



**VA PALO ALTO
HEALTH CARE
SYSTEM**

ANNUAL REPORT

FY 2022

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Palo Alto Health Care System

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Get far with QR

You have probably noticed these matrix barcodes all around our health care system. From checking in to your appointment early, to opening a website from a poster in our lobby, quick response (QR) codes will take you far. They are easy to use, especially now that most smartphones have the scanner built right into your camera app. You will find several QR codes throughout this annual report that link to videos and related information.

As the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) commemorated 75 years of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in 2021, VAPAHCS was honored to participate in the filming of several amazing stories shared by staff and Veterans. Look for QR codes with the number “75” like the one below to watch related videos.



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

To our Veterans and your families, thank you for choosing VA Palo Alto and allowing us to care for you. We honor your sacrifices in the work we do every day as we have the special mission of Serving Those Who Served.

This year we reinvigorated our focus to deliver the highest quality health care, honoring our Nation's Heroes. As we emerged from the pandemic and found the balance between telehealth care options and in-person care, we increased access, improved many of our health care performance metrics, focused on recruitment and retention of our precious workforce, and celebrated the opening of several large construction projects. As you read this year's annual report, I hope you take a moment to celebrate the many achievements, and also take a moment to renew your commitment to serve our Veterans and their families. We at VA fulfill the promise to care for those who have borne the battle.



We celebrated the opening of a new Radiology wing at the Palo Alto campus and the Mammography Suite at our Major General William H. Gourley VA-DoD Outpatient Clinic in Marina, Calif. We opened the largest Basic Science Research Center in the VA's portfolio, which allows us to expand our research recruitment efforts to bring more of the brightest minds to our health care system. This was a particularly special occasion as we hosted VA's Assistant Undersecretary for Health, Discovery, Education, and Affiliate Networks, and the Chief Research and Development Officer from Washington, D.C., along with our staff and local partners at Stanford University and Stanford School of Medicine.

We focused on hiring through dedicated hiring stand-downs, recruitment referral programs, and job fairs. We increased our efforts to retain existing staff with retention incentives and approval of special salary rates for hard-to-recruit positions.

We saw major legislative initiatives that impact our focus in fiscal year 2023. The signing of the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022 may prove to be the largest expansion of Veteran eligibility in VA history. The bill expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. VA Palo Alto will continue to increase our clinical care and research to support cancer care.

Another major change to reduce the distance Veterans based in Calaveras, San Joaquin, Tuolumne, and Stanislaus counties will have to travel for specialized care, the Stockton, Sonoma, and Modesto community-based clinics were realigned for the administrative oversight to the VA Northern California Health Care System. VA Palo Alto will continue to provide specialty and surgical services, and we remain committed to serving any Veteran who chooses VA.

The new year brings renewed commitment and dedication to serve our local Veterans, as well as many who travel from other states seeking out our many special programs and centers of excellence. I invite you to enjoy reflecting on the many milestones we have crossed together this year. It would not have been possible without our Veterans, families, staff, and surrounding community. We thank you for your continued trust and support in serving our nation's Veterans.

Lisa M. Howard

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM



Drew DeWitt, FACHE, Deputy Executive Director

Drew DeWitt was appointed Deputy Executive Director at VAPAHCS in November 2021. As a member of the Executive Leadership Team, he is responsible for many operations within the health care system, including administrative clinic operations, construction, maintenance, and financial services. Mr. DeWitt is a graduate of the 2014 Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 12 Leadership Development Program, a fellow-level mentor in the national mentor certification program, and a coach for the VA Health Care Leadership Development Program.



Megan O'Connor, Associate Director

Megan O'Connor was appointed Associate Director at VAPAHCS in July 2021 and is responsible for administrative operations that include security, safety, environmental cleaning, supply chain, and business operations. Ms. O'Connor previously served as Director for Clinical Support in the Office of the Chief of Staff, where she supported the Group Practice Management structure, improved wait times in the call center, and created first-call resolutions at VAPAHCS. Prior to her administrative work, she provided direct patient care as a physical therapist for 7 years.



Chandra Lake, Associate Director

Chandra Lake was appointed Associate Director for VAPAHCS in November 2021. This role provides oversight of administrative operations at the community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs), as well as chaplain (faith-based), nutrition and food, volunteer and hospitality, information technology, and information security services. She also oversees patient privacy and Veteran experience services. Ms. Lake is a retired Air Force combat Veteran, where she held executive leadership positions within military hospitals, clinics, and joint task force operations. Ms. Lake has served Veterans for over 25 years in VA and was awarded the Order of Military Medical Merit in 2020 for her leadership and impact on improving efficiencies within the VA-DoD joint venture partnership.



Michael J. Kozal, MD, Chief of Staff

Michael J. Kozal, MD, was appointed Chief of Staff at VAPAHCS in March 2021. He oversees all clinical operations including primary, specialized, rehabilitative, and surgical care. He also has oversight of research, education, and several national VA health programs. Dr. Kozal also serves as Professor of Medicine and Senior Associate Dean for Veteran Affairs at Stanford University School of Medicine. His research has been supported by the National Institutes of Health, VA, foundations, and private industry. He is considered an expert in molecular diagnostics and deep sequencing technology and has several medical patents.



Rina N. Shah, MD, FACP, Deputy Chief of Staff

Rina N. Shah, MD, FACP, was appointed as the Deputy Chief of Staff at VAPAHCS in December 2018. She is responsible for clinical operations, including acute care, mental health, ancillary and clinical support services, end-of-life, and community care. Dr. Shah is currently a Clinical Professor (Affiliated) in the Clinician Educator Line in the Department of Medicine and Division of Primary Care and Population Health at the Stanford University School of Medicine. As a leader at VA, she is committed to the management and optimization of clinical care delivery, education, and research.



David R Renfro, RN, Acting Associate Director for Patient Care Services/Nurse Executive

David R. Renfro was appointed Acting Associate Director for Patient Care Services/Nurse Executive at VAPAHCS in September 2021. His role oversees all patient care services including sterile processing and nursing operations. Mr. Renfro originally joined VAPAHCS in 1989, following his service in the United States Navy. During his tenure, Mr. Renfro implemented Project RE-Engineering Discharge (RED) throughout the facility and provided assistance with RED implementation in more than 13 VAs nationally. He is active in his local community and in 2020, served as the Vice President of the Leadership VA Alumni Association helping to build future VA leaders.



Aileen Naungayan, RN, Acting Deputy Associate Director for Patient Care Services/Deputy Nurse Executive

Aileen Naungayan was appointed Acting Deputy Associate Director for Patient Care Services/Deputy Nurse Executive at VAPAHCS in September 2021. She oversees nurses providing surgical, acute, ambulatory, hospice, and end-of-life care. She also has oversight of mental health and rehabilitative nursing operations. Since her start in the new graduate nurse program, Ms. Naungayan has gained a wealth of experience and held progressive leadership roles as a Nurse Manager, Assistant Chief Nurse, and Chief Nurse of Acute Care Hospital Operations (ACHO).



ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

Who we are

VA Palo Alto Health Care System is part of VA Sierra Pacific Network (VISN 21), which serves Veterans in northern and central California, Nevada, Hawaii, the Philippines, and U.S. Territories in the Pacific Basin. VAPAHCS consists of three inpatient facilities located at Palo Alto, Menlo Park, and Livermore, in addition to seven Community Based Outpatient Clinics in San Jose, Capitola, Monterey, Stockton, Modesto, Sonoma, and Fremont; as well as two residential homes for Veterans in the Compensated Work Therapy program.

VAPAHCS operates over 800 beds, including three nursing homes and a 100-bed homeless domiciliary - all to serve more than 67,000 enrolled Veterans. VAPAHCS operates one of the largest integrated health care systems in VA in terms of specialized programs, research, and graduate medical education. VAPAHCS is primarily affiliated with Stanford University School of Medicine, with both prestigious educators and medical students providing comprehensive health care including the areas of medicine, surgery, psychiatry, physical medicine, rehabilitation, neurology, oncology, dentistry, geriatrics, and extended care. VAPAHCS is also home to a variety of regional treatment centers, including Spinal Cord Injury, Polytrauma Rehabilitation, Blind Rehabilitation, Homeless Veterans Rehabilitation, as well as Men and Women Trauma Recovery programs.

VAPAHCS' Research Program is one of the top three largest in VHA with annual funding of approximately \$69M in FY 2022. National VHA Research Centers at VAPAHCS include Cooperative Studies Program; Health Services Research and Development, Center for Innovation to Implementation, Health Economics Resource Center; Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center; Mental Illness Research Education Clinical Center; National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder; VHA Performance Evaluation Resource Center; VHA National Center for Collaborative Health Care Innovation; Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center; War Related Illness and Injury Study Center, and Public Health National Program Office.



Mission, Vision, Values

VHA Mission

Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

VHA Vision

VHA will continue to be the benchmark of excellence and value in health care and benefits by providing exemplary services that are both patient-centered and evidence-based.

This care will be delivered by engaged, collaborative teams in an integrated environment that supports learning, discovery and continuous improvement.

It will emphasize prevention and population health and contribute to the nation's well-being through education, research and service in national emergencies.

VA Values

VA's five core values underscore the obligations inherent in VA's Mission: Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence. The core values define "who we are," our culture, and how we care for Veterans and eligible beneficiaries. Our values are more than just words – they affect outcomes in our daily interactions with Veterans and eligible beneficiaries and with each other. Taking the first letter of each word—Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, Excellence—creates a powerful acronym, "I CARE," that reminds each VA employee of the importance of their role in this Department. These core values come together as five promises we make as individuals and as an organization to those we serve.

Integrity: Act with high moral principle. Adhere to the highest professional standards. Maintain the trust and confidence of all with whom I engage.

Commitment: Work diligently to serve Veterans and other beneficiaries. Be driven by an earnest belief in VA's mission. Fulfill my individual responsibilities and organizational responsibilities.

Advocacy: Be truly Veteran-centric by identifying, fully considering, and appropriately advancing the interests of Veterans and other beneficiaries.

Respect: Treat all those I serve and with whom I work with dignity and respect. Show respect to earn it.

Excellence: Strive for the highest quality and continuous improvement. Be thoughtful and decisive in leadership, accountable for my actions, willing to admit mistakes, and rigorous in correcting them.

FY 2022 YEAR IN REVIEW



Our mission is to provide exceptional health care to all Veterans we serve.

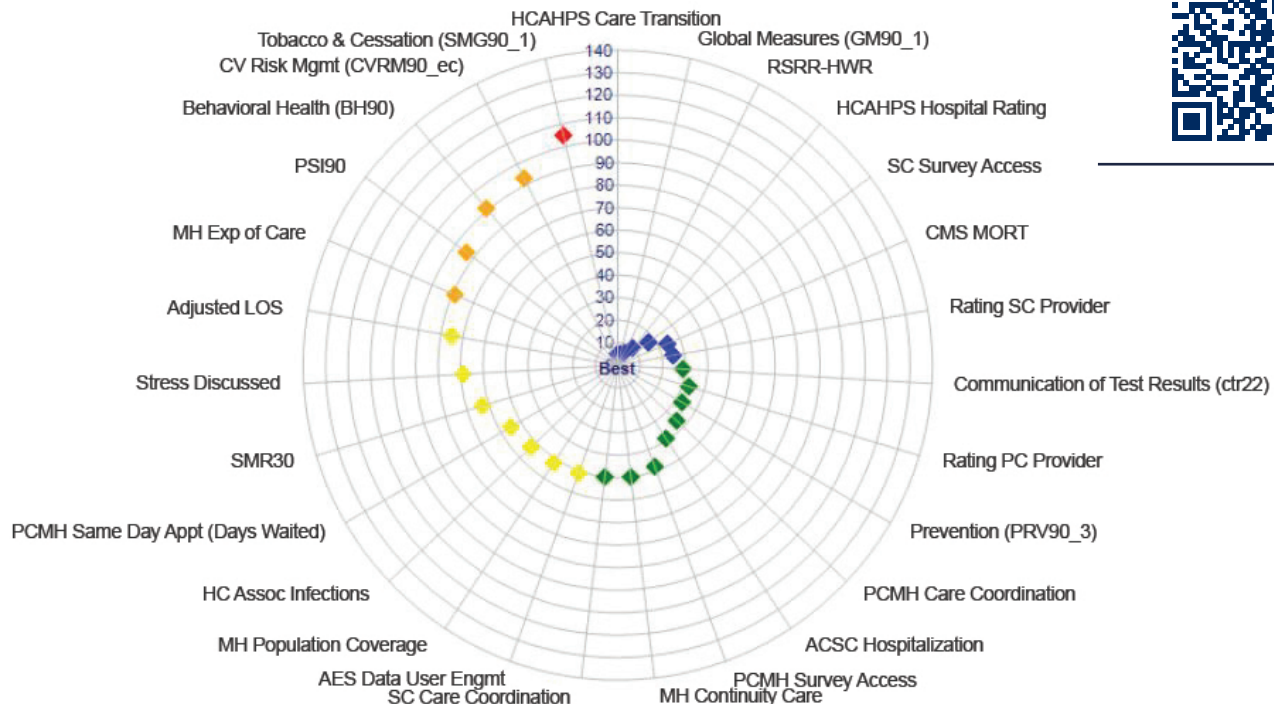
Quality and Performance Outcomes

Aligned with Quality and Performance Outcomes and a High Reliability Organization's (HRO) commitment to Continuous Process Improvement, the Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning (SAIL) and Performance Measures (PM) Committee was reinstated in March 2022. The SAIL PM Committee monitors multidisciplinary improvement efforts for all SAIL, quality, and performance outcomes measures for VAPAHCS.

There were 8 metrics selected as priorities for improvement from FY 2022 through FY 2023. Improvement teams have been hard at work and making great strides in performance outcomes.

SAIL

Palo Alto VAMC (FY2022Q3) (Metric)



Marker color: Blue - 1st quintile; Green - 2nd; Yellow - 3rd; Orange - 4th; Red - 5th quintile.

Learn more about VA SAIL

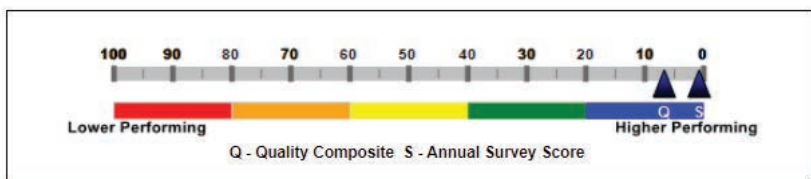




CLC SAIL

Quintile Performance Gauge

(Relative performance compared to other CLCs)



Red - 5th Quintile; Orange - 4th; Yellow - 3rd; Green - 2nd; Blue - 1st Quintile

CLC Compare



Overall Rating

Domain	Star Rating
Unannounced Survey	★★★★★
Staffing	★★★★★
Quality	★★★★★

Recreational Therapy introduces first Wheelchair Football Clinic

VAPAHCS held its first-ever Wheelchair Football Clinic in 2022. Recreation Therapy team partnered with Reno Adaptive and Move United Sports to provide this opportunity. The health care system holds various sports clinics designed to promote adaptive sports and community among our Veterans.



Watch the video!



National Veterans
Golden Age Games

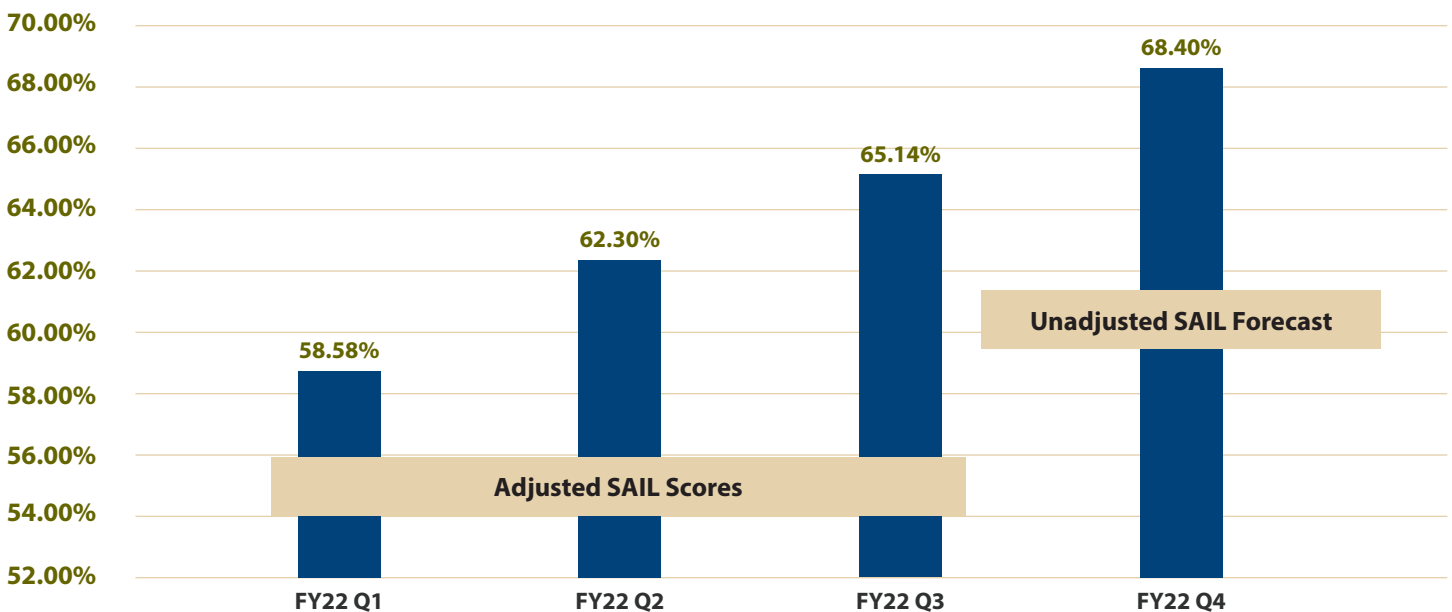




SAIL Improvement Highlight: “Improving Hypertension Using Student Volunteers”

One of the priority improvement efforts this year was from a Shark Tank applicant, Dr. Rhonda Hamilton, who presented to several forums including a VISN presentation and Stanford Lean Conference to spread the promising practice. She developed and piloted an innovative approach from a health equity perspective with the help of student volunteers to improve cardiovascular risk management. Ten student volunteers ranging in educational experience were trained to conduct over 868 instructional telephone calls to Veterans by the protocol. As staffing levels were stressed throughout the health care system, this inexpensive approach offered a significant improvement to SAIL scores and an opportunity leading many of the volunteer students to now have a deeper interest in health and medicine.

FY 2022 Cardiovascular Risk Management Composite - Quarterly Improvement



Continuous Process Improvement

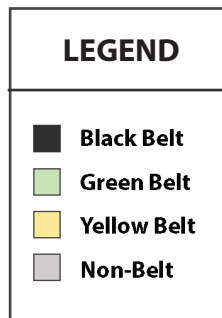
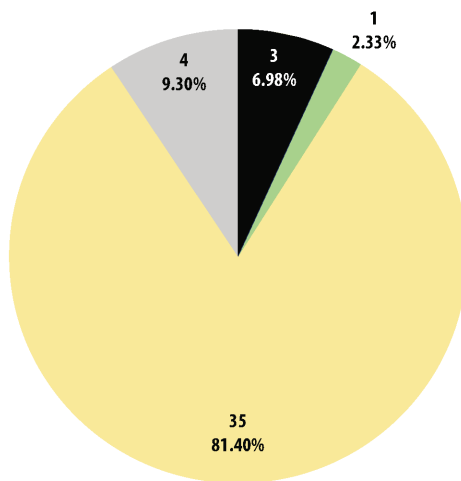
Return on investment from VAPAHCS Lean projects

VAPAHCS is committed to training all staff in Lean, VA's official improvement methodology and management system. The combination of two popular Process Improvement methods—Lean and Six Sigma—paves the way for operational excellence.

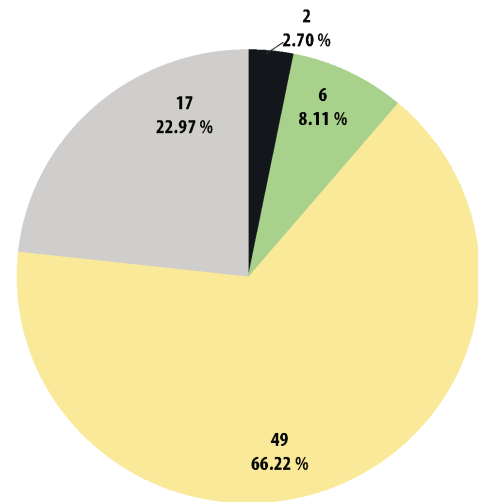
Lean focuses on increasing value to the customer by removing waste with two guiding principles, Respect for People and Continuous Improvement. Six Sigma focuses on improving quality by reducing variation and defects while providing a systematic approach to help employees build their problem-solving skills. Both Lean and Six Sigma are based on the scientific method and together, support organizations looking to build a problem-solving culture to make the idea of "finding a better way" become a daily habit.

In FY 2022, VAPAHCS gained a \$1,658,219 return on investment from 43 completed Lean improvement projects. There are 74 projects still in progress that improve processes and may save more for the health care system.

FY 2022 Completed Lean Projects




FY 2022 In Progress Lean Projects



Non-User Enrollees' Enhancement Project

The VAPAHCS Non-User Enrollees' Enhancement project successfully targeted the 32% of Veterans who were enrolled but were not using our health care system. Led by Gasling Sweeney, members of the project team spanned across Member Services, Patient Administrative Support Service, Compensation and Pension (C&P), and Center for Development and Civic Engagement. The team trained Member Services and C&P staff in various process improvement efforts, including a way to offer an appointment during enrollment or after their C&P exam. This increased the rate of newly enrolled Veterans with a first appointment to 25% with an increase of 24% in Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) dollars during the project timeline of January to September 2021. Tracking non-users to periodically advise them of their ability to use VA care also led to the enrollment of 565 Veterans with a VERA of \$276,309.



Team River Runner
Kayaking Program



Wheelchair Games at VA



VAPAHCS improvement projects accepted to Stanford Lean conference

Many VAPAHCS staff who completed substantial Lean improvement projects throughout FY 2022 were accepted to the Lean Healthcare Academic Conference at Stanford. Their presentations gave insight into the conference theme “Improving Together for All – Patients, Families and Healthcare Workers.” The diverse perspectives that were showcased at this international conference broadens and deepens the understanding of improvement within the academic health care setting.

Conference presenters include:

- Dr. Matthew Stevenson, Education Director, General Medicine Clinic; Medical Director, Respiratory, Covid Testing, and Covid Vaccination Clinics
- Dr. Nazima Allaudeen, Director of Quality Improvement for Inpatient Medicine
- Katherine Inouye and Sandra Aparte, RN Patient Flow Coordinators, Acute Care Hospital Operations Command Center
- Kimmyrose Palma and Lhaarnie Ablao, RN Patient Flow Coordinators, Acute Care Hospital Operations Command Center
- Desiree Nepacena, RN, Acute Care Hospital Operations; Maung Aung, Acting Assistan Chief Nurse for Acute Care Hospital Operations; and Dr. Julia Armendariz, Hospitalist
- Dr. Elizabeth Le and Dr. Chris Millhouse, Hospitalists
- Dr. Marianne Yeung, DCOS, Acute Care Hospital Operations and Heidy Garcia, Acting Chief Nurse, Acute Care Hospital Operations
- Dr. Rhonda Hamilton, Chief, General Medicine Clinic
- Kelly Robertson, Chief, Pharmacy Service and Sandra Le, Clinical Pharmacy Specialist
- Rona Margaret, Research Health Specialist

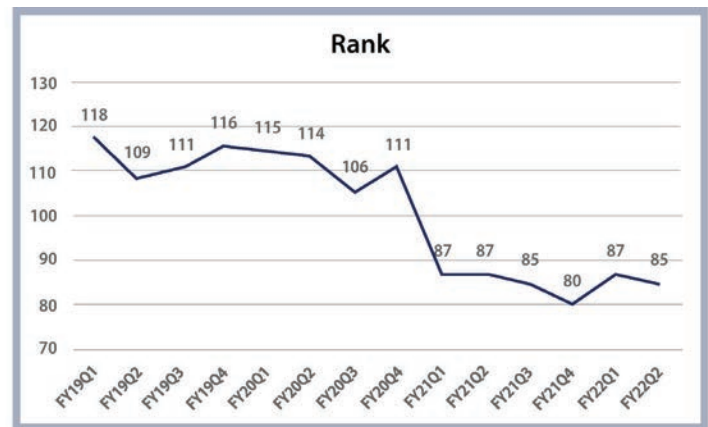
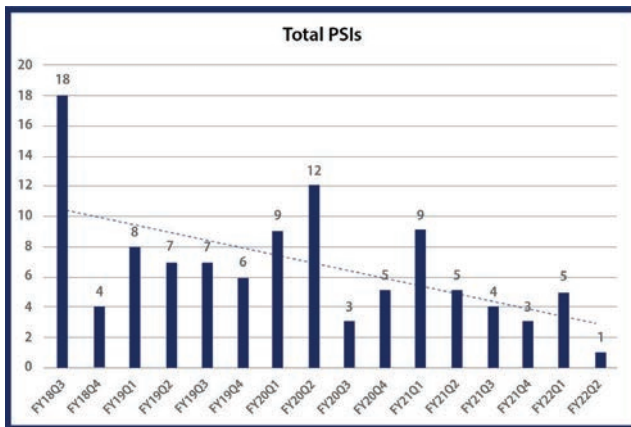
Patient Safety Indicator Taskforce

Patient Safety Indicators (PSI) are a set of 10 measures that provide information on problems that patients experience during their time in the health care system. These problems are usually preventable by making improvements at the system or provider level. These measures include pressure ulcers, perioperative venous thromboembolism, sepsis, and hemorrhage.

Dr. Nazima Allaudeen, Director of Quality Improvement for Inpatient Medicine, established a multidisciplinary PSI Taskforce to address these measures. Core members include Nurse Manager Evann Schalch, Chief Vascular Section Dr. Shipra Arya, and ICU Medical Director Dr. Margaret Neff.

The diligent work of the PSI Taskforce over several years has shown significant progress in reducing PSI, resulting in only one PSI in the past quarter. They also improved the VAPAHCS SAIL ranking from the lowest quintile 119 to now 85 (out of 126). One area of success is reducing venous thromboembolism (VTE), including deep venous thrombosis and pulmonary embolism, for which post-operative patients are at higher risk. The interventions developed and sustained over the past few years have led to a significant reduction in VTE in FY 2022. (See graph below). The following interventions were implemented:

- Leveraging order sets in the patient record for decision making around pharmacologic VTE prophylaxis
- Creating templates to standardize notes, adding VTE prophylaxis to daily notes
- Ensures high risk patients work with a mobility tech every day, not only preventing VTE but pneumonia as well
- Deep dives on all PSI cases to evaluate if best practices were followed
- Root cause analysis of a safety event led to development of standardized VTE prophylaxis protocols when epidurals are removed



2022 American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) Citation Award

Jonathan N. Myers, MD, was recognized with the 2022 American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) Citation Award for his significant contributions to the fields of sports medicine and exercise science.

Patient Satisfaction

FY2022	FY2021
VSIGNALS Outpatient Trust Score: 92.5	VSIGNALS Outpatient Trust Score: 93.2
VSIGNALS Inpatient Trust Score: 90.6	VSIGNALS Inpatient Trust: 95
SHEP PCMH Overall Satisfaction: 86	SHEP PCMH Overall Sat: 87.9
SHEP Community Care Overall Satisfaction: 87.3	SHEP Community Care Overall Sat: 79

	FY2021	FY2022
Patients who reported that their nurses "Always" communicated well.	80% National Average 81% California Average 77%	82% 80% 75%
Patients who reported that their doctors "Always" communicated well.	83% National Average 82% California Average 78%	84% 80% 76%
Patients who reported that they "Always" received help as soon as they wanted.	65% National Average 70% California Average 64%	73% 67% 61%
Patients who reported that the staff "Always" explained about medicines before giving it to them.	68% National Average 66% California Average 63%	72% 63% 60%
Patients who reported that their room and bathroom were "Always" clean.	75% National Average 76% California Average 73%	77% 73% 71%
Patients who reported that the area around their room was "Always" quiet at night.	57% National Average 62% California Average 51%	60% 63% 52%
Patients who reported that YES, they were given information about what to do during their recovery at home.	87% National Average 87% California Average 86%	89% 86% 85%
Patients who "Strongly Agree" they understood their care when they left the hospital.	58% National Average 54% California Average 50%	61% 5% 47%
Patients who gave their hospital a rating of 9 or 10 on a scale from 0 (lowest) to 10 (highest).	79% National Average 73% California Average 70%	81% 72% 69%
Patients who reported YES, they would definitely recommend the hospital.	81% National Average 72% California Average 70%	82% 71% 69%

New leadership for Veteran Experience Office

Mary Kay Campbell joined VAPAHCS in February 2022 as the Chief of Veteran Experience. She has served in various leadership roles in health care and non-profit settings. After leaving VA in 2014 to pursue other passions, she returned to VA in 2021 before joining the VAPAHCS family.



In this role, she oversees Patient Satisfaction, Patient Advocate, and Veterans and Family Centered Care programs, which all work together to improve the experience of veterans and their families while visiting VAPAHCS.

Veteran and Family Advisors share their experiences

The Veteran and Family Advisory Committee (VFAC) serves as an important voice to communicate the perceptions, concerns, and needs of Veteran patients and their family members. The VFAC creates an excellent collaborative partnership with Veteran patients, families, and staff to enhance the Veteran experience. Their effort to develop policy and program development, foster professional development, and impact the delivery of care is crucial to the success of VAPAHCS.

I am motivated because the VA Palo Alto has supported me in my health journey. Volunteering at VAPAHCS carries with it a very real sense of personal responsibility and ownership to contribute to the growth and excellence of the system.

Darren McBride, VFAC Veteran Advisor, U.S. Army

The most important member of the VA's Patient Care Team is the patient and our service on the Veteran and Family Advisory Committee ensures that the patient's perspective is always available to assist the VA staff in providing the best possible patient oriented care.

Peter F. Carpenter, VFAC Veteran Advisor, U.S. Air Force and U.S. Marine Corps

It's a priceless opportunity to provide constructive feedback to projects at every stage of design and development to create Veteran-centric programs and services. The appreciation we get back from the project leaders is gratifying but witnessing and experiencing the changes from our input is what keeps me devoted to the committee.

Walan Chang, VFAC Veteran Advisor, U.S. Air Force



Mission Based Canine Therapy at VA Palo Alto Welcome Center



Women Veterans Healing Journey through Art Therapy



Continuing the High Reliability Organization Journey

In line with the VA's journey to becoming a High Reliability Organization, VAPAHCS continues to promote a Just Culture. Education around this topic balances individual accountability with systems thinking, empowering all staff to lead continuous process improvements within their own workspace, and creating an environment where employees feel safe to report harm or near misses.

Clinical Team Training has been the primary goal in FY 2022 and with 37% participation by all clinical staff to date. The program offers an opportunity for clinicians to improve patient safety and job satisfaction by facilitating clear and timely communication through collaborative teamwork in the clinical workplace.

In addition to education, leader rounding, and continuous process improvement, HRO integration at VAPAHCS includes hosting Safety Forums. These monthly events provide a safe and transparent environment for staff to share close calls and adverse events witnessed at VAPAHCS.

Participation has increased to over 150 participants each month with diverse topics that include Monkeypox updates, process improvement projects, facility emergency plans, and our Commitment to Resilience when adverse events occur move us forward on our journey to High Reliability. VAPAHCS serves as a leader in the VISN and across the country with its robust Safety Forums, even consulting with other VA medical centers to better develop their own.

White Cane Day 2022

VAPAHCS held its 18th Annual White Cane Awareness event for the first time on the Palo Alto Division campus. The event aims to spread awareness of the White Cane Law and celebrates the strength, accomplishments, and advocacy of persons with vision loss. The Western Blind Rehabilitation Center took their team and Veterans from their program around the hospital to proudly share the celebration of people who are blind or visually impaired and recognize one of the most important symbols and tools of independence, the white cane.



Watch the video!

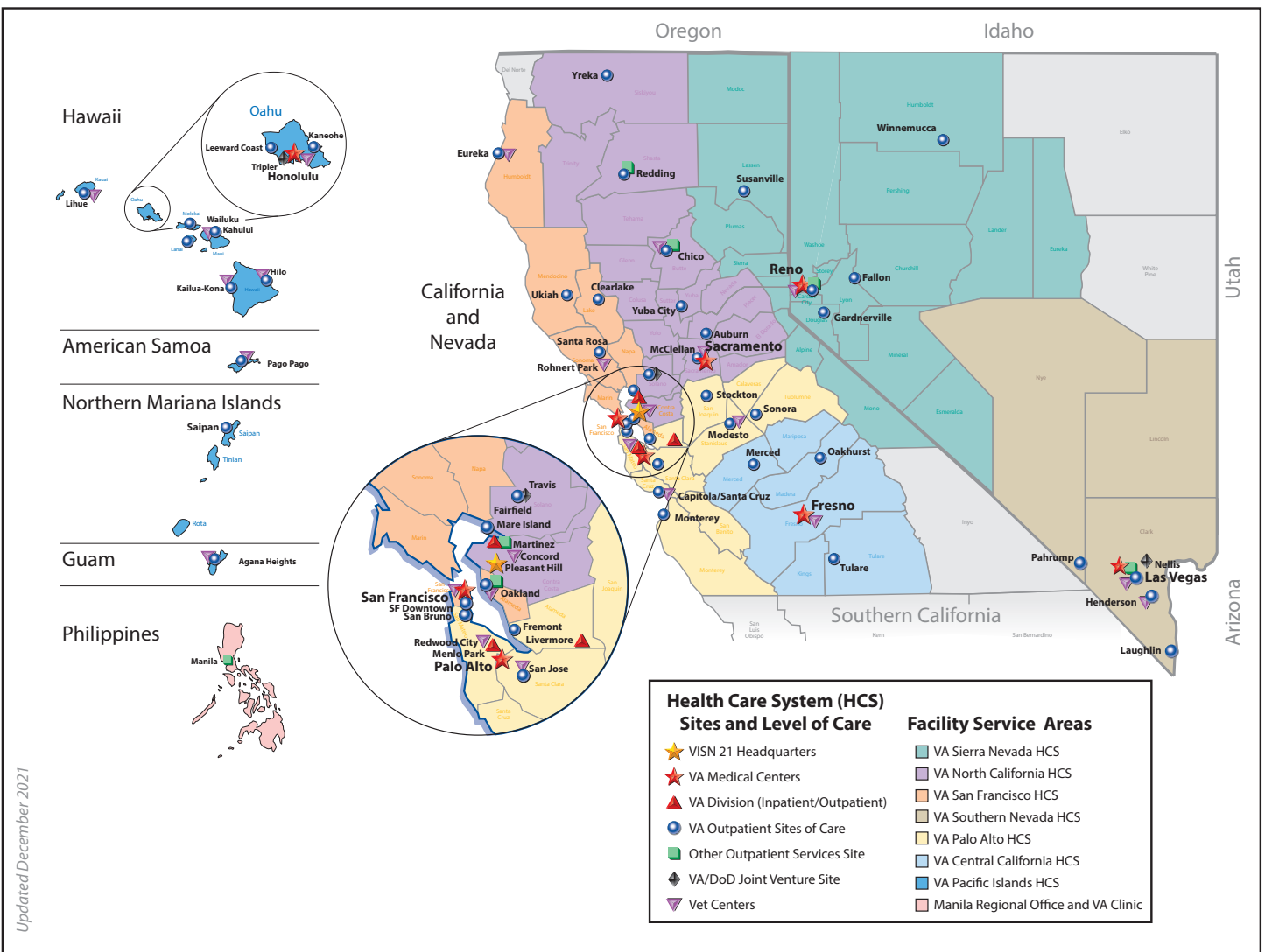




We are committed to providing our Veterans and fellow employees the right service, in the right place, at the right time.

Where we are

VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) is part of VA Sierra Pacific Network (VISN 21), which serves Veterans in northern and central California, Nevada, Hawaii, the Philippines, and U.S. Territories in the Pacific Basin.



Who we serve



Enrolled Veterans: 67,776

Women Veterans: 9,481 (13.9%)

Unique Veterans: 68,415

Male Veterans: 58,933 (86.1%)



Total admissions: 7,411

Inpatient Encounters: 222,180

Bed days of care: 138,333

Operational beds: 738

Inpatient discharges: 7,422



Outpatient Encounters:

1,039,431

ER visits: 13,404

COVID Vaccines: 31,805



Telehealth Encounters: 114,633

***Includes: Store and Forward,
Clinical Video Telehealth, and
VA Video Connect**

VISN 21 Specialty Care Clinical Resource Hub

The VISN 21 Specialty Care Clinical Resource Hub (CRH) began providing clinical care in June 2021. Since its inception, the Specialty CRH has served over 3,000 Veterans at sites across VISN 21 and beyond. This has resulted in the completion of more than 5,000 encounters. The Specialty CRH has completed 44 Telehealth Service Agreements (TSAs) to date offering 20 different specialties across VISN 21. In FY 2023, there are plans to expand these TSAs to include CRH programs in Echocardiogram Interpretation, Geriatrics, Hematology, Rheumatology, Vascular Surgery, multidisciplinary Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation, and a multidisciplinary Weight Management Center offering both medical and surgical modalities to treat obesity.

As a result of the VISN 21 CRH Specialty Care Clinical Resource Hub's exceptional performance and success in FY 2022, all proposed sustainment and expansion funding requests were approved for FY 2023, and it serves as a model for Specialty CRH program development in other VISNs.



Radiology Service expands clinical space and technology

VAPAHCS opened a new radiology wing at the Palo Alto campus on March 9, 2022. Executive leadership and staff cut the ribbon on a 34,000 gross-square-foot addition that will consolidate radiology services into one area. With expanded diagnostic suites and the latest imaging technology, more Veterans will be able to experience the efficient, cutting-edge care provided by our Radiology Service.

Watch the video!



Mammography Suite Ribbon Cutting at Monterey Bay clinic

Another ribbon cutting marked the opening of a new Mammography suite at the Major General William H. Gourley VA-DoD Outpatient Clinic in Marina, Calif. The latest in mammography equipment expands diagnostic capabilities for VAPAHCS, so Women Veterans in the Monterey Bay area receive timely access to care all in one place. Mammography had traditionally been offered through community providers and now is available on-site!



From left to right: Ryan Bacon, Vocational Development Specialist; Neonee Senoro, Employment Coordinator; Michael Myers, Program Support Assistant; Jaime Betancur, Outreach Coordinator, participating in the 14th Annual Operation Gateway at Las Positas College.

Outreach Program

The Outreach Program works to enhance community partnerships with stakeholders that include but are not limited to Veteran Service Organizations, libraries, homeless shelters, community centers, colleges, senior centers, and the military. The goal of the program is to connect Veterans and their families with VA services and local resources. In the fiscal year 2022, some of the Outreach Program initiatives and accomplishments this year include:

- Hired a new Outreach Coordinator, Jaime Betancur, who is also a U.S. Navy Veteran. This position was realigned to the Office of Public Affairs to provide oversight for planning and directing outreach activities across all VAPAHCS services.
- Hired the first Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinator at VAPAHCS, LaShelle Burch. She is a licensed clinical social worker and serves as a content matter expert for community-based suicide prevention and education initiatives. Through community-led coalitions, Ms. Burch provides free suicide prevention resources and training opportunities for various organizations, Veterans, and their families.
- Conducted monthly Tele-Town Hall meetings that reached more than 1,200 Veterans and stakeholders each month. Special presentations given this year included COVID-19, Benefits, Caregiver Support Program, Women Veterans Program, Audiology and Speech Pathology Services, LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinators, Mental Health, Puppies Assisting Wounded Servicemembers (PAWS) Pilot Program, Reproductive Health Access, and PACT Act.
- Distributed a monthly email newsletter with regular updates on local and national VA initiatives and news, as well as preventative health information.
- Distributed more than 1,000 VA welcome kits to local colleges and Supportive Services for Veteran Families providers.
- Distributed 15,000 COVID-19 tests throughout the health care system to Veterans and their families.
- Provided equipment and supplies for Veteran mothers and their children at local shelters and colleges.
- Developed new educational material to educate Veterans at college events about VA benefits and how to navigate enrollment and services.
- Established a monthly educational event to connect Veterans to legal, housing, and medical support in the community.

Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring Our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act of 2022

The PACT Act is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they've earned and deserve. The Act expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 era, and expands eligibility for benefits for Veterans exposed to toxic substances..

What are the PACT Act key components?



The Act **expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic-exposures** and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 era.



VA **will improve the decision-making process** for determining what medical conditions will be considered for presumptive status.



Every enrolled Veteran will **receive an initial toxic exposure screening** and a follow-up screening every five years. Veterans who are not enrolled, but who are eligible to enroll, will have an opportunity to enroll and receive the screening.



VA health care staff and claims processors will receive **toxic exposure-related education and training**.



The Act requires **research studies** on mortality of Veterans who served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War, Post-9/11 Veteran health trends, and Veteran cancer rates.



The Act will help VA **build a stronger, more skilled workforce** to meet the growing demand for benefits and services.



The Act authorizes **31 new medical facilities** across the country, providing greater access to VA health care.



A New Start at the Western
Blind Rehabilitation Center



Adaptive Horseback
Riding at VA Palo Alto
Healthcare System



We embrace continuous learning, improvement, and research as fundamental to our ongoing success.

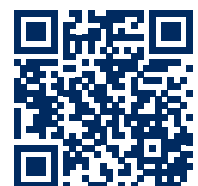


Ribbon cutting for new Basic Science Research Center

On July 28, 2022, VAPAHCS held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a New Basic Science Research Center at the Palo Alto Campus. The two-story, 95,000 gross square foot building contains 56 research benches and 6,400 square feet of open lab space on each floor. The building also features “green roofs,” which serve as patio and garden spaces on the ground floor.

The state-of-the-art facility was designed to foster collaboration and knowledge sharing among world-class researchers, reinforcing VAPAHCS as one of the top three research programs in the Veterans Health Administration.

Watch the video!





2021 Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research

Keith Humphreys, Ph.D., earned the 2021 Under Secretary's Award for Outstanding Achievement in Health Services Research – the highest honor for a VA health services researcher.



2021 HSRD Award for Best Research Paper

Liam Rose, MD, received the HSRD Award for Best Research Paper in 2021 for his JAMA publication titled "Association of Expanded Health Care Networks with Utilization among Veterans Affairs Enrollees".



XPRIZE Alliance to combat COVID-19



NCCHI's partnership with the XPRIZE Foundation is bringing leading VA innovators next to partners from around the world to develop new ways of combatting COVID-19. VA professionals are engaging with fellow global health care leaders to share ideas, present projects, and test solutions to help rapidly scale promising technology for the global pandemic response. As of December 2020, nearly three hundred COVID-19 solutions have been shared, 18 new projects initiated, and 6 completions launched through the alliance.

Through this partnership, we helped to form a Brain Trust around Collective Pandemic Artificial Intelligence. As part of this effort, we joined "AI for Good", a partnership that fosters solutions and dialogue on the beneficial use of Artificial Intelligence to solve pressing global issues such as COVID-19, and organized a partnership with over 35 sister United Nations agencies.



MVP
MILLION VETERAN PROGRAM

Join today!
Help advance health care with us.

MVP is VA's national, voluntary research program to better understand how genes affect health.

No appointment necessary!
Walk-ins welcome!

Visit mvp.va.gov
Call 866-441-6075



VAPAHCS MVP 20,000th Enrollee

Navy Veteran Virginia Shefchick is the 20,000th Veteran in the San Francisco Bay Area to join VA's Million Veteran Program (MVP), which now has more than 900,000 Veteran participants nationwide.

The goal of MVP's research is for Veterans to one day be able to visit their doctor and get the right screenings and the right treatment based on their genes, medical history, lifestyle, and military experiences.

Already data from Veterans in our program have supported the largest genetic studies to date on posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), major depression, heart disease, and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, one of the most common forms of liver disease in the country.

Other areas being researched include tinnitus, cancer, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, Gulf War Illness, and suicide prevention.



LEAP research initiative

In 2021, Dr. Jennifer Lee, Associate Chief of Staff for Research, was appointed as the VISN 21 Research Lead. She launched the Leveraging Electronic Health Information to Advance Precision Medicine (LEAP) Research Initiative. The objectives of LEAP are to establish a quality real-world evidence base about health conditions, populations, interventions, and outcomes using VA HER; and to augment and support random clinical trials to improve individual and population health. This initiative is led at VAPAHCS with VINCI, VA Salt Lake City, and West Haven VA.

VISN 21 Early Career Award Program

In 2022, the VISN 21 Early Career Award Program (ECAP) was launched and is intended to assist and enable junior investigators and investigators early in their research careers to successfully develop their research careers to make an important positive impact on Veteran health and compete for further research funding. Awardees will be announced in early FY 2023.

SimLEARN Innovation Center for Education

SimLEARN Innovation Center for Education (SLICE) is a national training and educational model for combat medics and hospital corpsmen. SimLEARN constructs the curriculum, then qualifies VHA staff to become instructors of their designated programs at their local facilities. In 2022, VAPAHCS became one of three sites selected across the nation where the Intermediate Care Technician National Foundational Course will be held. VAPAHCS will lead the way in ensuring that ICTs across the nation receive standardized training prior to their designated assignments throughout their respective VISNs and Medical Center facilities.

Innovation Awards

In April 2022, Dr. Thomas Osborne received the 2021 Arthur S. Flemming Award. As the Director of the National Center for Collaborative Healthcare Innovation (NCCHI) and Chief Medical Informatics Officer, he has transformed how cloud computing and augmented reality are used in one of the largest health care systems in the country.

Dr. Osborne was also recognized alongside Veteran Brian Higgins with the 2022 Disruptive Tech Program Award. Dr. Osborne won for his Fall Prevention Socks program and Mr. Higgins won for his innovative Smart White Cane. The G2Xchange/FedHealthIT Disruptive Tech Awards: Programs Shifting the Landscape recognizes disruptors that are leading and transforming Federal information technology.



Augmented Reality and the Telepresence Robot, Veteran-Led Healthcare Technology at VA Palo Alto

Innovations in Blind Rehabilitation at the VHA



Remembering Our Fallen from California

VAPAHCS hosted "Remembering Our Fallen from California," a photographic war memorial that honors California's military Fallen from The War on Terror (9/11/2001 - Present) in December 2021.

Unlike brick-and-mortar memorials, Remembering Our Fallen is designed to travel with both military and personal photos. The goal is for these men and women to be remembered and their names to be spoken while helping to lessen the grief of their families.

Watch the video!





Our people – the employees, volunteers, students, trainees, contractors, and others who serve our Veterans – are our most important resource.

Workforce

Race/Ethnicity	Number	Percentage	RCLF
White	1,879	34.29%	43.40%
Black	624	11.39%	5.77%
Hispanic or Latino	453	8.27%	39.91%
Asian	2,326	42.45%	15.92%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	76	1.39%	0.38%
American Indian or Alaska Native	98	1.79%	0.76%
Two or More Races/ Undisclosed	19	0.35%	0.85%

Age Group	Number
0-20	6
21-30	524
31-40	1,444
41-50	1,336
51-60	1,361
61-70	722
71+	94

*RCLF - Relevant Civilian Labor Force

5,488

Total number of employees onboard as of September 2021

18.55%

1,024 of staff are Veterans

21%

Of the workforce is retirement eligible



Workforce Development

In FY 2022, the Workforce Development Council (WDC) continues to provide strategic planning to meet the needs of a diverse and engaged workforce. Three committees are aligned under WDC, including Workplace Engagement, Diversity Equity and Inclusion, and Employee Wellness. The council aims to boost employee engagement while promoting opportunities essential for professional development and inclusion to support employee wellbeing. WDC also supports leadership development programs such as the Emerging Leaders Development Program (ELDP) and Leadership Development Institute (LDI).



FY 2022 LDI Graduates: FY 2022 LDI Graduates: Stephanie Chang, Physician; Yvonne Duque, Project Manager, Taylor Jaure, Health System Specialist; Colin McNerney, Health System Specialist to the Director; Ryan Ngo, Supervisory General Engineer; Courtney Seaman, Workforce Development Coordinator; Mystyc Metrik, Food Service Systems Manager



FY 2022 ELDP Graduates: Jason Augustus, Operations Specialist; Petrina Smith, Advanced Medical Support Assistant (AMSA); Carlton Barrett Jr., Lead MSA; Peter Franco, Peer Support Specialist; Caroline Onizuka, Occupational Therapy Supervisor; Jerome Sabangan, Physical Therapy Supervisor; Eric Pederson, Program Specialist; Ellen Phan, Program Specialist; Adan Pulido, Audiovisual Production Specialist; Marinita Santos, Recreation Therapist; Yer Xiong, Registered Nurse; and Kerlos Baker, AMSA.

Diversity and Inclusion

The mission of the VA's Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Program is to grow a diverse workforce and cultivate an inclusive work environment, where employees are fully engaged and empowered to deliver outstanding services to our Nation's Veterans, their families, and beneficiaries.

VAPAHCS' Special Emphasis Programs (SEPs) are an integral part of the Equal Employment Opportunity Diversity and Inclusion program. Through various initiatives, these programs address the unique concerns of each group in achieving diversity, inclusion, and equality of opportunity in the recruitment, hiring, development, training, and advancement of VAPAHCS' workforce. EEO D&I Program sponsors SEP committees, including; American Indian and Alaska Native; Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander; Black/African American; Federal Women's Program; Hispanic; Individuals with Disabilities; LGBTQ+ ; and Veterans.



2022 Federal Asian Pacific American Council Civilian Service Award

Christine Salcedo, Health System Specialist to the Deputy Director, received the 2022 Federal Asian Pacific American Council Civilian Service Award. This award recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of Asian Americans and Pacific Islander communities and promotes diversity and inclusion among the Federal and District of Columbia government workforces.

VA surpasses goal for annual All Employee Survey

The annual All Employee Survey is a confidential tool for VA employees to provide feedback to leadership on key areas such as job satisfaction, workplace perceptions, and employee engagement. The AES helps VHA make the changes needed to improve both the employee and Veteran experience. This year, 71% (297,864) of VA employees across the country completed the survey, surpassing the national response goal of 60%. VAPAHCS saw a 13% increased response rate from the 2021 AES survey. Here is the breakdown of the results from FY 2022:

3,605 (70%)

Responses (VA= 71%)

58%

AES Data Sharing
(VA= 65%)

36%

AES Data Use
(VA= 42%)

69/100

Best Places to Work
(VA= 68%)



VAPAHCS saw a 13% increased response rate from the 2021 AES survey! In honor of staff reaching a high response rate, Chief of Staff Dr. Michael Kozal and Acting Nurse Executive David Renfro participated in an ice bucket challenge!

Watch the video!



Priority areas for FY 2023

AES Priorities show which general aspects of the workplace employees say they most wanted to work on over the next year. Priorities could be things people want to improve or things people want to maintain. This year's top priority areas are workload (23%), growth (16%), and communication (13%).

WE ARE NOT INVISIBLE



There are roughly two million women Veterans, making up ten percent of the Veteran population and growing. Yet they continue to face significant barriers and challenges in accessing necessary health care and other services, while experiencing a lack of recognition. Women Veterans are not only overlooked by those around them, but frequently struggle to consider themselves Veterans. The I Am Not Invisible (IANI) campaign aims to increase awareness and dialogue about women Veterans and open viewers' eyes to the myriad contributions, needs, and experiences of women who have served in the military.



Women Leaders at Palo Alto VA



VA Nurse Creates Home Kit to Monitor Vets with COVID-19



Donna Lynch's capstone project for a master's degree in early 2020, was an opportunity to enhance VA's rapidly expanding home telehealth services being offered to Veterans by making a Home Respiratory Monitoring kit.

The 21-Day Home Telehealth program was already created to monitor symptoms of stable Veterans who test positive for COVID-19 and reduce the need for unnecessary admissions into VA hospitals. However, the HRM kits allow Veterans to self-monitor their oxygen levels with a pulse oximeter, the device used to estimate the oxygen saturation of the blood. Lower oxygen levels are a known indication of worsening conditions for COVID-19 patients.

"We know it is scary to find out you have COVID-19, so our kits not only help us monitor and reduce admissions, but it helps our Veterans feel safer as they navigate their condition," said Lynch, who is a Case Manager in Nursing Specialty and Hospital-Based Services at VA Palo Alto health care.

For her project, Lynch calculated the costs of admission against the creation costs of the kit. Based on a 7-night stay average, using a \$9,333.33 per night average, the kit is estimated to save \$65,253.48 per person. From the few hundred kits already sent out, she estimated a savings of nearly \$2 million for VA.

The kit also was named a local strong practice that is aligned with VA's Commitment to Zero Harm on its Journey to High Reliability. She is now working with various VA facilities to implement the kits around the country.

We know it is scary to find out you have COVID-19, so our kits not only help us monitor and reduce admissions, but it helps our Veterans feel safer as they navigate their condition.

Donna Lynch

DAISY/BEE awards recognize extraordinary nurses



The DAISY and BEE Awards are international nursing recognition programs supported by our partnership with the DAISY Foundation. These awards are among the highest honors available to recognize excellence in nursing practice.

Nominations are submitted by peers, supervisors, patients, or their families for nurses who are outstanding role models of the VA "ICARE" values. Nominees are reviewed and 12 honorees are selected quarterly by an interdisciplinary panel. Each honoree is recognized at a public ceremony, where they receive a certificate,

a handmade statue, an award pin, and other benefits provided by the DAISY Foundation. Honorees also receive international recognition by joining the list of DAISY honorees on the DAISY Foundation website.

The honorees from FY 2022 were Jamie Presto, Mithor Agbalay, Lanette Roos, Tieshlea Wolf, Sara Butler, and Anjelene Esteban.



Dr. Alfaro on Capitol Hill

VA Palo Alto psychologist selected to advise U.S. Senate Committee

Dr. Ana Alfaro was selected as a fellow for the Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program. She currently serves as a Research Fellow in the Advanced Fellowship Program in Geriatrics at VA Palo Alto Health Care System and is now detailed to the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging, where she informs the U.S. Senate Special Committee on Aging of issues related to the care of aging Americans.

Dr. Alfaro's professional interest focuses on increasing access to mental health services to underserved aging populations. One way she is doing this is by leveraging technology as a means of increasing access. For instance, through a GRECC clinical demonstration program, she teaches older Veterans how to use mental health mobile apps as an innovative mean to address their well-being goals. Most recently, she received funding to test a 6-week telehealth group intervention for older Veterans with problematic drinking. The intervention aims to coach older Veterans on how to use a VA mobile app called VetChange for self-management.

In the meantime, she will be on a year-long track with the Health and Aging Policy Fellows Program, which will offer her a unique training opportunity, focusing on policy issues, communication skills development, and professional networking.

//

As a psychologist, I feel like we are not typically trained to be in policy, so I hope I can open doors for others to get involved. It's important for those interested in this field to use their voice for the common good, and that is exactly what I am trying to do.

Dr. Alfaro

//



The safety of our Veterans and workforce is essential every day.



VAPAHCS welcomes new safety chief

In FY 2022, VAPAHCS selected Samantha Brandfon as the Chief of Safety and Emergency Management. She comes from VA Ann Arbor Healthcare System, where she served as the Health Systems Specialist/Executive Assistant to the Associate Director. Prior to that, she was the Facility Emergency Manager, DEMPS (facility and VISN), and All-Hazards Team Coordinator.

In her role at VAPAHCS, she is responsible for developing and implementing comprehensive programs for safety, emergency management, fire protection, green environmental management systems, industrial hygiene, and radiation safety programs.



Designation for CDPHI Antimicrobial Stewardship Honor Roll



In FY 2022, VAPAHCS was designated as a member of the California Department of Public Health Antimicrobial Stewardship Honor Roll with gold status. The California Department of Public Health Healthcare-Associated Infections Program recognizes top-performing antimicrobial stewardship programs (ASP) in California.

The goals of the ASP Honor Roll are to promote the optimal use of antimicrobials, prevent the emergence of antimicrobial resistance and *C. difficile* infections, showcase health care facility ASP programs that follow national guidelines, demonstrate outcomes, and engage the local

health care community. Hospital ASP programs are designated bronze, silver, or gold status based upon specific criteria. This designation was thanks to the VAPAHCS Infectious Disease team including Drs. Trisha Nakasone, Catherine Yang, Arthi Chary, and Cybele Renault.



Music Therapy for
Mental Health



Aquatic Therapy at the
Palo Alto Health Care System



Safety Stories

VA's journey to becoming a High Reliability Organization encourages employees to share stories to learn how they all can improve patient care and keep our Veterans safe. Safety stories provide examples of HRO principles in action for a variety of different clinical and non-clinical roles across VHA.

Nurse Practitioner's quick action promotes HRO value: Culture of Safety



When reaching out to a Veteran in March 2022 regarding a specialty consult, Nurse Practitioner Francesca Osborne from the Referral Coordination Team noticed something wrong in the Veteran's voice and initially suspected intoxication. After she further inquired about his status, he reported hitting his head and bleeding from his ear. She immediately contacted emergency services to do a safety check.

The Veteran was taken to the local Emergency Room and was admitted to the hospital. The Veteran now has a home health aide to make sure he is safe. Osborne's actions align with one of the three pillars of HRO: Culture of Safety. This pillar highlights the safety values and practices used to prevent harm and learn from mistakes throughout the health care system.

Prosthetics Clerk's determination reinforces the HRO principle: Preoccupation with Failure



On April 27, 2022, Marine Veteran and Prosthetic Clerk John Potter answered a call from a Veteran inquiring about this vertical platform lift. After letting him know the contracting team was working on the order, the Veteran expressed he was contemplating suicide because he felt "locked up" inside his home due to the pandemic. After the Veteran repeated the suicidal statement, Potter jumped into action.

He refused to get off the phone with the Veteran until he received confirmation the Veteran was not going to hurt himself. Potter then placed a note in his record about the interaction, then contacted Medical Support Assistant Leanne Roderick, who helped to contact the Veteran Crisis Line. Alerted by Potter's note, the Spinal Cord Injury Psychology team was also able to reach out to the Veteran and confirm his safety.

Since the incident, the contracting team ensured the lift was ordered and installed at the Veteran's home. Potter's actions align with the HRO principle of Preoccupation with Failure, teaching employees to anticipate risk and that every staff member is a problem-solver.



Each of us carries the responsibility of ensuring the best use of our nation's resources in performing our duties.



Center for Development and Civic Engagement (formerly Voluntary and Hospitality Service)

The VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE) is one of the largest volunteer programs in the federal government. More than 7,400 national and community organizations support CDCE.

Volunteers: 914



Hours



Regularly Scheduled Volunteer Hours: 50,532.50
Occasional Volunteer Hours: 305.50
Total Hours Volunteered: 50,838

Donations



Monetary: \$839,924.14
In-Kind: \$599,025.76
Total Donations: \$1,438,949.90

Defenders Lodge

The Defenders Lodge provides free temporary lodging for Veterans who travel long distances. The Lodge also helps to ease the burden for Veterans undergoing extensive treatment or procedures, such as organ transplants or chemotherapy.



Veterans & Caregivers Served

14,078



Nights Stayed

12,270

**Equivalent
Hotel Savings**

\$3,067,500 (\$250 / night)



After spending time with my husband, I am able to come home, to the Fisher House, and can sleep peacefully. This place has been a blessing to me.

Karen Maxey

Read their story!



Fisher House I and II

The two Fisher Houses on the Palo Alto Division's campus provide free, high-quality, temporary lodging to families of Veterans and active-duty military personnel who are undergoing treatment.



Nights Stayed

4,415



Families Served

585

Equivalent
Hotel Savings

\$1,103,750 (\$250 / night)



ORGANIZATIONAL DIRECTION



VISN 21 realigns clinics to reduce travel for Veterans

While operating one of the largest integrated health care systems in the country, VA must adapt and evolve its delivery of health care to keep up with the current and future needs of Veterans. As required by the MISSION Act of 2018, VA conducted market assessment studies of every VA market across the country designed to understand the makeup of our Veterans. The assessment looked at healthcare needs, age, race, gender, and the era served.



An important component of this effort is adapting VA's health care infrastructure to provide care closer to where Veterans live. Keeping with this idea, the Stockton, Sonoma, and Modesto VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinics will realign to the VA Northern California Health Care System in FY 2023. These transfers will reduce the distance Veterans based in Calaveras, San Joaquin, Tuolumne, and Stanislaus counties will have to travel for specialized care.



It has been an honor to serve our Veterans in these counties. Veterans have a right to continue to receive their care at the Palo Alto and Livermore campuses if they choose. VAPAHCS honors that right and will continue to welcome them.



VA PRINCIPLES

ADVOCACY | ACCESS | OUTCOMES | EXCELLENCE

VHA PRIORITIES

- Hire faster, and more competitively
- Connect Veterans to the soonest and best care
- Serve Veterans with toxic exposures
- Accelerate our journey to High Reliability
- Support Veterans' whole health, their caregivers, and survivors
- Prevent Veteran suicide

VHA STRATEGIC ENABLERS

- Retain, invest in, and support our people
- Scale best practices and drive innovation
- Improve our technology systems and workflows
- Drive equity for women, minorities, and LGBTQ+ Veterans
- Modernize our infrastructure
- Leverage our VSOs, states, advocates, and interagency partners

VHA MISSION STATEMENT

Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

VHA VISION STATEMENT

VHA will continue to be the benchmark of excellence and value in health care and benefits by providing exemplary services that are both patient centered and evidence based.

I-CARE (Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, Excellence) define who we are and our culture. They serve as a guide in providing world-class care and services to Veterans, their families and beneficiaries.



National Center for
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder



Cycling for Life



FISCAL YEAR 2022-2024 VA PALO ALTO HEALTH CARE SYSTEM OPERATIONAL PLAN

The VA Palo Alto Health Care System FY 2022 - FY 2024 Operational Plan provides guidance to drive health care system operations. It is a living document that supports the strategies of the VHA Long Range Planning Framework and is refreshed annually or as needed.

GOAL 1 #1 PATIENT EXPERIENCE (VHA GOALS: 2, 4)

Objective	Strategies
<p>A. Provide greater choice and access to care that supports and encourages lifelong health and wellness and addresses Veteran healthcare disparities</p>	<p>A.1: Increase access to mental health, women’s health, and suicide prevention services</p>
	<p>A.2: Expansion and sustainment of Whole Health</p>
	<p>A.3: Increase utilization of telehealth modality to provide care to Veterans</p>
	<p>A.4: Increase number of newly enrolled Veterans receiving care at VAPAHCS</p>
	<p>A.5: Increase the use of VAPAHCS as a referral site for Veterans currently enrolled in VA</p>
	<p>A.6: Improve health equity and reduce disparities to care</p>
<p>B. Build relationships with internal and external partners</p>	<p>B.1: Foster information exchange and closer partnership DoD, Military and Veteran Service Organizations, academic affiliates, and other partners to play key roles in Veterans’ health care delivery</p>
<p>C. Optimize facility and VISN resources efficiently</p>	<p>C.1: Advance the alignment of health care infrastructure and delivery of care</p>

FY 2022 Highlights

Recruited first Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinator to serve as a content matter expert for community-based suicide prevention and education initiatives. Conducted suicide prevention training (S.A.V.E) for community partners. Opened a mammography suite at the MG Gourley VA-DoD clinic.

Increased the number of Veterans accessing Whole Health services by 6%.

Surgery CRH implemented; implemented virtual specialty care via CRH as well as other facility Telehealth programs.

Recruited an Outreach Specialist to increase enrollment and provide Veterans and their families with resources and education.

VAPAHCS was established as the VISN 21 Speciality Care Clinical Resource Hub in 2021. In 2022, expanded services offered by the Specialty Care Clinical Resource Hub.

Health Equity focused innovations in general medicine clinic led to improvement in hypertension and diabetes control performance metrics (mnemonics ihd53h_ec and dmg27h_ec) associated with Cardiovascular/Diabetes Risk Management composite (CVRM90_ec) by over 10%, exceeding L5 benchmark of 62.5% with 66.04%.

Increased race/ethnicity stratification performance by 20% from 54.03% to 64.36% for ihd53h_ec and 43% from 45.7% to 65.28% for dmg27h_ec.

The National Center for Collaborative Healthcare Innovation (NCCHI) resides at VAPAHCS. NCCHI leads collaborations to solve the greatest healthcare challenges facing Veterans. NCCHI collaborates broadly with industry, other government agencies, academia, and throughout VA to create far-reaching positive impact for our Veterans with cutting-edge technologies. Other partnerships include SkillBridge, a Defense Department (DoD) program for transitioning Service members.

Received additional funding to replace aging equipment.
Opened state-of-the-art Radiology Facility, Rehabilitation Center and Basic Science Research Center.

GOAL 2 #1 QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE (VHA GOALS: 2,3)

Objective	Strategies
D. Transform VAPAHCS into a High Reliability Organization	D.1: Implement and embrace Just Culture principles
	D.2: Implement and embrace continuous process improvement
	D.3: Reduce Adverse Events
E. Apply research into clinical practice	E.1: Develop a knowledge translation program to move scientific research results into clinical care practice
	E.2: Promote VAPAHCS as a leader in health care research training and delivery of evidence-based healthcare
	E.3 Promote Evidence-based research and clinical practice
F. Meet/Exceeds VHA Quality Benchmarks	F.1: Establish excellence regarding VA metrics

FY 2022 Highlights

Conduct monthly Safety Forums with facilitation by the HRO Lead and executive leadership, resulting in a VISN 21 best and shared practice. All staff are invited to attend. Topics include HRO principles, safety stories, process improvement projects, RCAs, JPSRs, action plans and system changes.

Over the last several years, we have brought back our Lean belt program and classes, increasing the number of staff educated in lean principles. Established regular forums where belt projects are shared and spread. In FY 2022, there were 84 yellow belts, 9 green belts, 3 black belts, and 21 non-belted projects, supported by a robust process improvement staff.

Provided education and awareness of the importance of using JPSR to report all incidents of patient safety. Reviewed JPSR data and shared lessons learned through monthly Safety Forums. Focused on Just Culture principles when reviewing adverse incident events.

Established a new VACO-supported program (National Research Registry) based at VAPAHCS.

Shared clinical and administrative best practices and collaboration with researchers to understand, treat and adapt to COVID-19 throughout the VISN and nationally.

Shared new depression treatment, rTMS, that is now being used in 40 VAMCs

Leveraged technology such as AR/VR, sensor technology, 5G, cloud computing, 3D printing, advanced analytics including machine learning and natural language processing, and drones use for emergencies such as patient elopement, natural disasters, facility maintenance and support.

Launched Leveraging Electronic Health Information to Advance Precision Medicine (LEAP) research initiative.

Focused efforts on local, VISN-level, and national-level goals and metrics. Prioritized innovation, health equity, and data-driven projects to drive improvement.

GOAL 3 #1 EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE (VHA GOALS: 3, 4)

Objective	Strategies
G. Retain and recruit talent	G.1: Recruit lasting talent and retain human capital
	G.2. Foster a safe environment for employees
	G.3. Work with Congress to invest in wages (Top 10 Employee Investments)
	G.4. Maximize bonuses and retention incentives (Top 10 Employee Investments)
	G.5. Increase opportunities to advance at VA (Top 10 Employee Investments)
	G.6. Expedite the hiring process (Top 10 Employee Investments)
	G.7. Offer great flexibility in where employees work (Top 10 Employee Investments)
	G.8. Help cover the cost of childcare (Top 10 Employee Investments)
	G.9. Invest in measures to improve well-being (Top 10 Employee Investments)
	G.10. Invest in education (Top 10 Employee Investments)
	G.11. Embed inclusion, diversity, equity and access (I-DEA) across VA (Top 10 Employee Investments)
	G.12. Protect employees from COVID-19 (Top 10 Employee Investments)

FY 2022 Highlights

Participated in Onboard Hiring Surge events, and hiring fairs. Maximized non-competitive hiring, VA-TRE, PMF, VALOR, VANEEP, Pathways and Schedule A hiring.

Increased access to advanced Prevention and Management of Disruptive Behavior (PMDDB) training for all staff. Launched LYNX, an internet-based panic alarm system. Actively used ADR mediation, group facilitation, conflict coaching to address workplace disputes, and EEO complaints.

Utilized RAISE act to increase salaries where appropriate.

Increased utilization of 3Rs for hard-to-fill positions from 71.7% (Dec 2021) to 89% (Mar 2022). Palo Alto has maximized compensation through the use of new Locality Pay Schedules (LPS) using the RAISE act enhancements. Also, have maximized the use of Special Salary Rates (SSR) for Hybrid 38 positions and selected Title 5 positions.

Reclassified positions to create career ladder opportunities. Increased educational offerings to employees.

Supported HR Modernization throughout the year.

Expanded use of permanent telework opportunities, alternate work schedules, and remote work opportunities.

Increased maximum total household income requirement for childcare subsidy by \$5,000.

Expanded Employee Whole Health, including Employee Assistance Program. Distributed mobile wellness carts to clinics that do not have fitness centers. FY2022 saw the return of the "Front Office Fitness Challenge."

FranklinCovey and LinkedIn Learning are offered to all employees free of cost. Revised New Employee Orientation. Educational offerings included Employee Leadership Development Program and Leadership Development Institute.

Reaffirmed commitment to White Ribbon VA. Active Special Emphasis Programs for Veterans and staff.

Distributed COVID-19 testing kits to all employees. Expanded N95 mask distribution. Centralized repository of information for COVID-19. Launched vaccine booster program.



Palo Alto Division
3801 Miranda Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94304
(650) 493-5000



Menlo Park Division
795 Willow Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(650) 614-9997



Livermore Division
4951 Arroyo Road
Livermore, CA 94550
(925) 373-4700



Capitola VA Clinic
1350 41st Avenue, Suite 102
Capitola, CA 95010
(831) 464-5519



Fremont VA Clinic
39199 Liberty Street, Bldg. B
Fremont, CA 94538
(510) 791-4000



**M.G. William H. Gourley
VA-DoD Outpatient Clinic**
201 9th Street
Marina, CA 93933
(831) 884-1000



Modesto VA Clinic
1225 Oakdale Road
Modesto, CA 95355
(209) 557-6200



San Jose VA Clinic
5855 Silver Creek Valley Place
San Jose, CA 95138
(408) 574-9100



Sonora VA Clinic
13663 Mono Way
Sonora, CA 95370
(209) 588-2600



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