



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Fact Sheet

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

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Progress Made at the Phoenix VA Health Care System March 2015

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is making progress to ensure Veterans receive the care they need, when they need it, and where they want to be seen. While more work remains, VA has expanded access to care for Veterans in Phoenix and across the country, both in VA facilities and in their communities since May 2014.

Increasing Access to Care:

- From May to July 2014, VA reached out to more than 4,000 Veterans in Phoenix to coordinate the acceleration of their care, including all Veterans in Phoenix identified as being on unofficial lists by the Inspector General or the facility Electronic Waiting List.
- Between May 1, 2014, and January 31, 2015, over 30,000 authorizations for non-VA care were provided to Veterans enrolled at the Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS), an 80 percent increase in the number of authorizations over the same time period one year earlier.
- From May 1, 2014, to January 31, 2015, PVAHCS completed more than 476,000 Veteran appointments, a 19 percent increase in the number of completed appointments over the same time period in the previous year. During that time:
 - Primary care completed appointments increased by 9 percent over the same time period in the previous year.
 - Mental health completed appointments increased by 16 percent over the same time period in the previous year.
 - Specialty care completed appointments increased by 16 percent over the same time period in the previous year.
- The Phoenix VA Health Care System completed 94 percent of appointments from October 2014 to January 2015 within 30 days of the date the Veteran preferred.

Increasing Staffing Levels:

- In May 2014, the Veterans Health Administration surged resources to support the hiring of additional staff at the Phoenix VA.
 - VHA utilized 33 emergency medical personnel supplementing existing staff until vacancies can be filled.
 - VA deployed three mobile medical units to Phoenix last summer to serve hundreds of Veterans waiting for care.

- Since June 2014, the Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS) has hired 305 net new full time employees, as of January 2015, toward the 800 positions needed over the next two years.
 - The Phoenix VA Health Care System is increasing primary care staffing of physicians, nurses and clerks by 53 additional full-time employees.
 - PVAHCS is authorized to hire 80 full-time employees as a result of the Veterans Access Choice and Accountability Act. As of January 20, 2015, 50 employees have been hired.

Improving the Veteran Experience in Phoenix:

- The Phoenix VA Health Care System will open new community based outpatient clinics in northeast and southwest Phoenix in 2015.
- Construction on a new emergency department expansion began in January 2015.
- Construction on a dental clinic is completing its design phase and expected to be complete within a year.
- Clinical expansion of Medical Surgery areas are currently in the design stage.
- PVAHCS is expanding the Homeless Community Referral and Resource Center by 5,000 additional square feet to serve more homeless Veterans.
- Construction began on a new parking structure in January with three parking leases in progress. Valet parking for Veterans began in November 2014.
- The facility is restructuring phone systems and staffing levels to improve the patient call center.

Ensuring Accountability:

- In November 2014, the former Medical Center Director was terminated by VA. To ensure continuity of care for Veterans and leadership for VA employees, Glenn Grippen, retired Network Director, was appointed as interim Phoenix VA Healthcare System director.
- VA achieved certification from the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) under OSC's 2302(c) Whistleblower Protection Certification Program.
- VA coordinated with OSC to successfully resolve whistleblower retaliation complaints filed by three employees of the VA Phoenix Health Care System.
- Since June 2014, 91 percent of our medical facilities have new leaders or leadership teams. This includes both newly placed, permanent leaders and those acting in a detailed role.
- VA's Office of Accountability Review has an administrative investigation ongoing to assess leadership accountability for the issues identified in the final OIG report, for alleged whistleblower retaliation, and for other alleged leadership failures affecting the Phoenix VA Healthcare System.