The Radical Redesign of Health Care

Partnering with Veterans for their Greatest Health and Well-Being

A REPORT BY THE VHA OFFICE OF PATIENT CENTERED CARE AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION
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## Acronyms

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<tr>
<td>CIH</td>
<td>Complementary and Integrative Health</td>
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<td>FY</td>
<td>Fiscal Year</td>
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<td>IHCC</td>
<td>Integrative Health Coordinating Center</td>
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<td>IMPACT</td>
<td>Integrative Medicine for Patient Aligned Care Team</td>
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<td>OPCC&amp;CT</td>
<td>Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation</td>
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<td>VA</td>
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<td>Veterans Health Administration</td>
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We want to partner with Veterans and support them in achieving their greatest well-being.
Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Thank you for your dedicated and unwavering service to our Nation’s Veterans. For the past five years, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employees across the Nation have been working hard to transform our health care system to one that better partners with our Veterans allowing them to explore what matters most to them in their lives.

Our vision for system-wide implementation of the whole health approach to care represents a bold shift from a system designed around points of medical care primarily focused on disease management, to one that is based in a partnership across time focused on the physical, emotional, and social well-being of the whole person. This represents a radical change from the traditional approach to health care, one that VA is uniquely positioned to provide. We are pleased to share with you what this approach can mean for both our Veterans and you as VA employees.

We believe this approach best supports our primary mission to “honor America’s Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.” By employing a personalized, proactive, patient-driven strategy that considers the full range of physical, emotional, mental, social, spiritual, and environmental influences in their lives, this partnership will help to minimize and manage disease while improving the Veteran’s overall well-being – their whole health.

As you read this comprehensive report, notice the impact the whole health approach is having on Veterans and health care providers across the country. You will hear from Alex, who overcame addiction and homelessness, Judy, who practiced whole health to battle issues with depression, as well as many other Veterans who have taken control of their health so they can achieve what matters most to them in their lives. They have accomplished things they never imagined were possible and at the same time dropped their blood pressure, decreased their pain, and lost weight, all by making whole health a part of their lifestyle.

We are honored to share these very personal experiences with you along with other information on ways you can participate in the VA’s whole health approach. We want Veterans to be empowered to take control of their health while continuing to provide them the best quality whole health clinical care possible.

Sincerely,

Steve Young
Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management
Department of Veterans Affairs
Whole health is an approach to health care that empowers and equips people to take charge of their health and well-being to help them live their lives to the fullest.
Executive Summary

RADICALLY REDESIGNING HEALTH CARE FOR WHOLE HEALTH

An Overview
This report details the radical redesign of health care underway at VA. In collaboration with the National Leadership Council’s Whole Health Committee and a wide range of Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Program Offices, the OPCC&CT has developed the Whole Health System, which moves VA from a focus on episodic care to more continuous engagement with the Veteran throughout his or her life. The Whole Health System builds on the exceptional quality and compassionate care provided by VA providers and staff.

Why
Health outcomes in our country are poor. The United States is now ranked 37th in life expectancy, despite spending far more on health care than any other country. The costs are crippling. It is time to radically re-envision and redesign health care to create a health system, rather than a disease care system. In this redesign, we must start from a different place. We must expand our understanding of what defines health care, developing a Whole Health System model that empowers and equips Veterans to discover a path to health and well-being. The VA is uniquely positioned to make this a reality for our Veterans and for the nation.

What
Whole health is an approach to health care that empowers and equips people to take charge of their health and well-being to help them live their lives to the fullest. VA facilities have been exploring what it takes to shift from a system designed around points of medical care primarily focused on disease management, to one that is based in a partnership across time focused on whole health. We have learned clinical encounters are only one part of this equation. We need a health system focused on empowering, equipping, and treating Veterans.

Empower: The Pathway—In a partnership with peers, Veterans and their families explore their mission, aspirations and purpose, and begin developing their overarching personal health plans.

Equip: Well-being Programs—With a focus on self-care, skill building, and support, these programs are not diagnosis or disease based, but support the personal health plan of each individual. Services include proactive, complementary and integrative health (CIH) approaches such as stress reduction, yoga, tai chi, mindfulness, nutrition, acupuncture, and health coaching.

Treat: Whole Health Clinical Care—in the VA or the community, or both, clinicians are trained in whole health and incorporate CIH approaches based on each Veteran’s personal health plan, grounded in the healing relationship. This approach not only partners with Veterans to improve their whole health, but is also critically important for Veterans with complex conditions, such as chronic pain and the invisible wounds of war. Additionally, the whole health approach improves access and reduces the burden on primary care.

How
VA staff have been working with Veterans around the country to bring this approach to life. This report highlights the impact the Whole Health System is having on Veterans. Read this report to learn how Veterans are taking charge of their health and living their lives to the fullest with the support of their VA health teams and communities. Many VA facilities are advancing the whole health approach. In conjunction with the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) legislation, VA will now launch the full Whole Health System in 18 Flagship Facilities in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, the first wave of facilities in the national deployment of whole health. In addition to an implementation guide, the Flagship Facilities will receive education and training, resources and tools, and onsite support. Veteran outcomes and satisfaction will be tracked, as well as the interface with opioid safety and suicide prevention. This redesign of health care will model the future for the VA and for the country.
The whole health approach is a radical redesign that empowers and equips Veterans to take charge of their health and well-being.
Making Lives Better Through Whole Health

In FY 2016, the VHA continued efforts to improve Veterans’ access to high-quality health care while providing an exceptional experience. As these critical efforts progress, we are guided by the thoughts expressed by VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin in his March 17, 2016, *New England Journal of Medicine* article:

*Our whole health model of care is a key component of the VA’s proposed future delivery system. This model incorporates physical care with psychosocial care focused on the Veteran’s personal health and life goals, aiming to provide personalized, proactive, patient-driven care through multidisciplinary teams of health professionals.*

The whole health approach is a radical redesign that affirms the importance of the relationship and partnership between patients and their community of providers, and uses all appropriate therapeutic approaches, healthcare professionals, and disciplines to help patients achieve optimal health and well-being.

VA facilities have been exploring what it takes to shift from a system designed around points of medical care primarily focused on disease management, to one that is based in a partnership across time focused on whole health. In collaboration with the Whole Health Committee, the OPCC&CT developed a Whole Health System, which the National Leadership Council endorsed for national implementation in 2018. Whole health is an approach to health care that empowers and equips people to take charge of their health and well-being and to live their lives to the fullest.

The Whole Health System moves VA from a focus on episodic care to more continuous engagement with the Veteran throughout his or her life. It provides a roadmap to personalized, proactive, patient centered care—VA’s response to the health care crisis in the United States.
It’s very refreshing to see everyone feel engaged and empowered and part of this partnership with the Veteran to provide whole health.
Dr. Anupam Agarwal is the Associate Chief of Staff for Primary Care Service at the VA St. Louis Health Care System. She is a strong supporter of whole health. “We’re trying to weave whole health into the very fabric of what we do in primary care,” she says. Dr. Agarwal believes regardless of race, gender, or age, all Veterans benefit from a holistic approach to care that meets them where they are and helps them meet their goals.

“Our job here is to make sure we provide the care the Veteran expects and deserves,” she says. “This is what I trained for. That is why I went to medical school.”

That feeling of fulfillment, of helping Veterans and providing the care that makes these professionals feel good about their work is a win-win. “It’s very refreshing to see everyone feel engaged and empowered and part of this partnership with the Veteran to provide whole health,” she says.

Dr. Agarwal believes the Whole Health Partnership between Veterans and health teams translates into improved clinical outcomes and increased Veteran satisfaction. “The outcomes that we’re seeing are better. Diabetes control, better hypertension, or they really, truly are quitting smoking and sustaining it... When we have that shared goal, and that participatory relationship in that care plan, then the Veteran is comfortable. And they are more trusting of us,” she says.

The closer relationships and more positive outcomes are good for staff too. “We benefit, because we are providing that care,” she says. “I think whole health brings a unique way of thinking that we have lost. So, it really builds that relationship with the Veteran.”

Dr. Agarwal recognizes that sometimes it is difficult for staff to see where they fit into the implementation of whole health in their daily work. She says sharing information with health teams on how whole health processes can be built into what they already do is very important.

“I think whole health is infectious,” she says. “And it’s infectious in a nice way, because people are happier. I think the teams are happier, because they see the results with their Veterans.”
THE WHOLE HEALTH SYSTEM

The Whole Health System is the structure through which VA assists, guides, and provides care to Veterans who create personal health plans and practice whole health. Personal health planning is the process Veterans and health care teams will engage in to determine what is most important to the Veteran and the best ways for them to achieve their goals. As seen here, the personal health plan is at the center of the three supporting components that comprise the Whole Health System model:

• The Pathway Is EMPOWERING: In a partnership with health teams, including peers, Veterans and their families explore the missions, purposes, and aspirations that will guide the development of their overarching personal health plan.

• Well-Being Programs Are EQUIPPING: With a focus on self-care, skill building, and support, these programs are not diagnosis or disease based, but support the personal health plan of individuals and equip Veterans to achieve their goals and what matters most to them. Services include proactive, CIH approaches such as stress reduction, yoga, tai chi, mindfulness, nutrition, acupuncture, as well as health coaching for additional support.

• Whole Health Clinical Care Is TREATING: In the VA, community, or both, clinicians are trained in whole health and incorporate CIH approaches based on the Veteran’s personal health plan.
While the Whole Health System outlines the way in which VA is bringing this new approach to Veterans, the practice of whole health is best illustrated by the Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being, also called the Circle of Health. It lays out the big picture, connecting one’s health with other aspects of his or her life.

The equation at the bottom of the diagram identifies four key parts of the model, while the diagram illustrates the relationship of each component to achieving whole health.

- **Me:** The equation begins with the person, the Me, at the center. The Me represents each of us as unique individuals. We start at the middle saying, “I am the expert on my life, values, goals, and priorities. Only I can know WHY I want my health. Only I can know what really matters to ME.”

- **Self Care:** Each of us has the power to impact our well-being. But we may not have the skills or support to make those changes. It starts with looking at all the dimensions of your whole health. Even people who cannot be cured can often experience a deeper sense of meaning, peace, joy, or comfort.

- **Professional Care:** Health care teams are there to help with the prevention and treatment of disease and illness and to help one explore what matters most in life.

- **Community:** Just as there is a Me at the center of the circle, there is a We that enfolds it. Community is however you define it and often includes where you live, work, and worship, as well as all the people and groups you connect with.
At the end of the day you feel like you really made an impact on that person’s life.
She manages a panel of over 1,000 Veterans over the age of 55. Most of the Veterans she serves have chronic issues such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and lung disease from smoking. Everyday Ms. Phillips oversees their medications, lab tests, follow-ups, screenings, referrals to specialists, and other details related to their care.

Integrating the whole health approach in Little Rock has offered clinicians “a whole new way of doing things,” she says. It appeals to her because it doesn’t involve another medication, which she thinks is especially positive and important given the growing opioid epidemic. She says whole health gives her tools that can potentially “improve their (Veterans’) health and wellness rather than contribute to the pill burden.”

Introducing a new model to doing things is always going to be difficult, but she wants to encourage other staff to make the effort. “If we can understand where they (patients) are coming from, we can help them,” she says. “I can say with certainty, having adopted this model, it is so worth the time and the effort to do this. It completely changes the relationship you have with your patient.”

She stresses that integrative medicine isn’t an opponent of traditional medicine, but rather a means to complement it. “Whole health does not discriminate against the pharmaceutical industry… Pharmaceuticals save people’s lives,” she says. But she has seen more successful outcomes when she works with Veterans to build a health plan with smart goals and a combination of Clinical Care and Well-Being Programs.

When introducing the Circle of Health to patients, she helps them decide what they think they really need to work on. Then she talks with them about what they want and what they can do to get where they want to be.

“It (whole health) is much more rewarding. At the end of the day you feel like you really made an impact on that person’s life. It feels so good to really reach someone in a different way.”

Olive Ann Phillips is a primary care provider for the Patient Aligned Care Team at the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System in Little Rock.
The action of putting the Veteran at the center of his or her own healing process is an essential first step for healing.

After many years away from the military, Barbara, a Navy Veteran who served from 1969 to 1972, returned to VA for care with great hesitation.

She was sure she would not be welcomed or find what she needed. Looking back, she says, her resistance was unfounded. As she works with her health team in Boston and connects with well-being services such as health coaching and meditation, she feels like she is home and on the pathway of “freedom and happiness.” She says, “It was like a fresh start.” Because the whole health approach has become so valuable to her, she continues to work at her well-being practices and sits on the VA Veterans Whole Health Communication and Education Task Force.

“The action of putting the Veteran at the center of his or her own healing process is an essential first step for healing,” says Barbara. “I appreciate the Circle of Health graphic as a useful guide to always remember how each of us needs to remain in the center of our own health and welfare efforts if we are to achieve total health and well-being, even as we may need major support with these efforts. By following this model, the support given can be immensely more effective and gratifying to all involved.”

Barbara and other Veterans who are engaging in whole health are making the connection between their health and other areas of their lives. They are seeing where the traditional health care model of “find it and fix it” may not be helpful for some conditions. These include post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, sleep...
disorders, pain, substance abuse, even diabetes, heart disease, or cancer. The benefits of the whole health approach extend beyond what is addressed or provided by conventional health care. It puts the Veteran at the center of his or her health care, promotes self-care and healing, and emphasizes the importance of relationships and partnerships.

“Soul-level wounds are shared wounds,” says Barbara. “I feel immense gratitude toward health care providers who are willing to share the burdens that Veterans carry.”

**VIDEO RESOURCES:**

- An Overview of the Patient Centered Approach (6 mins)
  *bit.ly/2sgdopR*
- A Patient Centered Approach To: Community (2 mins)
  *bit.ly/2r1Zlz6*
- A Patient Centered Approach To: Professional Care (2 mins)
  *bit.ly/2r60Pcj*
- A Patient Centered Approach To: Spirit and Soul (2 mins)
  *bit.ly/2qWZ4pm*
- A Patient Centered Approach To: Surroundings (2 mins)
  *bit.ly/2rVoVKU*
- A Patient Centered Approach To: Recharge, Rest, Sleep
  *bit.ly/2sDKJsj*
- A Patient Centered Approach To: Power of the Mind (1.5 mins)
  *bit.ly/2r5XhGX*
- A Patient Centered Approach To: Food and Drink (2.5 mins)
  *bit.ly/2rMbgnS*
- A Patient Centered Approach To: Personal Development (3.5 mins)
  *bit.ly/2rLR98F*
- A Patient Centered Approach To: Working Your Body (3 mins)
  *bit.ly/2r2BVPp*
- A Patient Centered Approach To: Family, Friends, and Coworkers (4 mins)
  *bit.ly/2rVdQJK*
Implementation of the Whole Health System is having a positive impact on both Veterans and staff.
As Ms. Phillips and Barbara’s stories illustrate, the implementation of the Whole Health System is having a positive impact on both Veterans and staff. A recent report shows us that staff awareness of this new priority through supportive leadership, dynamic and innovative education, and the engagement of Veterans in decision making, increases overall job satisfaction and decreases burnout.

To learn more, read the full report at bit.ly/2vHZAG9.
Surveys designed to measure patient satisfaction have also found a correlation between higher patient satisfaction and patient centered care interventions. At sites practicing whole health, Veterans report better provider communication and collaboration and a more positive health care experience.

At VA New Jersey Health Care System, a Center of Innovation and Whole Health Flagship Facility, surveys found outpatients gave their providers an average rating of 9.2 out of 10 when it came to understanding, listening, and inclusion as compared with an 8.3 average rating at a comparison site.

Further, 73 percent of VA New Jersey outpatients rated their visit as the best visit possible, compared to less than 54 percent of patients at the comparison site.

Another critical component of the whole health approach is the creation of healing environments and relationships to improve the Veteran’s experience. Developing healing environments starts by ensuring all Veterans receive a warm and welcoming greeting and the setting supports health and healing with home or spa like furnishings, soft lighting, and artwork that inspires all who enter a VA facility.

Surveys show statistically significant correlations between Veterans’ experience of the physical environment and measured outcomes, including lower anxiety, depression, fatigue, and sleep disturbances. This inter-relationship enables better social functioning and self-efficacy.

In VA New Jersey surveys, outpatients on average rated the environment of care at 6.4 out of 7 as compared to a rating of 5.7 for comparison site patients. Patients rated the outpatient environment on 14 descriptors such as comfortable, cheerful, quiet, and clean.

New Jersey Outpatients Visit Experience:

Measure of Patient Centered Communication

Average of all items. Scores adjusted for site differences in health status, years with provider, and Hispanic ethnicity.

Overall Satisfaction

Percentage of patients rating office visit as 9-10 vs. 0-8.

Perceived Environmental Quality Index (PEQI)

Average of all items. Scores adjusted for site differences in health status, years with provider, and Hispanic ethnicity.
"It’s not a fad. It’s not a trend. It is a complete transformation and evolving of health care."
Five or six years ago, St. Louis was at the bottom of the barrel of Veteran satisfaction scores, according to Mr. Repko. But that is no longer the case. “We have moved up significantly. I think our whole health program has been a big part of it,” he says.

Treating Veterans as people and not just patients, he says, is what makes the whole health approach so powerful. “It’s not a fad. It’s not a trend. It is a complete transformation and evolving of health care. It really is fully complementary,” he says.

The staff at VA St. Louis is embracing whole health and what it offers Veterans. “After we hear story after story of the positive impact on the Veterans, it’s spreading to all the peers. ‘Hey, I want to be part of that. I want to help Veterans like that team over there’s doing, like that clinic is doing,’” Mr. Repko says.

He admits the transformation didn’t happen overnight. The changes in St. Louis have taken a couple of years and really started with one provider who advocated for the change. “The main thing is to get that first champion to take that on. And then it spreads. There’s no magic here,” says Mr. Repko. “We aren’t a one and only, nobody else can ever create this. It’s no different here than any place else in the country, as far as being able to replicate this.”

“You can find excuse, after excuse, after excuse,” he says, “But when you see the positives that the program has on the Veterans’ lives, and their care, I don’t see how you can’t want to break down those barriers.”

Keith Repko is the Director of the VA St. Louis Health Care System. As a leader, he says it is vital to remember that it isn’t just the health outcomes patients remember, but the way they are treated that really makes a lasting impression. “It’s not that, ‘Oh, that doctor was great, and I got my knee taken care of.’ It’s, ‘Well, I wasn’t treated right. I wasn’t treated with respect.’”
The Radical Redesign of Health Care

VA’s priority is to spread innovation and strong practices that support its transformation to a Whole Health System. VA is committed to providing staff with the tools, education, and support they need to practice patient centered care and whole health approaches.

To meet growing interest, VA OPCC&CT Field Implementation Team consultants serve as specialists to guide staff as they engage in this transformation. With expertise in areas such as whole health, personalized health planning, self-care and well-being, healing environments, and healing relationships, these consultants share the latest research and resources related to patient centered care as well as strong practices from VHA and the private sector. In FY 2016, the OPCC&CT Field Implementation Team consultants delivered more than 100 onsite consultative services to support facilities.

VA whole health and coaching courses have spanned 59 facilities across the country and by mid FY 2017 were delivered to more than 5,000 employees. These courses have built upon the TEACH, Motivational Interviewing and Clinical Coaching Courses that have been provided by the VA Health Promotion and Disease Prevention program leaders. OPCC&CT Field Implementation Team has provided onsite support during the courses and assisted with implementation planning following the training. Fifty-nine VA employees (including peers) are pursuing certification to become National Board-Certified Health and Wellness Coaches. The first exam for this certification is being conducted by the International Consortium for Health and Wellness Coaching.org and The National Board of Medical Examiners in September 2017.

Listed here are brief descriptions of the courses and resources currently offered to help staff better understand and adapt to whole health.

**ACCESSING WHOLE HEALTH TRAINING AND RESOURCES**

**Sharing Best Practices**

The VA Boston Health Care System shared lessons learned from their implementation of a personal health planning process in a workshop held in June 2016. Ninety days post-workshop, 100 percent of respondents reported some, or all, of the intended outcomes were achieved.

**Spreading the Word to Veterans**

In July 2016, the OPCC&CT Field Implementation Team participated as national faculty for the second year at the National Golden Age Games in Detroit. Information about whole health was provided at the Health and Wellness Expo on opening day to the approximately 600 Veterans in attendance.
**Whole Health in Your Practice Clinical Course:** This two-and-one-half-day clinical course uses a transformative educational approach to help clinicians: (1) co-create health plans that are personalized and reflect the goals and beliefs of Veterans, (2) collaborate with Veterans to support the innate healing response through nutrition, stress management, movement, and mindful awareness, and (3) learn about evidence-based non-pharmaceutical therapies. An evaluation of this course found significant changes in outcomes. At the two-month follow-up, these changes ranged from improved attitudes toward integrative medicine and preparedness to discuss non-pharmaceutical approaches to care to increased self-efficacy in the use of whole health strategies, intention to use these strategies, and use of these strategies. Access the course documents at [vaww.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/education/Whole_Health_in_Your_Practice_WHYP_Clinical_Course.asp](http://vaww.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/education/Whole_Health_in_Your_Practice_WHYP_Clinical_Course.asp)

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**Preparedness to Discuss with Veterans**

**Non-Pharmaceutical Approaches to Care**

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**Indicates significance from pre-test mean (p<.001). Means rounded to one digit to the right of the decimal.**

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**THE EVIDENCE IS IN Mindfulness**

The evidence map of mindfulness illustrates the potential positive effect of mindfulness interventions (Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy) on depression, pain, mental illness, or anxiety. View the Evidence Map of Mindfulness at [www.hsrdr.research.va.gov/publications/esp/cam_mindfulness-REPORT.pdf](http://www.hsrdr.research.va.gov/publications/esp/cam_mindfulness-REPORT.pdf)
Whole Health in Your Life: New Perspectives Course: This is a two-day clinical offering designed to introduce VA clinicians and clinical staff to the whole health approach through one of the most powerful methods possible—directly applying it to their own lives. Participants focus on their health and self-care priorities using the Circle of Health and explore a series of Whole Health Coaching techniques, mindful awareness practices, and various complementary and integrative health approaches, and learn how to create a personal health plan. This course can be a stand-alone offering or a gateway for clinicians who would like to dive deeper into additional offerings such as the Whole Health in Your Practice Clinical Course, the Whole Health Coaching Course, or additional specialized courses.

- **Passport to Whole Health Reference Manual:** This is an in-depth, printed manual all whole health course participants receive. bit.ly/2x5qoh5

Whole Health Coaching Program: This is a six-day intensive course on coaching and communication skills using the four-step coaching process model to train Whole Health Coaches as well as clinicians and others in Whole Health Coaching skills. This experiential course involves substantial practice and mentoring and is divided into two parts. Graduates are eligible to become National Board-Certified Health and Wellness Coaches. Course participants in 2016 reported increases in the use of Whole Health Coaching skills and the implementation of coaching sessions in one-on-one sessions with Veterans between baseline pre-test and three-month follow-up. Considering the magnitude of effects, participants were 3.35 times more likely to use Whole Health Coaching skills one-on-one, and 2.23 times more likely to implement coaching sessions one-on-one at follow-up compared to baseline. Access the course documents at [vaww.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/education/Whole_Health_Coaching_Course.asp](http://vaww.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/education/Whole_Health_Coaching_Course.asp)

- **Whole Health Coaching videos:** [vaww.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/education/Whole_Health_Coaching_Course.asp](http://vaww.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/education/Whole_Health_Coaching_Course.asp)

Taking Charge of My Life and My Health Facilitated Groups: This nine-week course, led by Veteran peers and/or VA health professionals and providers, teaches small groups of Veterans how to identify their own personal mission for life and health, and learn tools and skills to create a personalized health plan to improve their health based on what’s important to them. These groups are led by facilitators trained in the Whole Health Facilitated Groups Training Course, a three-day experiential training to teach participants whole health concepts and skills, such as mindful awareness and how to use the Personal Health Inventory, as well as group facilitation skills. Evaluation of Veteran groups has not yet started, but a preliminary sample of 42 training course participants showed significant (p < .05) pre-post changes in self-efficacy to use whole health concepts and tools (3.9 to 4.5 out of 5) and group facilitation skills (3.6 to 4.7 out of 5). These changes were sustained at follow-up with 11 participants for self-efficacy to use skills. Access the course documents at [vaww.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/education/Whole_Health_Group_Based_Program.asp](http://vaww.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/education/Whole_Health_Group_Based_Program.asp)

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**THE EVIDENCE IS IN**

**Yoga**

The evidence map of yoga illustrates the potential positive effect of yoga on two priority areas, depression and lower back pain. The yoga map looked at highly selective conditions. View the Evidence Map of Yoga at [www.hsrdr.research.va.gov/publications/esp/yoga.pdf](http://www.hsrdr.research.va.gov/publications/esp/yoga.pdf)
Pre-Follow-Up Change in Percent
Using Whole Health Coaching Skills Learned

![Bar Chart]

**p < .001, p < .01 *p < .05

*Denotes significant linear trend, p < .05, †denotes significant quadratic trend, p < .05. As there were three time points, a linear trend would indicate increases from pre to post, and from post to follow up. A quadratic trend indicates that the measure increased from pre to post but decreased post to follow-up.

Whole Health Learning at VA To Date

- More than 5,013 VHA employees were trained in whole health.
- 59 facilities have hosted 1 or more courses
  - 27 clinical and coaching
  - 25 clinical only
  - 7 coaching only
  - 15 have hosted 1 or more specialty courses

Flagship Courses
- 2,776 for the Whole Health Clinical Course, 61 courses
- 1,310 for the Whole Health Coaching Course, 35 courses

Specialty Courses
- 109 Whole Health Foundation, 3 pilots
- 160 Whole Health Partnership Group-Based, 11 programs
- 112 Whole Health 101, 5 pilots
- 70 Personal Health Planning: Making it Real, 2 programs
- 276 Whole Health for Pain and Suffering, 2 pilots + 2 programs
- 100 Whole Health and Nutrition, 2 pilots
- 100 Whole Health in Your Life, 2 pilots
- 5 online courses: Clinician Self-Care, Mindfulness, Complementary and Integrative Approaches, Nutrition, and Supplementary Taking Charge of My Life and Health (Facilitator/Group-Based)
The evidence map of tai chi illustrates the potential positive effect of tai chi on fall prevention and balance confidence as well as osteoarthritis, depression, and pain. View the Evidence Map of Tai Chi at www.hsrd.research.va.gov/publications/esp/taichi-REPORT.pdf.

Whole Health 101: This is a one-day offering that gives clinicians an experiential glimpse into what whole health is all about, how to incorporate mindful awareness into patient encounters, how personal health plans fit into the whole health model, and techniques that enhance resilience and innate healing. Contact the OPCC&CT Field Implementation Team partner who works with your facility for more information. Optional online modules, tools, and resources that complement this program can be found at bit.ly/2ukjZQ.

Additional whole health resources include the HealtheLiving Assessment and the Veterans Health Library.

- The HealtheLiving Assessment is a powerful tool that can help Veterans better understand their health habits and overall health. It’s available at the My HealtheVet website. The HealtheLiving Assessment asks each user a set of personalized questions and uses the answers to give personalized feedback on one’s risk for disease, and provides suggestions on how to improve health. It takes about 20 minutes to complete and is available online 24/7.
- The Veterans Health Library has more than 1,500 health sheets, 150-plus videos, go-to-guides, and flipbooks, all clinically reviewed, available at www.veteranshealthlibrary.org.
- The My Health Choices Tool is another tool that supports efficient personal health planning. My Health Choices builds on the VHA’s 9 Healthy Living Messages and facilitates collaborative goal setting, action planning, problem solving, and follow up.

Specialty Courses: These courses focus on pain management and nutrition.

- The Whole Health for Pain and Suffering: An Integrative Approach Course is a two-day offering about evidence-informed, safe, and effective non-pharmaceutical approaches to pain care. Participants will learn about research related to a broad range of CIH health approaches including acupuncture, dietary supplements, and manual therapies. Clinician self-care, burnout prevention, and enhancing resilience are also emphasized. bit.ly/2vHGJL5
- The Eating for Whole Health: Functional Approaches to Food and Drink Course is an advanced, stand-alone two-day clinical education course designed to introduce VA clinicians to the whole health approach as it relates to a fundamental aspect of self-care nutrition. It is informed by the latest research in nutrition and is designed for clinicians who are likely to incorporate nutrition recommendations into Veterans’ personal health plans. bit.ly/2uBz4tO
**Five online courses** have been developed including: Clinician Self-Care (TMS ID 29697), Mindfulness (TMS ID 31300), CIH Approaches (TMS ID 29890), Nutrition, and Supplementary Taking Charge of My Life and Health (Facilitator Training).

**Whole Health Virtual Library:** This user friendly, evidence-supported collection of practical and up-to-date resources, educational modules, and clinical tools support busy, evidence supported collection of practical and up-to-date resources, educational modules, and clinical tools that support busy clinicians in holistically caring for Veterans, family members, and even themselves. It includes more than 35 modules and 200 clinical tools. In addition to course materials, Veteran facing resources are available to augment the exploration, education, and practice of whole health. [projects.hsl.wisc.edu/SERVICE/index.php](http://projects.hsl.wisc.edu/SERVICE/index.php)

**Guidebook to Patient Centered Care:** This tool helps individual facilities determine the stage of transformation they are at and identify opportunities for continuous improvement. Critical elements of the patient centered culture include organizational support structures, healing relationships, healing environments, and the practice of whole health. The guidebook outlines a continuum of the patient centered journey across these critical elements and identifies standard milestones and actions to define the organization’s baseline and progress in the journey. It is an excellent starting place that helps inform strategic planning and the development of goals that make it possible to monitor progress over time.

**The Integrative Health Coordinating Center (IHCC):** The Center provides oversight and an infrastructure for delivering a variety of complementary and integrative approaches that are expanding across VA. IHCC is working with subject matter experts to provide structure and guidance relative to occupational codes and stop codes developed to promote the expansion of CIH services across the system. The IHCC is partnering with the OPCC&CT’s Field Implementation Team consultants to provide a CIH specialty team that supports the implementation of CIH in the field. Both onsite and virtual consultation regarding CIH implementation are available upon request. [vaww.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/IHCC.asp](http://vaww.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/IHCC.asp)

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**THE EVIDENCE IS IN Acupuncture**

The evidence maps of acupuncture illustrate potential positive effects on a number of applications, but most importantly on chronic pain. View the Evidence Map of Acupuncture at [www.hsrd.research.va.gov/publications/esp/acupuncture.cfm](http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/publications/esp/acupuncture.cfm)
I absolutely have been amazed at the progress that people make.
It was in her fellowship that Dr. Jill Elwing, a gastroenterologist at the St. Louis VA Medical Center, says she was first made aware of the importance of treating the whole person and not just a set of symptoms. She credits this awareness to her mentor who always had strong relationships with his patients and remembered and shared their stories.

The lesson has stuck with her, and she tries to teach it to the interns, residents, and fellows she works with at the VA today. She shares the stories of each individual patient’s circumstances with the health care providers she is working with. For instance, if a patient is traveling a long distance for treatment at a VA facility, she reminds the fellows how important it is to keep that personal situation in mind when scheduling appointments as to assure no unnecessary stress is put on the patient.

She credits the whole health approach with helping patients be more open with their health teams, feeling more confident in their care, and doing better. “I absolutely have been amazed at the progress that people make,” she says.

The personal patient relationships she has developed through the practice of whole health have also benefited her. “It is a lot more rewarding than just pushing a pill or giving a test,” Dr. Elwing says. “I feel like my morale is better because I have relationships that go deeper than just the surface of taking care of a medical illness… It is definitely more moving to me, and it means a lot more to be in health care when you can share both the ups and downs with your patients and be invested in their health.”
As a leader of Whole Health Facilitated Groups, called Taking Charge of My Life and Health, Marvin begins his work with other Veterans by asking what is important to them. “I try to give them time to think about it,” he says. “That is a big question, and often times they have never thought about it before.”

Through whole health peer-to-peer groups, Veterans can connect with and learn from other Veterans who have shared similar experiences. These healing relationships can be pivotal on the journey to well-being. During these nine-week sessions, Veterans are encouraged to look at their health in a different way while the leader teaches skills to improve health and well-being.

Marvin appreciates how whole health asks Veterans for their perspective on how their health care is handled and what is important to them. “It is really a 180-degree shift for how we approach health care, and now the Veteran really has the opportunity to be in the driver’s seat,” says Marvin.

An officer in the Army from 1980 to 1983, Marvin Everest has been putting his skills as a former community college educator to work at the Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System in Biloxi, Mississippi, where he partners with Veterans on their whole health journey.
Marvin says he wasn’t sold on the practice of whole health until he tried it for himself. At first, he found mindfulness practices to be a bit of a struggle but says he now cherishes them.

He credits whole health with helping him deal with his biggest health issue, an up-and-down struggle with weight. “Part of this program is using the skills that I’ve obtained as a facilitator and as a teacher and applying them directly to helping Veterans as well as myself, changing my lifestyle so I don’t get back into that yo-yo syndrome of gaining and losing weight.”

Marvin says controlling his weight is not just about looking better. It is also closely tied to what he values. “The biggest reason I want to lose weight is so that I can help and interact with my family and my community.” He says being at a healthy weight not only makes it easier to do things he loves like camping and hiking but also helps him to feel more confident, making it easier for him to help others, something that is very important to him.

As a Veteran teaching other Veterans about whole health, Marvin is in a unique position to relate to his fellow Veterans and can make them feel more comfortable when they share with the group. He describes this relationship of trust and common experiences as “a dynamic combination.”

**VIDEO RESOURCES:**

- Whole Health Care Comes to Life Through Interactive Patient Care *(3 mins)*
  

- Health for Life Through The Voice of the Veteran *(4 mins)*
  

**Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy**

A 2011 study of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy found it led to a 34 percent relative risk reduction in relapses of major depressive disorders. Another well-designed trial found that 15 months after completing mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, 75 percent of people with a history of major depression were able to discontinue antidepressant medications.

[projects.hsl.wisc.edu/SERVICE/modules/4/M4_EO_Mindful_Awareness.pdf](http://projects.hsl.wisc.edu/SERVICE/modules/4/M4_EO_Mindful_Awareness.pdf)
Timeline and Accomplishments

2012

- VHA developed its five-year Strategic Plan for FY 2013-2018. Number one strategic goal: provide Veterans personalized, proactive, patient-driven care
  - Defined the characteristics of the VA model of care
    - [www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/clinicians/what-is-patient-centered-care.asp](http://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/clinicians/what-is-patient-centered-care.asp)
  - Prepare the work force to deliver personalized, proactive, patient-driven care
- New Directions Design Summit held
  - Convened national thought leaders to envision and inform this model
- Centers of Innovation (COI) established
- Began research on outcomes
- Began Development of educational curricula
- Solicited request for proposals and grants provided to the field to support innovation

2013

- National Leadership Council approved the VA Model of Care
- Executive Decision Memo signed by Under Secretary for Health
- Whole Health Education Courses began
- Solicited request for proposals and grants provided to the field to support innovation
- Innovation Toolkits developed to share promising practices
- Evidence maps in CIH were launched

2014

- Centers of Innovations and innovation grants continue to inform and evolve the model
- Integrative Health Coordinating Center stood up
- Launched partnered evaluation with Health Services Research and Development and the Quality Enhancement Research Initiative
- Solicited request for proposals and grants provided to the field to support innovation
- First white paper published “Lessons Learned to Operationalize Patient Centered Care”
- Grants provided to the field to support innovation
Secretary of the VA approved whole health as VA’s approach to personalized, proactive, patient-driven care

- HAIG report shows 93 percent of parent facilities provide some type of CIH
- Patient Centered Care Guidebook deployed
- Grants provided to the field to support innovation

- Request for proposals for whole health design sites, seven selected and launched
- CARA legislation signed into law
- Core model refined based on innovation grants and design sites
- Aligned with Opioid Safety Initiative

- Second request for proposals for whole health design sites, 11 selected and launched
- 18 Flagship Facilities identified to be launched in 2018
- Secure funding and plan for national Whole Health System implementation in FY 2018
- CARA report and recommendations delivered to Secretary
- Whole Health System Implementation Guide created to support a national implementation of whole health across VA

[www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/WHS_Implementation_Toolkit.asp](www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/WHS_Implementation_Toolkit.asp)
Most services will be focused on self-care skills and ongoing classes and support to empower Veterans.
The Pathway

Whole health is focused on empowering Veterans to take charge of their health. VA will partner with Veterans at the point of enrollment and throughout their relationship with VA, facilitating their exploration of their mission, purpose, and aspiration, to help create an overarching personal health plan that integrates care both in the VA and the community.

The Pathway programming can be offered within VA or the community and can be inclusive of family and caregivers. To facilitate the Pathway, VA is creating a new role for peers to partner with Veterans. The Pathway programming may include:

- **Whole Health Orientation**: This is offered at the point of entry to VA health care and provides connection to Pathway options.

- **Core Program**: This offering has an emphasis on exploring what matters most to the Veteran, identifying avenues for enhancing self-care, and creating a personal health plan. This may include:
  - **Whole Health Group Programs**: The Taking Charge of My Life and Health (virtual or in-person in VA or community settings) course, and/or
  - **Online Pathway Options

- **Well-Being Programs (Integrative Health Providers)**: These core offerings teach new skills to support self-care and include CIH approaches, self-care classes, and health coaching. These offerings will be easily accessible to Veterans throughout the nation either within the VA setting or in the community. They will not be disease focused but rather focused on self-care and CIH approaches to optimize health and well-being.

Health teams may include an integrative nutritionist, movement therapists and teachers (e.g., yoga, tai chi, qigong), licensed acupuncturists, mind-body therapists (e.g., stress reduction, guided imagery, clinical hypnosis), Health Coaches, and others. Veterans will be able to be seen individually in support of their personal health plan, but most well-being services will be focused on self-care skills and ongoing classes and support. These programs will have strong relationships with whole health Clinical Care and Pathway programming, including referrals to and from primary care, other service lines, and Whole Health Partners.
A Whole Health Partner is a new role. This person provides information and advocates for Veterans’ personal health goals and plans, and shared goals with Clinical Care teams by partnering with Veterans in completing a Personal Health Inventory and exploring aspects of a personal health plan in group and individual settings. The position is the steward of how to navigate the Whole Health System and orient Veterans new to the program about the services, hours, locations, staff, tools, resources, and other pertinent information necessary for the Veteran to understand the program and how to utilize the program.

ENGAGING IN PERSONAL HEALTH PLANNING

To help Veterans focus on what matters most them, VA has developed the My Story: Personal Health Inventory (https://www.va.gov/PATIENTCENTEREDCARE/resources/personal-health-inventory.asp). This tool helps the Veteran reframe his or her attitude toward health while providing the health care team with vital information about what is important to the Veteran. Knowing Veterans’ personal health priorities creates opportunities for the health care team to address and support those areas. Putting the tool in the hands of patients gives them increased independence and ownership over their health. For more information, read the white paper: Personal Health Inventory, An Analysis of Veteran Responses at bit.ly/2vHRIEv.

The HealtheLiving Assessment, an evidence-based online health risk assessment is another important resource that is currently available to help Veterans learn about their risks for illness, the role that health behaviors play determining risks, and how to take steps for staying well and mitigating existing health risks. The My Health Choices Tool is another tool that supports efficient personal health planning. My Health Choices builds on the VHA’s 9 Healthy Living Messages and facilitates collaborative goal setting, action planning, problem solving, and follow up.

IMPROVING PATIENT-REPORTED OUTCOMES

A recent study of Veterans who participated in personal health planning found patients reported better outcomes including measures of health status, ability to manage illness and engage in healthy behaviors, and perceptions of provider communication. Veterans described the experience as positive, collaborative, patient centered, and important to their health. Of those surveyed, 88 percent responded that a personal health plan is important to health and well-being and 75 percent recommended setting a personal health goal.
Another study evaluated the impact of personal health planning at two VA sites. One whole health site where primary care teams helped Veterans establish a personal health plan reported significantly better health status, self-efficacy, and activation. The study also illustrated health benefits in those with personal health planning. The chart below shows Veterans with diabetes who engaged in health planning achieved better blood sugar levels and control of their diabetes (hemoglobin A1Cs).

### Experiences of Veterans in Personal Health Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88%</td>
<td>Personal health goal is important to health and well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Would recommend setting a personal health goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74%</td>
<td>Had enough say in selecting a personal health goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73%</td>
<td>Made progress toward reaching personal health goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72%</td>
<td>Someone followed up to discuss progress on personal health goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70%</td>
<td>Often discuss personal health goal at visits with VA primary care team or coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69%</td>
<td>Relationship with VA health team or Health Coach was helpful in making progress towards personal health goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68%</td>
<td>Choosing a personal health goal improved my health and well-being</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Trends in Blood Sugar (Hemoglobin A1C) Levels in the 24 Months Before and After Beginning Personal Health Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean (standard deviation) (%)</th>
<th>6 Months Before</th>
<th>6 Months After</th>
<th>p value from T-test – N.S.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 Months Before</td>
<td>7.26 (1.69)</td>
<td>7.33 (1.81)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interrupted Time Series Parameter Estimates**

| Parameter  | SE  | ~P>|t| |
|------------|-----|-----|
| Time       | 0.010 | 0.003 |
| Program    | 0.206 | N.S. |
| Time After | 0.015 | N.S. |

Trend of modest increase in HbA1C levels over time tempered by PHP initiation

To learn more, read [The Impact of Personal Health Planning](http://bit.ly/2vHSJMH).
Hopefully we come together in a way that the Veteran says, ‘You know what? That is a great opportunity.’
Like many medical centers and health care systems across the country, the Gulf Coast is now partnering with Veterans to guide them on the whole health pathway, helping them to plan for lifelong health and well-being.

Mr. Bowne describes whole health as “a paradigm shift in how we do things.” An advocate of the approach, he believes it opens the door for health teams to help patients who may have challenges and difficulties outside of health care. He says whole health allows clinicians to deal with those issues head on so patients can move in a new, healthy direction. He describes these interactions as satisfying for clinicians because it feels good to know they are helping Veterans meet their needs.

Using the new tools the OPCC&CT has developed, such as the Personal Health Inventory, makes it easier for health teams to partner with Veterans to align their personal health plans with their day-to-day goals and life aspirations. Better yet, it keeps the patient in the driver’s seat.

“Our Veterans know their bodies and what is right and best for them. We as clinicians know medicine, nursing, social work, and behavioral health, and we have recommendations on how Veterans can optimize their health and wellness. Hopefully we come together in a way that the Veteran says, ‘You know what? That is a great opportunity. That is a great idea. I want to run with it.’”

Gulf Coast uses telehealth technology to share whole health with as many Veterans as possible throughout their large geographic region. Along with eliminating the need for a trainer to travel to several different clinics over several hundred miles to do individuals trainings, telehealth has allowed Gulf Coast to offer more courses and engage more Veterans over a shorter period of time. The best part of this approach, Mr. Bowne says, is that it can be duplicated at any VA without increasing costs. “It doesn’t require extra staff and uses existing technology that is available at every VA,” he says.

By partnering with Veterans on their whole health journeys, clinicians are helping Veterans reach their personal goals, according to a recent survey. The results show more than half of respondents had either been referred to another professional or a class or activity, received encouragement and support, or were motivated by members of their health care team in efforts to reach their goals.
It’s due to the whole health program that I’m able to sit here...

Judy Thedford served in the Air Force from 1979 to 1992. Extremely depressed and anxious, Judy attempted to take her life on several occasions and was not able to leave her home or even walk down a dark hallway in her house.

A 2016 study released by the VA Office of Suicide Prevention found an average of 20 Veterans died by suicide each day in 2014. Suicide prevention is a top priority for VA, making well-being programs even more important.

Judy came to VA for help with severe, chronic migraines and was later diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Then she participated in a whole health course via telehealth. Working with her health team to develop a personal health plan, Judy examined what was important to her and decided her goal was to train her dog, Blue, as a service dog to help her deal with her anxiety. Animal-assisted therapies have been shown to lower the cortisol levels of patients. Cortisol is a hormone that regulates many of the physical reactions to stress.

“Before I trained Blue, I wouldn’t go outside. I wouldn’t leave my house. I wouldn’t walk down the hallway to my bedroom. Like with a lot of Veterans, many things were reminders of horrible nightmares,” says Judy. “Blue sticks with me close. And she is able to go with me any place I want to go.”

Judy says now she can get up in the morning and walk down her hallway with the light off and deal with the quiet of her home. These accomplishments, small to some, mean the world to her. Better yet, she says she can talk about her struggles without feeling judged. She credits her work with whole health and VA’s use
Therapeutic Journaling

Expressive writing is an evidence-based treatment for post-traumatic stress. The simple act of expressing thoughts and feelings on paper about challenging and upsetting events can allow us to move forward by expressing and letting go of the feelings involved.

"It is due to the whole health program that I’m able to sit here with Blue," she says.

of expressive writing therapies with helping her work through her emotions and feel more connected to a community of Veterans. Expressive writing therapies, like the one Judy is engaged in, are a great way to express feelings and thoughts and have been very effective in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder.

VIDEO RESOURCES:

- The Road Ahead (14 mins)
  bit.ly/2sTttb0
- Whole Health: A Shift Towards Health (13 mins)
  bcove.me/ygyrew7x
- Whole Health: The Power of You (13 mins)
  bcove.me/f32kgdfv
- Health for Life: Innovative Practices (6 mins)
  bit.ly/2shr1VJ
- A Patient Centered Approach To: Family, Friends, and Coworkers (4 mins)
  bit.ly/2rVdQJK
Rather than focusing on disease, whole health design sites employ an integrative approach to optimize patients' health and well-being.
Well-Being Programs and Centers

Across the nation, many facilities are actively advancing the Whole Health System: 18 whole health design sites are currently in place, and 18 Whole Health Flagship sites are scheduled to launch in 2018.

Rather than focusing on disease, whole health design sites employ an integrative approach to optimize patients’ health and well-being. Whole health teams incorporate the knowledge and expertise of Primary Care, Specialty Care, Mental Health, and Geriatric providers who partner with Veterans to help them focus on what matters most in their lives. The whole health model is strengthened when health teams collaborate with all those who can help support the Veteran in their personal goals and priorities. Health Promotion Disease Prevention Coordinators, Pain Management specialists, Women’s Health, Peer Support Specialists, Suicide Prevention Coordinators, and Palliative Care specialists all provide a holistic approach to care in the whole health model.
**ORIGINAL WHOLE HEALTH DESIGN FACILITIES AND FUTURE SITE PLANS**

**Established Centers of Innovation**
- VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System
- VA North Texas Health Care System
- Washington DC VA Medical Center
- VA New Jersey Health Care System
- Birmingham VA Medical Center

**Emerging Centers of Innovation**
- VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System
- VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System
- Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System
- Orlando VA Medical Center

**2016 Design Sites**
- VA Boston Healthcare System
- Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System
- VA North Texas Health Care System/Plano Community Based Outpatient Clinic
- Washington DC VA Medical Center
- Jesse Brown VA Medical Center (Chicago, IL)
- Harry S. Truman Memorial (Columbia, MO)
- W.G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center (Salisbury, NC)

**2017 Design Sites**
- Baltimore VA Medical Center
- Central Arkansas Health Care System
- Durham VA Medical Center
- VA Greater Los Angeles Health Care System
- VA Hudson Valley Health Care System
- Iowa City VA Health Care System

**Flagship Sites**
- VISN 1: VA Boston Health Care System
- VISN 2: VA New Jersey Health Care System (East Orange, NJ)
- VISN 4: Erie VA Medical Center
- VISN 5: Beckley VA Medical Center
- VISN 6: W.G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center (Salisbury, NC)
- VISN 7: Atlanta VA Medical Center
- VISN 8: Tampa VA Medical Center
- VISN 9: Tennessee Valley Health Care System
- VISN 10: Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center (Saginaw, MI)
- VISN 12: Tomah VA Medical Center
- VISN 15: St. Louis VA Health Care System
- VISN 16: Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (Little Rock, AR)
- VISN 17: South Texas Veterans Health Care System
- VISN 19: Salt Lake City VA Medical Center
- VISN 20: VA Portland Health Care System
- VISN 21: Palo Alto VA Medical Center
- VISN 22: Tucson VA Medical Center
- VISN 23: VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (Omaha, NE)
A Report by the VHA Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation

Established Centers of Innovation
Emerging Centers of Innovation
2010-15 Innovation Grants: 1
2010-15 Innovation Grants: 2
2010-15 Innovation Grants: 3+
Whole Health Education Locations
Whole Health 2016 Design Sites
Whole Health 2017 Design Sites
Whole Health Flagship Sites

Map Key
Patient centered care activity at VA facilities.

Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands
We care about what is inside of you, what makes you tick, and what makes you excited about life.
Mary Nelson, the Patient Centered Care Coordinator at the Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System, says Veterans react enthusiastically to whole health. “They want to start right away and find out about how they can get involved,” she says.

Because Gulf Coast is one of the original whole health design sites, Ms. Nelson has had the unique opportunity to observe both the staff and Veterans’ journey as they learn about the new approach and how they can benefit from it. She says the feedback so far has been “this is awesome.”

Giving Veterans tools such as guided imagery and mindfulness techniques has a big impact on their efforts to relax or grieve, she says. In appreciation of the practices they share with Veterans, many of the staff now begin some of their meetings with whole health mindfulness practices. “It makes you feel you are on top of your game,” she says.

Whole health allows Ms. Nelson to reframe the conversation with the Veterans she talks to. She says discussing not only Veterans’ health but also their well-being gives her more to offer and opens the door for them to achieve better self-management. “The question ‘what matters most to you’ really gets attention, and that is where the impact comes from,” she says. “We care about what is inside of you, what makes you tick, and what makes you excited about life.”

Ms. Nelson oversees an Ambassador program where she has found Veteran volunteers who have become Peer Support Specialists and now lead Whole Health Facilitated Groups, Taking Charge of My Life and My Health. These volunteers, whom she describes as “agents of change,” are an integral part of Gulf Coast’s whole health journey and cultural transformation. “There’s nothing like Veterans speaking to Veterans,” she says. “They get it.” The strength of this approach, according to Ms. Nelson, is any medical center can follow this model.

For those Patient Centered Care Coordinators who haven’t found their volunteers yet, Ms. Nelson advises, “Just keep looking, and offer an opportunity for service.” She credits the Ambassador program for her good fortune in finding Gulf Coast’s volunteers and believes others will be able to do the same.
After leaving the military, Nick Wolff faced many hardships: a divorce, bankruptcy, and living on the streets. He describes it as a “rough transition” and says he doesn’t want other Veterans to share his experience.

“When you are in pain and don’t know where to turn, it is almost as bad as being in a combat zone,” he says. “You are scared for your life, and you are worried about how you are going to make it to the next day.”

Having served in the Army from 2005 to 2013, Nick says he was in “pretty bad shape” when he got out. Struggling with chronic pain, he was regularly taking medication but knew this wasn’t the long-term solution for him. “I don’t want to take more medication than my 92-year-old grandmother,” he says. “That’s what I was doing.”

All that changed when he found whole health at the Little Rock, Arkansas VA. There he has developed a relationship with a health care team who listens to him and has open, honest conversations about what he wants his treatment to be and what he wants his health for. “When you realize you have stuff to live for,” he says, “it motivates you to get better.”

In Nick’s case, he started living for himself, his family, and other Veterans and friends. He has four children whom he wants to be able to watch grow and become young adults. He describes his family as active and says he wants to be active with them. He also spends a lot of time helping other Veterans find the
assistance they need. Veterans trust Veterans, he says. “We’ve been there, done that, and got the t-shirt.”

Through the whole health approach, he has experienced improvements in his relationships and his health as well. When he first came to whole health, he says he couldn’t run two miles. Now he can run four to six miles, something he hasn’t been able to do since early in his military service. He raves about the pain relief he experiences from battlefield acupuncture, an integrative health therapy he receives at the Little Rock VA. He says this treatment allows him to remember all the things he used to do and is a great alternative to “here’s another pill.”

The support he receives from his family, his relationships with other Veterans and friends, and his connection to his health care team all help him stay motivated. Through whole health, he says he’s found “love, compassion, friendship, and honesty.”

“I’ve seen it change my life dramatically for the better,” he says.

**Battlefield Acupuncture**

This acupuncture technique was named “battlefield acupuncture” because it can be performed in less than ideal conditions. It involves only the ear and the insertion of five small gold needles at specific points until the patient feels a reduction in pain.
Whole health Clinical Care involves health and disease management within a whole health paradigm.
Whole Health Clinical Care

Whole health Clinical Care involves health and disease management within a whole health paradigm, which includes personal health planning, CIH, and health coaching. Clinical Care integrates holistic approaches into treatment plans and is provided in outpatient and/or inpatient settings that are attentive to healing environments and healing relationships. Whole Health Clinical Care builds upon the Patient Aligned Care Teams model. In the vision of the future state of health care, this Clinical Care will work seamlessly with the Well-Being Programs (VA or non-VA/community) and the Pathway.

An Overview of a Veteran’s Journey Through the Whole Health System

Veterans can begin their whole health journey in any area of the system, accessing each component as desired and needed. The Veteran is the driver of their path through the model.
Hearing a person’s story and giving them hope for the future are keys to activating the individual into self-care.
The Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System is working with patients dealing with pain to not just manage it but reverse it through the Integrative Medicine for Patient Aligned Care Team (IMPACT) for Pain Clinic. IMPACT focuses on the whole person and tries to understand where that pain comes from. “Pain doesn’t exist in isolation. It exists within the framework of the entire life story of that individual,” says Dr. Henri Roca, a staff physician and program manager for IMPACT. “If we can understand how something like pain is created, we can actually give them (patients) a pathway to help them undo it.”

Dr. Roca says a more traditional approach to medicine has doctors identifying and treating symptoms as entities. He argues that this approach “is sort of a false perspective,” as it only considers one experience of the individual without looking at the entire system within which the person exists.

IMPACT has been well received by Veterans. Dr. Roca says he now hears patients say they have hope and feel like they have been listened to and heard. “Those two things, hearing a person’s story and giving them hope for the future, are keys to activating the individual into self-care,” says Dr. Roca. “When they feel they can make a difference and have been heard, they are more likely to engage in activities that will actually improve their health.”

The implementation of whole health care involves shifting the perspective from the individual’s symptoms to the person’s whole life story. Dr. Roca says this approach appeals to many staff members who went into medicine to help make people healthier, not to hand out more medications.

The whole health model brings the focus back to values and vision—why Veterans want to live, and why health care providers want to do the work they do. Dr. Roca describes it as reestablishing a sacred space between the provider and Veteran that is “filled with joy, hope, and positive feelings. Whole health meets individuals where they are, honors their life experience, and helps them buy into their own care.”

He says, “One of the best things you can do for an individual is to say, ‘you know you have control over most of this, and if you were to do these certain few things, then you could get control over your health.”

Central Arkansas is working to share basic whole health practices with as many patients as possible throughout the facility, not just through the IMPACT program. They are training providers in the basic skill sets of battlefield acupuncture, mindfulness, movement, and nutrition to reach Veterans near the initial point of service.

As whole health expands at other facilities across the country, Dr. Roca says including mindfulness, nutrition, and movement activities like yoga or acupuncture can be done without a lot of extra cost. This is about transforming medicine, he says. The bigger need will be for champions, both administrators and providers, who decide to make this change in style.
The Veteran Experience

Alex

Setting Goals and Identifying Barriers

The VA is on the cutting edge of listening to what is important to the Veteran.

The need for change and control is something Alex Stallworth understands.

A former Marine, Alex had trouble finding his way after leaving the service. When he came to the Gulf Coast Veterans Health System in 2014, he was dealing with homelessness and addiction and had a history of difficulties with the law. He says the first glimmer of hope he felt in years was when a VA counselor told him he was accepted into an inpatient drug rehabilitation program. Through his ongoing care at VA, he has become familiar with the whole health approach.

Whole health has taught him to set goals, take steps, and identify barriers. He points to the mindful awareness tools he learned, such as breathing exercises and gratefulness meditation, as things he now uses to help him through each day.

“Whole health to me means taking control of your destiny,” says Alex, who now works as a Peer Support Specialist and Whole Health Group Facilitator. His favorite thing about working with whole health groups is the growth and the confidence he sees in other Veterans when they participate. “They can take charge of their health care,” he says.

Because of shame and embarrassment, Alex says he held his story back for a long time. It took him a while to realize how much it helps him to talk about his whole life journey and how much it helps others to hear him do that. He is so grateful for the changes he has been able to
Whole Health in Action

Preliminary findings suggest that after only 8 weeks of program participation, Veterans reported:

• Improved physical and mental health symptoms
• Decreased medication use
• Positive experience and patient satisfaction

*Washington DC VA Medical Center

make in his life and now shares his story through the Whole Health Facilitated Groups he leads. “I never could have told my story if there were no ears that wanted to listen,” he says. “The VA is on the cutting edge of listening to what is important to the Veteran.”

Without VA programs, Alex says he hates to even think about what would have happened to him. “I probably wouldn’t be here. The gratefulness and willingness to help others would be lost in the graveyard,” he says.

Through a series of small goals, Alex has achieved a large goal. He and his family have purchased their first home, and he is enjoying time with them. “When I walked up to my first house for the first time, the first house that I ever owned, it was unbelievable. It was like living a dream because I never thought I would attain a home… To put my key in the front door, it was a dream come true.”

FIND YOUR COMMUNITY VIDEO RESOURCES:

Health for Life: Strengthening Relationships, From Warrior to Soul Mate (6 mins)
bit.ly/2sh8vwR

A Patient Centered Approach To: Community (2 mins)
bit.ly/2r1Zlz6

Learn More About Mindfulness Meditation by Watching One of These Brief Introductory Videos:

• What is Mindfulness? (7 mins)
  bit.ly/2r3f8TD
• Why Mindfulness for VA? (8 mins)
  bit.ly/2rCDQsE
• Four Ways to Cultivate Mindfulness (4 mins)
  bit.ly/2sUBa7m
• Beginning a Mindfulness Practice (5 mins)
  bit.ly/2r3x2Wq
• Mindfulness and Compassion (4 mins)
  bit.ly/2tIkocH
We are exploring the best ways to create, manage, and sustain effective Veteran and Family Advisory Councils.
Partnering With and Listening to Veterans

There is real power in listening to and connecting with Veterans. VA wants to ensure Veterans are not only at the center of their health care but at the center of all we do as an organization.

We are exploring the best ways to create, manage, and sustain effective Veteran and Family Advisory Councils across the country and are looking at the best ways to recruit and train members. This includes building leadership support, developing charter and mission statements and facility action plans, and identifying the elements of effective council meetings. We created the Veteran/Family Advisors Toolkit (bit.ly/2vg89pl) to provide a step-by-step guide to help medical center leaders and staff start Veteran and Family Advisory Councils.

Because the voices of Veterans are so important to whole health at the VA, we started the National Veterans Task Force on Whole Health Communication and Education in 2014. This group exists to support the development of online and print resources for Veterans. The task force is made up of 12 Veterans from Alabama, Alaska, California, Florida, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, South Carolina and Texas. Task force members review and give input into the development of the Veteran-facing education products as well as the whole health communication products.
Innovation and strong practices support VA’s transformation to a patient centered culture.
Bringing Whole Health to Your Facility

With the introduction of the Whole Health System, VHA has undertaken one of the most massive changes in the philosophy and practice of health care delivery by an organized health care system. One of VHA’s aims is to spread innovation and strong practices that support VA’s transformation to a patient centered culture.

To do this, the OPCC&CT is partnering with the field to provide hands-on workshops to help facilities implement and sustain improvements in one or more elements of the patient centered culture. As you will read here, there have been significant accomplishments and best practices developed throughout the VISNs at the original centers of innovation, whole health design sites, and many other facilities.
HIGHLIGHTS OF VISN ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

VISN 1

VA Boston Healthcare System has served as one of the original Whole Health System design sites. Staff from the facility participated in the development of a video entitled, “Partnering with Veterans in a Personal Health Planning Approach to Whole Health Care,” available to all VHA sites (bit.ly/2vHSJMH). The VA Boston Healthcare System also hosted the Whole Health Clinical Course and developed and sponsored the personal health planning workshop where they shared Boston’s experience implementing personal health planning with six other VHA sites, as well as providers across VA Boston. The healthcare system has provided training to their nurse residents to provide a shared framework in patient centered care as part of the overall system-wide whole health foundation. VA Boston has implemented an innovative model for training Patient Aligned Care Teams across multiple campuses to help implement whole health.

www.boston.va.gov

VA Connecticut Healthcare System trained all Patient Aligned Care Teams in whole health to assist providers with changing the conversation as they engage Veterans. The Connecticut Healthcare System also hosted the Whole Health Pain Course to explore how mind-body approaches and self-management can support coping and well-being for patients with pain. The facility also established the Integrative Health Center.

www.connecticut.va.gov

Providence VA Medical Center completed the self-assessment Guidebook to Patient Centered Care to identify organizational strengths and gaps. The center is in the process of erecting a standalone CIH clinic and is enhancing the healing environment with military-focused displays and inspirational quotes throughout the medical center.

www.providence.va.gov

River White Junction VA Medical Center, Vermont conducted four 2-hour Whole Health Sessions to 35 employees with an emphasis on the present status of deployment of the Whole Health System and the current implementation of whole health strategies planned for the facility. The training also focused on mindfulness and self-care. Fifty percent of the attendees signed up to be a part of the facility-level whole health deployment.

www.whiteriver.va.gov

VISN 2

Syracuse VA Medical Center developed a Quick Cards Program as an easy way for staff to know how well it is doing and ways to improve from the Veterans’ perspective. They also implemented a “Real-Time Survey,” which provides quick feedback from patients to help analyze weak spots and make continual improvements. The women’s clinic has focused on expanding CIH services and developed a multidisciplinary plan for the treatment of fibromyalgia that has received excellent feedback from patients and positive data on objective measures of improvement in pain, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Syracuse staff welcomed Whole Health 101 training in June 2017.

www.syracuse.va.gov
Bath VA Medical Center is working to enhance their healing environments by spearheading beautification projects, including planting flowers with residents of a community living center. They are also highlighting the importance of nutrition by hosting a monthly farmers’ market to make fresh fruits and vegetables readily available. To enhance both the patient and employee experience, the facility is exploring a patient shadowing program to track a Veteran’s experience from the moment he or she walks in the door until leaving the facility to better understand check-in times, use of kiosks, and staff challenges.

www.bath.va.gov

VA Western New York Healthcare System is highlighting the benefits of healthy cooking by showcasing teaching kitchens in the waiting rooms with produce from their farmers’ market. Mobile cooking demonstrations offer participants the opportunity to share recipes and learn to prepare healthy foods. In addition, there is a healthy garden and a “whole health patio” has replaced the smoking area.

www.buffalo.va.gov

James J. Peters VA Medical Center’s uses the My Life, My Story Program in the Women’s Clinic to listen to and document Veterans’ stories so they can be shared with the care team. They are working to incorporate the personal health planning process that incorporates the National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Gateway to Healthy Living Program. The facility is enhancing their complementary and integrative health portfolio and expanding its healing arts programs into Veterans’ care.

www.bronx.va.gov

Healing Environment Workshops:

Allows participants the opportunity to experience a healing environment as they learn about strategies for capturing the voice of the Veteran and staff, organizational and leadership structures, collaborations with external partners, financial and non-financial re-sources, evidence-based design principles, outcome measures, as well as innovations for interior and exterior spaces.

• Healing Environments Toolkit: bit.ly/2vJdLLM

• Healing Environments Workshop: bit.ly/2vg1wmU
The goals of VA Voices are twofold: The first is to help leaders engage staff, providers, and care teams with ICARE values. These values are demonstrated in responsive relationships with Veterans that focus on the Veteran’s experience and perspective to respond to his or her needs and goals. Relationships among staff must also be strengthened to work effectively in teams, collaborate on improvement, and develop trust for optimal safety, transparency, and improvement.

The second goal of VA Voices is to integrate and align the system to support this Veteran centered focus and improve clinical and organizational outcomes. Health care system improvements include demonstrated ongoing leadership support, commitment, and training; enhanced hiring and workforce management practices with emphasis on ability to function in a team and deliver patient-driven care; creative use of clinically integrated quality improvement within a culture of transparent and effective data and feedback; and space and infrastructure improvements to enhance patient centered care delivery.

VA Hudson Valley Health Care System has served as a Whole Health System design site and hosted both the Whole Health Clinical Course—Changing the Conversation and the Whole Health Coaching Course. Seventy-four percent of staff has attended a staff engagement session, including 87 percent of the mental health staff. Hudson Valley has received a Whole Health and Wellness Mini-Competition Grant for Mindful Meditation.

www.hudsonvalley.va.gov

VA New Jersey Health Care System has been a longtime Center of Innovation and is now serving as a Whole Health System Flagship Facility. The outcomes of their Health and Wellness Center, which integrates primary care, mental health, and CIH has been noted earlier in this report. Additionally, they have hosted Healing Environment Workshops in March and May 2016 and rolled out VA Voices to all Patient Aligned Care Teams. They received two grants from Whole Health and Wellness Mini-Competition: Neuromuscular Action for the inpatient Women’s Treatment Unit and Yoga Therapy for self-management of cancer treatment side effects.

www.newjersey.va.gov

Northport VA Medical Center has an effective Patient and Family Advisory Council and has increased the number of Veterans on the council and the medical center’s committees. The center embarked on a customer satisfaction campaign with new and existing employees to enhance relationship building, trust, confidence, and communication. They have established a Wellness Clinic to assist Veterans in reaching their goals and what matters most to them.

www.northport.va.gov
VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System has a very active Veterans Center Care Committee geared toward improving processes that impact Veterans’ experiences and Veteran health outcomes. [www.pittsburgh.va.gov](http://www.pittsburgh.va.gov)

Wilmington VA Medical Center completed a Healing Environments Engagement to inspire and engage staff to develop and implement healing design principles. [www.wilmington.va.gov](http://www.wilmington.va.gov)

Erie VAMC was selected as the VISN 4 Whole Health Flagship Facility for FY 2018. Erie is very busy planning to integrate CIH therapies as part of their shift to a Whole Health System of care. [www.erie.va.gov](http://www.erie.va.gov)

Beckley VA Medical Center is working to replicate a whole health Well-Being Program model that includes various CIH offerings such as battlefield acupuncture for pain management. [www.beckley.va.gov](http://www.beckley.va.gov)

Huntington VA Medical Center continued its impressive patient centered care journey with a Veteran Experience Engagement designed to assist the site with transforming the Patient Advocacy Office into a comprehensive and proactive Veteran Experience Office. Additionally, the OPCC&CT provided a military culture immersion engagement, called Mil-X, to enhance the understanding and appreciation of Veterans’ unique experiences. [www.huntington.va.gov](http://www.huntington.va.gov)

VA Maryland Health Care System has a robust and ongoing partnership with the OPCC&CT. With the Baltimore VA being a whole health design site, the director set the stage for adopting the principles of a patient and family-centered care model, and there is interest in expanding the CIH services currently being provided in the Residential Wellness Center. Dramatically improved scores for the facility’s Survey of Healthcare Experiences of Patients are attributed to resources and staff engagement in patient centered care. The facility will be implementing whole health system-wide with a rollout date of August 1, 2017. [www.maryland.va.gov](http://www.maryland.va.gov)

**Veteran Experience Engagement**

The Veteran Experience Engagement is a collaborative strategy between the OPCC&CT and VA Medical Centers to assist and provide guidance on organizational structure, policy development and employee skill development to shift current advocacy programs to a Personalized, Proactive, and Patient-Driven Patient Experience Office. For more information: [bit.ly/2uB12Wl](http://bit.ly/2uB12Wl)
Charles George VA Medical Center continues to successfully maintain the highest VA-wide inpatient satisfaction rating since 2014. The site chose six areas to implement health coaching: nutrition for pain management, whole health retreats for staff, creation of a diabetic group for young adults, caregiver support, use of therapy dogs to improve parenting skills, and alternative therapies. Their Weight Management Services using the concepts of whole health have greatly improved Veteran outcomes.

www.asheville.va.gov

Durham VA Medical Center has served as a whole health design site and continues to strive for new ways to serve Veterans in an environment that supports staff. Monthly VA Voices sessions have increased the staff’s engagement and awareness of the impact of relational styles with Veterans, with 96.7 percent of participating staff strongly agreeing the sessions are relevant to changing the culture. The site is also offering whole health retreats to engage and educate staff to have the conversation with Veterans. Whole health groups are being conducted by both shared medical appointments and group facilitation with peers.

www.durham.va.gov

Hunter Holmes McGuire VA Medical Center continues to expand whole health through the development of a “one-stop shop” for consults and resources. The Veterans Integrated Pain Clinic provides individualized care for each Veteran. This includes weekly nutrition classes, biofeedback, meditation, and yoga. The clinic also partners with local fitness centers after a consult to physical medicine and rehabilitation to continue Veterans’ self-care in the community.

www.richmond.va.gov
A Report by the VHA Office of Patient Centered Care and Cultural Transformation

W.G. (Bill) Hefner VA Medical Center has served as a whole health design site and continues to strive for new ways to serve Veterans and support staff. Salisbury is providing whole health retreats for both staff and Veterans. They have taught other VISN 6 staff how to conduct their own retreats. The Peer Support Specialists are providing one-on-one coaching through primary care, and recruitment is underway for a Whole Health 9-week course. More than 350 Veterans have participated in the Whole Health Coaching 9-week classes provided through the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center and the Substance Abuse Recovery and Rehabilitation Treatment Program.

www.salisbury.va.gov

Atlanta VA Medical Center was one of the first facilities to spread personal health planning and was recently named a Whole Health Flagship Facility. Two unique teams at the Fort McPherson Clinic began implementing personal health planning coupled with healing environments to support patients’ health and healing while they explore “what matters” to them.

www.atlanta.va.gov

Birmingham VA Medical Center has been instrumental in implementing personal health planning and integrating transformative nurse training practices into the process. This includes skills such as healing touch, guided imagery, and breathing techniques. In addition, Birmingham began using the Personal Health Inventory as part of new staff orientation to the clinic.

www.birmingham.va.gov

Charlie Norwood VA Medical Center has used the Voice of the Veteran in organizational operations and established a Patient and Family Advisory Council that continues to grow. They have also worked aggressively to identify inpatient measures and subsequent actions to improve overall inpatient satisfaction.

www.augusta.va.gov

Nursing Engagement

The Purpose of the Nursing Engagement is to:

- Provide an overview of the role of nurses in whole health strategies
- Incorporate a personalized, proactive, patient-driven approach into nursing care
- Provide information on the VHA whole health model, which includes both the practice and the experience of care
- Support site specific strategies focused on both the practice and experience of care, which reinforce the facility’s overall patient centered care strategic plan
- Offer ways for nurses to effectively implement holistic strategies that support Veteran well-being
- Promote wellness to America’s Veterans by shifting from sick care to “health care,” an essential strategy of VHA

For more information: bit.ly/2fnQI2b
Central Alabama VA Health Care System’s leadership team has been instrumental in using the Guidebook to Patient Centered Care to create a plan of action for nursing based on identified gaps. The medical center’s nursing staff has the most daily Veteran encounters. For this reason, nursing was decided to be at the forefront of the transformational movement to whole health. The health care system conducted nursing engagements at three campuses. The facility has plans to integrate this information into the entire organization by offering nurse-led information sessions on whole health. www.centralalabama.va.gov

West Palm Beach VA Medical Center’s Patient Aligned Care Team started the process of personalized health planning. The center is also working to improve peer-to-peer encouragement by having Peer Support Specialists reach out to Veterans who do not show up for referred programs such as weight loss or smoking cessation that are part of their whole health journey and engaging with the Veteran to create a personalized, proactive whole health plan that includes the Veteran’s mission, aspiration, and purpose. The three Peer Support Specialists currently working on this team have been training in the OPCC&CT Whole Health Coaching Peer Support Course. www.westpalmbeach.va.gov

North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System focuses on the Veteran experience with two innovative ideas. The Senior Prom and Military Ball enhance healing relationships among both staff and Veterans within the community living center, and the “Ask Me About My Wishes” campaign ensures all Veterans’ end-of-life wishes are honored. A whole health pilot program was started this FY with a Primary Care Mental Health Integration team. The goal is to enhance mental health access in VHA Rural Clinics. Whole health well-being enhancement classes are now offered through social work and mental health care teams to help Veterans be proactively in charge of their health. www.northflorida.va.gov

VA Caribbean Healthcare System created several healing environments, including their parking garage. They were recognized by the ACGME and Gold Foundation’s DeWitt C. Baldwin, Jr. Award for their commitment to fostering a respectful and supportive environment. www.caribbean.va.gov
James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital - Tampa is VISN 8’s Whole Health Flagship Facility. In 2016, the hospital created cards designed to visually introduce Veterans to care providers and provide contact information for future reference. Tampa’s Women’s Health Program created and is offering a whole health Transforming Health and Resilience through Integration of Values-based Experience Program (THRIVE). This multidisciplinary facilitated, 14-week curriculum-based group was founded on evidence-based principles of whole health, positive psychology, acceptance and commitment therapy, and mindfulness. The hospital’s Women’s Health program expanded to include train the trainer classes through THRIVE Immersion, a 3-day program intended to increase staff awareness and expand THRIVE within the hospital and beyond. www.tampa.va.gov

Orlando VA Medical Center focuses on the Veteran experience, hosting town hall meetings and facilitated listening sessions with Veterans, engaging in community partnerships, and providing healing greenspaces and gardens throughout the campus. Orlando’s Women’s Health Program hosted a nursing mini-residency where the OPCC&CT presented on the Whole Health System and provided education to staff on self-care and experiential learning. Orlando trained a Peer Support Specialist in Whole Health Coaching and is focusing on outreach to the community to aid with the offerings of CIH modalities such as yoga, tai chi, and well-being classes. www.orlando.va.gov

Lexington VA Medical Center has executive leadership open their patient centered care staff engagement sessions. Leadership involvement heightens the impact of the sessions and helps employees understand how patient centered care ties in with the facility’s strategic goals as well as how it affects them personally. Additionally, with Mil-X infused into these sessions, the staff is learning the best ways to engage with Veterans. www.lexington.va.gov

Louisville VA Medical Center is fostering innovation through the development of the MyVA WAY mobile app. Conceptualized by Louisville employees, this app will greatly improve the Veteran experience. The center also has nurses engage in professional self-care to address stress and burnout and develop site-specific strategies for incorporating patient centered care practices throughout patient services. www.louisville.va.gov

Battle Creek VA Medical Center hosted the Whole Health in Your Practice course in February 2017. As a result, they have five whole health teams working on personalized health planning with Veterans at the primary facility along with two community-based outpatient clinics. Each team has three specific whole health goals, which include creating a pilot project with Veterans on whole health, incorporating mindfulness in Patient Aligned Care Team meetings, and utilizing three specific questions with patients: 1) What things would I like to accomplish with my provider today? 2) What matters to me the most? 3) What do I want my health for? The plan is to distribute questions to Veterans prior to their visits, with a goal of two patients a day for the next three months. www.battlecreek.va.gov
Chalmers P. Wylie VA Ambulatory Care Center focuses on education and expanding community partnerships. This Columbus VA established a partnership with the Wexner Gallery and initiated offering CIH approaches to staff and Veterans in the evening. www.columbus.va.gov

John D. Dingell VA Medical Center increased the number of Patient Aligned Care Team members who are offering personalized health planning to Veterans. This Detroit facility has increased primary care satisfaction scores as they have expanded their whole health approach to care. www.detroit.va.gov

Cincinnati VA Medical Center completed the self-assessment Guidebook to Patient Centered Care and identified next steps to further patient centered care and whole health. Objectives include introducing whole health concepts into new employee orientation, involving key leaders as patient centered care champions, incorporating personal health planning education into new Veteran orientation, expanding personal health planning training to two community-based outpatient clinics, and embedding the Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being and personal health planning education in various electronic education. www.cincinnati.va.gov

VISN 10

Jesse Brown VA Medical Center—Chicago was one of the original whole health design sites with strong organizational commitment to and consideration of how care is received from the Veteran’s perspective. They are focusing on Whole Health System implementation and have developed a systematic approach to empowering Veterans by offering the Taking Charge of My Life and Health whole health group for Veterans and expanded Well-Being Programs, while equipping Veterans in support of their self-care. They are offering the whole health approach across the continuum of care. www.chicago.va.gov

VISN 12

Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center revamped their Patient Advocate Liaison Staff functions, creating a new model for several sites across VHA. VA Voices, chosen by Lovell leadership as a key method to increase staff engagement, was so well received it resulted in an overall participant satisfaction rating of 100 percent. www.lovell fhcc.va.gov

Tomah VA Medical Center was recently named as a Whole Health Flagship site and will be developing the Whole Health Systems approach. They have launched VA Voices to help staff share their values and drive culture change. MyVA highlighted Tomah’s Renew and Refresh space for employee wellness. Equally of note is the center’s emphasis on Veteran health and wellness with dedicated space for healing touch and other Pain University course offerings. www.tomah.va.gov
Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans’ Hospital - Columbia has served as an original design site. To strengthen their Well-Being Programs they have added Health Coaches and a health and wellness instructor to the staff while also enhancing CIH services. The changes are designed to help introduce Veterans to the Whole Health System, guiding them through a variety of clinical and non-clinical means and providing them with options for self-managed health care with team support. A comprehensive CIH resource directory has been developed to provide resources for each of the Components of Health and Well-Being.

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

VA St. Louis Health Care System has served as a Whole Health System design site and was recently named as a Whole Health Flagship site. Their dedicated, multidisciplinary, Veteran-centered care steering committee has has led patient centered care initiatives. These include working with select Patient Aligned Care Teams to deliver personalized health planning and building a robust offering of CIH approaches. The focus on partnering with Veterans to identify their well-being goals has been their top priority.

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

VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System has as their motto for patient centered care, “We Are Better Together—No Decision About You Without You.” New employee orientations integrate whole health information from the OPCC&CT and include a panel consisting of a Veteran staff member, a Veteran receiving services at the facility, and a family member of a Veteran.

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

John J. Pershing VA enhanced the environment of the community living center with new neighborhood signage and the addition of mailboxes for each resident. A greenhouse, which is part of their partnership with the local community, gives residents the chance to work with plants and fresh produce to eat. The facility developed a video of their enhanced digital signage that can be viewed on VA PULSE ([www.vapulse.net/videos/10566](http://www.vapulse.net/videos/10566)).

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

Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System continues to make cultural transformation a priority as a Whole Health Flagship site with a well-developed patient centered care committee that plans, implements, and guides strategic priorities. Currently, Central Arkansas has trained more than 2,200 employees in customized staff engagement sessions and integrated whole health training into new employee orientation.

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

G.V. (Sonny) Montgomery VA Medical Center is involved in cultural transformation efforts through both staff engagement sessions and VA Voices. The center has initiated a patient centered care newsletter, offered experience in mindfulness, and implemented the Fresh Eyes project to discover and address concerns.

[www.jackson.va.gov](http://www.jackson.va.gov)
Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System - Biloxi was one of the original Whole Health System design sites and uses telehealth to conduct classes for groups of Veterans across all five community-based outpatient clinics. Additionally, the facility is fully engaged in VA Voices and continues with staff engagement session retreats. The system shares stories and patient centered care news through the Inspire Newsletter.

www.biloxi.va.gov

Overton Brooks VA Medical Center initiated several CIH programs for Veterans such as acupuncture, pet therapy, yoga, and tai chi. The medical center improved the environment by making changes to the emergency room, waiting rooms, elevators, and lobbies to raise Veterans’ perceptions of care and overall satisfaction.

www.shreveport.va.gov

Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks introduced the Personal Health Inventory at the Branson community-based outpatient clinic, offered peer support classes and tai chi through AmeriCorps, and used volunteers to teach qigong. They also initiated therapeutic projects including healing waters, a community garden, stairwell art, and a walking trail.

www.fayettevillear.va.gov

VA North Texas Health Care System was one of the Patient Centered Care Centers of Innovation, and their Plano Clinic was one of the original whole health design sites. They continue to advance their whole health practices to all ambulatory care clinics at the Dallas campus using the “After Visit Summary,” a modified combination of the Personal Health Inventory and personal health planning. Looking ahead, the facility intends to train several Peer Support Specialists in the Taking Charge of My Life and Health Whole Health Group Program to facilitate groups.

www.northtexas.va.gov

Central Texas Veterans Health Care System utilized the Personalized Health Inventory and personalized health plan in several outpatient programs at the Austin clinic. The health care system has expanded community partnerships to support Arts and Humanities Programs for Veterans.

www.centraltexas.va.gov

Amarillo VA Health Care System created, tested, and revised their own version of the Personal Health Inventory, which they call “The View.”

www.amarillo.va.gov
Eastern Oklahoma VA Health Care System has put many new processes and programs into place through their Veterans Experience Committee and Veteran and Family Advisory Council. These include: “Honor Walk,” “No Veteran Dies Alone,” monthly staff retreats, a Veteran and Family Advisory Council, a Voice of the Veteran inpatient survey, an outpatient customer satisfaction campaign, and a CIH services SharePoint site. Eastern Oklahoma has also developed a partnership with the local health department to offer the “Stanford Chronic Disease, Living Longer, Living Stronger with Chronic Conditions” Self-Management Course and tai chi certification for staff.

www.muskogee.va.gov

Portland VA Medical Center has been designated the Flagship Facility for VISN 20. This builds on its foundational work in recent years, including development of a variety of CIH services, staff training around whole health, selection as a design site, and strong research experience in patient-centered care. Staff have piloted and implemented Whole Health Coaching individually and in groups, and have been bringing whole health to Veterans through several new programs in various departments. Whole health has also been introduced to staff through several staff self-care engagements, as well as introduced to medical trainees.

www.portland.va.gov

VA Puget Sound Health Care System has a strong complement of whole health practices. A group of mental health providers working in primary care developed a nine-week Whole Health Curriculum for Veterans and staff and shared the workbook with peers nationally. Additionally, they developed the 12-week Hero’s Journey Class that focuses on civilian reintegration by examining culture, story, mindfulness, and the framework of Joseph Campbell’s hero’s journey as it applies to Veterans.

www.pugetsound.va.gov

VA Salt Lake City Health Care System was recently named as Whole Health System Flagship Facility. In preparation, they have expanded a coaching course that has reached the maximum allowed registration and now has a waitlist. Several CIH approaches are already available through the Health Promotion and Healing for Veterans Program including qigong, warrior yoga, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, and more. The Ogden community-based outpatient clinic also has a personal health planning pilot team who have been making progress with implementing the use of the My Healthy Choices form with Veterans as they develop their personal health planning process.

www.saltlakecity.va.gov
**VISN 20**

VA Northwest Health Network, and other VISN 20 facilities are embarking on the Employee Engagement Program leveraging the model of Purposeful Change. VA Puget Sound Health Care System pioneered this and is assisting in its spread. The goal is to enable all employees to work together and empower them at all levels. Leveraging the model of Purpose-Led Transformation, the program combines knowledge and skills from every corner of the organization including both day-to-day experiences and process improvement. VISN 20 leadership also hosted the Whole Health Coaching Course for all the sites with the deputy network director opening the session and leaders spending time listening to comments about the course and the innovative ideas participants took away. [www.pugetsound.va.gov](http://www.pugetsound.va.gov)

Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center offered nursing engagement for all levels of nursing in the organization. The staff engaged in professional self-care to address stress and burnout during the week and discussed strategies for incorporating whole health tools in their practice and with their teams. The attendees expressed and exhibited interest and enthusiasm for whole health and generated discussions on moving forward with the implementation of personal health planning in their work. [www.southernoregon.va.gov](http://www.southernoregon.va.gov)

Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VA Medical Center—Walla Walla has been working on further development of the Life Goals Project by exploring what really matters to the Veterans regarding their health at one of their community-based outpatient clinic. The facility is also working to expand the use of the Life Goals Project beyond the Richland community-based outpatient clinic and to bring this process into mainstream clinical practice. This process was noted as a best practice during their last Joint Commission review. [www.wallawalla.va.gov](http://www.wallawalla.va.gov)

**VISN 21**

VA Pacific Islands Health Care System covers many small island populations dispersed throughout an enormous geographic area spanning approximately 4.6 million square miles of the Pacific Ocean. This has not kept them from practicing whole health. They developed a mobile approach to VA Voices and sent a training team to their community-based outpatient clinics. This has served to emphasize their commitment to providing leadership support, trust building, and an enhanced sense of community in the outpatient environment. [www.hawaii.va.gov](http://www.hawaii.va.gov)
VA Northern California Health Care System uses personal health planning with patients and is proactive about moving it forward in daily practice throughout different teams. More than 400 nurses were trained through nursing engagements, and nursing leadership shifted the way nurses listen to concerns and explain procedures to patients.

www.northerncalifornia.va.gov

VA Palo Alto Health Care System was recently named a Whole Health Flagship Facility. They have contributed to expanding the Voice of the Veteran across VA by hosting and training on-site for Patient and Families Advisory Councils, providing a wealth of experience and support to novice sites.

San Francisco VA Health Care System made great strides incorporating patient centered principles into its staff’s everyday practices. Peer Support Specialists introduce the Personal Health Inventory to Veterans and continue to provide health coaching after Veterans visit with a health care provider.

www.paloalto.va.gov

www.sanfrancisco.va.gov

VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System has a very active VA Voices Alumni Group. In pursuit of the Veteran's voice, this facility is also participating in the My Life, My Story initiative. A full-time writer captures and shares Veterans' narratives, and the system integrates CIH care approaches such as yoga for back pain.

www.reno.va.gov

VA Central California Health Care System has been very engaged with the OPCC&CT and held or hosted the following: facilitated listening sessions, shadowing for a pharmacy customized consultation, the Whole Health Clinical Course, personalized health planning consultation, and advanced personalized health planning consultation. They have been incredibly proactive in engaging their staff and leadership to implement the concepts of whole health. To date, they have a team integrating the personal health planning process in their pain program. The team consists of physicians (primary care and physical medicine and rehabilitation), a pharmacist, and a psychologist utilizing the components of whole health and the Personal Health Inventory in their practice.

www.fresno.va.gov
VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System is a whole health design site and is currently working to expand its Pathway to include community resources, including a Family Well-Being Center (in partnership with University of California Los Angeles (UCLA)), a resource center for homelessness, domiciliary. New permanent housing is also coming to the health care system’s campus, plus many more sites in the community at UCLA, YMCA, Vet centers, and other community partners. There is a strong commitment to providing a holistic approach to mental health and the arts and humanities are an area of focus for healing. Staff in Patient Centered Care, Mental Health, the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center, and Integrative Health have shared strong practices by developing numerous innovative toolkits on the OPCC&CT website.

Northern Arizona VA Health Care System has a strong and dynamic Veteran Centered Care Board with eight subcommittees that have been introduced to the Guidebook to Patient Centered Care. After Northern Arizona hosted the Healing Environments Engagement in FY 2016, their Veteran Centered Care Board created and implemented healing environment goals and action plans.

www.prescott.va.gov

Southern Arizona VA Healthcare System was recently named as a Whole Health System Flagship site for VISN 22, and the OPCC&CT has been partnering with the site since 2012.

www.tucson.va.gov

VA Long Beach Healthcare System collaborated with the OPCC&CT on developing the Guidebook to Patient Centered Care, providing feedback and input. Staff coordinated the shadowing of three Veterans through three different Patient Aligned Care Teams to help identify current processes and flow of care and to capture the use of the change the conversation tools. Additionally, two more staff members of the VA Long Beach have recently completed the Whole Health Coaching Course and have engaged a workgroup seeking to expand their current use of Whole Health Coaching within the medical center. Several staff members also participated in the Arts and Humanities Project, which led to their team working closely with Education to produce a booklet that delineates all of their programs, called the Bulldog.

www.longbeach.va.gov

VA San Diego Healthcare System - Several staff members also participated in the Arts and Humanities Project. Their team attended the San Diego Veteran Arts Symposium and are working with the Associate Director on space challenges for supporting health and well-being, and pursuing a grant for seated yoga. Additionally, the CIH Committee has been partnering with the OPCC&CT and the Integrated Health Coordinator Center to advance their infrastructure and use of stop codes, CHAR 4 codes, and notes titles to capture use of CIH services. VA San Diego is also working on how to best integrate whole health and CIH into their committee structure and delivery of care.

www.sandiego.va.gov
Sioux Falls VA Health Care System successfully completed more than 600 Personal Health Inventories and provided valuable CIH services to Veterans. Based on the program’s success, the facility plans to expand into a new, separate building. Sioux Falls is also working to expand clinical knowledge and the practice of whole health approaches for all primary care clinicians and hosted a customized clinical training for all Patient Aligned Care Teams.

www.siouxfalls.va.gov

Minneapolis VA Health Care System trained more than 1,900 staff in self-care and well-being through retreats conducted in collaboration with the OPCC&CT. Attendance continues to be strong at the two sessions held each week. Minneapolis also developed a robust grand round lecture series with guest speakers on whole health and CIH topics.

www.minneapolis.va.gov

Iowa City VA Health Care System is home to the Therapeutic Lifestyle Clinic, which has nutrition as the cornerstone and utilizes a very innovative whole health lifestyle approach to dealing with chronic pain and illness. The Iowa City clinic also has incorporated the Components of Health and Well-Being and parts of the Personal Health Inventory into their clinical processes.

www.iowacity.va.gov

VA Nebraska Western Iowa Health Care System was selected as the Whole Health System Flagship site for VISN 23. They are piloting personal health planning in one of their Patient Aligned Care Team clinics and have incorporated CIH offerings including yoga, tai chi, mindfulness, and acupuncture throughout their three facilities. Their Post 9-11 Transitional Care Management Program currently uses in-house acupuncture and community partners who provide acupuncture, massage therapy, chiropractic care, and hydrotherapy.

www.nebraska.va.gov
We thank you for your commitment to caring for our nation’s heroes and look forward to our continued partnership.
Looking Ahead

In FY 2018, each VISN will launch a Whole Health Flagship site.

A national Learning Collaborative is being offered to allow sites to work effectively as a group to facilitate innovation and shared learning. This effort will involve travel to three face-to-face meetings during 2017-18. The whole health design sites will serve as subject matter experts, and the meeting will overlap with the Whole Health Committee meeting.

Going forward, Flagship Facilities will participate in a package of whole health training, collect ongoing evaluation data of patient reported outcomes and utilization, and lead VISN-wide dissemination through education and mentoring.

These efforts will inform and prepare for the next waves of Whole Health System deployment:

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<th>Year</th>
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<tr>
<td>2019</td>
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<td>2020</td>
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Learn more about whole health design facilities and future site plans on pages 44-45.

CIH approaches to help Veterans improve their physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being are a continuing focus. The OPCC&CT IHCC plays a vital role in advancing this vision through the creation of the infrastructure and guidelines for VHA to incorporate CIH approaches. These efforts are now enhanced by the CARA of 2016. Signed in July 2016, CARA calls for the expansion of research and education on and the delivery of CIH to Veterans and the use of CIH and wellness-based programs to complement pain management and related health care services to Veterans, including mental health care.

Together, we have done excellent work to support Veterans and help them live their lives to the fullest. We thank you for your commitment to caring for our nation’s heroes and look forward to our continued partnership.