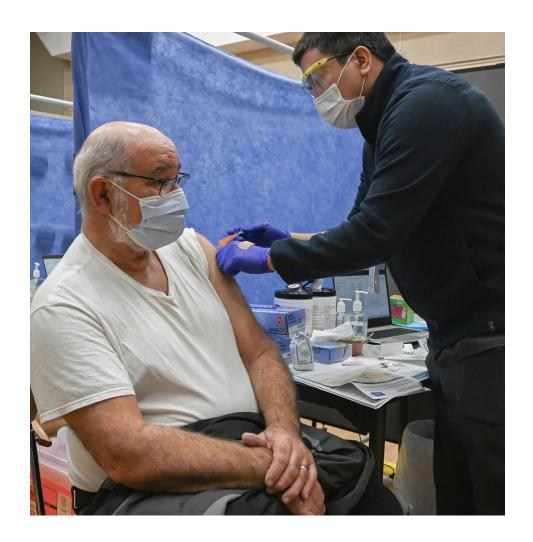
was greater than the VHA average, ranking second across all VHA. The top five compliments from Veterans were quality of care, satisfaction with specialty care, interactions with staff, cleanliness of the facility, and courtesy of health care providers. To further improve Veteran experience, VISN 12 hired two new standalone positions in FY 2022: a Veteran Experience Officer in February 2022 and a Patient Advocate in May 2022.

At the VA Customer Service Symposium in September 2022, VA Secretary Denis McDonough awarded the William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital the Overall Best Experience, and the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center the Facility Complexity Level 3 Best Experience.

VISN 12 places a high priority on providing exceptional healthcare experiences for patients, and the Own the Moment (OTM) workshop is one of the ways this is done. OTM is an interactive workshop founded on the values of ICARE (Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence) and designed to empower staff to provide an easy, efficient, and emotionally resonant healthcare experience that builds trust. Nearly 91% of full-time VISN 12 staff completed OTM training in FY 2022.

OTM endorses the HRO (High Reliability Organization) philosophy of employee empowerment through a systematic approach. This approach empowers staff to "Own Each Moment" as an opportunity to cultivate positive meaningful relationships and build trust, one interaction at a time. By taking ownership of their interactions with patient, VISN 12 employees are better able to provide the exceptional care and service patients deserve.

In FY 2022, the VISN 12 Veteran Experience Subcommittee worked to improve the overall patient experience, holding a face-to-face strategic planning retreat in September 2022 that brought together Veteran Experience officers, Patient Advocate supervisors, and other Veteran Experience Committee members to share best practices, learn new innovative ideas, and plan for the upcoming fiscal year. This was the first retreat in a couple of years due to COVID-19. and it was an essential step in building positive relationships and allowing for a more fluid and dynamic exchange of ideas and collaboration.





Strategic **Planning**



The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is the nation's largest integrated healthcare system with a vast, dynamic, and complex network that provides a wide array of care and services to our nation's Veterans. This network requires ongoing planning to achieve our primary and abiding goal to meet the needs and expectation of our Veterans.

VISN 12's planning process is part of a continuum that starts with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Strategic Plan. That plan is the overall vision for the VA and is based on the VA principles of advocacy, access, outcomes, and excellence.

VHA's operational plan translates the VA's broad goals into more specific objectives that support the VHA's mission, vision, and core values. The four goal statements in VHA's plan are:

- 1. Veterans choose VHA as their trusted health care provider and coordinator, built on trusted long-term relationships
- **2.** VHA delivers high-quality, accessible and integrated health care,
- **3.** VHA maximizes performance through shared ownership and is on the forefront of innovation, and
- 4. VHA optimizes assets across the enterprise.

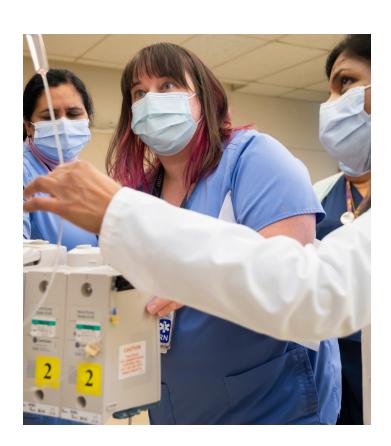
In turn, those guiding principles, along with focus areas identified by our VISN leaders, form the basis of the VISN 12 Operational Plan.

Connecting Veterans to care is one focus of the VISN 12 Operational Plan. Our Clinical Resource Hub (CRH) offers providers and services for Primary Care, Mental Health, and a variety of Specialty Care areas. The Operational Plan includes actions to increase clinical sharing across the VISN via multiple

modalities (including the CRH) and enhance access via the CRH for certain types of specialty care to engage Veterans in the VA.

Continuing the path to becoming a High Reliability Organization is a second ongoing goal for VISN 12. This year specific actions include hosting two VISN-wide Patient Safety Forums, demonstrating completion of TEAM training, and adoption of Stay in VA Touchpoint Sessions. These interviews with staff are used to identify ways to improve our employee retention by engaging with employees early in their career with the VA.

Finally, recruiting and retain excellent staff is key to the successful execution of any other strategic goal. The VISN 12 Operational Plan includes two action items with that goal in mind. Improving



hiring timeliness focuses on making the onboarding process smoother and ensuring that the first impression new employees have of the VA is a good one. Sites in VISN 12 are also implementing the Recruitment Referral Reward Program, which awards staff who successfully refer a new employee to employment in VHA.

We are also proud to announce the opening of a new replacement Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Wausau, Wisconsin. This new clinic, which is part of the Tomah VA Medical Center's network of care, offers Primary Care, Mental Health, Physical Therapy, Audiology, Dermatology, Whole Health Ophthalmology, Home-Based Primary Care, Women's Care, Respiratory Therapy, and Telehealth services including Teleretinal screening.





Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence (I CARE) define "who the VA is," VA's culture, and help guide the actions of staff across VA. Staff at every level within VA play a critical role to support VA's commitment to care for and serve our Veterans, their families, and beneficiaries.

Medical Facilities





Jesse Brown VA Medical Center Chicago, IL



VA Illiana Health Care System Danville, IL



Capt. James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center North Chicago, IL



Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital Hines, IL



Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center Iron Mountain, MI



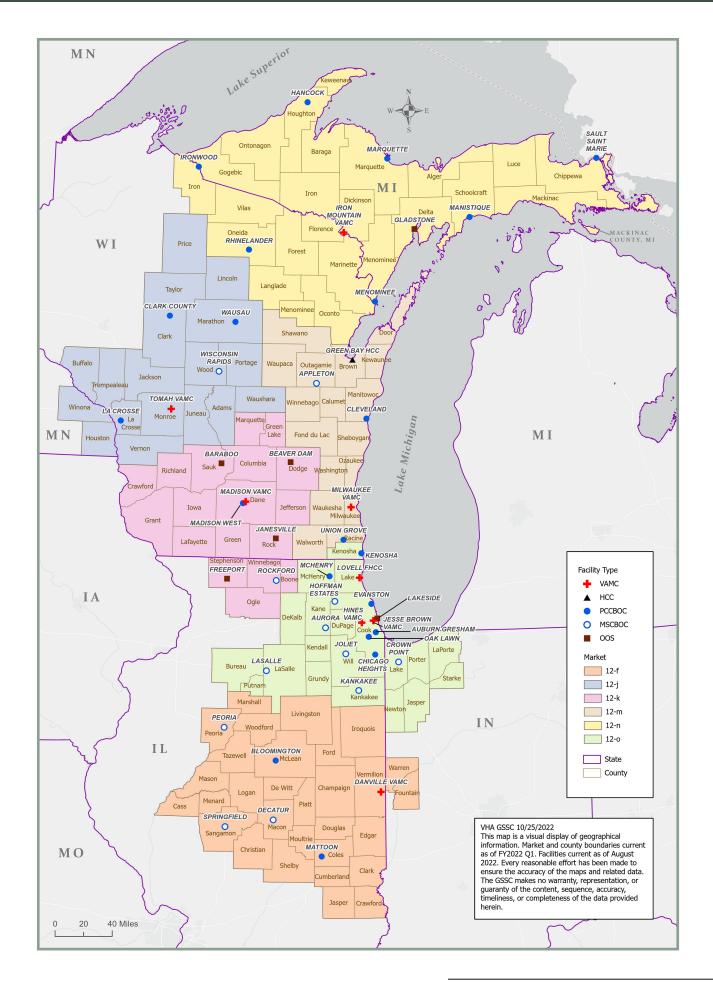
William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital Madison, WI



Tomah VA Medical Center Tomah, WI



Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center Milwaukee, WI





VISN 12 Office, Westchester, IL

To fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.

