



VA HEALTHCARE—VISN 4 2019 ANNUAL REPORT



Choose VA

MESSAGE FROM THE NETWORK DIRECTOR

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

Our VISN 4 team considers it an honor to serve our nation's Veterans, and it is my pleasure to present our 2019 annual report. In this report, you can read about some of the excellent work our staff have been doing to provide excellent care for Veterans at our 9 medical centers and 45 outpatient clinics.

I'm very proud of our accomplishments in 2019 across the network. We improved our customer service, implemented the MISSION Act, continued developing the eastern and western markets, expanded connected care and mental health programs, implemented smoke free policies, and realigned our human resources departments. With the continued dedication of our staff, I am confident we will be successful again in 2020.

I want to sincerely thank our Veteran patients and their families for choosing VISN 4 to provide their health care. I also want to thank our Veterans service officers and advocates for your continued support. And lastly, I want to thank our VISN 4 staff and volunteers for your dedication in caring for and serving America's heroes.

Sincerely,

Timothy W. Liezert
Network Director, VISN 4



(L-R) VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center Director Karen Flaherty-Oxler and VISN 4 Network Director Timothy Liezert during a site visit in Philadelphia.



Timothy W. Liezert

Network Director
Since September 2019

Charles R. Thilges

Deputy Network Director
Since January 2018

Timothy Burke, M.D.

Chief Medical Officer
Since March 2016

Joseph Haverstick

Chief Financial Officer
Since May 2019

Moira M. Hughes, FACHE

Quality Management Officer
Since April 2014

Teneal Caw

Human Resources Officer
Since August 2012

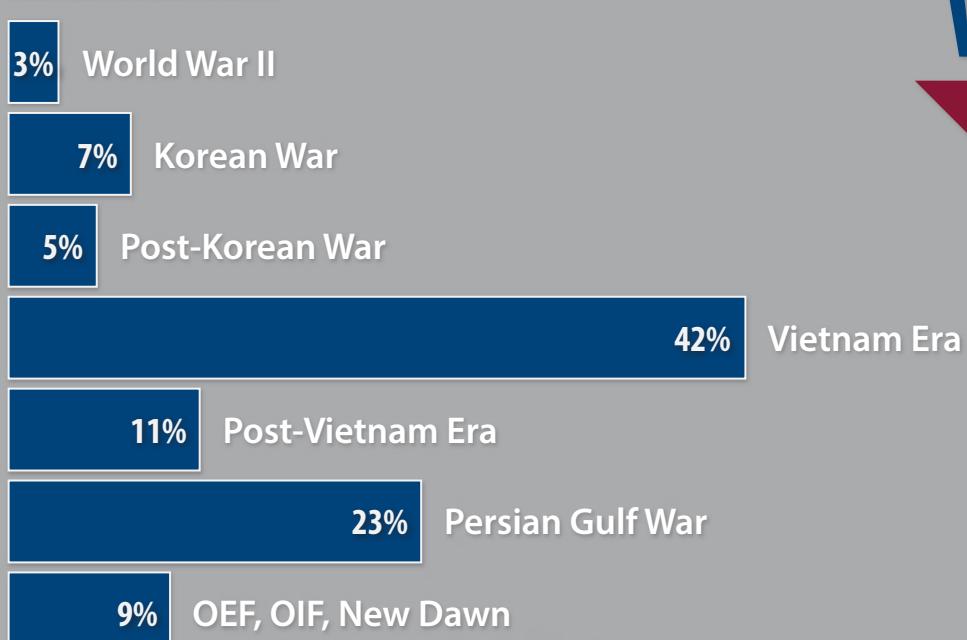
David E. Cowgill

Communications Manager
Since January 2007

Jo Petro

Executive Assistant
Since January 2018

Period of Service



WHO WE SERVE

**314,768
VETERANS**



91%
285,966 Men



9%
28,800 Women

	<25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85+
By Age	2,245	19,901	24,915	31,217	49,827	99,586	51,086	35,987
	0.7%	6.3%	7.9%	9.9%	15.8%	31.6%	16.2%	11.4%

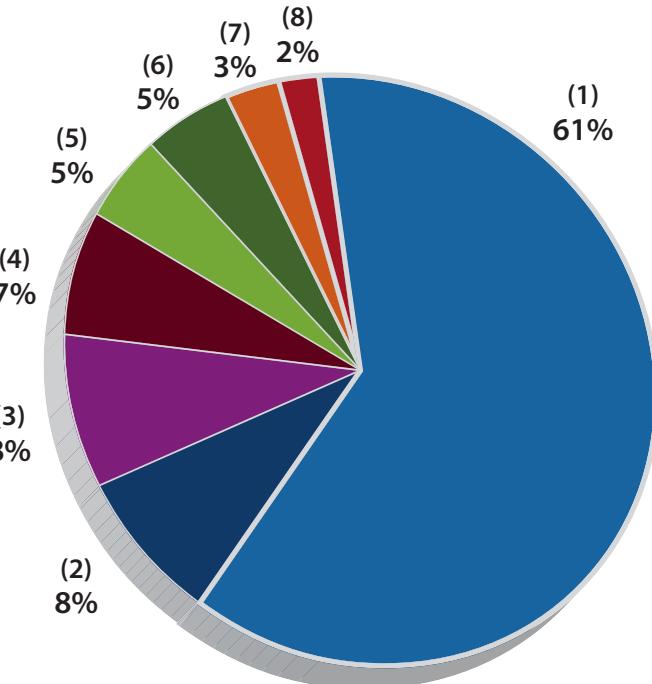
*Unique Veterans, includes all Veterans,
Non-Veterans and Pharmacy-only patients.*



VISN 4 OPERATING STATISTICS

Operating Budget

1) Salary and Benefits	\$1,403,491,638
2) Consolidated Mail-out Pharmacy	\$185,628,432
3) Services.....	\$183,017,254
4) Drugs and Medicines.....	\$160,520,478
5) Medical Care Collection Fund	\$126,163,000
6) All Other Costs	\$111,156,802
7) Lands and Structures	\$77,310,284
8) Equipment.....	\$49,081,429
TOTAL.....	\$2,296,369,317



Workforce

Total Number of Employees.....	14,875
Physicians.....	1,107
Veterans	3,925
Nurses.....	3,034



Research

Total Funding for Research	\$28,045,916
Investigators.....	223
Projects	587



Workload

Inpatient Admissions.....	25,859
Outpatient Visits.....	3,681,924
Prescriptions Filled	12,292,099
Surgical Procedures	20,157

Volunteers

Total Volunteer Hours.....	431,362
Volunteers.....	3,013
Avg. Hours	143



Gifts and Donations

Total Value of Gifts and Donations:.....	\$4,358,461.16
Items	\$2,967,696.07
Monetary.....	\$888,348.83
Activity.....	\$502,416.26

Operating Beds

Total Number of Beds.....	2,033
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ACCESSING YOUR HEALTH CARE...ANYWHERE

VISN 4 has one of the largest and most diverse telehealth programs in VA. In fiscal year 2019, VISN 4 served more than 56,000 Veterans through telehealth as 19% of Veterans had at least one telehealth visit, the highest percentage of any VA network in the country.

Overall, VISN 4 served more than 9,000 more patients and offered more programs through telehealth than the prior fiscal year. Some examples of the telehealth programs that had the greatest impact include:

- **TeleMental Health Hub** – served nearly 3,000 Veterans from 48 facilities across four VISNs, providing access to mental health services when there are local gaps in coverage.

- **Home Telehealth** – monitored 6,000 patients and improved clinical outcomes and access to care while reducing complications, hospitalizations and clinic or emergency room visits.
- **TelePrimary Care Hub** – cared for more than 300 Veterans with less than a full operational year. This new program provides primary care coverage where there are existing gaps in VISN 4.

TeleSeasonal Clinics

In fiscal year 2019, VISN 4 launched a program where Veterans who contacted the network call center could be seen the same day by a nurse practitioner through VVC. This program also provided treatment for common seasonal ailments such as tick bites and the flu.

TeleChemotherapy

On July 25, 2019, Dr. Richard A. Stone, Executive in Charge from the Office of the Under Secretary for Health, visited the Pittsburgh VA Healthcare System and toured the Chemotherapy Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) Clinic. The TeleChemotherapy program allows Veterans who live in the Altoona area to visit with their VA Pittsburgh oncologist through telehealth while they remain at the James E. van Zandt VA Medical Center. In FY19, this program saved more than 500 Veterans from travelling to Pittsburgh for their oncology appointments, and Veterans report they are highly satisfied with the program.

My HealtheVet

My HealtheVet (MHV), VA's online personal health record, empowers Veterans, service members and their dependents with taking an active role in managing their health care. MHV users can review, refill, and track VA prescriptions; send secure messages; view, print and download portions of their medical record; and request VA appointments. In FY19, more than 128,000 Veterans or 40% of patients in VISN 4 have registered to use MHV, and more than 335,000 secure messages were received, a 12% increase over FY 18.

VA Online Scheduling

Through My HealtheVet, VA's online personal health record, Veterans can self-schedule or request a primary

care appointment or specialty appointments such as Optometry or Audiology. VA Online Scheduling also allows Veterans to view and cancel appointments and requests. In VISN 4, Veterans self-scheduled more than 3,200 and requested almost 4,600 appointments through VA Online Scheduling in FY19.

VEText

VEText was created to remind Veterans of upcoming appointments via text messaging. VEText offers a quick and easy way for Veterans to confirm and/or cancel appointments. In FY19, 43% of appointments canceled through VEText in VISN 4 were rescheduled with other appointments. A new feature offers Veterans earlier primary care appointment times via text messages for those that meet certain criteria (wait time, service connection, etc.). By following the prompts provided in the text message, Veterans can either reschedule or keep their current appointment.

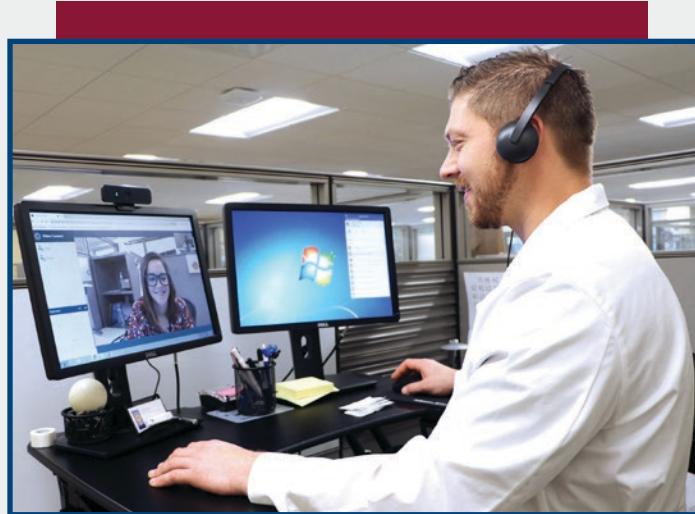
Annie

Annie is VA's automated texting system that promotes self-care for Veterans by sending reminders to take medications and record blood pressure readings. Although it is NOT a direct messaging system between Veterans and their clinicians, Annie is used for facility broadcast messages, appointment reminders, and automated clinical protocols. At the end of FY19, Annie was implemented at six VISN 4 medical centers, and we will continue to add programs during FY20.

VA VIDEO CONNECT

VA Video Connect (VVC) enables Veterans to meet virtually with their VA health care providers securely and privately from wherever they may be. The use of VVC increased in VISN 4 during FY 19 as we served more than 5,000 Veterans in their homes or other remote locations. As an added benefit, there is no co-pay for VVC visits!

-  <https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect>
-  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IS8z9_O_efU



YOUR EXPERIENCE MATTERS

Patient experience initiatives aim to create a consistent, exceptional experience at every VA medical center. Employees at all levels of the organization have been empowered to provide service recovery at the point of service, eliminating wait times for resolution.

VA is using a variety of tools to incorporate the voice of the veteran in performance improvement initiatives. Veterans enrolled in care may receive an electronic VSIGNALS survey or a paper SHEP (Survey of Healthcare Experiences) survey and are encouraged to provide their feedback.



LIVING LIFE TO THE FULLEST

Whole Health is VA's new integrative approach to health care that combines conventional and complementary approaches to help veterans live a whole, healthy and fulfilling life.

VA's new approach to health care will significantly improve outcomes by shifting from a system primarily focused on disease management to one that is based on partnering with Veterans throughout their lives and focusing on their whole health.

A variety of whole health-related classes are available at your medical center, including Introduction to Whole Health and Taking Charge of My Life and Health. In these classes, you can interact with your peers and share the reasons why you want to be healthy.

Your VA care team will partner with you and provide you the tools to help you reach and maintain your goals.



Of all Veterans surveyed in the VISN 4 region, 91% said they trust VA for their health care, the 3rd highest in the nation.



In addition, 95% of Veterans that use VISN 4 for their care also agree that they feel respected and comfortable at their appointments.

"Everyone there was courteous and friendly. They went out of their way to make you feel special. They are helpful and answer all your questions, and if they can't, they will find someone who could."

~Veteran comment from a recent VSIGNALS survey

ENGAGING OUR EMPLOYEES

Leadership Development Institute

In fiscal year 2019, nineteen emerging leaders with high leadership potential participated in the VISN 4 Leadership Development Institute (LDI). This year-long intensive leadership development initiative consisted of multiple face-to-face and virtual opportunities, where the participants interacted closely with peers from medical centers across the network.

Under the guidance of three experienced program facilitators, participants were given the opportunity to collaborate on various assignments and projects. Each student learned more about their individual leadership style as well as how to interact effectively with those utilizing different approaches. In addition, they applied process improvement techniques and learned about the career paths of current leaders in VISN 4.

We are excited to hear about the positive impact our 2019 LDI graduates will continue to have on the organization as they move forward on their VA journey! Many thanks to our dedicated 2019 LDI facilitators: Andrea Hall, Tauna Perenovich and Amanda Spock Ervin.



All Employee Survey Results

In fiscal year 2019, 63% of VISN 4 employees completed the All Employee Survey, surpassing last year's response rate. As a result, more than 8,900 employees across the network shared perceptions about their current work environment as well as provided feedback to maintain or improve satisfaction in key areas.

This year's survey results indicate that VISN 4 employees understand how their daily work helps to achieve the agency's goals and that they are given a real opportunity to improve their skills. Employees across the network report trust and confidence in their supervisor, and in return, their supervisor treats them with respect and actively listens to what they have to say. In addition, employees strongly feel that Veterans and their families are very satisfied with the products and services provided through their daily



The Best Places to Work Score (BPTW) for the network improved from the FY18 level, with a score of 67, exceeding the overall VHA average. The BPTW score measures three areas of employee perception:

- Overall job satisfaction
- Satisfaction with the organization
- Likelihood of recommending the VA as a good place to work

► VISN 4 employees and instructors gather for a group photo following the 2019 Leadership Development Institute graduation ceremony.



IMPROVING YOUR ACCESS TO CARE

In fiscal year 2019, more than 95% of appointments in VISN 4 were completed within 30 days of the Veteran's preferred date. We scheduled more than 2.4 million appointments, and the average wait time was 5.0 days.

Clinics	Number of Appointments	Wait Time <30 days (#)	Wait Time <30 days (%)	Average Wait (days)
All Clinics	2,449,201	2,315,450	95.7%	5.0
Mental Health	357,838	344,680	97.6%	3.4
Primary Care	552,100	540,669	97.9%	3.6
Specialty Care	965,173	874,310	93.0%	7.4

Outpatient Clinic Relocations

The Lancaster County VA Clinic (pictured above) relocated to a new location in Willow Street, PA in December 2018. The new 25,000-square-foot clinic includes 40 exam rooms, two women's health rooms, two group therapy rooms, and 12 behavioral health treatment rooms.

Services offered include primary care, women's health care, mental health care, preventative care, laboratory and point of care testing services, rehabilitation services and optometry services. This move allows the clinic to fully transition to the Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) model of healthcare.

Lancaster County VA Clinic
212 Willow Valley Lakes Drive
Willow Street, PA 17584

EXPANDING COMMUNITY CARE

During fiscal year 2019, VA medical centers dedicated efforts to expand access to health care by expanding eligibility through the Mission Act, while Veterans Choice Act was sunsetting. This was accomplished by forming an alliance with new health care networks and providers. VISN 4 Community Care departments are committed to VA's mission "To serve those who served."

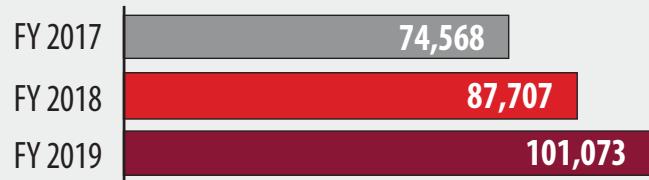
While community care benefits and services continue to grow within VISN 4, Veterans are still accessing high quality health care within VA.

Due to continuous growth and high demand for foundational services within the Philadelphia metropolitan area, a new outpatient clinic was established in West Philadelphia in March 2019. This location provides primary care, behavioral health, PAIN PACT, home based primary care, laboratory and telehealth services to approximately 6,000 Veterans residing in West Philadelphia and eastern portions of Delaware County, Pa.

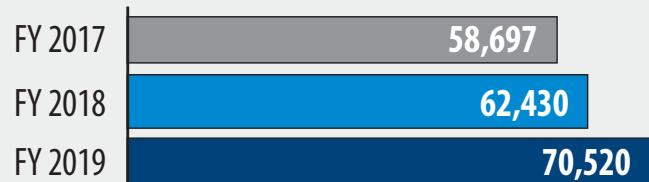
In addition, several clinics in southwestern Pennsylvania relocated to larger facilities. The Fayette County VA Clinic relocated to a new location in Uniontown, Pa. in December 2018, the Belmont County VA Clinic relocated to a new location in St. Clairsville, Ohio in March 2019, and the Washington County VA Clinic relocated to a new location in Washington, Pa. in April 2019.

For each clinic, the relocation increased the usable space to more than 16,000 square feet. Your care team will now have additional primary care, behavioral health, and specialty exam rooms as well as new space to provide audiology services. These moves will allow each clinic to officially transition to the Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) model of health care.

Scheduled and Completed Consults



Unique Veterans Served by Community Care Staff



West Philadelphia VA Clinic
6232 Market Street
Suite 100
Philadelphia, PA 19139



Fayette County VA Clinic
627 Pittsburgh Road
Suite 2
Uniontown, PA 15401



Belmont County VA Clinic
67800 Mall Ring Road
Suite 215
St. Clairsville, OH 43950



Washington County VA Clinic
95 West Beau Street
Suite 200
Washington, PA 15301



INCREASING ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE

In addition to meeting the many national requirements for suicide prevention, VISN 4 also improved access to mental health treatment programs and expanded virtual care options. These strategies are integral to VISN 4's efforts to prevent Veteran suicides.

Improved Access to Mental Health Services in Primary Care

In fiscal year 2019, VISN 4 successfully launched a Behavioral Health Lab pilot between the Corporal Michael J. Crescenz VA Medical Center in Philadelphia, Pa. and the five outpatient clinics from Wilmington VA Medical Center.

- Successfully onboarded 3 psychologists to work in Philadelphia while providing Primary Care Mental

Health Integration services virtually to Wilmington's five outpatient clinics.

- Partnership between with PCMHI psychiatry & primary care has increased confidence with prescribing necessary psychotropics
- There are veterans seen in Wilmington's CBOC's currently receiving MH services, who prior to this initiative, were not.
- At the end of FY19, the virtual team had triaged 273 veterans, with the number triaged increasing each month.

The providers from Philadelphia and Wilmington are actively partnering to assure that veterans with mild to moderate MH concerns are now being identified and their concerns addressed, often in the Primary Care environment. Workload is increasing each month as the program becomes better established.

Improved Access to Residential Care

VISN 4 established a weekly VISN-wide huddle for residential program leaders to discuss program and referral issues. Veterans with complex care needs are also discussed to determine which program might best address their needs. The goal is to facilitate sharing of resources, increase access, and improve bed utilization for the residential programs throughout VISN 4.

Results for the Eastern Market Facilities included:

- The acceptance rate for referrals increased from 75% to 78% compared to the national acceptance rate of 66%.
- Admissions increased 7% during the second half of FY19.
- 98% of accepted referrals resulted in an admission during second half of FY19 due to increased emphasis on access and reducing barriers.
- Lebanon VA Medical Center achieved a significant increase in ADC/Admissions

VISN-wide results included:

- Four of six facilities demonstrated modest increases in their average daily census
- VISN 4 facilities achieved an 8% increase in admissions

Improved Access to Virtual Outpatient Mental Health Care

VISN 4 established a Behavioral Health Lab hub in Philadelphia and expanded Pittsburgh's Mental Health Clinical Resource hub, accomplishing many desired outcomes during FY19, including:

- Served 3,085 veterans from 50 sites within 8 states and 5 VISNs and completed 11,092 encounters
- Secured funds to add 12 mental health clinicians to provide additional care for veteran
- Started a Virtual Medication Assisted Treatment program to help patients in Altoona, Pa. with Opioid Use Disorder.
- Expanded the use of VA Video Connect and remotely served 443 patients and completed 700 encounters
- Improved access - 59% of all veterans served were in a rural area

#BeThere
for Veterans and Service members

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

AROUND VISN 4

VA Healthcare—VISN 4 is a fully integrated network of 9 VA campuses, 45 outpatient clinics, 1 mobile clinic, and 17 Vet Centers.

In fiscal year 2019, VISN 4 served 314,768 Veterans from across the nation, primarily from Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, Ohio, West Virginia and New York.

WESTERN MARKET

Altoona, PA

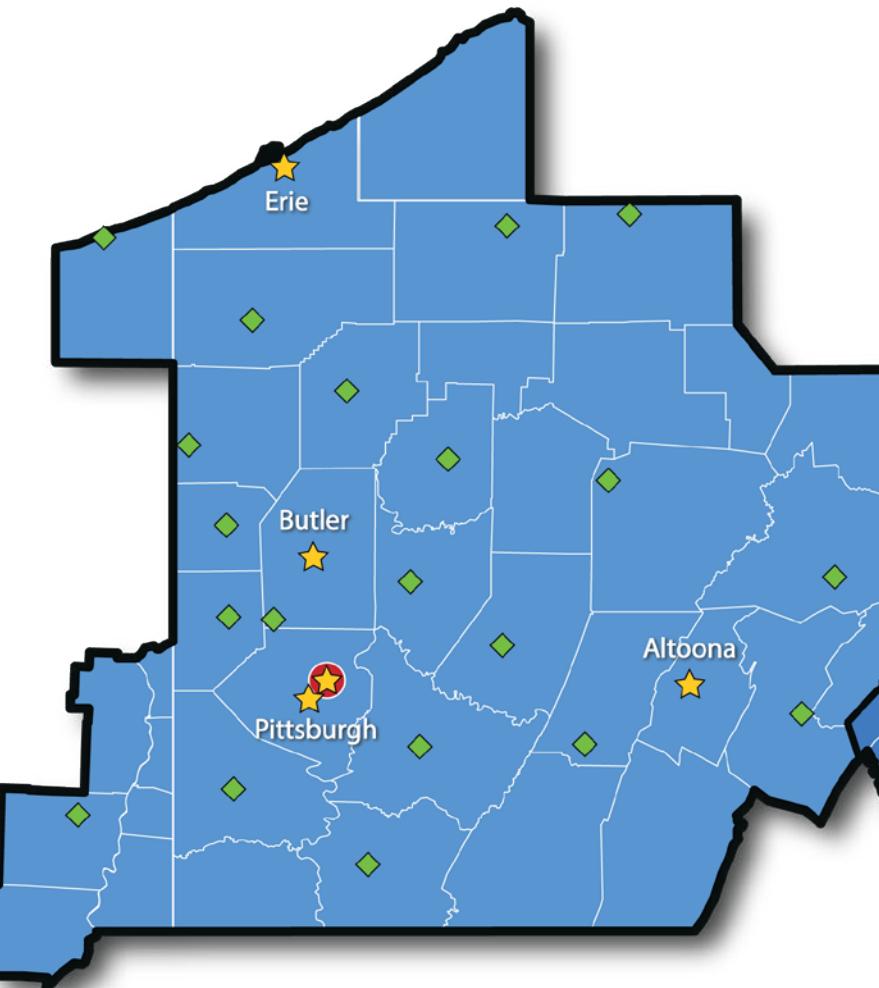
James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center
2907 Pleasant Valley Blvd.
Altoona, PA 16602
877-626-2500
www.altoona.va.gov
www.facebook.com/VAAaltoona
twitter.com/VAAaltoona

■ Total Veterans Served	25,888
■ Female Veterans Served	1,873
■ Operating Budget	\$136,539,000
■ Admissions	569
■ Outpatient Visits	350,228
■ Employees	932

Butler, PA

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

■ Total Veterans Served	26,720
■ Female Veterans Served	1,628
■ Operating Budget	\$111,151,547
■ Admissions	446
■ Outpatient Visits	214,541
■ Employees	723



VA Healthcare-VISN 4

- VA Medical Centers
- Outpatient Clinics
- Network Office
- Homeless Site

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

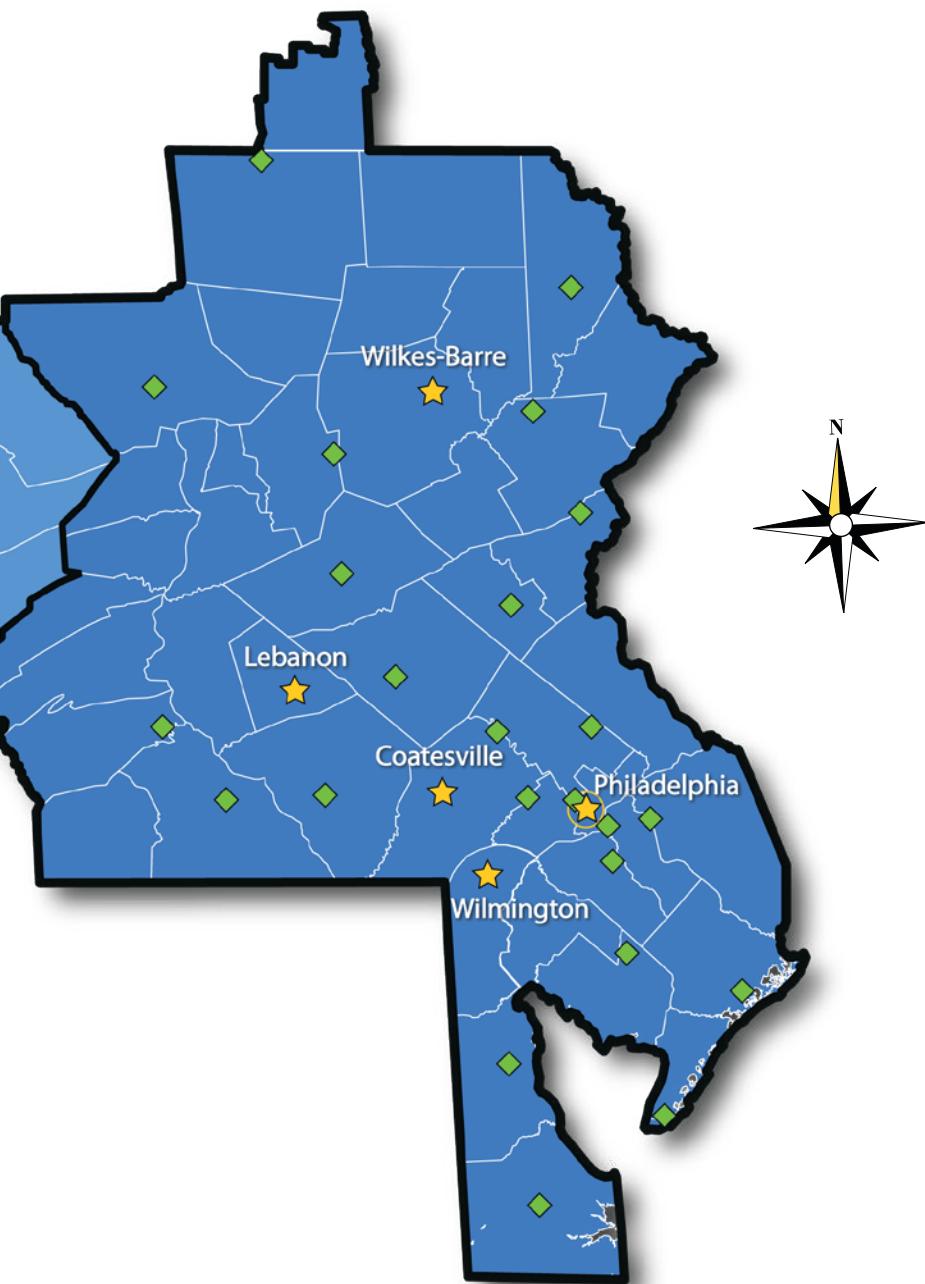
■ Total Veterans Served	22,602
■ Female Veterans Served	1,753
■ Operating Budget	\$127,000,000
■ Admissions	461
■ Outpatient Visits	268,012
■ Employees	790

Pittsburgh, PA

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

■ Total Veterans Served	79,934
■ Female Veterans Served	7,851
■ Operating Budget	\$696,300,000
■ Admissions	14,345
■ Outpatient Visits	758,505
■ Employees	4,066

EASTERN MARKET



Coatesville, PA

Coatesville VA Medical Center
1400 Blackhorse Hill Road
Coatesville, PA 19320
📞 800-290-6172
✉️ www.coatesville.va.gov

Flag	Total Veterans Served	18,860
Woman	Female Veterans Served	1,076
Pie	Operating Budget	\$208,618,000
Mountain	Admissions	2,240
Heart	Outpatient Visits	231,168
Person	Employees	1,300

Wilkes-Barre, PA

Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center
1111 East End Blvd.
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711
📞 877-928-2621
✉️ www.wilkes-barre.va.gov

Flag	Total Veterans Served	38,255
Woman	Female Veterans Served	3,427
Pie	Operating Budget	\$278,460,000
Mountain	Admissions	3,206
Heart	Outpatient Visits	405,252
Person	Employees	1,515

Lebanon, PA

Lebanon VA Medical Center
1700 South Lincoln Avenue
Lebanon, PA 17042

📞 800-409-8771

✉️ www.lebanon.va.gov

Facebook www.facebook.com/VALebanon

Twitter twitter.com/VALebanon

Flag	Total Veterans Served	45,066
Woman	Female Veterans Served	3,203
Pie	Operating Budget	\$365,978,968
Mountain	Admissions	3,541
Heart	Outpatient Visits	508,977
Person	Employees	1,633

Philadelphia, PA

Corporal Michael J. Crescenz
VA Medical Center
3900 Woodland Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19104

📞 800-949-1001

✉️ www.philadelphia.va.gov

Facebook www.facebook.com/PhiladelphiaVAMC

Twitter twitter.com/VAPhiladelphia

Flag	Total Veterans Served	59,312
Woman	Female Veterans Served	6,083
Pie	Operating Budget	\$574,266,000
Mountain	Admissions	6,563
Heart	Outpatient Visits	545,295
Person	Employees	2,520

Wilmington, DE

Wilmington VA Medical Center
1601 Kirkwood Highway
Wilmington, DE 19805

📞 800-461-8262

✉️ www.wilmington.va.gov

Facebook www.facebook.com/WilmingtonVAMC

Twitter twitter.com/WilmingtonVAMC

Flag	Total Veterans Served	32,433
Woman	Female Veterans Served	2,688
Pie	Operating Budget	\$245,347,194
Mountain	Admissions	1,099
Heart	Outpatient Visits	354,790
Person	Employees	1,170

BRING A BUDDY!

Know a fellow Veteran not enrolled in VA health care? Bring him or her with you to your next VA appointment or event!

They will need to bring their DD-214 and check in at the main reception desk of your local medical center or with a staff person at an outreach event. We will take it from there and begin the enrollment process.



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
1010 Delafield Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15215
412-822-3316**

www.visn4.va.gov

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Healthcare-VISN 4