Veterans Health Administration

Office of the Under Secretary for Health

VHA Vitals
Top 15 Things the Veterans Health Administration is
Doing to Improve Access, Care, Timeliness and
Quality for Veterans and their Families

As aligned with VHA's Priorities for Strategic Action

Priority 1: Access: *We pledge that any Veteran with the requirement for urgent care will receive care at the right time appropriate to his or her clinical needs.*

1. In July 2016, **96.36%** of appointments were within 30 days of the clinically indicated or Veteran's preferred date; **85.05**% were within 7 days; **22.44**% were same-day appointments. In July 2016, average wait times for completed appointments were **4.72** for primary care, **6.60** for specialty care, and **2.77** for mental health care.
2. VHA has reduced the Electronic Wait List from **56,271** appointments to **32,073**, a **43%** reduction between June 1, 2014 and September 1, 2016.
3. VHA and the Choice contractors created more than **3.1 million** authorizations for Veterans to receive care in the private sector from July 31, 2015 through June 30, 2016. This represents a **5%** increase in authorizations when compared to the same period in 2014/2015.
4. As part of the MyVA Access initiative, VHA's goal is to ensure a Veteran with a need for care right away will have it addressed the same day. Currently, a phased approach exists for ensuring all facilities are going to meet the goal of same day access. This includes the ability of **90** facilities to provide same day access to care when needed by the end of September and all facilities by December 2016.
5. By the end of 2016, Veterans receiving care at VA medical centers will be able to schedule routine ear and eye appointments at local [VA Audiology and Optometry](#) clinics without a primary care referral.

Priority 2: Employee Engagement: *We will work to allow staff to have greater input into their work environment.*

6. On July 27, 2016, Dr. David J. Shulkin, Under Secretary for Health, hosted a national town hall focused on employee engagement and sought employee input concerning how we can do a better job of providing a work environment where employees are valued, supported, and encouraged to do their part in fulfilling our mission.

Priority 3: High Performance Network: *We will build a high performance network of care to best serve Veterans.*

7. VHA is the largest integrated health care system in the United States, providing care at **1,234** health care facilities, including **168** VA Medical Centers and **1,055** outpatient sites of care of varying complexity (VHA outpatient clinics).
8. VHA employs over **24,500** physicians and **93,500** nurses (RN, LPN & NA) to provide care to Veterans and their families.
9. VHA has increased net onboard staff by more than **20,000** employees since the beginning of FY 2015 through July 31, 2016. This includes more than **6,640** nurses (RN, LPN & NA), **1,657** physicians, **112** psychiatrists, and **450** psychologists for VHA's clinical care to Veterans.
10. As of August 2016, VHA has hired more than **11,000** medical center staff using funding from the Choice Act.
11. VHA's turnover rate is **9.3%**, which continues to compare favorably to private sector health care turnover rate estimates of 30% as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014).
12. Clinical workload is up **11%** over the past two years—**9%** within VA and **29%** in the community. The **11%** increase translates into roughly **7.4 million** additional hours of care for Veterans.

Priority 4: Best Practices: *We seek to identify and disseminate best practices throughout VA.*

13. As the nation's largest genomic biobank, the [Million Veteran Program](#) has enrolled more than **500,000** Veteran participants at more than **50** VA sites. Research using MVP data is already underway, studying a range of medical issues like mental illness and heart and kidney diseases.
14. The Million Veteran Program also has rich data on various health conditions that are common in Veterans. Approximately **62%** of MVP enrollees report a current or past diagnosis of high blood pressure and about a third report tinnitus. Also, nearly **32%** of Veterans present with a history or current diagnosis of cancer.

Priority 5: Trust in VA Care: *We will share our results on the quality and timeliness of how we care for Veterans.*

15. VA developed the Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning Value (SAIL) Model to measure, evaluate and benchmark quality and efficiency at medical centers. The latest SAIL data release indicated **75** medical centers (**51%**) showed improvement in overall quality from the second quarter of FY 2015 to the second quarter of FY 2016.

… and there's more vital work to be done.