



# Capturing Personalized, Proactive, Patient-Driven Care Across VA

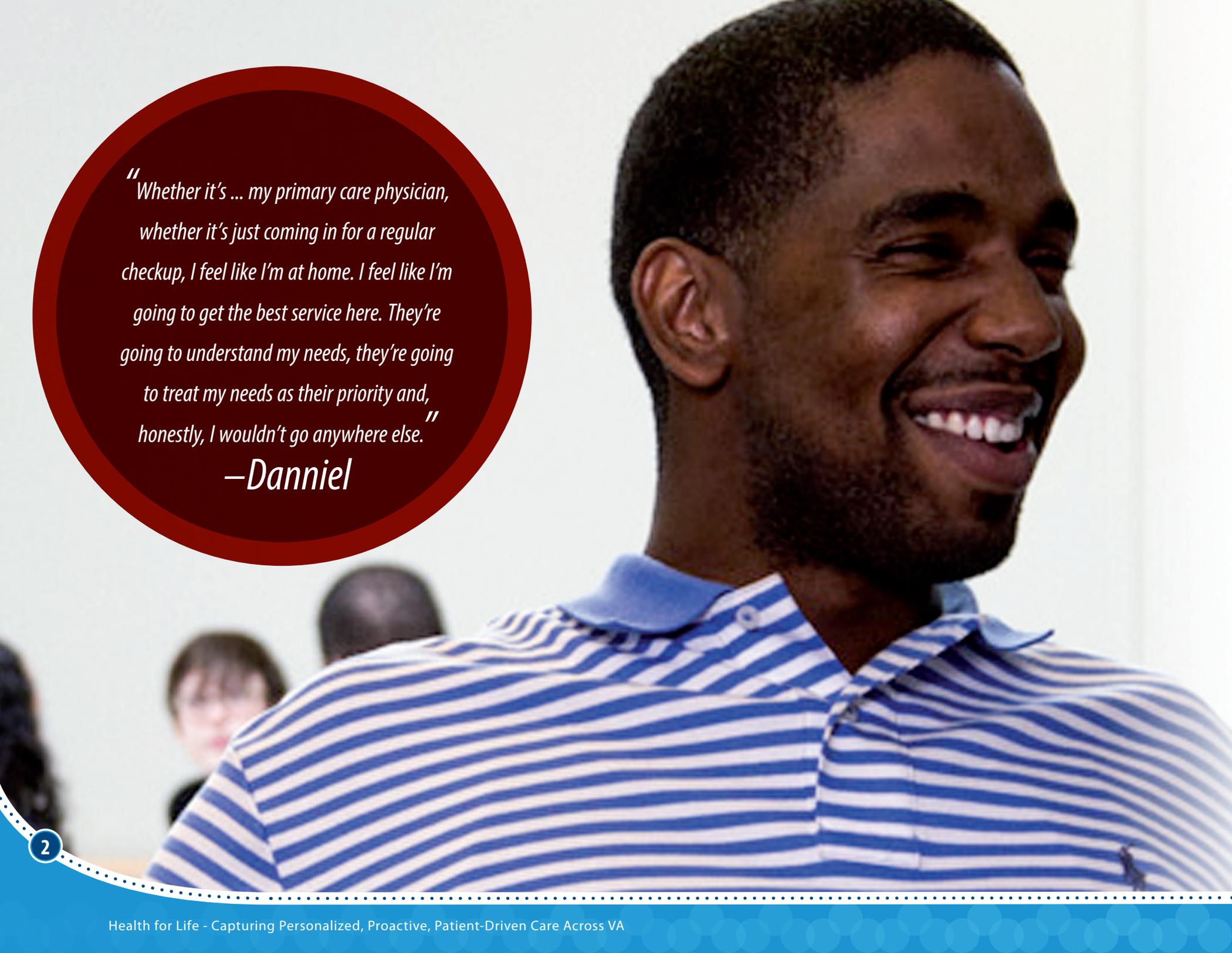
A Story by the VA Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation



**VA** | Defining  
**HEALTH CARE** | **EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century

# Health for Life

[www.va.gov/health](http://www.va.gov/health)

A close-up, profile view of a Black man with a short beard and mustache, smiling broadly. He is wearing a blue and white horizontally striped polo shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a clinical or office setting.

*"Whether it's ... my primary care physician, whether it's just coming in for a regular checkup, I feel like I'm at home. I feel like I'm going to get the best service here. They're going to understand my needs, they're going to treat my needs as their priority and, honestly, I wouldn't go anywhere else."*

*—Danniel*

# Introduction

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**Daniel Powell served in the U.S. Navy from 2005 to 2010 and was having trouble making the transition back to day-to-day life as a civilian. He came to the Las Vegas VA Medical Center, where he found staff members to be friendly, helpful, and in tune with his needs as a Veteran. They helped him make that transition and find a place in a community that can understand what he's been through. Daniel received personalized, proactive, and patient-driven care and this whole health approach has made a meaningful difference in his life.**

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# Health for Life

In VA – We Value Veterans and  
What Veterans Value

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## What Is Whole Health Care and *Health for Life*?

*Health for Life* is a growing movement within VA that is changing the way we provide care. *Health for Life* is bringing whole health care to VA.

What is whole health care? In conventional medicine, clinicians focus on treating diseases and managing their patients' health. Whole health care builds upon this important focus by putting the Veteran, and not diseases, at the center of personalized, proactive, patient-driven care.

When Veterans come to VA, we start by changing the conversation. We believe that exploring with Veterans what matters most—helping them rediscover what gives them a sense of meaning and purpose—assists us in partnering in the design of a personal health plan that helps Veterans live their lives fully. Whether that means awakening each day free of pain, dancing at a niece's wedding, or simply making visits to VA as easy as possible, it's the Veteran's choice, and we want help to build the skills and support so Veterans can succeed in meeting their goals.

At VA, Veterans can find more than health care. Veterans find health—*for life*.



## About the Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation

The VA Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation (OPCC&CT) works with VHA leadership and those in the field to drive VA's No.1 strategic goal of providing personalized, proactive, patient-driven health care to Veterans and their families.

**Personalized care** is a dynamic health plan that is based on education, prevention, and treatment options tailored to the individual user based on the user's history, signs and symptoms, lifestyle, behavior, and preferences.

**Proactive care** is using strategies that strengthen the person's innate capacity for health and healing such as mind-body approaches and nutritional strategies prior to surgery or chemotherapy.

**Patient-driven care** is a collaboration between a patient and his or her health care system in which the patient drives his or her health care based on his or her needs, and how the patient wants to live.

The country has reached a critical moment in the history of medicine: Across the industry, experts are discovering the power of whole health care that is proactive and personalized to meet the patient's needs. At VA, that means building a health care system that honors Veterans' service and empowers them to achieve their greatest health and well-being. As VA transforms the delivery of care, it's providing a unique community for Veterans that embraces their distinctive needs.

That transformation is just beginning. The OPCC&CT and VA are providing the resources to give leaders, providers, and staff the freedom to create a culture in which this transformation can flourish. Now, Veterans and providers have the opportunity to work together to define the future of whole health care at VA.



A close-up photograph of a woman with light brown hair, wearing a pink tank top, laughing heartily. Her eyes are squinted, and her mouth is wide open, showing her teeth. Her right hand is raised in a celebratory gesture, with her index finger pointing upwards. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor setting.

*“I battled a little bit of depression and I’m a stay-at-home mom, so the opportunity to change my lifestyle with eating different and having exercise was really exciting to me.”*

**—Andrea**

## Changing the Conversation: The Voice of the Veteran

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**Andrea Martin served in the U.S. Army from 1995 to 1999. After returning from service, she came to the Polk Street VA Annex Clinic in North Texas, where she got to know her Patient Aligned Care Team —and they got to know her. It didn't take long for them to figure out together ways Andrea could stay happy and healthy. For about two years she has been participating in the MOVE! and Fortitude programs; she's lost weight, gotten fit—she says she's proud to show off her “guns”—and it's changed her family activities and how her family buys food. Her husband and daughter attend yoga, running, and weightlifting classes with her. Andrea is grateful for how her health team helped her find the steps she could take to achieve greater health. VA employees can [click here](#) to see Andrea's story and others.** 

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The VA North Texas HCS's Polk clinic was one of the first to pilot the Personal Health Inventory, which has helped its Patient Aligned Care Teams focus on what is most important to Veterans. This whole health approach has supported Veterans like Andrea in making changes that enable them to live their lives more fully.





The VA Greater Los Angeles HCS uses point-of-service customer satisfaction to collect real-time patient and family feedback to improve the experience for Veterans during their visits.



At the Birmingham VA Medical Center, Veteran advisors work with medical center leaders to guide the facilities' operations and strategic planning.

Creating a health care system that is personalized to each Veteran's goals and desires is a strategic priority for VA. Establishing a partnership to improve the Veterans health and well-being is a lifelong commitment for both the patient and their provider teams. We at VA have taken the first step, and we hope Veterans will join us on the journey to define the future of their health and their care.

For example, many Veterans have told us that faster and easier access to care is a priority. That's why we have begun to institute programs that provide the resources to support their personalized health plans at home and to make the most of their visits to the medical facilities. Others have asked for complementary medicine, and so we are beginning to implement new therapies to help Veterans manage pain and improve all aspects of health and well-being.

## Listening Sessions

The OPCC&CT's regional Field-based Implementation Teams (FITs) have worked closely with medical centers to support the transformation to patient centered care and a whole health approach. The listening sessions with Veterans have helped facility leadership, staff, and volunteers learn what matters most to Veterans in that region and how the facility can shape its care in response. By gathering answers from medical facilities across the country, VA is learning how to provide better Veteran centered care. Overwhelmingly, Veterans indicated that improving their access to care, including the basic amenities such as healthy food choices, parking, and telephone access, will help remove the stress from health care and enable them to focus on their health and well-being. Veterans almost unanimously say that the VA staff is dedicated and caring.

## Veteran/Family Advisors

Many VA medical centers have established Veteran/Family Advisor Programs to incorporate Veteran perspectives in decisions affecting the facility. The advisor programs foster excellent collaboration among patients, families, and VA staff on decisions made about policy and program development, professional education, and the delivery of care. The OPCC&CT has partnered with practitioners and others in the field and has developed a toolkit on how to create Veteran/Family Advisor Programs. If you are a VA employee, click [here](#) to see the Veteran/Family Advisor toolkit. 

## Interactive Patient Care

Some VA facilities put information at the Veterans' fingertips using technology called Interactive Patient Care (IPC). Interactive Patient Care will give Veterans an inpatient view of their personalized health plan, providing information needed for the Veteran to actively participate in their healthcare decisions and real-time feedback to staff regarding their care, which enables them to shape their inpatient experience.

Interactive Patient Care also improves processes so clinicians can spend more time learning what Veterans value most and less time handling administrative tasks that can now be handled through IPC technology.

The Interactive Patient Care delivery environment leads to better patient outcomes, safety and service performance improvements, and increased satisfaction which empowers Veterans. If you are a VA employee, watch the video, "[Interactive Patient Care: Bringing Whole Health Care to Life.](#)" 



In New Orleans, the Patient & Family Outreach Coordinator has resolved more than 300 issues Veterans face, and staff respond on a daily basis to what Veterans say about their care.



*“I didn’t walk into it expecting any huge miracle and it really surprised me. The first round of acupuncture I did I was able to cut my meds in half. Then after that when we started adding the other alternative therapies in, I was able to wean completely off the meds and stay off them now for seven months.”*

*—Mark*



## The Elements of Personalized, Proactive, Patient-driven Care

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**Mark Spencer served in the U.S. Coast Guard from 1983 to 1986. To treat a degenerative disease that caused him tremendous pain, Mark took pain medications, including almost the maximum dose of morphine. He needed supporting medications to handle the side effects. Mark's quality of life was diminishing. He used a cane to get around; as he considered using a walker instead, he felt there had to be a better way. He decided to try the complementary therapies in addition to conventional treatment at VA in Las Vegas.**

**Mark started receiving acupuncture, chiropractic therapy, and kinesiotherapy therapy. Seven months later, he was off pain medications—and says his pain level is far lower than before. He is not using a cane, his gait is back to normal, and he is thinking of going to a gym again.**

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In Inpatient Mental Health services, the Denver VA Medical Center uses the MyStory PHI to change the conversation with Veterans.



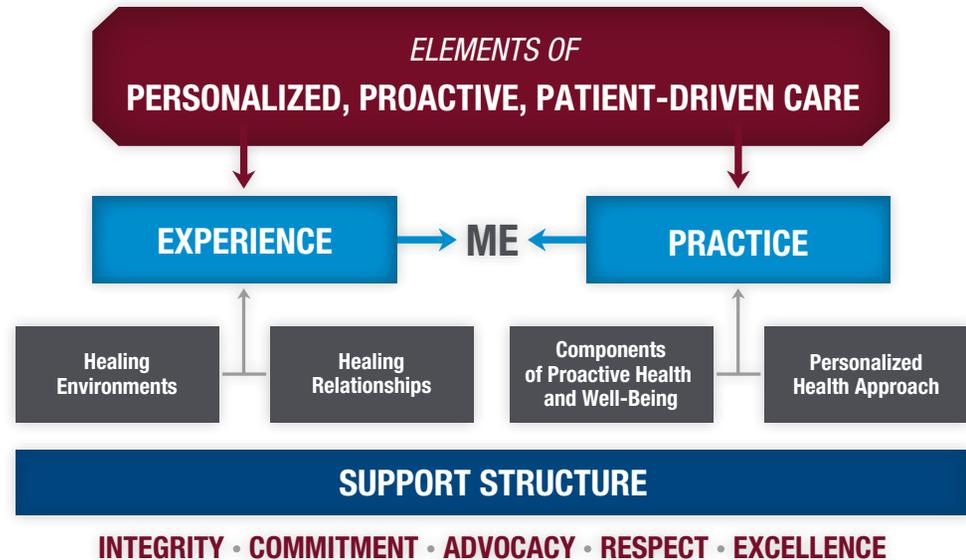
VA is changing the practice of care by putting Veterans' priorities at the center. Equally important, VA facility leadership is changing the experience of a traditional clinic visit: The setting itself is being enhanced by creating an environment that better meet Veterans' needs. We are continually improving our facilities by creating spaces where Veterans come together, and take control of their health with providers who give thought to each person's needs. These elements of care work together to provide an experience that will give Veterans the confidence, knowledge, and support to achieve their goals.

Many VA facilities are testing and implementing programs built on the practice and experience of whole health care. Below are just a few examples of how the elements of a patient centered approach are taking hold at VA.

## Changing the Practice

### Personalized Health Approach

Whole health care is changing the conversation between Veterans and clinicians, starting with the first question a patient typically is asked. A personalized health plan starts not with "What's the matter?" but discovering what matters to the Veteran—what it is that good health can help him or her do, and be.



The Washington DC VAMC created a virtual Integrative Health program that gives Veterans home access to complementary health approaches.

To help clinicians make the transition to first asking “What matters to you?” VA has introduced the MyStory Personal Health Inventory (PHI). This simple tool helps Veterans, loved ones, and employees think about what matters most and find the right kind of care. VA is piloting the MyStory PHI at eight facilities, including those in Dallas, TX, Birmingham, AL, and East Orange, NJ. If you are a VA employee, see an example of a MyStory PHI [here](#). 

## Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being

At VA, we provide care designed to support your whole health, not just manage illness.





The VA New Jersey HCS created a new Health and Wellness Center, integrating primary care and mental health services and offering integrative health care such as yoga, tai chi and acupuncture.

The Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being illustrates how each area of self-care is connected and how improving one area can benefit all other aspects of your life—including your overall physical, emotional, and mental health and well-being even while living with illnesses. The components guide the development of programs that are helping Veterans across the country by combining conventional treatment with integrative approaches. Integrative Health reaffirms the importance of the relationship between practitioner and patient, focuses on the whole person, and makes use of all appropriate therapeutic approaches, health care professionals, and disciplines to achieve optimal health and healing.

To address all aspects of your health and well-being, VA medical centers are:

- Creating a polypharmacy project, which reduced by 30 percent the number of patients with more than 15 prescriptions. *(New Orleans and other VAMCs)*
- Bringing tai chi and mindfulness-based stress reduction into Veterans' homes through use of telemedicine. *(Los Angeles, CA)*
- Integrating acupuncture therapy to help Veterans stay pain-free. *(Birmingham, AL)*
- Adopting Alpha-Stim, a drug-free alternative to treating acute, chronic, and postoperative pain. *(Las Vegas, NV)*
- Using music therapy and narrative medicine programs to help Veterans cope with traumatic events. *(Denver, CO; Washington, DC)*
- Using Reiki, a Japanese mindfulness therapy, to manage stress, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and pain, and to treat tobacco use disorder. *(Las Vegas, NV)*
- Pioneering a virtual medical center to give Veterans an experience and orientation to the new facility before they arrive. *(Orlando, FL)*
- Opening a Life Skills and Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center. *(Denver, CO)*
- Using whole health coaching to guide care in mental health intensive case management programs. *(Dallas, TX)*
- Expanding these and many other approaches to more and more medical centers.

## Changing the Experience

The experience of health care—including trusting relationships between health care providers and patients as well as the environment of the facility itself—contributes to an overall positive health care experience. This experience has a significant effect on a patient's health and well-being. Developing strong, healing relationships and vibrant, welcoming healing environments enhances the patient experience, leading to an improved quality of care, faster healing process, and better outcomes.

## Healing Relationships

Healing relationships are the foundation of a positive health care experience. If VA can build strong relationships between Veterans and providers and staff, they can work together to create a truly personalized health plan, and those relationships will give them support to address their unique challenges.

To build healing relationships, medical centers within VA are:

- Creating a community for Women Veteran Health Services. *(Washington, DC)*
- Offering PAIRS (Practical Application of Intimate Relationship Skills) training in couples counseling to Veterans and their families through the From Warrior to Soul Mate program. *(Trained counselors in over 50 facilities)*
- Building a Community Resource and Referral Center to provide services to homeless Veterans and non-Veterans. *(New Orleans, LA)*
- Training peer support specialists and Veterans who have dealt with mental health challenges and act as advocates for other Veterans. *(Dallas, TX; Denver, CO)*
- Piloting VHA Voices, which aims to enhance and sustain a relationship-focused culture in VA. By teaching participants how to share and respond to heartfelt stories employees enhance their interpersonal awareness and working relationships. VHA Voices builds on the Southcentral Foundation's NUKA experience, a relationship-based system of care.



77%

of Veterans listed caring and committed staff as a strength of VA.



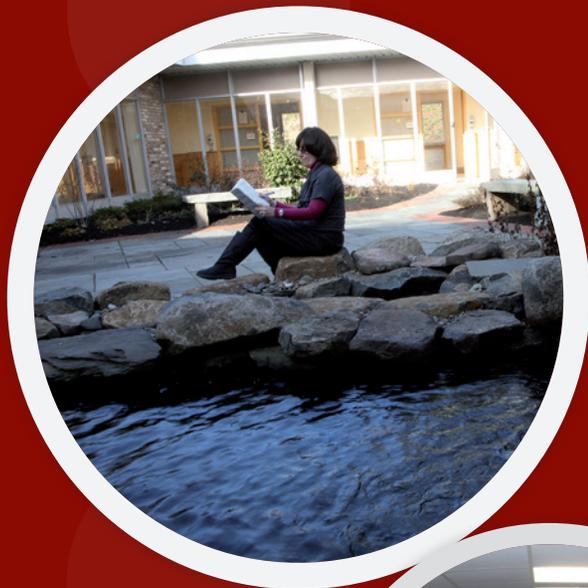
- Training nurses in the necessary communication skills to establish meaningful relationships with Veterans. *(Birmingham, AL)*
- Offering holistic training in Greet/Listen/Act and Thank to improve relationships. *(Los Angeles, CA)*

## Healing Environments

Stress and discomfort can have dramatic effects on the healing process. VA is working with Veterans to develop environments at each facility that decrease stress, so patients have peace of mind. Whether that means building new healing spaces or improving wait times, VA is committed to doing all it can to make health care a positive experience. To reduce stress and improve facilities, VA is:

- Piloting a Neurology/Sleep Lab Design Pilot. *(Birmingham, AL)*
- Opening a Veterans' Garden at a Soldiers Home. *(Denver, CO)*
- Building the Valor Point Domiciliary Greenhouse. *(Denver, CO)*
- Renovating the outpatient pharmacy using evidence-based design. *(East Orange, NJ)*
- Responding to Veteran feedback from the Perfect Patient Experience program by adding a bathroom in the first-floor garage lobby. *(New Orleans, LA)*
- Starting a Healing Artwork Program. *(Birmingham, AL)*
- Opening The Center for Health & Wellness as a learning laboratory to advance VHA's strategic goal of personalized, proactive, patient-driven care. *(East Orange, NJ)*
- Activating a new Community Living Center. *(Orlando, FL)*





**43%**  
of Veterans listed the  
environment of facilities  
as one of VA's key  
strengths.



*"I'm living proof that if  
you want to change, help  
is there for you."*

*—Michael*



## Supporting a New Model of Care

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**Michael Hancock served one tour after joining the Army in 1974. Following his service, his use of drugs eventually landed him in prison. Still using drugs after prison, he found himself depressed and homeless. Life changed once Michael discovered and completed a VA rehabilitation and housing program in Dallas, TX. Michael completed a VA work program, and VA helped him find work and get an apartment. Habitat for Humanity built a home for him, and he now has a permanent place to live and is back on his feet.**

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Transforming an entire medical system to give Veterans like Michael the chance to achieve their mission for health requires fundamental change. Our program is providing comprehensive research and analysis, facilitating education in the field, and supporting the implementation of whole health programs.

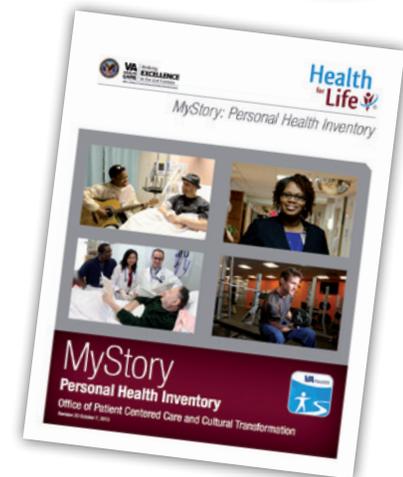


**73%**  
of staff indicated that better communication is critical to improving their experience.



## VA OPCC&CT Fiscal Year 2013 Accomplishments

- Developed and implemented a field-based support structure to facilitate cultural transformation in Veterans Integrated Service Networks and medical centers across the country.
- Field-based Implementation Teams (FITs) conducted engagement sessions at more than 50 percent of VA medical centers.
- Supported and funded the establishment of patient centered care Centers of Innovation that piloted innovative strategies and served as demonstration sites.
- Created and piloted a series of educational offerings, including a whole health foundational toolkit, whole health clinical curriculum, and whole health coaching curricula.
- Produced extensive communication resources and tools including a robust SharePoint site and an intranet website filled with print and video products to support the field.
- Built a series of community-of-practice forums—monthly national discussions that allow practitioners and clinicians to share updates and strong practices, and support the expansion of patient centered care throughout VHA by breaking down barriers.
- Initiated research to evaluate the most effective ways in which leadership, staff, and clinicians enhance the practice and experience of care, based on evidence and Veteran perspectives. Projects include a compendium of VA research related to patient centered care, lessons from those in the field on developing a patient centered culture, and metrics to assess the progression of patient centered care.
- Piloted clinical tools that support ways to change the conversation with patients, such as the MyStory Personal Health Inventory and the Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being.



## Foundational Research

To support this transformation, the OPCC&CT is researching clinical techniques, integrative therapies, and cultural changes that can help put the Veteran at the center of care. This evaluation includes an evaluation of outcomes at the patient, family/caregiver, provider/employee, and organizational/system levels to measure the impact of Patient Centered innovations. By conducting a thorough analysis of patient centered care implementation, the OPCC&CT is working to encourage cultural transformation at VA, the nation's largest integrated service network of health care providers.

### ***Lessons Learned (Center for Evaluating Patient-Centered Care, Bedford, MA; Center for Evaluation of Practices and Experiences of Patient-Centered Care, Hines, IL)***

One outcome of the patient centered care research has been the white paper titled, "Lessons from the Field for Implementing Patient-Centered Care and Cultural Transformation." This report provides insights about key aspects of implementation of patient centered care and the important lessons learned from the evaluation of VA Patient Centered Care Centers of Innovation. The evaluation team conducted site visits, which included interviews with leaders, middle managers, frontline staff, Veterans and family members. The assessment included tours of the facilities and observation of the care and delivery processes and provided an overview of seven key domains—classified as facilitators, challenges, and environmental factors—to implementing patient centered care at VA. The OPCC&CT mapped resources to support the field in each of the domains in a guide titled "Lessons from the Field – Operational Tactics for Implementing Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation." VA employees can [read this report](#) at and [hear staff talk about the case for transformation](#). 





## Perceived Facilitators of Patient Centered Care Culture

### **Role of Leadership**

- Engage a core cadre of leaders to foster patient centered innovation and transformation.
- Model patient centered behavior for staff throughout the facility.
- Encourage staff to take risks in patient centered care innovation.

*"The crux of the matter is that it really is a cultural shift for every single employee, as well as for every Veteran. It's about engaging Veterans in their care. It's about nurses and doctors and care providers relinquishing the authoritative figure in care and inviting the Veteran to participate in care decisions that center around life choices. And, so, my role within VA ...is to certainly to model that behavior and to be sure that whatever area that we're looking at creating projects around patient-centered care, that we're driving the initiative forward, to look at, are we always focusing on the Veteran, and involving the Veteran in the decision making process."*



### **Engaging Veteran Patients and Family Members**

- Ask Veterans both formally and informally what matters most to them.
- Engage Veterans in patient centered innovations through marketing and signage.
- Capitalize on formal feedback sessions as opportunities to engage in patient centered care.

*"It was amazing and it was heartbreaking to do these focus groups. Our women Veterans ... they couldn't talk enough. ... We couldn't keep them within the time parameters because they had so much to say."*



### **Enculturating Staff**

- Emphasize that patient centered care is a mindset, and compatible with other clinical responsibilities.
- Build on current staff practices and use a collaborative approach to secure buy-in for trainings.
- Engage staff at an emotional level to motivate and invest them in trainings.
- Use a multimodal approach to reinforce key patient centered care messaging.

*"I think what's the turning point for people is a personal experience. When we go to our retreats, that's the first thing we discuss. ... We ask people to talk about an experience, and all of a sudden the light bulb goes off."*

### **Fostering Innovations**

- Support creativity among front-line staff who initiate innovation.
- Engage middle managers as clinical champions to foster implementation of senior leadership-initiated innovation.
- Involve staff in the development of context-sensitive implementation of patient centered innovations.

*"[The medical director] 'paints the landscape,' and says: 'Make it happen.' Then service chiefs pick people to engage in PCC activities and that's how front-line staff become involved. [New initiatives] are occasionally mandated by leadership, and when they are, they are likely to get eye rolls. It's easier to have a physician champion introduce them, show that they work, be enthusiastic and willing to put in the effort. This translates to the staff."*



The Dallas VAMC Health and Wellness program is supporting employees' work by focusing on their health and well-being.





**50%**  
of Veterans identified being with family, getting adequate sleep, and eating proper foods as critical to their health.



## Perceived Challenges to Patient Centered Care Culture

### **Staff Roles and Priorities**

- Adapt performance measures to reflect the priority of patient centered care.
- To encourage a focus on patient centered care, limit the number of other initiatives introduced.

*"We tend to be 'schizophrenic' about how we go about change, jumping from one theory to another. ... We need to embrace and work at one way for a long time, because culture change doesn't happen quickly. ... We need to commit to something for 10-15 [years], and we need to engage entire staff, from leadership to lowest levels."*

### **Role of VA Organizational Structures and Processes**

- Encourage and foster flexibility within the rules of VA.
- Capitalize on opportunities to collaborate with those who are directing programs also focused on patient centered care.

*"The messy work to integrate care instead of keeping up the silos that separated services [is] the only way to do PCC."*

## Environment of Care – Setting the Stage

### **The Contributions of Environment of Care Changes**

- Make the most of aesthetic renovations by including key structural changes that foster patient centered care interactions.
- Create environments that are healing and also improve the work environment for the staff.
- Recognize that environmental changes have an important impact on patients and staff when tied to functional changes that facilitate patient-provider interaction.

*“What we’ve come to find out is, in patient satisfaction scores, if one thing is left undone, they’re just not satisfied. So if you come [here] and it’s really clean but you get terrible care, you are going to be like ‘that was terrible.’ If you get great care, but things are broken and dirty, same thing. So, [it’s] just a perfect marriage of really great quality care plus a healing environment.”*

## Compendium of Research and Evidence Maps

To support the implementation of whole health care in clinics, the OPCC&CT partnered with the VHA Evidence-based Synthesis Program (ESP) to create a compendium of the vast VA research related to patient centered care. The research projects are organized according to the “practice” and “experience” of care. This format makes learning about the outcomes of VA research readily accessible. If you are a VA employee, find the compendium [here](#). 

The OPCC&CT and ESP partnership also oversaw an analysis of research on acupuncture and other integrative therapies. Findings include an evidence map of acupuncture’s effectiveness in the treatment of pain, mental health, and wellness; and studies on tai chi, yoga, and mindfulness-based stress reduction are in progress. These provide an evidence-based guideline for leaders and clinicians to use as they seek to expand these modalities for Veterans. If you are a VA employee, see the report on the [Evidence Map of Acupuncture](#). 

## Personal Health Inventory: An Analysis of Veteran Responses

The patient centered care team at the Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) is assessing the use of the MyStory PHI in the eight VA facilities that are using it. The QUERI team worked with one of those facilities to review the feedback of 100 Veterans on its implementation. In particular, the application of this tool clearly illustrates that the MyStory PHI succeeds in altering the framing of the health of Veterans. The responses also indicate areas of personal health that are important to Veterans and opportunities for the VA to address and support these areas. Veterans clearly value their functionality and independence as part of their personal health, and consider their communities (e.g., family and friends) as well as individual aspects as important to them. The VA has an opportunity to address all these concerns with Veterans to provide the optimal personal health and well-being planning. If you are a VA employee, see the full white paper [here](#). 

Evidence maps indicate that acupuncture is very effective at mitigating migraines and chronic pain.



Only **11%** referenced dealing with a specific medical complaint as critical to their health.



- “Results and analysis of the PHI responses clearly shows that the VA will need to understand ways to embrace a more holistic viewpoint of healthcare that leads to personal health and well-being.”
- “Veterans clearly value their functionality and independence as part of their personal health, and consider their communities (e.g., family and friends) as well as individual aspects as important to them.”





## Innovations Map

To identify and codify the best approach to implementing patient centered care, researchers at VA at the Center for Evaluating Patient Centered Care developed a map of the programs and projects that met the core concepts of patient centered care. The map shows the breadth of innovation and how individual programs work together to achieve whole health care. If you are a VA employee, [see the innovations map](#) or [watch a video](#) of some of VA's innovative practices. 

## Outcomes & Analysis

Using its findings from its research, the OPCC&CT is encouraging innovation by supporting programs that bring patient centered care to life at facilities across the country. With a combination of grants, partnerships, toolkits, and field engagements, the OPCC&CT is giving health care systems the resources they need to change the practice and experience of care.

## Mental Health Innovations

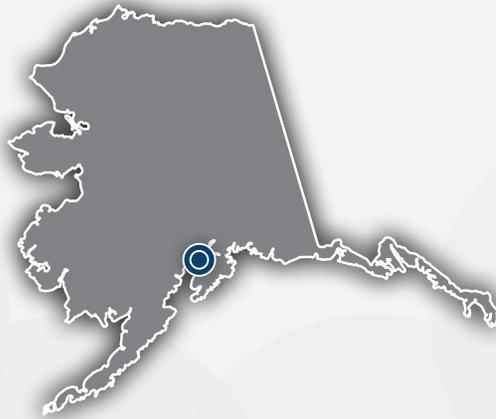
The conditions among Veterans that are less visible can be the ones that are hardest to address: PTSD, depression, sleep disorders, substance use disorders, and chronic pain. To help Veterans lead their fullest life, the OPCC&CT has partnered with the Mental Health Innovations Task Force to develop proactive health strategies on these fronts. MHI is exploring ways to change the conversation, connect with Veterans, even before a diagnosis and extend care to incorporating complementary approaches that treat the whole person. VA employees can learn more about the Mental Health Innovations at [HealthforLife.vacloud.us](http://HealthforLife.vacloud.us). 



VA Greater Los Angeles partnered with HSR&D to launch 12 innovation projects and analyze the health outcomes of participants.

# Patient Centered Care in Action

OPCC&CT has funded Innovation Grants at sites throughout each of the four regions within the VA network since fiscal year 2010.



**VA Palo Alto HCS**  
Created a Veteran and Family Advisory Council and is conducting Simulation-Based Clinician Training and Polytrauma Health Coaching.



**Sioux Falls VA HCS**  
was the first facility to complete a full FIT Engagement cycle and created a Veteran Centered Care Committee that oversees programs from a comprehensive remodeling to integrative therapies, women's health expansion, and a Veteran Advisory Team, among others.



VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System

VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System

VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (Region 1)

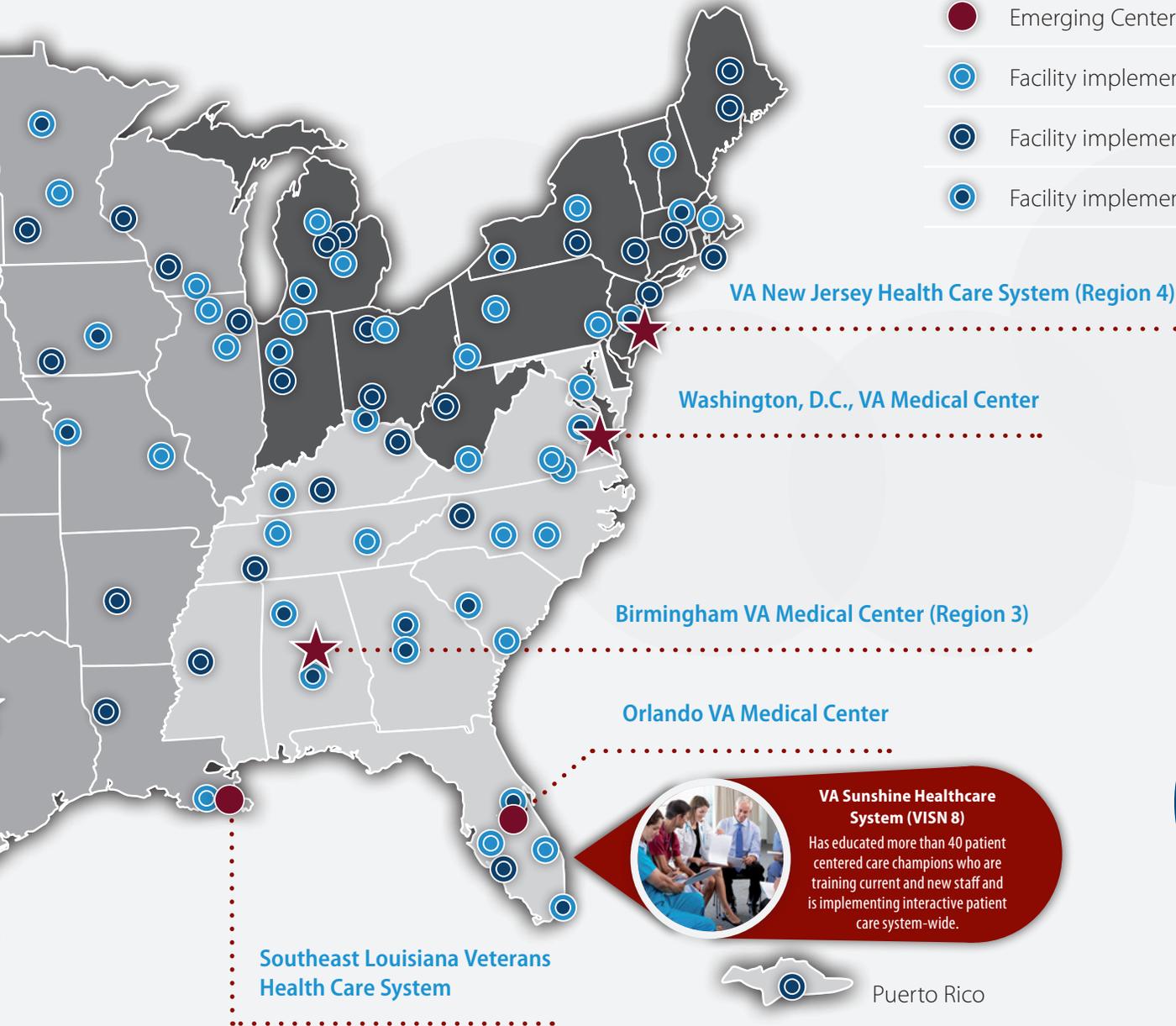
VA North Texas Health Care System (Region 2)

## Grants Supporting Enhancement of the Experience of Care

These transform a facility's grounds or build programs that foster healing relationships between staff and Veterans.

## Map Key

-  Established Centers of Innovation
-  Emerging Centers of Innovation
-  Facility implementing grants related to the Experience of Care
-  Facility implementing grants related to the Practice of Care
-  Facility implementing both experience and practice grants



### Grants Supporting Enhancement of the Practice of Care

These implement whole health care programs that bring a personalized approach to conventional medicine.

## Patient Centered Care Toolkits to Support the Field

The OPCC&CT has developed a series of toolkits to help facilities adopt patient centered care programs. The following is a selection of these toolkits. At the end of this section, you will find a more complete list. VA Employees can view these toolkits [here](#). 

### Personal Health Plan Staff Guide

The staff guide is a comprehensive tool that introduces staff to the personalized health planning approach. This overview provides basic background information about the personalized health plan (PHP), its purpose, and guidance on how to use it.

VA employees can see the PHP staff guide [here](#). 

VA employees can see the patient stories—an account of how the PHI and PHP can make a difference in patients' lives—[here](#). 

### Community Integration Through Creativity

*(San Francisco VA Medical Center)*

This project involved Veterans with severe mental illness in creative arts programs that allowed them to develop skills, fostered independence, and ultimately reduced stigma. The Veterans are reintegrating into the local community by selling the results of these programs and building relationships that will help them transition their lives to greater independence.

### Complementary and Alternative Medicine

*(VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System)*

This project developed a sustainable Integrative Health program: 32 multidisciplinary staff members were trained in evidence-based practices. They then formed a committee to coordinate attendance at national conferences and purchase the supplies and equipment needed to implement a full Integrative Health program.



### **Lifestyle Intervention for Veterans**

***(Washington DC VA Medical Center)***

Using a holistic patient care model, the VA medical center in Washington, DC, helped Veterans with chronic medical conditions improve their health by tailoring exercise and nutrition programs to them and their needs. The program paired these innovations with an education program for students, residents, fellows, and allied health providers to give clinical staff the skills to partner with Veterans on their journey to health and well-being.



### **Healthy Communities Greenhouse Project**

***(VA New Jersey Health Care System)***

Veteran Thurston Mangrum worked with the VA health care system in New Jersey to create a comprehensive green job skills program focused on sustainable landscaping, master gardening, and stormwater management. The program allows Veterans to participate in work therapy opportunities on the grounds of the medical center—for which they earn a salary—and builds expertise and a sense of community, helping many Veterans become certified master gardeners.



### **Pet and Equestrian Therapy**

***(In collaboration with Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center, VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System, and Lexington VAMC)***

This toolkit provides guidelines for the appropriate use of animals at VA medical facilities. Animal therapy often provides Veterans a meaningful relationship that strengthens their emotional foundation and helps them tackle challenges they face.



### **Vibroacoustic Therapy Chairs**

***(Bill Young VA Medical Center, Bay Pines, Florida)***

These chairs use vibroacoustic therapy to reduce pain in Veterans by about 50 percent in their estimates of their own pain level. Therapies have been shown to improve the quality of life in patients with dementia or PTSD.

## A Sampling of Patient Centered Care Toolkits

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### Practice of Care

- Personalized Health Plan Staff Guide
- Modalities of Integrative Health
- Complementary and Alternative Resources to Enhance Satisfaction (CARES) Program
- Yoga Nidra
- Mind Body Modalities
- Multidisciplinary Clinic for Integrative Management of Chronic Pain
- Re-Designing a Domiciliary Service Through Mental Health Wellness Interventions and Treatment
- Transformation Nurse Training
- The LIVE Program
- Teach for Success – Patient Education
- Healthy Communities Greenhouse Projects
- Community Integration Through Creativity

### Experience of Care

- How to Create Healing Environments
- Enhancing the Veteran Experience
- Facilitation Skills
- Employee Wellness Program
- Pet and Equine Therapy
- Vibroacoustic Therapy Chairs

### Support Structure

- Voice of the Veteran – Listening Sessions
  - Voice of the Veteran – Family Advisor Council
  - Creating an Organizational Structure to Support Patient Centered Care
  - Staff Selection and Interviewing
  - New Employee Orientation
- 





## Education & Training

### Training Courses

The OPCC&CT has developed a series of whole health educational curricula designed to lay the foundation for delivering personalized, proactive, patient-driven care (whole health).

**Whole Health Foundation Toolkit:** The toolkit offers a selection of online modules that a facility may use to advance patient centered care concepts with employees at VA facilities. If you are a VA employee, [learn more about this course and download materials.](#) 

**Whole Health Coaching Course:** This is a six-day in-person training on communication and integrative coaching skills for clinicians and non-clinicians being delivered at 14 facilities in fiscal year 2014. Designed to build on Motivational Interviewing and TEACH Training, this in-depth course focuses on the Whole Health approach. VA employees can learn more about this course and download materials [here.](#) 

**Whole Health – Change the Conversation Clinical Course:** This course is focused on advancing skills in the delivery of personalized, proactive, patient-driven care. The University of Wisconsin-Madison Integrative Medicine Program, in collaboration the OPCC&CT and Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, has developed and is facilitating this custom-designed clinical education program for VHA. This includes a two-and-a-half-day in-person experiential course, together with 36 online educational modules which clinicians can individualize based on their needs and interests. The course is being delivered at 23 facilities in fiscal year 2014. VA employees can learn more about this course and download materials [here.](#) 

*“Last week’s three days with Whole Health was exceptional. My impression is that the staff were very moved and motivated. It is now our responsibility here in North Texas to keep the ball moving. If not now, then when? In not us, then who? As an almost 24 year Veteran of the VA, I was astounded (in a positive way) by the information being communicated and the delivery was very good also. To be honest, I would have never anticipated VA moving in this direction. Long time coming. If there are any opportunities to bring this group back, it would welcomed with open arms.” – Mr. Jeff Milligan, Director, North Texas VA*



*"I am still basking in the wonder of our session together! It has already influenced my approach in dealing with patients and myself. I can see how people light up to be a part of the healing process when specifically asked. Thank you for the inspiration!" – San Francisco VA Participant*

## Integrated Senior Executive Service (SES) Performance Measures

To help staff align their priorities with the most effective model of care, VHA has identified fiscal year 2014 SES measures that lay a foundation for cultural transformation across the organization. The performance measures track three important areas:

- **Change Management:** Recognizes how well a facility addresses all aspects of proactive health and well-being, and how the facility addresses the seven domains of operationalizing patient centered care at their facility.
- **Communication:** Addresses how the facility is incorporating the voice of the Veteran in both its care planning and operations.
- **Workforce Training and Readiness:** Evaluates how the facility is educating staff about patient centered care.

## Community of Practice Calls

The OPCC&CT holds a series of Community of Practice calls to enhance learning and collaboration across the organization. These forums bring together national experts and support facilities in sharing strong practices with each other. VA employees can go to [HealthforLife.vacloud.us](http://HealthforLife.vacloud.us) to learn more about the following Community of Practice calls: Integrative Health, Patient Centered Care, Patient Advocacy and the Veteran Experience, Facilities engaged with the OPCC&CT Field-based Implementation Teams, My Story/Personal Health Inventory Pilot Sites, those participating in the Whole Health Clinical Course and the Whole Health Coaching Course and VHA Program Offices.





*“If we can raise the well-being of the provider, the provider will positively affect the well-being of the Veteran.”*

**—Mark Moore,**  
*Employee Wellness Coordinator,  
VA North Texas Health Care System*

# Catalyzing Transformation

The OPCC&CT is continuing to support the field's efforts to bring whole health care to VA. Facilities are implementing new programs and developing new ways to bring this vision to life. These are just a few of VA's illustrations of priorities in the coming year.

- Develop a New Employee Orientation Program to complete staff immersion in patient centered, relationship-based caring. *(Las Vegas, NV)*
- Expand the use of the MyStory PHI to guide the creation of personalized health plans for Veterans in additional facilities.
- Modify clinical reminders to be more patient-focused and less burdensome. *(East Orange, NJ)*
- Open a Pain Institute that integrates conventional treatment with complementary therapies including chiropractic care, massage therapy, acupuncture, yoga, and biofeedback to reduce the prescription of opiates. *(New Orleans, LA)*
- Expand the VHA Voices program to multiple facilities, furthering developing a relationship-based culture.
- Continue the Patient Centered Hiring Initiative to focus on the hires of staff on those who are committed to the transformation to whole health care. *(Orlando, FL)*
- Expand Integrative Health programs and finish developing the Virtual Health Clinic to give Veterans better access to care. *(Washington, DC)*
- Embark on a challenging goal to Eliminate Veterans Suicide through the "Be a Hero ~ Save a Hero" initiative including the creation of a unique Suicide Prevention course with 21,000 employees trained, with outstanding results already. *(VISN 16)*
- Demonstrate the implementation of personalized, proactive, patient-driven care with new External Peer Review Program (EPRP) performance measures for front line providers, replace existing ones as a pilot to incentivize the new model of Whole Health care.



Orlando, FL, developed a residency program and hiring initiative to make sure staff members have the skills and resources to support whole health care.



## Field-based Implementation Team Engagements

Thanks to our field staff for driving the transformation of VA's health care system and for providing exceptional care to Veterans every day. The OPCC&CT would like to extend special recognition to the facilities and networks that have worked with our FIT partners these past two years and during fiscal year 2014 to transform the culture of their medical centers:

### Region 1 (West)

- Amarillo VA HCS
- Phoenix VA HCS
- Northern Arizona VA HCS
- West Texas VA HCS
- El Paso VA HCS
- New Mexico VA HCS
- Southern Arizona VA HCS
- VA Eastern Colorado HCS
- VA Roseburg HCS
- Mann-Grandstaff VAMC (Spokane, WA)
- Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center & Clinics (White City, OR)
- Boise VAMC
- VA Central California HCS
- VA Northern California HCS
- San Francisco VAMC
- VA Greater Los Angeles HCS
- VA Southern Nevada HCS

- Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VAMC (Walla Walla, WA)
- VISN 20 (VA Northwest Health Network)
- VISN 18 (VA Southwest Health Care Network)
- VA Salt Lake City HCS
- VA Montana HCS
- VA Pacific Islands HCS

### Region 2 (Midwest)

- Jesse Brown VAMC (Chicago, IL)
- Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center (North Chicago, IL)
- Oscar G. Johnson VAMC (Iron Mountain, MI)
- Tomah VAMC
- Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital (Hines, IL)
- Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans' Hospital (Columbia, MO)
- John J Pershing VAMC (Poplar Bluff, MO)
- VISN 16 (South Central VA Health Care Network)

- Gulf Coast Veterans HCS (Biloxi, MS)
- Central Arkansas Veterans HCS
- Overton Brooks VAMC (Shreveport, LA)
- Alexandria VAMC
- Fayetteville VAMC
- Michael E. DeBakey VAMC (Houston, TX)
- Muskogee VAMC
- Oklahoma City VAMC
- VISN 17 (VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network)
- South Texas Veterans HCS
- Central Texas Veterans HCS
- VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend HCS
- VISN 23 (VA Midwest Health Care Network)
- Fargo VA HCS, (Fargo, ND)
- Sioux Falls VAMC
- VA Central Iowa HCS

### Region 3 (Southeast)

- VISN 9 (VA MidSouth Healthcare Network)
- Tennessee Valley HCS
- Lexington VAMC
- Huntington VAMC
- Louisville VAMC
- VISN 7 (VA Southeast Network)
- Charleston VAMC
- Birmingham VAMC
- Augusta VAMC
- Tuscaloosa VAMC
- Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VAMC (Columbia, SC)
- VISN 8 (VA Sunshine Healthcare Network)
- Miami VAMC
- West Palm Beach VAMC
- Tampa VAMC
- Bay Pines VAMC
- San Juan VAMC
- North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System
- Orlando VAMC
- Fayetteville VAMC

### Region 4 (Northeast)

- VA Maine HCS
- VA Connecticut HCS
- Manchester VAMC
- Providence VAMC
- VA Boston HCS
- VA Central Western Massachusetts HCS
- Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital (Bedford, MA)
- White River Junction VAMC
- Philadelphia VAMC
- Wilkes-Barre VAMC
- Erie VAMC
- Coatesville VAMC
- VA Pittsburgh HCS
- VA Hudson Valley HCS
- VA New Jersey HCS
- Northport VAMC
- VA Western New York HCS (Buffalo, NY)
- Battle Creek VAMC
- VA Illiana HCS (Danville, IL)
- Richard L. Roudebush VAMC (Indianapolis, IN)
- Dayton VAMC
- Chalmers P. Wylie VA Ambulatory Care Center (Columbus, OH)

- John D. Dingell VAMC (Detroit, MI)
- Louis A. Johnson VAMC (Clarksburg, WV)
- VA Butler Healthcare
- VISN 1 (VA New England Healthcare System)
- VISN 3 (VA NY/NJ Veterans Healthcare Network)
- VISN 4 (VA Healthcare-VISN 4)
- VISN 10 (VA Healthcare System of Ohio)
- VISN 11 (Veterans in Partnership Healthcare Network)



## Field-based Implementation Team Partners

Field-based Implementation Teams (FITs) will continue to support local facilities' efforts to develop and implement innovative strategies to transform the practice and experience of care. Through consultation with VISN and local leadership, clinicians, staff, Veterans, and family members, FIT partners are readily available to help facilities develop a customized plan to adopt a patient centered model of care. FIT partners have worked with more than 50 percent of VHA facilities to date. If you are a VA employee, learn more about [FIT partner support](#).



| Executive Leadership Engagement Session and Stakeholder Interviews   | Information Sessions   | Supervisory Leadership Engagement Sessions   | Cultural Transformation Support Summary   | Leadership Engagement Sessions   | Staff Engagement Sessions and Facilitator Workshop (Train-the-Trainer)   |
|--|--|--|---|--|--|
| <p><b>Duration:</b> 1 day (½ day ELES, ½ day interviews)</p> <p><b>Audience:</b> Quadrad/Pentad and POC</p> <p><b>Goal:</b> To help senior leaders create both an individual and organizational vision of PCC, and to identify individual and organizational commitments to bring their vision to reality. Then, to collect information to enrich and inform future steps in this cycle.</p> | <p><b>Duration:</b> 1 hr. sessions repeated during 2 days</p> <p><b>Audience:</b> All staff, Volunteers and Veterans</p> <p><b>Goal:</b> To introduce the VHA model of Patient-Centered Care to as many Staff, Volunteers, and Veterans as possible; to learn more about PCC initiatives already underway, to share other examples of PCC to aspire to, and inspire staff to get involved.</p> | <p><b>Duration:</b> 4 hours</p> <p><b>Audience:</b> Service Chiefs, Supervisory employees</p> <p><b>Goal:</b> To build upon the work begun in the Information Sessions that introduced employees to the VHA model of Patient-Centered Care. Encourages supervisor support in promoting and accommodating employee involvement with Patient-Centered Care programs and initiatives.</p> | <p><b>Duration:</b> 3-4 days</p> <p><b>Audience:</b> Various stakeholder groups</p> <p><b>Goal:</b> To assist the facility and its leaders in understanding their current status when it comes to providing PCC to its Veterans, and a culture of caring for visitors, volunteers, staff and providers. Facilitated listening sessions are held with various constituents and a report is provided.</p> | <p><b>Duration:</b> 1 day</p> <p><b>Audience:</b> Leadership at all levels</p> <p><b>Goal:</b> To immerse leaders in a learning process that defines leading in a PCC environment and to prepare leaders to lead the initiative by engaging them as champions for the cause.</p> | <p><b>Duration:</b> 1 day Engagement Session and 2 day Facilitator Workshop</p> <p><b>Audience:</b> Select staff from all levels, then staff chosen to facilitate continue on for the workshop</p> <p><b>Goal:</b> To create awareness of PCC and unity among staff members by sharing the patient perspective and inspiring staff to engage in the journey as facilitators.</p> |

## VA Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation Leadership Team

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VA Employees can see a list of VA OPCC&CT support staff [here](#).



# Health for Life

Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation

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