

In This Issue:

In This Issue:

Robert A. McDonald named Secretary of Veterans Affairs.....

VA Continues to Accelerate Access to Veterans Health Care.....

Network Strategic Goals - Priority Areas

Network Construction Update.....

National Veterans TEE Tournament – Volunteers Needed

Calendar of Events – August 2014

VA Continues to Accelerate Access to Veterans Health Care

The Department of Veterans Affairs has taken significant steps to improve Veterans' access to quality health care. In keeping with the commitment to improve transparency in the department's processes, VA regularly releases facility-level patient [access data](#).

As of July 1, 2014, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has reached out to more than 160,000 Veterans to get them off wait lists and into clinics. VHA has also made over 543,000 referrals for Veterans to received care in the private sector – 91,000 more than in the comparable period a year ago. Additionally, VA has reduced the New Enrollee Appointment Report (NEAR) from its peak of 46,000 on June 1, 2014 to 2,000 and the Electronic Waiting (EWL) by 17,000 Veterans on since May 15, 2014. In VISN 23 the EWL was shortened from 1,827 to 26.

Twice Monthly Updates

VA is posting regular [data updates](#) showing progress on its efforts to accelerate access. These updates are posted at the middle and end of each month. For more information go to: <http://www.va.gov/health/access-audit.asp>

Robert A. McDonald named Secretary of Veterans Affairs

Robert A. McDonald was nominated by President Obama to serve as the eighth Secretary of Veterans Affairs and was confirmed by the United States Senate on July 29, 2014.

Prior to joining VA, Secretary McDonald was Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer of The Procter & Gamble Company (P&G). Under his leadership, P&G significantly recalibrated its product portfolio; expanded its marketing footprint, adding nearly one billion people to its global customer base; and grew the firm's organic sales by an average of three percent per year. This growth was reflected in P&G's stock price, which rose from \$51.10 the day he became CEO to \$81.64 on the day his last quarterly results were announced—a 60 percent increase from 2009 to 2013.

An Army veteran, Mr. McDonald served with the 82nd Airborne Division; completed Jungle, Arctic, and Desert Warfare training; and earned the Ranger tab, the Expert Infantryman Badge, and Senior Parachutist wings. Upon leaving military service, Captain McDonald was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal.

Secretary McDonald graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point in the top 2 percent of the Class of 1975. He served as the Brigade Adjutant for the Corps of Cadets and was recognized by The Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturing, and Commerce as the most distinguished graduate in academics, leadership, and physical education. He earned an MBA from the University of Utah in 1978.

Read more at <http://www.va.gov/opa/bios/secretary.asp>

Network Strategic Goals - Priority Areas

Currently, the Department of Veterans Affairs is in the midst of its most serious crisis in more than a generation. Over the course of the past few months VA's faults have been well documented, and the call for VA reform provides all of us with the greatest of opportunities. We must seize this moment with enthusiasm and commitment. The fact that we care deeply about every Veteran fuels our desire to work even harder to re-establish Veterans trust, and re-affirm our core values of **Integrity, Compassion, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence (I-CARE)**.

Network Strategic Goals

- Provide Veterans Personalized, Proactive, Patient-Driven Health Care
- Achieve Measurable Improvements in Health Outcomes
- Align Resources to Deliver Sustained Value to Veterans

We achieve these goals by prioritizing and delivering high quality, safe, cost-effective care that exceeds Veterans expectations in:

- Delivering personalized, proactive, patient-centered care
- Providing exemplary Mental Health services
- Engaging Veterans in care with Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACT)
- Expanding Tele-health, e-Health, and e-Connectivity
- Eliminating Veterans Homelessness
- Improving the Health and well-being of Women Veterans
- Improving and expanding Access to Care
- Expanding Rural Health care
- Effectively treating pain and decreasing opioid prescribing
- Coordinating Non VA Medical Care when needed
- Improving the Contracting process
- Effectively managing budget and costs, and creating value in services delivered

We are also committed to creating environments where opinions of those doing the hard, day to day work of caring for Veterans are valued and incorporated into business practices and processes by:

- Working with front line staff to seek out innovative improvement ideas
- Meeting with Veteran Service Officers and other stakeholders on a monthly basis to gain feedback from those we serve
- Surveying Veterans after their outpatient visit or hospitalization to learn from their experience and determine if we have met their expectations
- Taking action to prevent Veterans from waiting for care by:
 - Extending clinic hours during evenings and weekends
 - Using telephone contacts and consults
 - Increasing the use of Telehealth
 - Increasing the use of secure messaging
 - Increasing the use of non-VA care when needed.

August 2014

VA Midwest
Health Care Network
Honoring Service. Empowering Health.

NETWORK UPDATE

www.visn23.va.gov

Network Construction Update

The Network is committed to upgrading our medical care infrastructure in order to enhance and improve the delivery of high quality health care services. To that end, we made significant financial commitments in 2013 and continue to invest in 2014 NRM (non-recurring maintenance) projects.

In Fiscal Year 2013, VA Central Office (VACO) allocated NRM funding to the Network in the amount of \$32.8M. Network leadership added an additional \$50.5M from the Network's budget, bringing total funding for NRM projects in 2013 to \$83.3M. In FY 14, the Network received an NRM funding allocation of \$44.6M from VACO with a supplemental budget of \$4.2M, and Network leaders plan to add another \$8.8M from the Network's budget, bringing the total funding for NRM projects in FY2014 to \$58M.

The investment in capital improvements is necessary to maintain an environment of high quality care and excellence. At the center of all improvements are patient-centered principles with an emphasis on efficient delivery of care in single treatment areas, as opposed to patient movement to multiple locations and/or buildings. All delivery concepts are intended to provide access to Veterans as close to their homes as possible through the use of CBOCs and Tele-health programs. Special attention is being paid to enhance patient privacy, especially for Women Veterans; expanding capacity in outpatient mental health and other areas of growth such as dental, audiology and various specialty services. The Network is also focused on supporting projects using the "neighborhood" concept in our Community Living Centers (CLCs).

In addition to improving our health facilities through capital improvements, we continue to be committed to expanding non-capital options wherever possible. To that end, Home Based Primary Care (HBPC), tele-health, rural health, and homeless programming is strongly supported and continues to grow. The use of non-capital solutions, along with increased efficiencies and utilization of current facilities will provide increased access to, and better utilization of, our services without creating additional strain on our current infrastructure

National Veterans TEE Tournament – September 8-11 – Volunteers Needed

This year's National Veterans TEE (training, exposure, experience) Tournament will be held September 8-11, 2014 in the Iowa City area. More than 200 Veterans are expected to participate. Volunteers are still needed throughout the week. Golfing locations are held at Lake McBride, Quail Creek, Blue Top, Iowa City Elks, and West Liberty golf courses. If you or someone you know is willing to spend a few hours or want to help out throughout the week, contact Kirk Sickels, Director National Veterans Tee Tournament at 319-358-5963 or email him at kirt.sickels@va.gov

For More information, call the Network Office at (651) 405-5600 or
Log on at www.visn23.va.gov or email sharyl.schaepe@va.gov

Calendar of Events – August 2014

- Aug 1** **Sioux Falls** [Tobacco Cessation](#) 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CST) Sioux Fall VA, Front Lobby, Room F-07
- Aug 2** **St. Cloud** [Military Day at Wright County Fair](#) 10:00 AM - 10:00 PM (CST) 1010 1st Street, Howard Lake, MN
- Aug 4** **St. Cloud** [Veterans Affairs Radio Show](#) KNSI AM 1450/FM 103.3
- Aug 4** **Nebraska** [VA Food Pantry](#) 10:00 AM - 11:30 AM (CST) VA Clinic, Bldg 40, Room 105, 600 S. 70th St, Lincoln
- Aug 4** **Nebraska** [Veterans Group Exercise Class](#) 5:15 PM - 6:15 PM (CST) Omaha VA Medical Center 3rd Floor TV Studio, 4101 Woolworth Ave, Omaha, Nebraska
- Aug 5** **Fargo** [Walking or Chair Exercises](#) 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM (CST) Basement - Room BD-22
- Aug 5** **Minneapolis** [Homeless Veteran Stand Down](#) 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM (CST) Ft Snelling Boy Scout Base Camp
- Aug 5** **St. Cloud** [Veterans' Law Clinic](#) 12:00 PM - 2:00 PM (CST) St. Cloud VA Medical Center, Building 28, Rm 126
- Aug 5** **St. Cloud** [Free Summer Golf Instruction \(Women's Session I\)](#) 4:30 PM - 6:30 PM (CST) Building 96, St. Cloud VA Health Care System
- Aug 6** **St. Cloud** [Kandiyohi County Fair](#) 11:00 AM - 10:00 PM (CST) 907 7th Street NW, Willmar, MN
- Aug 6** **Minneapolis** [Homeless Veteran Stand Down](#) 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM (CST) Ft Snelling Boy Scout Base Camp
- Aug 6** **Nebraska** [Omaha VA Pantry for Veterans](#) 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (CST) 825 Dorcas St, Ste. 200, Omaha, NE
- Aug 6** **Nebraska** [Veteran Group Exercise Class](#) 5:15 PM - 6:15 PM (CST) Omaha VA Medical Center 3rd Floor TV Studio, 4101 Woolworth Ave, Omaha, Nebraska
- Aug 6** **Sioux Falls** [Veterans & Spouses Job Fair](#) 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM (CST) Augustana College Elmen Center
- Aug 7** **St. Cloud** [Mobile Vet Center](#) 11:00 AM - 6:00 PM (CST) County parking lot across from Renville County Courthouse, 500 E. DePue, Olivia, MN
- Aug 7** **St. Cloud** [Free Summer Golf Instruction \(Men's Session I\)](#) 4:30 PM - 6:30 PM (CST) Building 96, St. Cloud VAHCS
- Aug 7** **St. Cloud** [Stroll for Epilepsy](#) 5:00 PM - 5:00 PM (CST) Lake George Municipal Complex, Eastman Park, 1101 7th Street South, St. Cloud, MN
- Aug 8** **Sioux Falls** [Tobacco Cessation](#) 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CST) Sioux Fall VA, Front Lobby, Room F-07
- Aug 10** **St. Cloud** [Military Day at Benton County Fair](#) 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM (CST) 1410 3rd Ave. South, Sauk Rapids
- Aug 12** **St. Cloud** [VA Caregiver Support Line](#) 9:00 AM - 10:00 AM (CST) From your home phone
- Aug 11** **Nebraska** [Veterans Group Exercise Class](#) 5:15 PM - 6:15 PM (CST) Omaha VA Medical Center 3rd Floor TV Studio, 4101 Woolworth Ave, Omaha, Nebraska
- Aug 12** **Fargo** [Walking or Chair Exercises](#) 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM (CST) Basement - Room BD-22
- Aug 12** **Black Hills** [Finding Your Voice: Self Advocacy in Medical Settings](#) 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM (MST) Telephone Education Group
- Aug 13** **Nebraska** [Veteran Group Exercise Class](#) 5:15 PM - 6:15 PM (CST) Omaha VA Medical Center 3rd Floor TV Studio, 4101 Woolworth Ave, Omaha, Nebraska
- Aug 15** **Nebraska** [VA CoffeHaus](#) 600 S. 70th St, Lincoln, Neb (canteen on lower level)
- Aug 15** **Sioux Falls** [Tobacco Cessation](#) 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CST) Sioux Fall VA, Front Lobby, Room F-07
- Aug 16** **Sioux Falls** [Service of Remembrance](#) 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM (CST) Front Lobby of VA
- Aug 18** **Nebraska** [Veterans Group Exercise Class](#) 5:15 PM - 6:15 PM (CST) Omaha VA Medical Center 3rd Floor TV Studio, 4101 Woolworth Ave, Omaha, Nebraska
- Aug 18** **Nebraska** [Welcome Home Event](#) 7:05 PM - 10:00 PM (CST) Werner Park, off of Nebraska Highway 370 near about 120th Street
- Aug 19** **Fargo** [Walking or Chair Exercises](#) 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM (CST) Basement - Room BD-22
- Aug 20** **Black Hills** [Finding Your Voice: Self Advocacy in Medical Settings](#) 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM (MST) Telephone Education Group
- Aug 20** **Sioux Falls** [Annual VA Show & Shine - Auto Show](#) 5:30 PM - 8:00 PM (CST) Visitor Parking Lot of Sioux VA
- Aug 21** **Black Hills** [Brown Bag Lunch Educational Program](#) 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM (MST) Fort Meade Building 145, Room 239; Hot Springs Building 53, Room 102; Rapid City CBOC Room 205 and Pierre CBOC
- Aug 22** **Sioux Falls** [Tobacco Cessation](#) 2:00 PM - 3:00 PM (CST) Sioux Fall VA, Front Lobby, Room F-07
- Aug 22** **Sioux Falls** [Stand Down](#) Sioux City
- Aug 26** **Fargo** [Walking or Chair Exercises](#) 9:00 AM - 9:30 AM (CST) Basement - Room BD-22
- Aug 27** **Black Hills** [Finding Your Voice: Self Advocacy in Medical Settings](#) 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM (MST) Telephone

* Dates and times are correct as of July 30, 2014. Information may have changed, please check local VA Health Care System websites for the latest information.