



Scott R. Isaacks, FACHE
Medical Center Director

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Fresh Xpress Produce Distribution
July 28, 8 a.m.
Ralph H. Johnson VAMC

Caregiver/Family Resource Fair
July 29, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Community Resource and Referral Center,
North Charleston

SUICIDE PREVENTION TAKES EVERYONE!

#BeThere

Veterans Crisis Line:
1-800-273-8255 and Press 1

Online chat at:
www.veteranscrisisline.net

Text: 838255



VA

Ralph H. Johnson
VA Medical Center



1,882
Families Served

MONTHLY REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR



It's been nine months since I left Charleston to become the Interim Network Director for VISN 7, and I am incredibly happy to be home and back in my role as director of the VAMC. Home is where the heart is, and my heart is here in the Holy City with both of my families – personal and professional. During my time in Atlanta, I was able to share with medical centers across the network many of the great practices we utilize here in Charleston.

Over the months, I was fortunate to hear from VA and VHA leadership, Congressional staff and community members what an outstanding job the Charleston VA Team does in providing care to our Veterans. And speaking of outstanding work, I want to express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude for the incredible job that our Associate Director Ronnie Smith did while serving as acting director in my absence. I want to thank him and the other members of the Pentad who stepped up, kept us on track and continued making improvements during an incredibly challenging time.

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am incredibly proud of what we have accomplished so far as a team – a team that's unified and focused on our mission to serve and care for our nation's Veterans. We achieved a great deal during my time at the VISN, and although there are too many to list, I'll share a few of the highlights.

- Implementing tools and resources to manage the 376 percent increase in virtual care appointments;
- Expanding virtual care to 21 specialty services to include oncology, vascular and hand surgery, neurosurgery, optometry, orthopedics, plastic surgery, and Traumatic Brain Injury support groups;
- Modernizing HR efforts to recruit new leaders and program managers;
- Tracking and addressing feedback from healthcare inspections;
- Improving quality of care and patient experience;
- Strengthening partnerships and communications through recurring engagements at medical centers; and
- Establishing new organizational structure that incorporates the principles of a high-reliability organization.

Ongoing COVID Response:

Last month, the VA began moving forward with reintroducing select services at facilities across the country. The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center was one of the first to implement a phased approach to reintroducing health care services while ensuring a safe environment this month. The safety of Veterans and staff continues to be the highest priority.

With the increase in COVID cases across our community, we have paused our reopening. We re-established our dedicated COVID inpatient units to care for our positive patients in the VAMC. Our clinical teams are also in close contact with Veteran outpatients who have tested positive to ensure they have the medical care and monitoring they need.

For all patients, we are providing procedures and face-to-face appointments to Veterans based on clinical need. Primary Care and Mental Health continue to utilize virtual video and telephone appointments as the primary option for care in order to maximize social distancing and safety for everyone.

When face-to-face appointments are needed in any of our clinics, they are scheduled, and we ask our Veterans to enter no more than 15 minutes prior to their appointment time. In the days and weeks ahead, our VA family is fully committed to doing what we always do – meeting the needs of each Veteran with the highest quality care and compassion possible. Yes, it's been a challenging time as we all deal with the pandemic, but we are all united in our devotion to care for the men and women we are honored to serve and our focus on fulfilling our mission will not waver. Thank you all for your ongoing support for our Veterans and our VA team.

Respectfully,

Scott R. Isaacks Director & CEO