

ANNUAL REPORT 2018



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System



Director's Message

It has been an exciting year for the Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System, and I invite you to reflect upon the mighty steps that the Veterans medical center has traveled to rebuild and deliver innovative, cutting-edge, and much-needed health care services to over 44,000 Veterans in the Gulf south.

Throughout this year, our employees have proven that wisdom, prudence, and service to Veterans make this health care system both an excellent place to get health care and to work. Since our ribbon cutting, we provided over 661,000 clinic appointments, over 2,100 surgical procedures and over 14,000 bed-days-of-care at the new Veterans medical center. Veterans deserve the very best care and services available, and we are committed to providing just that.

Our Veterans medical center has achieved numerous milestones that many thought would be impossible just a few years ago. Here are a few I'd like to highlight:

- Most recently, our surgical teams launched a variety of technology complex clinical services including laparoscopic, robotic, and implantable cardioverter defibrillator.
- Our women's health program grew tremendously and we now serve about 4,400 women Veterans with over 5,500 enrolled for care. From annual Ladies Nights to offering a full array of health care

services, women Veterans now have a full complement of health care services with us, including primary care, gynecology, social work, pharmacy and primary care/mental health integration all in our Women's Clinic.

- We have treated almost 500 patients since activating the inpatient mental health unit, and we now offer group psychotherapy and psychoeducational interventions in addition to medication management on a short-term basis so Veterans can return to normal life activities.

- Also, we completed the last major construction project on the campus this summer – the Research building, and we continue to move staff into office and laboratory space as we revitalize this critical component of our mission. This includes a 50 percent increase in the number of Merit recipients and a total of 14 Ph.D. investigators who are eligible for Merit funding in 2019.

- We are very focused on our research mission. In the coming years, we anticipate even more growth in clinical trial research to provide Veterans with immediate access to emerging treatment options. Our new state-of-the-art facility and research program will bring a superior level of research back to New Orleans and, most importantly, to our Veterans.

Our employees have traveled this amazing journey, and now we are 3,000 team members strong.

- This became possible because of the numerous and very popular onsite recruitment fairs. These fairs attracted more than 300 nurses, and 1298 other professionals as the new Veterans medical center entered a new phase of specialty services and

program activations that were more technologically complex.

- We are very fortunate to have 40 academic affiliations with two medical schools and several other clinical education programs. This past year, more than 400 medical students affiliated with LSU and Tulane medical schools went through our program, ranking SLVHCS with a satisfaction score of greater than 91 percent. We also have 31 administrative internships with students from 10 universities. Furthermore, we will have a projected 800 trainees rotating through the medical center over the next year, and these surveys ensure we are meeting the needs of our Veterans, as well as the future leaders of VA.

- This year, we recognized more than 300 physicians for their work and contribution to patients at Doctors Day and our entire nursing staff during our Nurses Week. We are proud to have had eight SLVHCS nurses recognized this year in the 100 Great Nurses of New Orleans. As a matter of fact, it was our nursing corps that created the highly successful nurse-led campaign to improve patient satisfaction.

- Together we are making an impact on some of the most critical issues facing society and Veterans alike. We've made a bold commitment to reduce opioid use among Veteran patients, reducing the proportion of patients prescribed opioids at SLVHCS by another 7 percent; making the total reduction 43 percent over the past five years.

- We expanded our tele-health program from basic vital signs to tele-stroke care with a specialized neurologist. We conducted over 1,366 sleep studies and almost 1,150



home sleep apnea tests in our 24-hour service sleep program. With a mission to eliminate Veteran suicide, we continue to focus on programs that support our Veterans who are suffering from things like traumatic brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder.

Step by step, throughout 2018, we continued to prove that we are "setting our course by the stars, and not by the lights of every passing ship" (Gen. Omar Bradley). Ours is a steady journey, one that is being recognized and rewarded, honored and emulated:

- This summer, we underwent successful unannounced Joint Commission, Long-Term Care Institute, College of American Pathologists and Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities surveys where teams of highly trained inspectors examined employees, safety and life safety procedures, regulatory compliance, and facilities and equipment. Also, VA's National Patient Safety Center recognized us with a Gold Cornerstone award.

- By the same token, I proudly accepted the American Veterans (AMVETS) Silver Helmet Award for Civil Service and shared it with my entire team. I can't think of anything more gratifying than being recognized by the people I serve. Our team has worked tirelessly every day to make sure all of our Veterans receive the respect and best care anywhere that they deserve.

- We also were recognized as a leader in the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer/Questioning (LGBTQ) Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) for the second year in a row, showcasing our policies and practices related to equality and inclusion of LGBTQ

patients, visitors and employees. We received recognition as a CareerSTAT Frontline Worker Champion for our Hudson Thomas and EVAL developmental programs. Our Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) star ranking showed "meaningful" improvement, resulting in 4-star ranking.

- Our achievements have been recognized internationally as the SLVHCS recently won the Project Management Institute Project of the Year Award, for a large and complex project that best delivers a superior performance of project management practices, excellent organizational results, and positive impacts on society.

- Also, two of our six community living center neighborhoods opened and our therapeutic and adaptive recreation sports programs are growing as well. We've started bocce ball, fencing and, equestrian programs and we are working on future programs that include pickleball, wheelchair racing, wheelchair lacrosse, adaptive scuba diving, and wheelchair softball.



**AMVETS Silver
Helmet Award**

As we move forward, we continue to engage with our community from our first-ever Community Clergy Open House to on-going town halls and Veterans engagement boards. But most of all, we work to put our Veterans at the center of the process. Veterans and their family members tell me all the time how much they love the service, respect, and attention they receive here from employees and volunteers throughout our health care system, which means Veterans love the work we do. The knowledge that we've done something great for someone else is a powerful reward one, which I hope we feel throughout the year. There's nothing else quite like it.

As we journey from one year to the next, thank you for your support and dedication during these challenging and exciting times. The year ahead will bring its own challenges, but I know by working together, keeping focused on our priorities and putting our Veterans first, we can realize our ambitions-all it takes is one step at a time.

This year we will focus on our continued journey to a 5-star ranking, improving patient satisfaction scores, improving our Best Place to Work score, and completing scheduled activation milestones. I'm excited about the future our health care system and the advancements in patient care that we will make together, as well as the future of VA as we build on our progress by rolling out a plan for the Mission Act that will revolutionize VA health care as we know it.

Fernando O. Rivera, FACHE
CEO/Director Southeast Louisiana
Veterans HCS

Customer Service

PATIENT SATISFACTION

Overall rating of hospital (inpatient), Using any number from 0 to 10, where 0 is the worst hospital possible and 10 is the best hospital possible, what number would you use to rate this hospital during your stay?

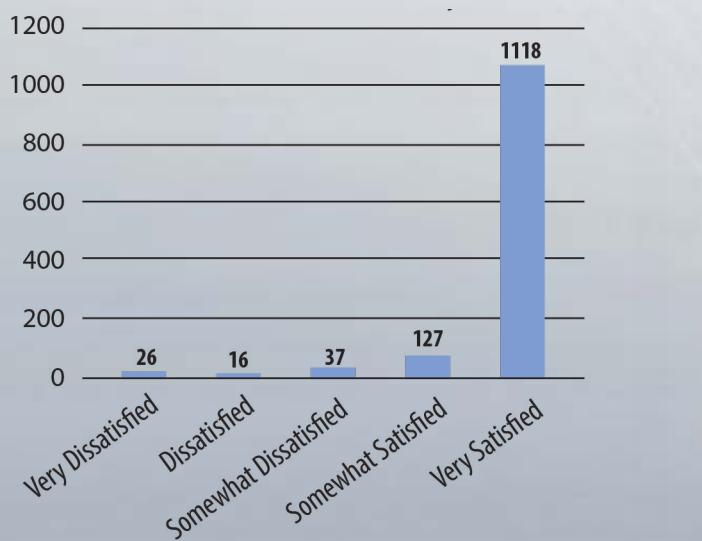
92%

of VA Survey of Health Care Experience of Patients (SHEP) responders rated the Veterans medical center a 9/10 for their stay.

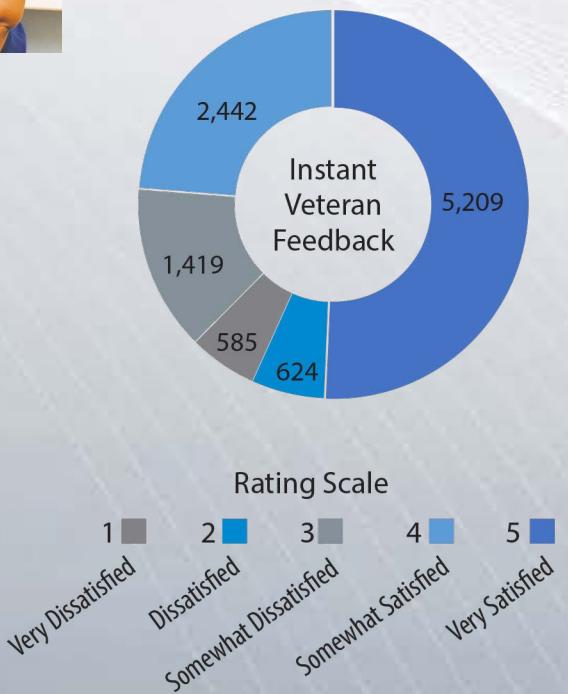
- Identified as a leader in the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer/ Questioning (LGBTQ) Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) for two years in a row.
- Created a dog relief center located next to the ground level parking lot for the Emergency Department. The bark park is a fenced, grassy relief area for service dogs to stretch their legs and take breaks.
- Nurse-led campaign is a program designed to promote positive health care experiences for Veterans by engaging employees through their knowledge of the Survey of Health Care Experience for Patients.



Satisfaction Survey



Veterans Signal Survey



I would like to thank my nurse practitioner and her team in the Orthopedics clinic at the SLVHCS for her excellent assistance in evaluating me and getting me to physical therapy which completely stopped the pain and restored the full range of motion in my left shoulder and arm that was crippling me since sometime in 1980s.

-Veteran

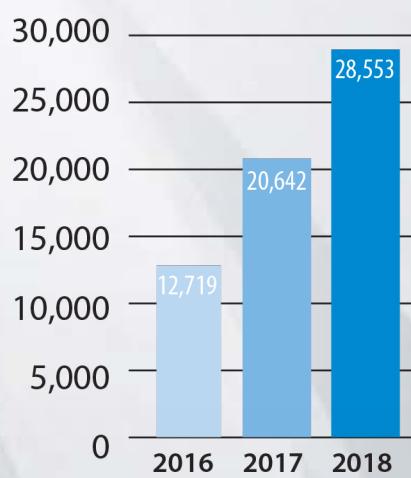
"I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude for the kind attention that your staff consistently provide to my dad. My dad is 87 years old, a vet of the Korean War. Each time that we go, I am impressed with the level of attention and care that the staff provide. The staff seem to genuinely enjoy their jobs and it shows."

-Veteran family member



We have televisions throughout our health care system with health care videos, informational updates and more! Check out our introduction video.

Voluntary Service Hours



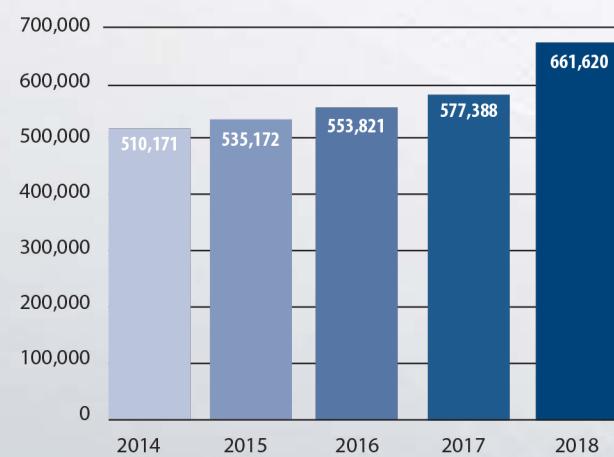
2018 Donations



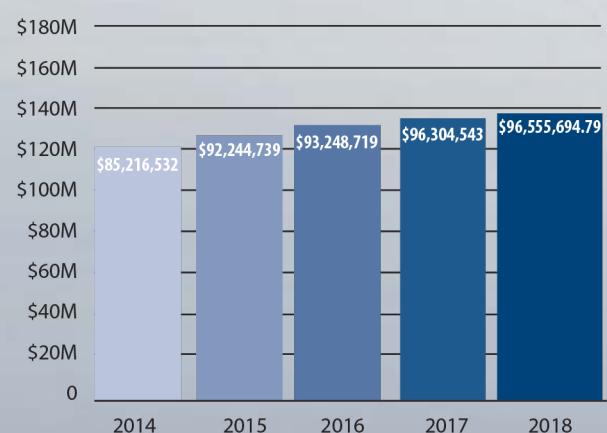
Well Coordinated Safe Patient Care



Face-to-face medical appointments



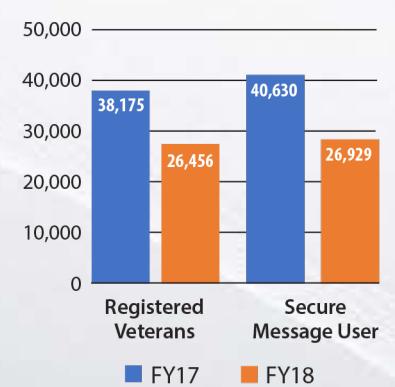
Purchased Community Care



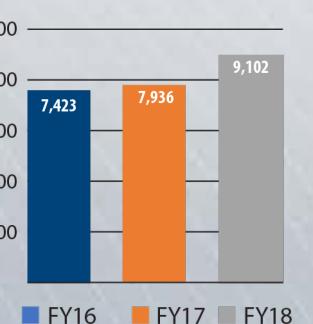
C&P Exams

- We conducted more than 661,000 outpatient visits this year, that's 84,000 more than we did last year.
- Since our ribbon cutting, we have completed over 2,000 surgical procedures and over 14,000 bed-days-of-care.

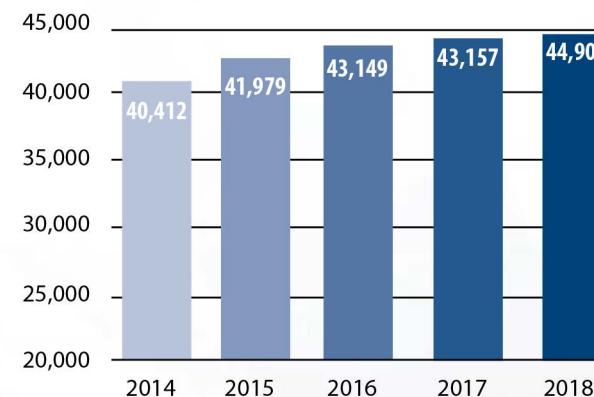
My HealtheVet



Telehealth Users



Total Veterans Served



Women Veterans

- We are in the top 25 in Veterans Health Administration for preventative health screenings for women Veterans, particularly with mammograms, ultrasounds and follow up, as well as cervical cancer screenings for women Veterans ages 30 to 65.

Women Veterans Served

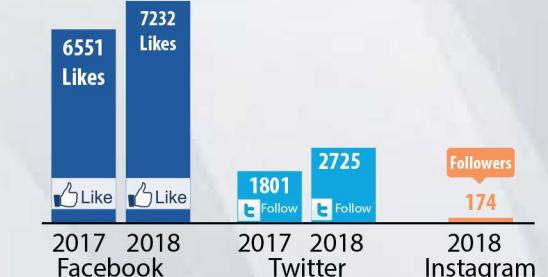


Town Halls

- To foster communication with Veterans, we hold monthly town halls throughout SLVHCS catchment area to support our Veteran's needs.

Veteran Advocates

- My VA Community Council, Veteran Service Organizations, and VA Volunteer Service each met quarterly to discuss health care, recent & upcoming events at the Veterans medical center. The purpose of these meeting is to discuss opportunities for strengthening partnerships and services for Veterans in southeast Louisiana.



Connecting with Veterans

- A great way to see what's going on in our medical facility is on our social media platforms. The latter part of 2018, we introduced Instagram to health care system to keep employees, Veterans, and their families informed.

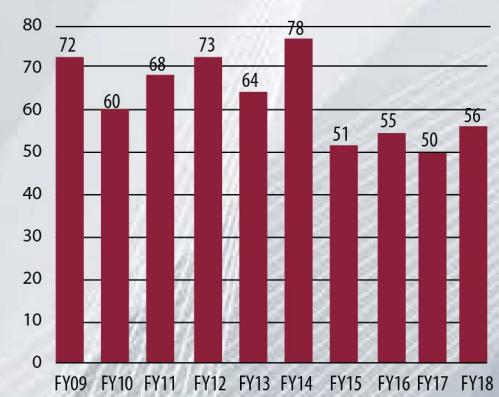
High Reliability



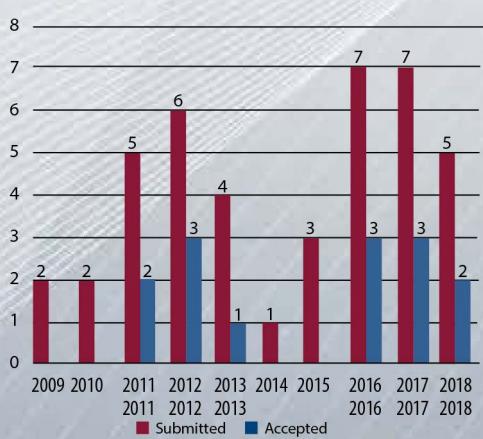
Accreditations

- First full hospital Joint Commission Accreditation
- VA National Center for Patient Safety- Gold Standard
- American Psychological Association
- Long Term Care Institute, Inc
- Project Management Institute
- College of American Pathologists
- Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities

Total Open Research Studies



Non-Clinician Eligibility Applications



Research

- Designed to support all three of the Department of Veterans Affairs core research areas, which are biomedical, clinical and health care delivery.
- Our research facility has 12 basic science laboratories, ultra-cold storage systems for tissue samples and biological safety cabinets and ventilated lab space for researchers to work with materials that could be contaminated with pathogens.
- Our research program includes 24 researchers, 50 registered protocols and \$2 million in VA funding alone.



Medical Center Updates

- 24/7 operations in our Emergency Department, which features 23 exam rooms with state-of-the-art equipment backed by emergency medicine health care providers.
- Launched a variety of technologically complex clinical services, to include laparoscopic and robotic surgery and pacemaker implantation. We have increased the complexity in our comprehensive surgery and procedure center that features advanced facilities, equipment and techniques.
- We also began performing inpatient dialysis, as well as cardiopulmonary exercise tests, which will be used alongside our new cardiac rehab program to deliver high-value care.
- The SLVHCS cardiac rehab program involves three major parts: exercise training, heart-healthy education, and stress counseling.
- Performing bone marrow biopsies in the outpatient hematology/oncology clinic, which allows for the diagnosis of blood and bone marrow disorders and certain cancers.
- The Eye Clinic performed a corneal cross-linking procedure this year for patients suffering from keratoconus. Corneal cross-linking is a new procedure, and specialists can offer this service right here in the medical center.

Quality of Care

Inpatient Care:

- Maintains a rate of zero for the in-hospital complications in the Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) report since opening.
- Standardized mortality ratio is top 10 in the nation among VA facilities.
- Overall rating of the hospital is top 10 in the nation among VA facilities.

Outpatient Care:

- Highest performing VA facility in the nation for quality measures in outpatient diabetes and ischemic heart disease prevention.

SLVHCS maintains high efficiency in clinical operations during unprecedented growth

- Top 10% performance for length of stay among VA facilities nationally.
- Led National Flow Academy project in Emergency Department operations resulting in 20% improvement in ED door-to-floor time, 30% improvement in ED admit delays, and 70% improvement in ED boarding times (compared to FY17).

SLVHCS shows strength in services through efficiencies that lead to awards and recognition

Patriot of The Year — Mary Hess



2018 PMI Professional Awards Gala



- SLVHCS won the Project Management Institute Project of the Year Award, for a large and complex project that best delivers a superior performance of project management practices, excellent organizational results, and positive impacts on society.



Snap the QR code and watch PMI's video of the winning team

Patriot of The Month



ACHE Federal Sector Senior Level Diversity Award Winner*

- Our health care system is fostering a diverse workforce and an inclusive work environment that is in alignment with the Veteran Affairs Office of Diversity and Inclusion mission, which ensures equal opportunity through national policy development, workforce analysis, outreach, retention, and education to best serve our nation's Veterans.

New Orleans City Business Health Care Hero — Ophthalmology Service Chief Dr. Rebecca Metzinger



VHA I CARE Award*

- Associate Chief of Staff for Outpatient Clinics Dr. Jamie Buth, and Outpatient Mental Health Social Work Supervisor Danielle Rosenfeld each received a VHA I CARE Award for outstanding lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender queer/questioning, and asexual/aromantic (LGBTQA) Veteran Service.

Great 100 Nurses of Louisiana



VA Biomedical Engineering Support Specialist of The Year*—Andrew Aiken



VA Police Services Supervisor of The Year*—Lt. Juan Perez

2018 Frontline Healthcare Worker Emerging Champion

The National Fund for Workforce Solutions, the Career STAT Peer Recognition Committee and the entire CareerSTAT Network have recognized SLVHCS as a 2018 Frontline Healthcare Worker Emerging Champion.



Federal Executive Board's Distinguished Service Award

- Outstanding Non-Supervisory Professional: Administrative, Management, and Specialist Dorothy Charlot Community & Public Relations
- Outstanding Administrative/Clerical/Technical Support: Douglas Clark Police Service

Suicide Prevention



Opioid Use

- Reduced the proportion of patients prescribed opioids at SLVHCS by another 7 percent, making the total reduction 43 percent over the past five years.
- Of the patients who received an opioid prescription from SLVHCS in 2017, 10 percent were prescribed opioids, compared to 17 percent in 2012.
- Responded to 1,029 crisis calls
- Participated in 124 community outreach events.



Community Resource & Referral Center

- CRRC has provided over 307,000 client interactions and serves an average of 100 clients each day
- Since October 2013, CRRC staff provided over 307,000 client interactions (80,700 Veterans and 226,300 non-Veterans)
- Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) program provides wide-ranging services to more than 2000 Veterans in southeast Louisiana each year.
- In the past four years, CRRC staff distributed over 26,600 hygiene kits, provided over 50,000 showers, washed over 40,700 loads of clothes, and served over 44,200 meals.
- Our health care system has 801 active Housing and Urban Development/Veteran Affairs Supportive Housing vouchers



Annual Stand Down for Homeless Veterans

- Stand Down for Homeless Veterans provided care and services for 254 homeless Veterans and those at risk of becoming homeless.
- More than 20 Veterans service organizations, more than 300 volunteers and community partners came together to provide hot meals, clothing, as well as information about other resources available to homeless Veterans throughout the region.



Within These Walls 2018

Veterans Day

We started with a wonderful lunch provided by the Legion of Mars, Mayor's Military Advisory Committee and Coca Cola, while attendees enjoyed playing bocce ball, cornhole games and wheelchair obstacle courses. We are so grateful to have the Marine Corps band and color guard this year, and honored to have New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell as our guest speaker. The VA Rolling Thunder team was once again defeated by Julius Lee's PVA Bayou Hurricanes. The final score was Rolling Thunder 22 and the Bayou Hurricanes 44.



POW/MIA

We honored and remembered those who were imprisoned while serving in conflicts and those who remain missing in action.



Victory Belles

Victory Belles entertained Veterans and their families at the new Veterans Medical Center in New Orleans.



Garden Fresh Prescription

The Farmers Market returned to SLVHCS this summer offering fresh fruit and vegetables from six different local farms as a vital part of a new garden-fresh prescription nutrition program being piloted here at SLVHCS for a select group of Veterans diagnosed with diabetes.

Salute to the Flag

More than 150 people came out to this year's Independence Day event where 94-year-old Dr. Jack Castrogiovanni and 92-year-old George Mazzeno, both WWII Veterans, raised the American, POW and Louisiana flags.



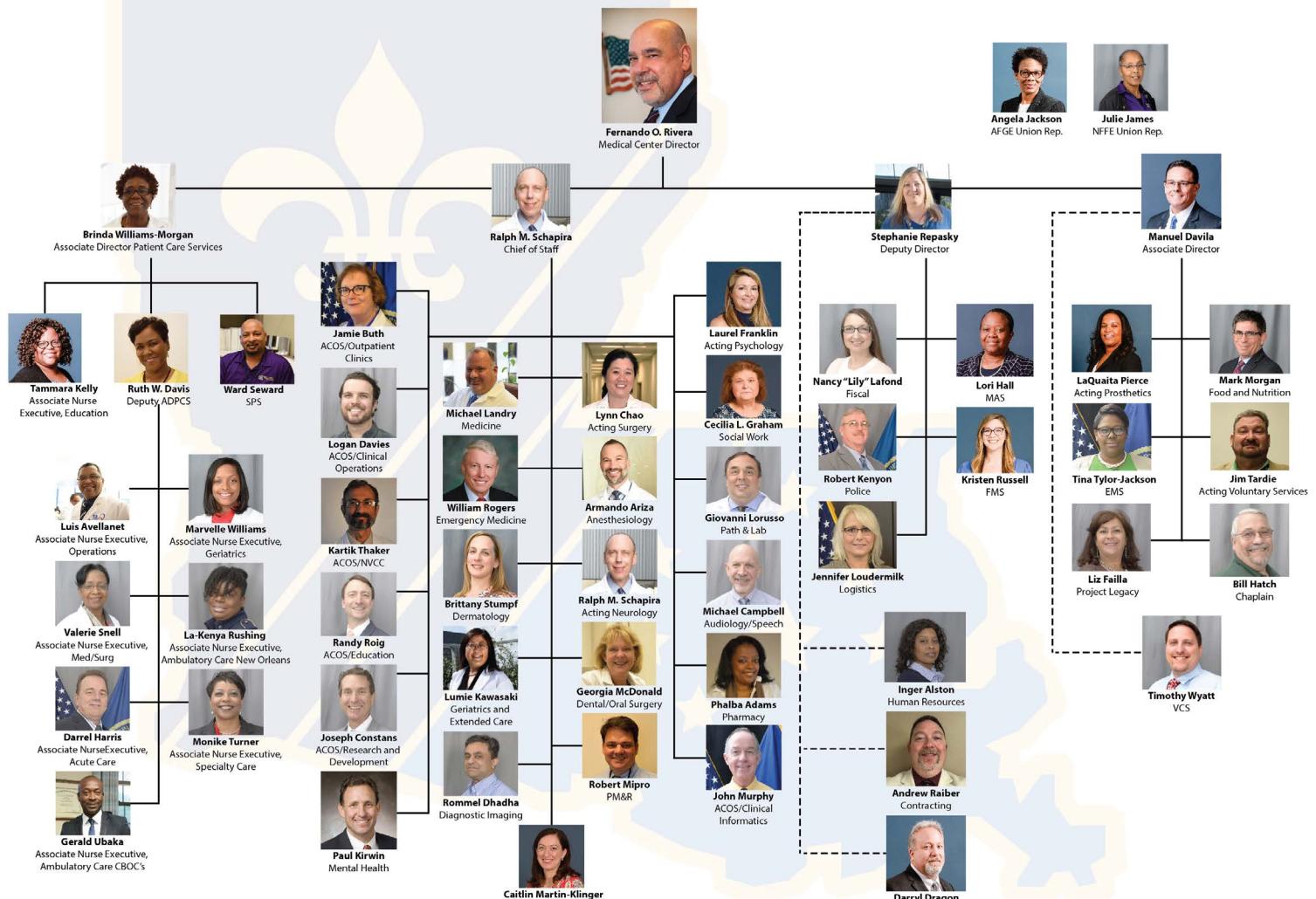
Adaptive Sports

We have started numerous adaptive sports programs, to include bocce ball, fencing, equestrian, and tennis programs and we are working on future programs that include pickleball, wheelchair racing, wheelchair lacrosse, adaptive scuba diving and wheelchair softball.



Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System Leadership Council

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