Naming Guidance in the VA Site Tracking (VAST) Database

An effort to improve consistency and standardization in Naming VHA clinical sites of care is underway. Clear, descriptive names of our VHA facilities improve transparency and communication for both Veterans and our colleagues.

This effort follows on the work of the publication and implementation of the VHA Site Classifications and Definitions Handbook #1006.02 which defined the major points of service across the VHA health care system, provided standardized definitions to enable new delivery sites to be more uniformly planned and deployed, facilitating cogent policy decisions regarding Veterans' access to health care, and provided the methods and rationale for VHA site classifications [1].

> **Classifications and Naming of VHA Sites of care, to include Definitions of, labels/tags, and process of, in VHA Data Systems are different processes and serve different purposes.**

Facility Classifications are calculated annually. Veterans' Health Administration (VHA) points of service are all rated through the VHA site classification process. Each unique point of service is rated in all four major medical care categories: outpatient, inpatient, residential, and extended care. These ratings are broken down into sub-ratings for each category and are based on actual workload completed at each point of service in the prior fiscal year [1].

Official Facility Names are assigned based on the process outlined in Public Law [3]. "Except as expressly provided by law, a facility, structure or real property of the Department, and a major portion (such as a wing or floor) of any such facility, structure or real property, may be named only for the geographic area in which the facility, structure or real property is located." This practice may be supplanted if Public Law has instead named [the Facility] in honor of individuals, and the honorary name has been approved by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

Naming Tags are categories that describe the site and are based on a site of care's classification. Naming Tags are updated in the VAST database annually as a result of changes in classifications as appropriate.
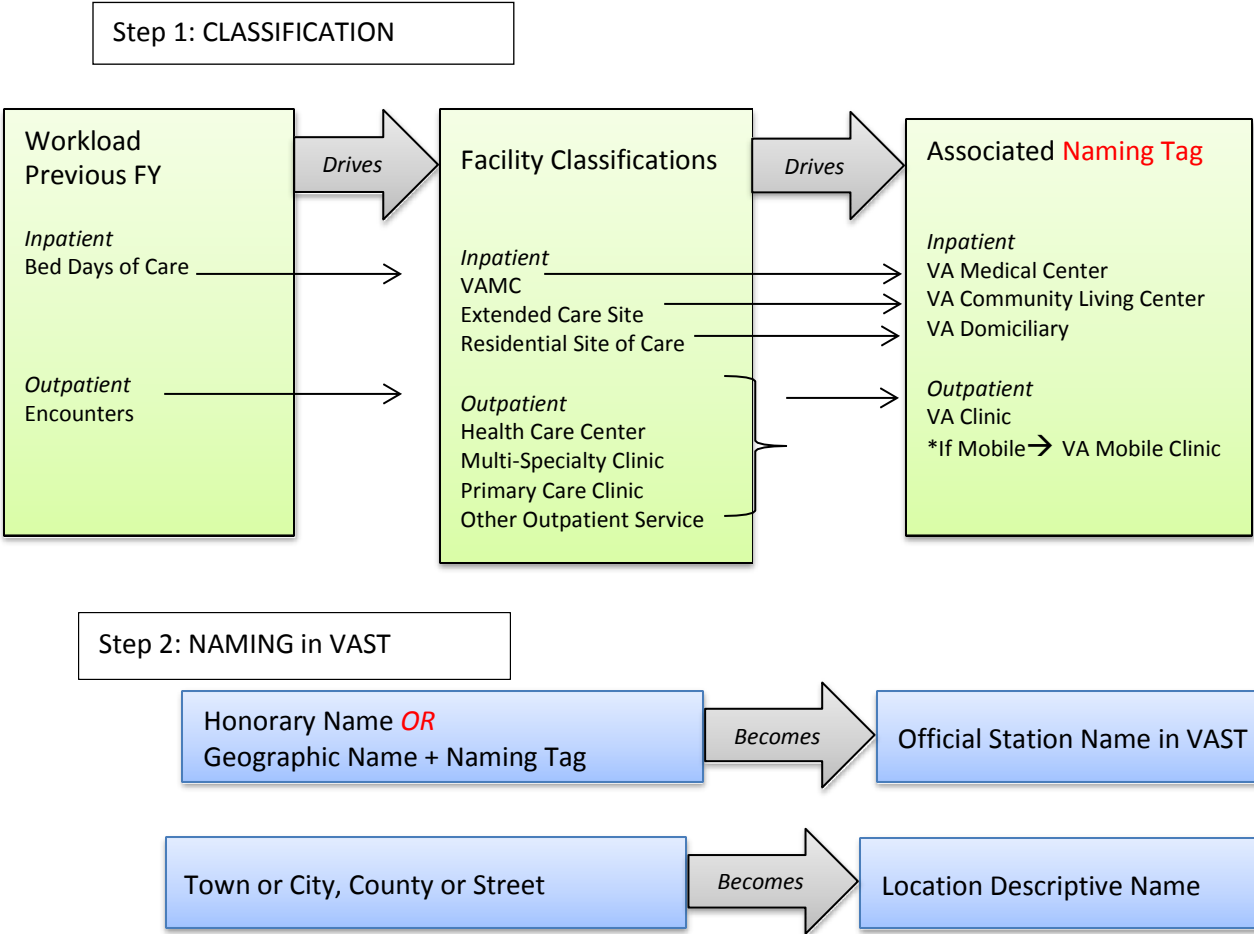
Table 1: Inpatient & Outpatient Naming Tags

Inpatient Naming Tags:	Outpatient Naming Tags
VA Medical Center	VA Clinic
VA Community Living Center	VA Mobile Clinic
VA Domiciliary	

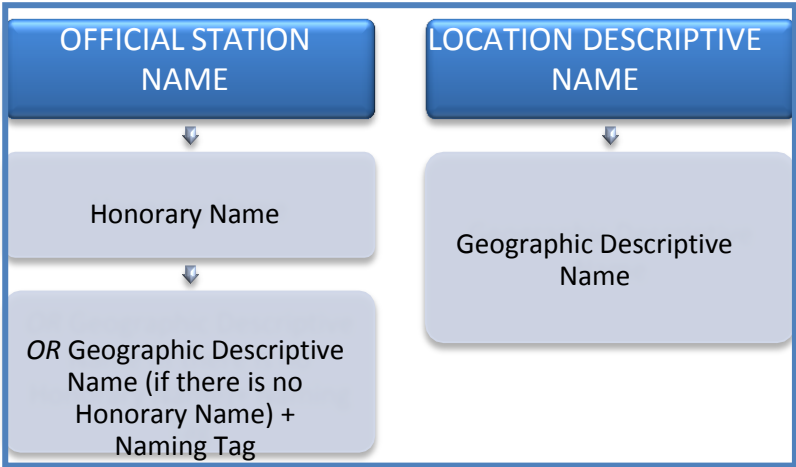**Table 2: Crosswalk of Sites of Care Classifications & Naming Tags**

Facility Classification	Official Facility Names + Naming Tags
VA Medical Center	*<<Official Facility Name>>* + VA Medical Center
VA Community Living Center (Stand-Alone)	*<<Official Facility Name>>* + VA Community Living Center
VA Domiciliary and other Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Programs or Residential Care Sites(Stand-Alone) (excluding Compensated Work Therapy-Transitional Residence)	*<<Official Facility Name>>* + VA Domiciliary
VA Health Care Center	*<<Official Facility Name>>* + VA Clinic
Primary Care CBOCs & Multi-Specialty CBOCs	*<<Official Facility Name>>* + VA Clinic *<<Official Facility Name>>* VA Mobile Clinic (#1,#2 If same City)
Other Outpatient Service Sites	

In Summary, facility classifications drive the naming in VAST.
Step #1 is classification and Step #2 is the addition of the naming tag.

Step 1: CLASSIFICATION

Workload Previous FY	Drives	Facility Classifications	Drives	Associated Naming Tag
Inpatient Bed Days of Care		*Inpatient* VAMC Extended Care Site Residential Site of Care		*Inpatient* VA Medical Center VA Community Living Center VA Domiciliary
Outpatient Encounters		*Outpatient* Health Care Center Multi-Specialty Clinic Primary Care Clinic Other Outpatient Service		*Outpatient* VA Clinic *If Mobile→ VA Mobile Clinic

Step 2: NAMING in VAST

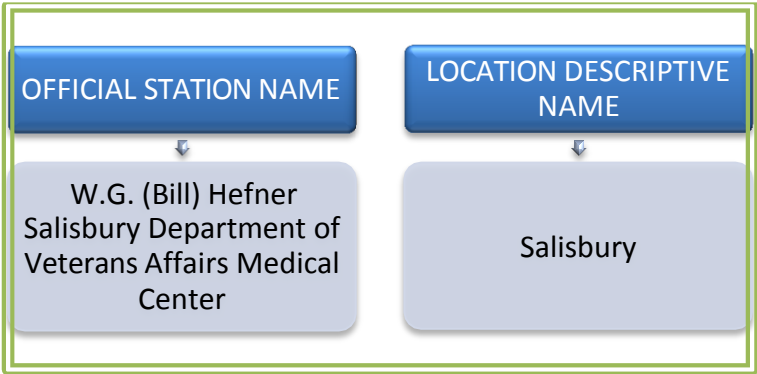| Honorary Name *OR* Geographic Name + Naming Tag	Becomes	Official Station Name in VAST
Town or City, County or Street	Becomes	Location Descriptive Name

There are two Fields which are impacted in the VAST database that reflect Facility Name:

1. **Official Station Name**: Honorary Name or Geographic Descriptive Name plus Naming Tag
2. **Location Descriptive Name**: Geographic Descriptive Name without a Naming Tag

OFFICIAL STATION NAME	LOCATION DESCRIPTIVE NAME
Honorary Name	Geographic Descriptive Name
OR Geographic Descriptive Name (if there is no Honorary Name) + Naming Tag	

For Example:

OFFICIAL STATION NAME	LOCATION DESCRIPTIVE NAME
W.G. (Bill) Hefner Salisbury Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center	Salisbury

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VISN: 6 - VA Mid Atlantic Health Care Network
Station Number: 659
Official Station Name: W.G. (Bill) Hefner Salisbury Department of Veterans
Location Descriptive Name: Salisbury

Name Change Details in VAST:

Standardize nomenclature affects two fields in VAST application: The **Official Station Name** and the **Location Descriptive Name**

In general, these items were <u>removed</u> from the name fields:
- ✓ Legacy Classifications (such as Annex & Outreach Clinic)
- ✓ Descriptions of Services (such as Eye Clinic, Pain Clinic, Mental Health Clinic, etc.)
- ✓ Program Specific language (such as RRTP, C&P, CRRC, etc.) and
- ✓ Specific Classification language (such as HCC & CBOC)

1) **Official Station Name** – Official Station Name is an Honorary Name or a Geographic Descriptive Name plus a Naming tag.
   a. Honorary Name: VA facilities may be named in honor of individuals only when authorized by Congressional Mandate or Executive Order. Therefore, where applicable, Official Station Name reflects an Honorary Name, if applicable. The name in VAST will be what is stated in the law, respectively. You can search for public laws on Congress.gov.
   b. Geographic Descriptive Name: In all other Cases the Official Station Name reflects the name of the geographical location where the site is located (county, city, town or street). If there was more than one clinic in the same area, then other location distinguishers such as county or street name were used to name the Official Station Name of the site. A naming tag will be added to the Geographic Descriptive Name.

2) **Location Descriptive Name** – Location Descriptive Name is always the Geographic Location and may reflect additional geographical information to aid in site identification. The naming approach is generally county then city or town and then street and then identifying location complex name. This field does not include a naming tag. If using a county or street name, the city is also added, for example Lake County-Willoughby.

Table 3: Examples of Naming Standards

Examples of New Naming Standards		
Outpatient Sites of Care		
Official Name	**Local Descriptive Name**	**Classification for QES Q3 FY18**
Greenville VA Clinic	Greenville-North Carolina	Health Care Center (HCC)
Lake County VA Clinic	Lake County-Willoughby	Multi-Specialty CBOC (MS CBOC)
New City VA Clinic	New City	Multi-Specialty CBOC (MS CBOC)
Raleigh VA Clinic	Raleigh-Sungate Boulevard	Primary Care CBOC (PC CBOC)
Montrose 1 VA Mobile Clinic	Montrose 1 Mobile	Other Outpatient Service (OOS)
Twenty First Street VA Clinic	Twenty First Street–Oakland	Other Outpatient Service (OOS)
Inpatient/Residential Sites of Care		
Official Name	**Local Descriptive Name**	**Classification for QES Q4 FY18**
Royal C. Johnson Veterans' Memorial Hospital	Sioux Falls	VA Medical Center (VAMC)
Tampa VA Domiciliary	Tampa Domiciliary	Residential Care Site (MH RRTP/DRRTP) (Stand-Alone)
Pueblo VA Community Living Center	Pueblo CLC	Extended Care Site (Community Living Center) (Stand-Alone)

Frequently Asked Questions & Answers

Q: Why were the classifications removed from the name fields in VAST?
A: Classifications will be found in another field within the VAST data system. According to the VHA Site Classifications and Definitions Handbook (1006.02), classifications will be driven off of workload as of FY15 and forward. Therefore, a Site's Classification and Names are independent of each other. Classifications are re-run annually and may change. Name Tags will be updated in response to changes in classification as appropriate.

Q: Why were the programs and services details removed from the name fields?
A: Programs and services can be found in the Clinical Inventory data system.[1]
Note: Sites of care do not have to change signage in the clinic locally or change the way in which clinics are communicated. However, utilizing a standard vernacular for VHA sites of care is beneficial for VA and VHA data systems to communicate. Example: Pine Plains Mental Health Clinic was changed to Pine Plains VA Clinic.

Q: What if there was more than one clinic in the same town?
A: If there is more than one clinic in the same Town/City, then other location distinguishers (such as County or Street Name) are used to name the Official Name & Location Descriptive Name of the site.

Q: Can I use the name of the building in the Official Station Name?
A: No, however, the name of the building or other identifier could be used in the Location Descriptive Name.

Q: What if our VA is named after someone? Wouldn't that be the "official name?"
A: Yes. VA facilities may be named in honor of individuals only when authorized by Congressional mandate or Executive Order of the President. Additionally, in our Nation's History, we have names that were assigned by "order" many years ago, such as with VA St. Louis VA Medical Center,
Jefferson Barracks (Station #567A0 in VISN 15). Therefore, where applicable, Official Station Names reflect Honorary Names where expressly stated by official record and/or law.[2] Honorary Names take precedent over geographic descriptive names. Honorary Names are displayed in VAST in accordance with the law. Naming tags are not added to the Official Name if there is an Honorary Name for a site of care.

Q: What if the law contains an outdated term, and does not match with the current VA terminology?
For example, the law uses "Hospital" instead of "VA Medical Center?"

A: Though we understand that in some cases the historical terminology predates the current classification process and naming standardization, per VA General Counsel, the Official Station Name in VAST must follow the exact wording per the law or executive order.
For example, "Franklin Delano Roosevelt Hospital" is the official name of the Montrose campus of the VA Hudson Valley HCS (Station #620 in VISN 2), which is considered a VA Medical Center.

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[1] Clinic Inventory Reports: Clinical Inventory Services Report; Clinical Inventory Facility Profile Report

[2] MP-1, Part II, Chapter 34 entitled "VA Uniform Station Numbering", discusses naming VA facilities. It states
"…Parts of facilities, such as individual buildings, wings of buildings, patient treatment wards, and auditoriums, may be named in honor of individuals, if approved by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs." Some of this has since been superseded by Public Law 105-368, Section 1001, dated November 11, 1998, and entitled "Requirement for Naming of Department Property." The public law states, "Except as expressly provided by law, a facility, structure or real property of the Department, and a major portion (such as a wing or floor) of any such facility, structure or real property, may be named only for the geographic area in which the facility, structure or real property is located."

Q: Does the VAST name field have limits on characters?

A: No. However, please note that FMS does have a 30-character limit on all their fields. FMS does use the Official Station Name as broadcast by the FSC and in VAST. This may present a problem, since it is inherent in the architecture of the system that some Official Station Names (including spaces) may be longer than 30 characters. FSC will determine the appropriate 30-character name for the FMS system.

Q: What if there are multiple sites of care with the same name, even after the naming rules above have been implemented?

A: If there is more than one site with the same Official Station Name and Location Descriptive Name, then add the state to the end of the Location Descriptive Name. If the state is the same for more than one site, then add the town or street name to the Location Descriptive Name instead.

For example, before:

| 407 | 564 | Fayetteville VA Medical Center | Fayetteville | (V16) 564 - Fayetteville VA Medical Center | VA Medical Center (VAMC) | Firm | Operational (Active) | No | Select |
| 161 | 565 | Fayetteville VA Medical Center | Fayetteville | (V06) 565 - Fayetteville VA Medical Center | VA Medical Center (VAMC) | Firm | Operational (Active) | No | Select |

After:

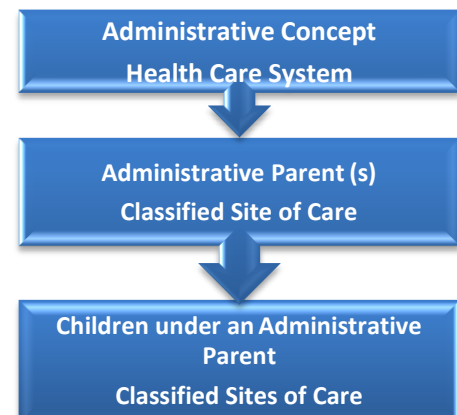| 407 | 564 | Fayetteville VA Medical Center | Fayetteville - Arkansas | (V16) 564 - Fayetteville VA Medical Center | VA Medical Center (VAMC) | Firm | Operational (Active) | No | Select |
| 161 | 565 | Fayetteville VA Medical Center | Fayetteville - North Carolina | (V06) 565 - Fayetteville VA Medical Center | VA Medical Center (VAMC) | Firm | Operational (Active) | No | Select |

Health Care Systems (HCS)

[VHA Handbook 1006.02, VHA Site Classifications and Definitions](#), defines a Health Care System as "an integrated health care delivery system under the direction of one administrative parent facility and comprised of multiple health care facilities, offering an array of health care services to Veterans in a defined geographic area. Health Care Systems are not specifically classified under the VHA site classification process."
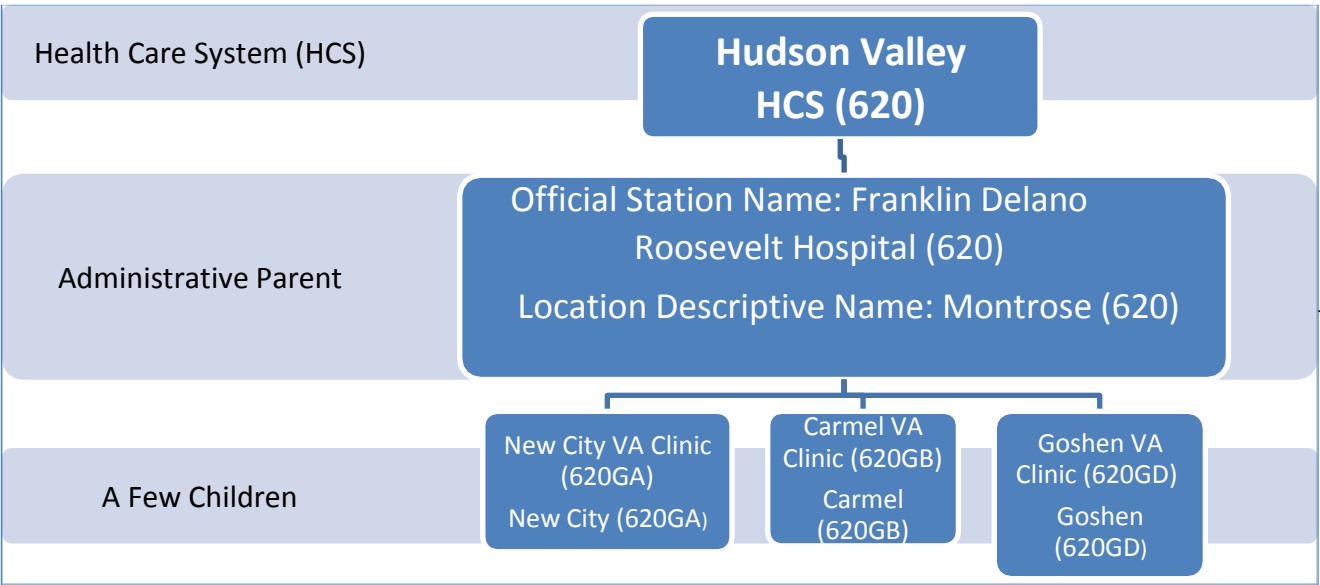
The term, Health Care System, does not identify a single site of care but a collection of sites under one administrative parent facility which manages the portfolio of sites in a common geographic area. There are [141 administrative parent facilities](#). A health care system is a conceptual term used to describe relationships, integrations, collaborations and coordination among sites. In contrast, Classifications are calculated based on workload and assigned to a single site of care with a unique physical address and presence. How a site refers to itself is dependent upon the frame of reference being used.

A similar analogy can be used when looking at VISNs or Veterans Integrated Service Networks (integrated network of multiple administrative parents and multiple health care facilities) versus the actual VISN Office (specific site).

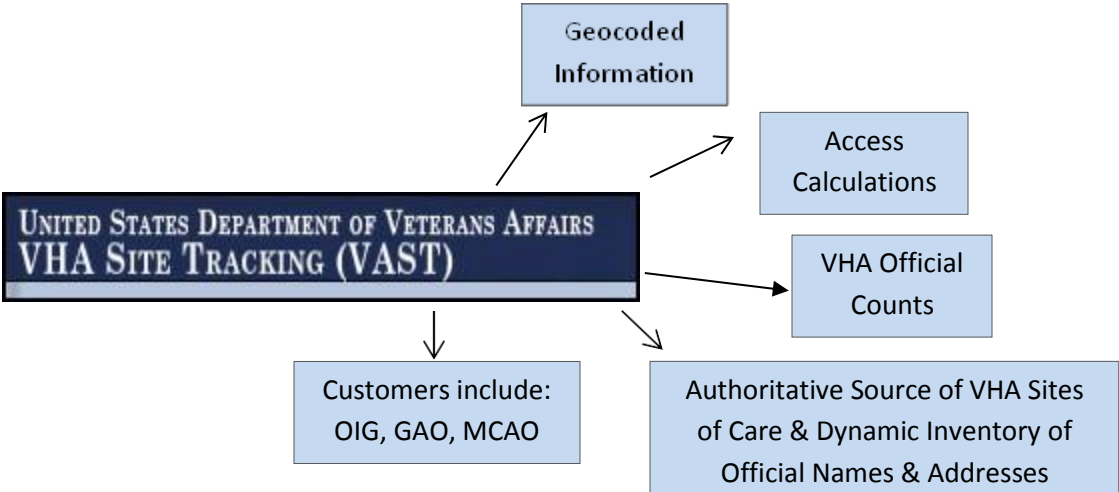**Names of Health Care Systems are not maintained in VAST**

Administrative Concept
Health Care System

↓

Administrative Parent (s)
Classified Site of Care

↓

Children under an Administrative Parent
Classified Sites of Care

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Health Care System (HCS)	**Hudson Valley HCS (620)**	
Administrative Parent	Official Station Name: Franklin Delano Roosevelt Hospital (620) Location Descriptive Name: Montrose (620)	
A Few Children	New City VA Clinic (620GA) New City (620GA)	Carmel VA Clinic (620GB) Carmel (620GB)	Goshen VA Clinic (620GD) Goshen (620GD)

Q: Why standardize the Names of VHA facilities in VAST?

A: The services available at VHA sites of care were not clear among the myriad of names VHA has used in the past (such as Annex & Independent Outpatient Clinic) and typically relied on using non-standardized naming nomenclature. In FY15, the implementation of VHA Site Classifications and Definitions Handbook (#1006.02)[3] is improving consistency in assigning Classifications to Facilities based on workload (Bed Days of Care and Encounters). A commensurate effort was needed in standardizing Naming VHA sites of care in national data systems. Since VAST is the authoritative source on VHA Sites of Care, VAST is leading the way to standardize Naming conventions in accordance with Public Law.

Geocoded Information

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Access Calculations

VHA Official Counts

Customers include: OIG, GAO, MCAO

Authoritative Source of VHA Sites of Care & Dynamic Inventory of Official Names & Addresses

Q: Does my VA need to change our signs or the way we refer to our sites of care?

A: No, Facility Name changes in national data systems do not:

- Require you to change signage (building or directional),
- Require you to change the way we, in every-day vernacular, refer to our sites of care, or
- Impact how Veterans currently refer to our sites of care (i.e. Internet website).

However, Naming Standardization efforts do impact nomenclature within and between VHA and VA data systems.

Q: Why is it important that there is consistency between these VHA and VA data systems?

A: There are countless data points and systems that converge and diverge along the entire continuum of care from the face-to-face encounter right through how a site of care is counted in the budget. Consistency in naming VHA sites of care is one of many potential areas in which VHA strives to improve standardization, accuracy and transparency.

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[3] VHA Site Classifications and Definitions Handbook, 1006.02.