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.
“Rooted in Trust.” This phrase encapsulates the essence of Erie VA Medical Center’s (VAMC) FY23 journey — a journey marked by remarkable achievements in delivering award-winning patient care, fostering an exceptional employee experience, and progressing in our quest toward modernization.

As Director of such an outstanding facility, I am immensely proud of the nearly 1,000 individuals whose devotion and hard work make these tremendous accomplishments possible.

At the heart of our mission lies the unwavering commitment to our Veterans, and this year, we take great pride in the recognition garnered for our exceptional patient care. The accolades we’ve received underscore our Veterans’ trust in us and the dedication of our skilled healthcare professionals and supportive staff members who strive for excellence every day. They are the roots of this exceptional organization; they embody the ICARE values by taking the time to truly listen to Veteran needs and contouring care accordingly.

A thriving healthcare environment is not only defined by the quality of patient care but also by the well-being and satisfaction of the aforementioned valued employees. We continually invest in initiatives to nurture a positive employee experience — creating a workplace where trust, collaboration, and growth are encouraged and deeply entrenched in our organizational culture.

Our commitment to technology and continuous improvement remains evident in our efforts to modernize systems and expand facility care to ensure seamless and efficient healthcare delivery. FY23 boasts the grand opening of an advanced Oncology department, a state-of-the-art clinic in Venango County, and Connected Care’s Virtual Health Resource Center, along with the groundbreaking of the Crawford County clinic and ongoing development within the infrastructure of our main campus.

With no plans to rest on our laurels, we celebrate the abounding success of FY23 by confidently looking ahead and remaining committed to evolving, growing, and adapting to the ever-changing healthcare landscape. Together, we will continue to positively impact the lives of our Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. “Rooted in Trust,” we eagerly look forward to another year of progress and triumph.

John A. Gennaro FACHE, MHSA, MBA
Director, Erie VAMC

(1 to r) Dennis Newara, Vietnam Veterans of America; Erie VAMC Director, John Gennaro; Skip Zeiber, Vietnam Veterans of America.

Message from the Director
Nationally Recognized for Patient and Employee Experience

Erie VAMC is an honored and proud recipient of the 2022 Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Best Experience Award. Director John A. Gennaro accepted the award on behalf of the facility during the 2023 VA Customer Experience (CX) Symposium held September 13-14 in Washington, DC.

The medical center achieved the highest overall combined patient experience and employee experience scores for facilities of similar size and service offerings in the VHA. Presented by the National Patient Experience Office, VHA Best Experience Awardees score in the top quintile in the Survey of Healthcare Providers (SHEP) Overall Rating of the Provider, SHEP Inpatient Overall Rating of the Hospital, Veterans Signals (V-signals) Trust scores, and the All-Employee Survey (AES) scores for the Best Places to Work.

This award recognizes the Erie VA health care system for its top-performing metrics and unwavering commitment to exceptional Veteran care. It is a testament to the medical center’s dedication to excellence in customer service. This accomplishment reflects the outstanding efforts of clinical professionals, support staff, and administration, who work tirelessly to ensure patients’ and employees’ well-being and satisfaction.

The facility consistently scores high inpatient satisfaction surveys, reflecting the commitment to providing compassionate, timely, and effective healthcare services. Erie VAMC’s dedication to exceeding the expectations of patients and their families remains at the forefront of operations.

Our staff plays a pivotal role in delivering outstanding care. Fostering a workplace environment where employees feel valued, supported, and fulfilled significantly enhances the care and services offered to Veterans – happy employees are better equipped to deliver exceptional care.

Additionally, Erie VAMC embraces a culture of continuous improvement and innovation, regularly seeking feedback from patients and employees to refine processes and enhance the overall experience. This approach allows adaptation to the evolving needs of our Veterans and staff.

Dr. Peng - VFW 2022/23 Outstanding VA Healthcare Employee of the Year Award

Primary Care, Whole Health provider Dr. Linda Peng receives recognition as an outstanding healthcare provider.

In a heartwarming tribute to the exceptional care he receives at the Erie VA Medical Center (VAMC), Mr. Jim Brown, U.S. Air Force Veteran, and Department of Pennsylvania Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) National Legislative Chair, nominated Primary Care Whole Health provider, Dr. Linda Peng, for the VFW 2022/2023 Outstanding VA Healthcare Employee of the Year Award.

Upon honoring Dr. Peng with the award, Mr. Brown shared how her compassion, dedication, and remarkable care made his journey of self-care and healing not only possible but incredibly successful.

“Dr. Peng goes above and beyond to ensure I receive the best possible care, coordinates my treatments, and advocates for my health care needs,” stated Mr. Brown, “she helps Veterans like me change their lives for the better.”

Dr. Peng graciously accepted the award, saying, “When I care for patients, I think about how I would want my loved ones treated, my mother, my father, even myself – and I care for my patients with that in mind.”

Mr. Brown’s story symbolizes the tremendous efforts of many healthcare professionals within the Erie VAMC, who often work tirelessly to provide specialized care to our nation’s Veterans. His nomination serves as a reminder of these healthcare professionals’ positive impact on our Veterans’ lives. It is a testament to the profound bond that can develop between Veterans and their healthcare providers.

An excerpt from Mr. Brown’s narrative submission:

“Dr. Peng is more than just a ‘doctor’. She is ultimately a great person. She personally calls me and other patients to ensure we are doing fine and to make sure we understand her expectations, as well as to make sure we are aware of any upcoming appointments. She does not have to do this, because she has office staff that could do this. However, she enjoys the personal touch and interaction with her patients.”

Employee of the Year Award: (l to r) VFW National Legislative Chair, Jim Brown, and Dr. Linda Peng.
Associate Director, Patient Care Services Assists on National Level

Beginning in January 2023, Dorene Sommers, RN, BSN, MBA, FACHE, Associate Director, Patient Care Services, was awarded the opportunity to serve as a member of the Senior Management Team in the VHA Office of Integrated Veteran Care (IVC) to initiate and create the role of the Senior Nursing Advisor/Chief Nursing Officer.

The Office of IVC, now with over 1,500 team members, was newly formed in March 2022, combining two VHA program offices - the Office of Veterans Access to Care and the Office of Community Care. The office advocates for the care of Veterans and beneficiaries both in VA and in community facilities.

While serving in this capacity, Ms. Sommers worked to optimize access to clinical contact centers, virtual care, utilization management, care coordination, and the Community Care Networks (CCN) throughout the enterprise. Additionally, she led several initiatives to enhance the effectiveness of teams and processes throughout IVC.

Ms. Sommers’ detail provided abundant experiences that allowed her to bridge broad systematic approaches with field-level processes and operations. Moving forward, she looks to continually apply lessons learned in her Erie VA Medical Center leadership role.
PACT Act
As a result of strategic outreach efforts and outstanding clinical diligence, Erie VAMC exceeded FY23 target goals for Toxic Exposure Screenings (TES) and follow-ups in support of President Biden’s PACT Act – the most significant expansion of VA health care and benefits in generations.

High Reliability Organizational Highlights – A High Reliability Organization (HRO) is an organization that has leadership commitment, a culture of safety, and continuous process improvement.

Joint Commission Survey:
Laboratory
Survey conducted October 2022
Two-year accreditation status received December 2022
Hospital, Behavioral Health Programs, and Home Care
Survey conducted February 2023
Three-year accreditation status received June 2023

Providing Tools, Principles, and Education to Improve Health Care Delivery
System Redesign supports Erie VAMC’s journey as a High-Reliability Organization by promoting a culture of continuous process improvement through refinement initiatives and offerings, such as team-based Improvement Collaboratives, Improvement Advisor and Inpatient Flow Academies, Lean Training Programs, and Patient Flow Support and Consultation.

Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) Survey
Survey conducted August 2023
Three-year accreditation status received September 2023
FY23 marked the first blended CARF survey approach for the facility in which four Erie VAMC programs were reviewed, including Compensated Work Therapy (CWT), Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Program (PRRP), Psychosocial Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (PRRTP), and Homeless Care Program. Additionally, this survey acted as the initial CARF evaluation administered for the CWT program.

The following comments are cited from the final report:

- Erie VAMC benefits from the varying tenure of its staff, from staff members who have served the organization for more than 30 years to those who have recently started employment with the organization to those in between. This mix of vast experience and new opportunities offers diverse viewpoints and perspectives for providing beneficial services to the Veterans.

- Veterans participating in the PRRP verbalized how the program’s curriculum and staff are instrumental in their recovery journeys. They expressed satisfaction with the variety of groups, classes, evidence-based treatments, and unwavering staff support. Veterans served said, “This place and these people saved my life,” “Here we have a voice and are heard and understood,” and “I think that new employees all over the hospital should come observe our groups in their orientation to see how this staff deals with Veterans and learn from the best.”

- Erie VAMC has embraced the whole-health culture, and this permeates throughout the medical center. Veterans in the PRRP and PRRTP are excited to discuss how aspects of whole health have benefited their recovery. One Veteran stated, “It is wonderful to see how the VA has progressed to treat the whole individual. It makes a world of difference.”
Streamlining Controlled Substance Inspector Monthly Assignments

The development of a new scheduling grid and implementation of a crosscheck protocol between the Controlled Substance Coordinator and Alternate Controlled Substance Coordinator in December 2022 was embraced by the team of 18 Controlled Substance Inspectors and continues to serve the program into FY24 successfully.

Ascellion Survey
Community Living Center (CLC)
Survey conducted June 2023
Annual accreditation status received

Members of the Pennsylvania American Legion, American Legion Auxiliary, Sons of the American Legion, and American Legion Riders visit CLC Veteran residents.

Increasing Pharmacy Virtual Care Visits

The rapid expansion of virtual care during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the benefits of video-based patient visits. Video visits offer a convenient option for Veterans and increase access to care, especially in rural areas. Given these advantages, the Erie VA PACT Clinical Pharmacist Practitioners strove to increase VA Virtual Care video visits in FY23, as each pharmacist completed an average of 4 visits per month in FY22.

Pharmacy VVC Impact

OCTOBER 2022 - SEPTEMBER 2023
300% increase in VVC pharmacy visits
NEW PHARMACY APPOINTMENTS OPENED FOR VETERANS
530
COST SAVINGS
$40,000

Streamlined Method Impact

INSPECTION SCHEDULING MANPOWER
Reduced by one hour per month

SCHEDULING ERRORS
Decreased by 67%

Energy, Environment, and Fleet Program receive 2022 Sustainability Award.

VISN 4 Network Director, Timothy Liezert and Erie VAMC Medical Center Director, John Gennaro in the new Erie Oncology Clinic.
Connected Care

Erie VAMC’s Office of Connected Care brings VA digital technology to Veterans and health care professionals, extending access to care beyond the traditional office visit. Through virtual technology, VA delivers care to patients where and when they need it.

FY 23 Highlights

- Remote Patient Monitoring (RPM) continues to lead VISN 4 with the highest percentage of Veterans served via home telehealth at 2.6%. RPM ensures maximum VERA reimbursement with the second-highest NIC % of 73.2% and the second-lowest non-responder rate in the VISN.

- RPM VISN 4 (specifically Traci Goreczny from Erie) was nationally recognized as a Star Performer for a Leading or Breakthrough Process for the VISN 4 RPM-HT Peer Review Process.

- In support of cutting-edge tele-eye expansion, the Ashtabula County Clinic is now home to the Maestro2 tele-eye machine. The Maestro2 improves upon existing retinal imaging by adding the Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) imaging modality and combining it in the same unit as traditional retinal photography.

- OCT imaging expands diagnostic capabilities and is the standard of care for glaucoma, macular degeneration, diabetic macular edema, and many other ocular diseases. Before installation of the Maestro2, all patients requiring OCT imaging had to travel to the main clinic in Erie. These expanded imaging techniques improve the quality and scope of our Tele-Eye screening program, TeleGlaucoma, and allow for further expansion of SFT eye care programs, including the planned VISN 4 pilot of a TeleMacula clinic.

- Erie VAMC proudly opened the 2nd Virtual Health Resource Center (VERC) in VISN 4, providing help to those utilizing VA tools and technologies, including My HealtheVet, VA Mobile, and telehealth. The VERC served 448 staff members, Veterans, and caregivers from December 2022 to October 2023.

- Despite the lack of a dedicated My HealtheVet (MHV) coordinator for almost half the year, MHV earned the second-lowest secure messaging (SM) escalations for the VISN at 0.24%, ensuring Veterans received timely responses to MHV SM questions and inquiries.

VA Telehealth

- UNIQUE VETERANS SERVED USING TELEHEALTH: 7,980
- TOTAL ENCOUNTERS COMPLETED VIA TELEHEALTH: 30,856
- TOTAL VA VIDEO CONNECT (VVC) ENCOUNTERS: 9,402
- TELE-MENTAL HEALTH CARE ENCOUNTERS: 7,434
- UNIQUE VETERANS SERVED VIA E-CONSULT: 318

My HealtheVet

- VETERANS WITH A MY HEALTHEVET ACCOUNT: 10,378
- SECURED MESSAGES SENT: 37,538

VA Mobile

Connect today!
To browse more tools that may fit your needs, visit mobile.va.gov/appstore
Clinical Services continues to expand services in collaboration with the Western Market

Oncology
UNIQUE VETERANS RECEIVING CANCER CARE INCLUDING INFUSION & TUMOR CARE 681 (Compared to 520 uniques in FY22)
TOTAL ENCOUNTERS 1,098
- Staffing additions: (1) certified Oncology RN and (1) LPN
- Full time Oncologist recruitment underway

Neurology
TOTAL ENCOUNTERS 500 (Compared to 450 encounters in FY22)
- Increased Clinical Video Telehealth visits (CVT)
- Broadened services to include post-stroke/TIA follow-up and migraine headache evaluation and care in collaboration with the national tele-neurology program

Rheumatology
UNIQUE VETERANS SERVED BY V-CONSULT 85 (Compared to 11 in FY22)
- VA Pittsburgh providers expand care via CVT with space provided by Connected Care

Ophthalmology
TOTAL CASES SEEN 320
- Increased to 5 days per month

Cardiology
UNIQUE PATIENTS SEEN 959
TOTAL ENCOUNTERS 2,116 (Compared to 523 in FY22)
- Staffing additions: (1) RN, (1) CRNP, and (0.5) Cardiologist
- New location within the medical center successfully accommodating patient growth

Endocrinology
TOTAL ENCOUNTERS 596
- Expanded services to include face-to-face and CVT visits
- Staffing addition: (0.5) CRNP
- Increased access to care for rural Veterans with the availability of once-per-week face-to-face appointments at the Crawford County clinic
- Pittsburgh CRNP sees patients weekly at the Venango County clinic

Pulmonary
- Recruitment is underway for a PA/CRNP
- A pulmonologist group in Pittsburgh provides expansion support by reading sleep study and pulmonary function test results for Erie VAMC

Orthopedics
- Staffing addition: (1) part-time Orthopedic physician
- A plan for total joints replacement (hip and knee) same-day surgery is underway via the collaboration of the Ambulatory Surgery Manager, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Manager, and Radiology Manager
Trust in Care

As an award-winning, High Reliability Organization, Erie VAMC remains hyper-focused on process improvement, patient safety, customer service, and employee satisfaction. Leadership and staff members within the facility continually observe, evaluate, and revise operations and procedures to better serve our Veterans.

Our front-line healthcare professionals are empowered to speak up, stop the line, and present their knowledge and concerns, promoting a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility.

Erie VAMC’s commitment to minimizing errors, maintaining a consistent level of excellence in operations, encouraging open lines of communication, and fostering transparency persists year after year – supporting an organization that both proud employees and satisfied patients continually recommend.

## Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNIQUE PATIENTS</th>
<th>21,758</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
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<td>SURGICAL PROCEDURES</td>
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<td>COMMUNITY LIVING CENTER</td>
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<td>POST 9/11 VETERANS SERVED</td>
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<td>OUTPATIENT VISITS</td>
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<td>FEMALE</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBSERVATION PATIENTS</td>
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<td>MEDICINE ACUTE CARE</td>
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## Operating Budget

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<tr>
<th>TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET</th>
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<tr>
<td>MEDICAL SERVICES</td>
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<td>FACILITIES</td>
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<td>ADMINISTRATIVE</td>
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<td>NON-VA COMMUNITY CARE</td>
<td>$89,619,832.24 (not considered operating budget)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRM PROJECTS</td>
<td>$3,034,370.12 (not considered operating budget)</td>
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## Veteran Satisfaction

| OVERALL OUTPATIENT SATISFACTION | 88.6% |
| OVERALL PATIENT RATING OF PROVIDER | 81% |
| TRUST SCORE                     | 93% (highest in the past 6 FYs) |
| QUALITY OF CARE                 | 97% |
| CLEANLINESS OF FACILITY         | 100% |
| INTERACTIONS WITH STAFF         | 94% |
### VA County Clinics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Veterans Served</th>
<th>Outpatient Visits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashtabula</td>
<td>1,856</td>
<td>8,024</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crawford</td>
<td>2,655</td>
<td>11,109</td>
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<tr>
<td>Venango</td>
<td>2,158</td>
<td>8,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warren</td>
<td>2,525</td>
<td>8,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McKean</td>
<td>1,115</td>
<td>6,183</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Ashtabula County**
  - Veterans Served: 1,856
  - Outpatient Visits: 8,024
  - Address: 2044 Ambrose Ln, Ashtabula, OH 44004
  - Phone: 866-463-0912 or 814-868-8661, press 2

- **Crawford County**
  - Veterans Served: 2,655
  - Outpatient Visits: 11,109
  - Address: 16954 Conneaut Lake Rd, Meadville, PA 16335
  - Phone: 866-463-0912 or 814-868-8661, press 2

- **Venango County**
  - Veterans Served: 2,158
  - Outpatient Visits: 8,441
  - Address: 125 Home Depot Dr, Franklin, PA 16323
  - Phone: 866-962-3260 or 814-868-8661, press 2

- **Warren County**
  - Veterans Served: 2,525
  - Outpatient Visits: 8,469
  - Address: 3 Farm Colony Dr, Warren, PA 16365
  - Phone: 866-682-3250 or 814-868-8661, press 2

- **McKean County**
  - Veterans Served: 1,115
  - Outpatient Visits: 6,183
  - Address: 20 Foster Brook Blvd, Bradford, PA 16701
  - Phone: 814-368-3019 or 814-868-8661, press 2
Supporting the Mission

Employee Satisfaction

Our staff plays a pivotal role in delivering outstanding care. Erie VAMC is committed to creating a positive and supportive work environment that cultivates employee satisfaction and engagement.

We recognize that employee satisfaction directly affects patient care by influencing motivation, communication, and collaboration, reducing burnout and turnover, improving patient-provider relationships, encouraging a culture of continuous improvement, enhancing attention to detail, and ultimately contributing to positive patient experiences and outcomes.

Erie VAMC employee scores continue to rise across all survey categories and remain above VISN and national averages, demonstrating the direct correlation between staff contentment and the award-winning care they provide.

Employee Engagement

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
<td>PHYSICIANS</td>
<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>NURSES (RNS)</td>
<td>177</td>
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<tr>
<td>VETERAN EMPLOYEES</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL EMPLOYEES</td>
<td>952</td>
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Erie VAMC staff hand out candy to Jefferson Elementary students on Halloween.
All employee award ceremony (l to r) Rickey Harris, Heron Warren, Dorene Sommers, Dr. Borys Loza, John Gennaro.

Erie VAMC staff enjoy hamburgers and hot dogs at the all employee picnic.

Veterans Canteen treats staff to cake on Employee Appreciation Day.

AES Results

**BEST PLACE TO WORK**
75%
% change FY16-FY23 +23.4%

**OVERALL SATISFACTION (OUT OF 5)**
3.99
% change FY16-FY23 +7.4%

**ORGANIZATIONAL SATISFACTION (OUT OF 5)**
3.95
% change FY16-FY23 +12.3%

**RECOMMEND MY ORGANIZATION (OUT OF 5)**
4.11
% change FY16-FY23 +10%

**SERVANT LEADER INDEX**
78.75%
% change FY16-FY23 +16.4%

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

*I*DEA – Identifying and eliminating institutional barriers to equity at VA and building agency-wide practices to ensure inclusion, diversity, equity, and access to underserved and otherwise marginalized Veteran and employee communities.

**SAFETY IN DIVERSITY SERIES SESSIONS COMPLETED**
4

**SERVANT LEADERSHIP PRESENTATIONS COMPLETED**
2

**EDUCATION & GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES WORKSHOPS COMPLETED**
3

**SPECIAL EMPHASIS CELEBRATIONS AND OBSERVANCES COMPLETED**
9

**DIVERSITY & INCLUSION COMMITTEE MEMBERS**
33

**I*DEA PLAN UPDATES PRESENTED**
34

**STAFF MEMBERS REACHED**
489+
Behavioral and Mental Health Services

Erie VAMC Behavioral Health Clinic (BHC) continues to be recognized for its outstanding implementation of mental health and substance abuse recovery services. The clinic proudly ranked #1 for Veteran Experience of Care nationwide, once again, in FY23 and continues to maintain its rank as the 9th VA BHC in the country overall.

Preventing Veteran Suicide

Preventing Veteran suicide is a top clinical priority at Erie VAMC. Our Suicide Prevention Program embraces a complete public health approach, combining community and clinical-based interventions. The program calls on all partners, stakeholders, and community members to help reach Veterans and reduce Veteran suicide.
Newly Forged Community Partnerships

- Soldier On
- Veteran’s Leadership Program
- United Way of Erie County
- Connect 55+ Active Lifestyle Living (featuring ongoing monthly Veteran outreach)
- Meadville Medical Center’s Behavioral Health
- Lethal Means Reduction/Suicide Prevention initiative with local American Legions and VFWs
- Participants in Crawford County and Ashtabula County Suicide Task Force

S.A.V.E. TRAININGS
25

LETHAL MEANS REDUCTION TRAININGS
18

SUICIDE PREVENTION OUTREACHES CONDUCTED RELATED TO SPECIAL POPULATIONS SUCH AS VETERANS IN RURAL AREAS, LGBTQ+, BIPOC, HOMELESS AND WOMEN VETERANS
134

GUN LOCKS DISTRIBUTED
1,947

Additional programmatic highlights

- Lethal Means Safety, S.A.V.E., and COMPACT Act presentations at the 7th Annual Suicide Prevention Conference
- Suicide prevention/Distressed caller/Self-care Training provided for BHC Medical Support Assistants
- Suicide Screening Reminder training and processes accepted as a Best Practice
- Supported COMPACT Act Initiatives by dispensing information via training to staff, Veterans, community members, and Veterans Service Organizations, as well as presenting COMPACT Act resources at the annual mental health summit and Veteran Town Halls

HOMELESS CARE ENCOUNTERS
527

PRRTTP ADMISSIONS
56

GRANT PROGRAMS SERVED
LIBERTY HOUSE AND VETERAN’S LEADERSHIP PROGRAM
49

HUD-VASH PROGRAM ENCOUNTERS
2,217

Katelyn Duberg, LPC and Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC) Veterans attend a day at the park with Peer Support.
Whole Health

As one of VA’s twenty-one flagship Whole Health (WH) Program sites, the Erie VAMC continues to expand holistic health offerings to Veterans and employees that consider the interconnected aspects of well-being, including physical, mental, emotional, social, and even spiritual dimensions.

Erie VAMC hosted the VISN 4 Whole Health Summit comprised of 26 employees, including WH Directors, Program Managers, and Employee Coordinators, who gathered to partake in conversations regarding strategic planning, current goals, and NDPP-specific goal charting.

The group also discussed highlights of WH in the VISN and explored further opportunities for growth and cultural transformation throughout the VA Healthcare system.
WH employees participate in laughter yoga during VISN 4 WH Summit breakout session.

**Available Whole Health Services**

- Biofeedback
- Health coaching
- Yoga
- Battlefield Auricular Acupuncture (BFA)
- Acupuncture
- Cupping for Massage Therapy
- Tai Chi
- Guided Imagery
- Mindfulness Meditation
- Clinical Hypnosis
- Reiki
- Qi Gong

**TOTAL UNIQUE VETERANS SERVED**

12,899

**TOTAL VETERAN ENCOUNTERS**

30,877

**TOTAL BFA ENCOUNTERS**

1,695

**TOTAL BFA UNIQUES**

519

150% Increase of Employee WH utilization (from FY22)

**New programs and offerings**

- Recreation Therapy: Creative Expressions, Percussion Group, Journaling Group, VR Pain Management, Pre-BFA Relaxation, Exploration group, and Renewed Biofeedback
- Peer Partner: YMCA Pick 6 and Taking Charge of My Life and Health
- MOVE! Group Coaching (in collaboration with MOVE! Program)
- Martial Arts Kata Skills Building Education Group
- Millennium Health and Fitness Education Group
- Mind Body Group
- Alpha STIM Group

**DISCOVER WHAT MATTERS**

Live Whole Health.
Nursing Recruitment and Retention

Nurses are the largest part of the Erie VA workforce who fulfill the VA’s mission to honor Veterans by providing exceptional healthcare that improves their health and well-being. Nationwide, RNs and LPNs remain among the top clinical shortage occupations in VA and stay on our facility’s hard-to-recruit list.

Executive Leadership, Nurse Managers, Nurse Recruiter, and Human Resource teams invest in the importance of VHA’s priority to hire right and hire fast. Erie VAMC’s Nurse Recruiter, Ms. Mari Johnson, maintains an active presence on the medical center’s local website and social media platforms, as well as the VA’s Hiring national webpage.

Nurse engagement prevails in the spotlight to increase nurse satisfaction and retention. Dorene Sommers, Associate Director, Patient Care Services, embraces the work accomplished through the nursing mentorship program and Stay Touchpoints done by Nurse Managers for all new nursing hires. These programs foster a positive work environment, focusing on open communication and trust and empowering newer nurses to have an active role within their units to help strengthen the excellent care provided to our Veterans.

The Journey to Pathway to Excellence | Soaring to New Heights

The Erie VAMC is pursuing the prestigious Pathway to Excellence (PTE) designation through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). This designation demonstrates leadership support for a healthy practice environment where nurses can excel and positively impact patient care.

In July 2023, nurses across the organization participated in an assessment to identify opportunities for improvement in the work environment and partner with their colleagues to enhance the workplace. Nurse leaders support collaboration with direct care nurses to promote responsibility and accountability for shared decisions affecting their practice using the Nursing Professional Shared Governance model, which is the foundation of the PTE program. The nurses chose the theme “Soaring to New Heights” to generate excitement about the PTE journey. Registration for designation is planned in early 2024, and document submission in late 2024.
Nurse Recruiter Accomplishments & Results
Retaining highly qualified talent is essential for continuity of Veteran care.

• The Erie VAMC boasts the highest 1-year retention rate within VISN 4 at 95%.
• RN Vacancy Rate 8.3% (VISN 4 Average 13.1%) | LPN Vacancy Rate 6.3% (VISN 4 Average 15.9%)
• 60+ Stay Touchpoints Completed | 100% RN and LPN Retention Rate of New Hires

Erie VAMC Leadership proactively engages employees to recruit highly qualified, exceptional nurses through an employee referral reward program. The success of this program increased referrals of RNs and LPNs, resulting in an increase of 8.3% for RNs and a 25% increase for LPNs through external non-competitive direct hires.

NURSE RECRUITMENT OUTREACH EFFORTS
Increased by 30% in FY23 compared to FY22.

RN GROWTH
6% compared to FY22

LPN GROWTH
3% compared to FY22

Nursing Awards

DAISY AWARDS
Lori Krull, RN, Primary Care
Shawna Gordon, LPN, Community Living Center, Alpha
Tasha Harris, LPN, PRRTP

B.E.E. AWARDS
Justin McFarland, EMS
Joshua Nickerson, FMS, Grounds
Megan Giannamore, Nursing Assistant, Community Living Center, Alpha
Heather Biggie, MSA, Radiology

DAISY TEAM AWARD
CLC Beta (Unit 5) - accepted by Danielle Wherry, RN, Acting Nurse Manager, Acute/Community Living Center

DAISY NURSE LEADER AWARD
Ann Custer, RN, Nursing Supervisor, Ambulatory Surgery

SECRETARY’S AWARD FOR NURSING EXCELLENCE
Nadean Sitter, RN, Women’s Health Program Manager

PRECEPTOR AWARD
Kimberly Platz, RN, Ambulatory Surgery

Community Living Center (CLC)
The Erie VAMC Community Living Center (CLC) nursing staff focused on nurse empowerment, engagement, and burnout prevention through a pilot program of resiliency. Led by the co-chairs of the Nursing Workforce Development Committee, this 4-week interdisciplinary program involved over 18 nurse participants who explored their values, practiced mindfulness, and learned more about Employee Whole Health resources and utilized them. The program focused on how to find joy in work and reconnect with their passion for nursing.

Megan Giannamore receives B.E.E. award in CLC Alpha

Jennifer Young, RN – Wound Clinic, April 2023 hire | Catherine Parke, RN – Wound Clinic, 18 years with Erie VAMC
Modernization

Expansion
As the health care landscape continues to shift, progress, and transform, infrastructure and construction advancements are imperative for Veterans’ overall well-being and health care delivery effectiveness.
Erie VAMC continues to upgrade and expand infrastructure, incorporating state-of-the-art medical technologies and equipment, optimizing workflows to increase staff efficiency and reduce patient wait times, and sustaining a safe, secure, and compliant environment for Veterans and staff.

4th Floor Renovation
Construction began summer 2023 to build administrative offices on the 4th floor. Occupancy of offices is planned for July 2024.

Data Center
EHRM infrastructure renovation and additional creation of data center including EHRM Training & Support.

CLC Phase 2 Planning
The new expansion to the CLC includes a 20,536 SF space connected to the existing CLC with 20 resident rooms, Physical Therapy/Multipurpose Rooms, Living and Gathering Areas, an Activity Room, Dining Areas and Kitchen, as well as porches and a courtyard for enjoying Erie summers. Construction planning is in the final planning stages, slated to break ground in spring 2025.

Venango County VA Clinic Grand Opening | July 2023
On July 13, 2023, Erie VA Medical Center invited community members to join Medical Center Director John Gennaro, Medical Director, Primary Care Dr. Dolan Wenner, Clinic Supervisor Lori Berquist-Springer, Chaplain Nelson Chapman, Downing Construction, and clinic staff members in the grand opening of the Venango County VA Clinic.

Serving over 2,000 Veterans and employing 15 VA employees, the new Venango County VA Clinic is more than twice the size of its former Allegheny Boulevard location (increasing from 6,782 to 15,180 square feet) and boasts a large parking lot with ample wheelchair-accessible parking. This $2.1 million project replaces the previous clinic office suite housed within a multiple-tenant building.

The new spacious clinic location allows space for additional specialty services, like retinal telehealth, and features the brand-new Close to Me Oncology pilot, which will bring cancer care closer to the rural patients in the Venango area starting this fall.

In the words of John Gennaro, “By adopting the PACT design model, initiating the Oncology Close to Me pilot, and expanding additional specialty care services, we are confident that we can enhance the health care experience for our Veterans and provide them with the comprehensive care they deserve.”
On March 3, 2023, Erie VA Medical Center proudly hosted the Ceremonial Ribbon Cutting and Open House of the new 11-chair Oncology Clinic. This state-of-the-art clinic will expand access to Veterans across Western PA undergoing cancer treatment.

Crawford County VA Clinic Groundbreaking | September 2023

On September 22, 2023, Medical Center Director John Gennaro and Chief of Staff, Dr. Borys Loza proudly hosted a ceremonial groundbreaking for the new Crawford County VA Clinic.

Construction of the new 15,212 sq. ft. medical facility marks another modernization milestone for the local Department of Veterans Affairs organization and will enhance health care accessibility to Crawford-area Veterans. Featuring the integrated Patient-Aligned Care Team (PACT) model design, this new location will become the third of Erie VA’s county clinics to offer this patient-centered environment. The clinic will feature updated medical equipment, advanced Telehealth tools, and a wide range of medical specialties, including Cardiology, Whole Health, Endocrinology, and Podiatry. With the building nearly doubling in size, plans to expand services will align with patient needs. From primary care to mental health services, Veterans will have access to a holistic spectrum of care under one roof.

Medical Center Director, John Gennaro and Peter Majors, Staff Sargent Retired, U.S. Army.

Oncology Clinic Ribbon Cutting | March 2023

On March 3, 2023, Erie VA Medical Center proudly hosted the Ceremonial Ribbon Cutting and Open House of the new 11-chair Oncology Clinic. This state-of-the-art clinic will expand access to Veterans across Western PA undergoing cancer treatment.

Primary Care Consolidation and Build Out

Creating a new Primary Care addition will provide over 8,000 SF of new clinic space, increased waiting areas, and modernization of the existing lobby and atrium. Groundbreaking is planned for Spring 2024.
Center for Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE) formerly Voluntary Service

During FY23, the Erie VAMC Medical Center’s Center for Development & Civic Engagement Office accepted, recorded, and distributed over $516,181.78 worth of donations (monetary and non-monetary).

VOLUNTEERS 334
VOLUNTEER HOURS 43,386
YOUTH VOLUNTEERS 9
VETERANS TRANSPORTED 11,390
MILES DRIVEN 385,000

Hundreds of community members gather to honor the service and sacrifice of our Veterans at the Annual Veterans Day Parade.

Bryon Switzer, WWII Army Veteran, and family celebrate his 100th birthday.

MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS 44
OUTREACH EVENTS 72
SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS 5,408
NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS 29,044

Hundreds of community members gather to honor the service and sacrifice of our Veterans at the Annual Veterans Day Parade.
Social Worker of the Year

The Social Worker of the Year Award aims to motivate Social Work employees to strive for excellence through achievement of our organizational goals. The award promotes excellence in VA Social Work service and provides an opportunity for professional recognition, and is awarded in March - National Social Work Month.

The Erie VAMC leadership team presented a well-deserved award to Margaret Westcott, LCSW in honor of her valiant effort to ensure both female Veterans and LGBT Veterans receive the Veteran Centered Care they deserve.

(Eto r) Jeff Rose, Assistant Chief, Behavioral Health, Margaret Westcott, LCSW, Jamie Zewe, Chief, Behavioral Health.

Center for Development & Civic Engagement VISN 4 Rankings
TOTAL NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS
Ranked Second

TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS
Ranked First

TOTAL VALUE OF DONATIONS
Ranked Second

Center for Development & Civic Engagement National Standings
TOTAL NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS
Top 10%

TOTAL VOLUNTEER HOURS
Top 5%

TOTAL VALUE OF DONATIONS
Top 15%

Stacy Farrell assists Erie Elks Lodge 67 in distributing holiday meals to local Veterans in need.
Contact Us

MAIN LINE – PHONE TREE
814-868-8661
800-274-8387 (TOLL FREE)
Press 1 Pharmacy
Press 2 Appointments & Specialty Care Providers
Press 3 Nurse Line
Press 4 Eligibility
Press 5 Billing
Press 7 Veterans Crisis Line

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CLINIC
814-860-2038

CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM
814-860-2657

ELIGIBILITY
814-860-2970

MEDICAL SOCIAL WORK
814-860-2529

MEDICATION REFILLS
814-868-6284
800-274-8387 (Toll-free)

NON-VA CARE NOTIFICATION
Notify within 72 hours
814-860-2800 (M-F 8:00 A.M.-4:30 P.M.)
814-868-8661 (after hours, ask for medical administration assistant)

RELEASE OF INFORMATION
814-860-2212

POST-9/11 MILITARY 2 VA
(OEF/OIF/OND)
814-860-2965

VETERANS CRISIS LINE
www.veteranscrisisline.net
988 (PRESS 1)
TEXT - 838255

WHOLE HEALTH PROGRAM
814-860-2437

WOMEN VETERANS PROGRAM
814-860-2907

VA MOBILE APPLICATIONS
MOBILE.VA.GOV