

VA St. Louis Health Care System Fiscal Years 2024-27 Strategic Plan





U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA St. Louis Health Care System

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Strategic Plan

FY 2024 – 2027

The VA St. Louis Health Care System (VASTLHCS) is a Joint Commission and CARF accredited, complexity level 1B facility serving approximately 70,000 Veterans and their families across Missouri and Illinois. It is a two campus, full-service, tertiary referral center, with 4 Community Based Outpatient Clinics. The two primary campuses are the John Cochran Division and Jefferson Barracks Division. There are outpatient clinics in St Clair County in Illinois, St. Louis County, St. Charles County, and Franklin County in Missouri. An outpatient clinic is also planned for Madison County in Illinois with an anticipated activation date of 2025. The John Cochran Division, named after the late Missouri congressman John Joseph Cochran, is located in midtown St. Louis in close proximity to its affiliated medical schools - St. Louis University and Washington University. It has all the medical center's operative surgical capabilities, the ambulatory care unit, and a six-story clinical addition that includes intensive care units, outpatient psychiatry clinics, and expanded laboratory. The Jefferson Barracks Division is a multi-building complex overlooking the Mississippi River in south St. Louis County. It provides primary and specialty outpatient services, continuum of mental health treatment and services, regional spinal cord injury treatment, a community living center with acute rehabilitation, skilled nursing and hospice care, geriatric health care, rehabilitation services, residential substance abuse treatment program, and a rehabilitation domiciliary program for homeless veterans. The VA St. Louis Health Care System provides advanced inpatient and ambulatory care in medicine, surgery, psychiatry, neurology, and rehabilitation, as well as over 65 subspecialty areas, including an interventional cardiac program, gynecological services and breast cancer care, interventional radiology, radiation oncology, and VISN 15's Flagship Whole Health Program.

Following the Customer Facing Leaders and Senior Leaders Planning Retreats, a finalized set of strategic goals and objectives were developed. These four goals and objectives address key strategic Imperatives. Please review the VASTLHCS Strategic Plan closely and let it serve as your primary guide for planning, budgeting, performance management, and alignment across the components of the system.



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Mission Statement:

Offer options to timely, quality services for Veterans through care and respect for one's physical, psychological, and spiritual health.

Vision Statement:

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.

2024-2027 Strategic Goals:

- 1) Recognized as a provider of choice
- 2) Recruit and retain a World Class healthcare team
- 3) Investing in Today, Resourcing the Future
- 4) Advocating for Veterans as a Community Leader



Strategic Goal #1: “Recognized as a provider of choice”

Goal Description: VASTLHCS will be the healthcare organization that all Veterans want to get their care from, and other organizations want to emulate.

Objective 1.1: Increase the number of Veteran Enrollees and Users.

Strategies:

- 1.1.1. Retain existing enrolled Veterans through comprehensive healthcare and exceptional customer service.
- 1.1.2. Recruit eligible Veterans within the catchment area that are enrolled but not active users, or are not already enrolled (including the new PACT Act eligible Veterans) in the VA.
- 1.1.3. Leverage Uber, Veterans Transportation Service (VTS), Disabled American Veterans (DAV) and Special Mode Transportation to improve access for eligible Veteran enrollees.
- 1.1.4. Create an effective framework and process for a centralized Referral Coordination Initiative (RCI) at VASTLHCS. The RCI Team will work with patients to appropriately weigh options of VA or non-VA care delivery with a focus on access to care and superior health care quality. The RCI will also facilitate interfacility referrals with VISN 15 VA Medical Centers.
- 1.1.5. Conduct an expansive campaign to call those Veterans living within the VASTLHCS catchment area, who do not currently utilize services, to invite them to try VA services.

Objective 1.2: Connect Veterans to the Soonest and Best Care.

Strategies:

- 1.2.1. Expand women Veteran services while encouraging more women Veterans to obtain care at the VA. Expand marketing efforts, as well as outreach strategies, specific to women Veteran healthcare offerings.
- 1.2.2. Increase number of veterans enrolled in My Health E Vet/Vet Text.
- 1.2.3. Develop and implement a strategic communication model and expansive marketing campaign for internal and external communications focusing on brand and marketing through social media and other digital platforms.
- 1.2.4. Market VISN 15 VA Connect - virtual care.
- 1.2.5. Understand and adopt VISN platforms and VISN 15 VA Connect for telecommunications to improve the Veteran experience.
- 1.2.6. Educate VVC end users (both veterans and employees) of functionality and problem-solving strategies.
- 1.2.7. Implement Care Coordination and Integrated Case Management (CC&ICM) model.
- 1.2.8 Expand utilization of virtual modalities within VASTLHCS Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs).
- 1.2.9. Continue increasing enrollment in the Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) program.
- 1.2.10. Determine viable options for establishing dialysis at additional sites of care and expand VASTLHCS dialysis services.
- 1.2.11. Offer new services and increase access with Operating Room expansion.



1.2.12. Evaluate all options (redesign, repurpose, leasing, construction) to identify and obtain additional space for clinical expansions.

Objective 1.3: Serve Veterans with Military Environmental Exposures.

Strategies:

1.3.1. Implement the Sergeant First Class (SFC) Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act.

1.3.2. Ensure staff are trained appropriately and that Toxic Exposure Screening is available to all Veterans in a timely manner.

1.3.3. Prepare our healthcare system to treat Veterans affected by military environmental exposures and deliver care compassionately and expediently, utilizing the authorities included in the Act to ensure we hire and retain the best staff possible to treat affected Veterans.

Objective 1.4: Create an aesthetic environment that is welcoming, clean, and inviting.

Strategies:

1.4.1. Provide a clean and welcoming environment that is well maintained.

1.4.2. Develop a plan to review space finishes periodically to include cohesive patient centered design elements and color coordination for easy identification.

1.4.3. Update current infrastructure to optimize patient flow, bed utilization and expand clinic footprint to maximize access.

Objective 1.5: Engage with our Veterans to create a welcoming experience at our care locations.

Strategies:

1.5.1. Central Concierge program to enhance veteran experience & communication options for veterans to use.

1.5.2. Optimize the check-in experience for patients, to include the use of names, guidance on kiosk use, and patient preference.

1.5.3. Develop a wayfinding program that integrates technology via automation that welcomes Veterans and gives directions (for improved wayfinding).

1.5.4. Enhance Veteran appointment letters to have map to clinic; QR code for location of map contact.

1.5.5. Expand transporters to more outpatient locations.

1.5.6. Implement Veteran Experience Tools (Ask Veterans what they want, to make the experience better, i.e. "How can we help you?). Post appointment texts with surveys, to include a QR code for Veteran feedback.

1.5.7. Review, analyze, and trend V-Signals and PATS reports to better understand Veteran input/feedback.

1.5.8. Bring back the Red Coat program or utilize volunteers to escort patients.

1.5.9. Evaluate the options for a robust phone tree, which could include calls to frequently cancelled by patient appointments across all services.

Objective 1.6: Support Veteran's whole health, their caregivers, and survivors.



Strategies:

- 1.6.1. Reestablish New Veteran and caregiver orientation and ongoing availability.
- 1.6.2. Open Virtual Education Resource Center at JB and a future Education Resource Center for JC.
- 1.6.3. Improve access to information and employee education on resources and updates available to help veterans and caregivers.
- 1.6.4. Analyze the current capabilities (through veteran & employee feedback) and resource Veteran Transportation Service (VTS) to meet the need of the Veteran population.
- 1.6.5. Continue patient centered care journey activities through Whole Health programs (Well-being, Whole Health Clinical Care, Pathway, Employee Whole Health).

Objective 1.7: Accelerate VASTLHCS' journey to a High Reliability Organization (HRO).

Strategies:

- 1.7.1. Implement local HRO efforts to include leadership rounding, safety forums, visual management systems, and safety huddles to improve culture and operations to achieve zero harm.
- 1.7.2. HRO Baseline Training - Standard training is provided in HRO concepts, Just Culture and safety behaviors for all new employees.
- 1.7.3. Team Training - Workgroup or unit-level teams learn communication tools toward error management and routinely apply these tools to continuously improve unit-based processes.
- 1.7.4. Continuous Process Improvement - Front line teams, with support from Executive Leadership, lead improvement projects focused on safety and reliability.
- 1.7.5. Assessments and Planning - Utilize HRO Swimlanes to assess maturity, strengths and gaps, and use this information to identify strategies for HRO improvement and sustainment.
- 1.7.6. Experiential Learning - Strong safety and improvement practices are spread across the enterprise, creating and leveraging opportunities to learn from the experiences of colleagues.
- 1.7.7. Complete a project to improve Joint Patient Safety Reporting (JPSR) feedback, and ensure the appropriate closeout loop is in place to communicate results to all necessary parties.

Objective 1.8: Provide exceptional, high-quality healthcare to all Veterans, achieving positive outcomes across all patient populations.

Strategies:

- 1.8.1. Emphasize the delivery of benefits, care and services to underserved, marginalized and at-risk Veterans to prevent suicide and homelessness, improve their economic security, health, resiliency and quality of life.
- 1.8.2. Enhance understanding of Veteran needs and eliminate disparities and barriers to health, improve service delivery and opportunities to enhance Veterans' outcomes, experiences and quality of life.



Strategic Goal # 2: “Recruit and retain a World Class healthcare team”

Goal Description: The VASTLHCS will foster a culture of a Learning Organization to engage and develop employees in a supportive and innovative environment. Every employee on the VASTLHCS team is key to providing World Class Care to our Veterans. Emphasis will be placed on developing a world class healthcare team through recruitment, retention, engagement, and employee well-being activities.

Objective 2.1: Hire Faster by creating a competitive hiring and on-boarding timeline, through efficient processes, active communication, creative recruitment strategies, and real time monitoring of productivity.

Strategies:

- 2.1.1. Execute and develop the Workforce Management Committee to develop tactics to address Objective 2.1.
- 2.1.2. Workforce Management Committee, in collaboration with Police, Credentialing & Privileging, Human Resources, and Employee Health, establishes a rapid improvement project to onboard employees faster.
- 2.1.3. Human Resources to deliver current recruitment activity (from vacancy to having a new person encumbering the position) reports to Services monthly.
- 2.1.4. Maximize recruitment and retention strategies and flexibilities.
- 2.1.5. Utilizing VHA Guidebook “Workforce of the Future” service chiefs will develop a plan for its workforce, maximizing telework opportunities. Move all telework agreement to MSS.
- 2.1.6. Establish a candidate navigator – for the hiring/recruitment process (non-HR staff). *Candidate Care Model*
- 2.1.7. Maximize opportunities in PACT Act for compensation. Execute recurring onboarding/hiring events. Fully utilize recruitment and retention incentives.

Objective 2.2: Develop a comprehensive marketing plan to attract high quality candidates to the VA St Louis Healthcare System.

Strategies:

- 2.2.1. Understand the VA competitive advantage within the job market. Develop a VA recruitment strategy to leverage those advantages.
- 2.2.2. Leverage all VA St. Louis outreach efforts for sharing employment information and opportunities.

Objective 2.3: Develop a comprehensive System wide employee reward and recognition program.

Strategies:

- 2.3.1. Establish a quarterly employee recognition award ceremony through the creation of the Rewards & Recognition Committee. Integrate an active Awards and Recognition system to include emphasis on productivity, patient feedback, report of excellence (e.g. CREW & Civility Stars).

Objective 2.4: Utilize data to understand drivers for satisfaction, engagement, and burnout (Exit Surveys,



Stay Interviews, All Employee Survey (AES)).

Strategies:

2.4.1. Develop an electronic exit survey process, to better understand why individuals are leaving the VA St. Louis. This information will be analyzed and trended to look for areas for improvement.

2.4.2. Implement the Stay in VA program to conduct stay interviews.

2.4.3. Analyze key AES drivers (Engagement, burnout, and best places to work) and implement department level AES action plans.

Objective 2.5: Develop a workforce plan that incorporates critical organizational needs, gaps, and opportunities.

Strategies:

2.5.1. Enhance the current VA St. Louis workforce planning process and develop strategies to address hard to recruit positions.

Objective 2.6: Invite opportunities for staff to have a voice, through idea sharing, input into decision-making, transparency, and shared governance.

Strategies:

2.6.1. Institute employee townhalls and other forums to provide staff with timely information and operational updates.

2.6.2. Develop ways to obtain direct patient care staff participation and feedback.

2.6.3. Tailored after-action reports for those items impacting employee or patient safety (decision making & transparency to ensure closed loop communications).

2.6.4. Share & improve pertinent data literacy; tailored to the correct audience.

2.6.5. Create a checklist with an integrated project team approach, to promote shared governance through inclusion of technical experts.

Objective 2.7: Develop career pathways through deployment of continuous training, mentorship, and deployment of individual development plans.

Strategies:

2.7.1. Develop career pathways – tiered for staff role.

2.7.2. Develop appropriate and adequate resources for managers and supervisors to support individual development plans for staff.

Objective 2.8: Enhance employee wellbeing by promoting a healthy work environment that improves satisfaction and work-life balance.



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Strategies:

- 2.8.1. Promote employee whole health by sharing options for integrating whole health opportunities during meetings (communication from leaders/managers to team).
- 2.8.2. Implement the Reduce Employee Burnout and Optimize Organizational Thriving (REBOOT) strategies across the organization.

Objective 2.9: Create an environment that promotes comfort, productivity, and safety.

Strategies:

- 2.9.1. Modernize our approach to standardizing ergonomics (e.g., sit/stand workstations).
- 2.9.2. Increase outdoor eating areas.
- 2.9.3. Support participation for employees to attend events and activities that support employee engagement (e.g., VA 2K, Staff picnics, Heart walk, and Special Emphasis Programs)



Strategic Goal #3: “Investing in Today, Resourcing the Future”

Goal Description: The VASTLHCS is a high reliability organization that maximizes innovation, technology, infrastructure, teamwork, and resources to deliver world class care to Veterans.

Objective 3.1: Optimization of VHA resources.

Strategies:

- 3.1.1. Improve access for both established and new patients by optimizing bookability.
- 3.1.2. Expand Education opportunities to increase resources associated with these programs.
- 3.1.3. Expand Research opportunities to increase resources associated with these programs.
- 3.1.4. Improve and enhance our ability to respond to Rural Health and other special purpose grants.
- 3.1.5. Increase and sustain Insurance Capture Buffer (ICB) performance at greater than 95%.
- 3.1.6. Improve access by increasing support for all telehealth modalities.
- 3.1.7. Improve timeliness for processing community care consults.
- 3.1.8 Stand up a Centralized Bed Flow Team to improve patient flow, use VASTLHCS beds more efficiently, and place a larger focus on providing inpatient care at VASTLHCS.

Objective 3.2: Enhance clinical and administrative operations and facility, to improve efficiency and scheduling practices which would improve access to services for patients.

Strategies:

- 3.2.1. Modernize facility governance structure to a standardized structure of Executive Board, Boards, Councils and Committees.
- 3.2.2. Increase value of each governance board, council or committee by have a clear charter and work for each, standardized work and reports and shorted times. 60 min meeting will end at 50 min and 30 min will end at 25 mins.
- 3.2.3. Engage, empower, and train Customer Facing Leaders and Section Chiefs to engage with the tasks that we need the Services to do outside of clinical care.
- 3.2.4. Utilize innovative and cutting-edge practices and applications/technology to provide world class care.
- 3.2.5. Improve access to Services by improving clinic functions through grid management, increasing clinic slot utilization and reducing no-shows. Evaluate the viability of walk-in clinics at all VASTLHCS sites of care and extend face-to-face schedules through increased weekend and evening clinics.

Objective 3.3: Optimizing Financial Resources.

Strategies:

- 3.3.1. Capture complete patient care workload and optimize VERA reimbursement (improve productivity and efficiency, closure of encounters timely, improve coding accuracy, and grid optimization).
- 3.3.2. Promote submission of new projects through the REB to strategically plan for new and existing operational needs utilizing business plans to determine make-buy decisions.



- 3.3.3. Increase Patient Weighted Work (PWW). Increasing visits, RVUs, PRPs, and uniques will increase PWW.
- 3.3.4. Expand cost avoidance initiatives in Pharmacy, Supply Chain, Oncology, inventory management, clinical contract efficiency and utilization
- 3.3.5. Secure external funding for positions through grants and special purpose funds

Objective 3.4: Ensure Data Integrity.

Strategies:

- 3.4.1. Coordinate with VISN 15 Human Resources to ensure HR Smart is up to date, accurate, and the system of record.
- 3.4.2. Coordinate with Managerial Cost Accounting (MCA) and the VASTLHCS Services to ensure a process is in place to cyclically ensure accuracy of Labor Mapping.
- 3.4.3. Execute a system or process that cyclically ensures optimization and efficiency of clinic profiles.

Objective 3.5: Proactively plan and prepare for an evolution in the Electronic Health Record (EHR).

Strategies:

- 3.5.1. Evaluate readiness through workflow and infrastructure assessment, in order to prepare for implementation of the new EHR.
- 3.5.2. Perform a staffing analysis to determine the healthcare system's readiness for EHR deployment and support. Hire additional staff as necessary to address any staffing needs required due to new workflows or processes.
- 3.5.3. Ensure training is developed, and staffed appropriately, supporting successful EHR deployment and sustainment throughout the healthcare system.

Objective 3.6: Design and implement efficient standard business and leadership practices.

Strategies:

- 3.6.1. Develop a training curriculum for leaders in business and administrative processes and deploy the training facility-wide, to include recurring refresher training.
- 3.6.2. Develop a training curriculum for leadership development and deploy the training facility-wide, to include recurring refresher training.
- 3.6.3. Use data, purposefully for decision making with the development of Service specific and person specific dashboards and standard reports.



Strategic Goal #4: “Advocating for Veterans as a Community Leader”

Goal Description: The VASTLHCS will be recognized as a community leader and advocate via enhanced community outreach and engagement through strategic partnerships with Veterans, community partners, and government agencies.

Objective 4.1: Earn and sustain Veteran trust.

Strategies:

- 4.1.1. Increase opportunities to collaborate with colleges, Veteran Service Organizations, and/or other community groups to foster enrollment and utilization of VHA services.
- 4.1.2. Develop and grow a leadership morning greeting program, to include participation from community partners.
- 4.1.3. Develop and expand social media presence and utilization to provide consistent and timely information.
- 4.1.4. Develop and implement a “How Can I Help You” campaign, emphasizing world-class customer service.
- 4.1.5. Improve patient satisfaction to include customer service training for all front-line staff.

Objective 4.2: Synergize with our community partners to maximize resources available for Veterans.

Strategies:

- 4.2.1. Define a list of community partners to enhance relationships to maximize available resources for Veterans.
- 4.2.2. Develop a communication plan with our external stakeholders in the community.
- 4.2.3. Explore partner/stakeholder benefits through an expanded relationship.
- 4.2.4. Engage non-user Veterans through community partners.

Objective 4.3: Cultivating new connections with community partners.

Strategies:

- 4.3.1. Create a Community Partnership Office with the appropriate personnel and resources.
- 4.3.2. Develop recruitment programs with colleges/high schools, trade schools, etc. to include career fairs.

Objective 4.4: Serve as a leader in healthcare preparedness through participation in emergency management.

Strategies:

- 4.4.1. Facilitate increased staff involvement and training with emergency management activities.



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Objective 4.5: Promote Veterans' personal and population health by sharing VA Research and Innovation projects widely with the Veterans we serve and with our community partners.

Strategies:

4.5.1. Present research updates or briefs at town halls and actively seek media engagement opportunities.