

VA Black Hills Health Care System Update
October 2016

VA Black Hills Health Care System is pleased to announce a very successful Joint Commission triennial survey resulting in full accreditation under their strict standards. Our entire staff demonstrated their outstanding skills and knowledge during the Joint Commission's recent visit. We were also notified of our 5 Star Quality designation for both campuses on the Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning report for FY16 Q3. Both measures reflect the efforts of our workforce to provide only the highest quality care and service to Veterans.

We are involved in one of the most significant transformations in VA's history. Under the direction of Secretary Bob McDonald we are implementing the priorities and strategies outlined in the MyVA program. The VA BHHCS leadership team has identified our key priorities that closely align with the Secretary's plan which include improving the Veteran experience, increasing employee engagement, continuous process improvement, achieving shared support services, and expanding strategic partnerships. We have reaffirmed our commitment to providing an outstanding experience each time Veterans access our services and striving to meet the Secretary's goal of same day access in Primary Care and Mental Health by the end of this year. Access to care is one of Secretary McDonald's top priorities. We have been positioning our team to achieve this goal through clinical process improvement initiatives, hiring qualified providers, and reducing the number of missed appointments. We are seeing improvements in access in primary care and mental health but continue to struggle in specialty care.

The C&P exam process is one of the services VA has looked at to improve efficiency. Typically, it is the first experience Veterans have with VA and sets a lasting impression. As you know contracts were awarded to perform exams outside of VHA; however, the number of exams already conducted by our providers will not change. We're still waiting for additional guidance. Any changes to our processes or impacts to our Veterans will be communicated to you, our VSOs and our Veterans.

Our Care in the Community (CITC) team has expanded to better meet the needs of our Veterans using the Choice Program. Dr. Neil Goodloe has joined us as the Section Chief for CITC. Additional staff is on board to serve as our Choice Champion and Lead Tech. A key focus of the team is to meet with providers and finalize the process for payment agreements under the Choice Program. The benefit of additional staff includes daily reviews of returned consults from Healthnet to get Veterans their care as soon as possible. Any Veteran experiencing difficulty with Veterans Choice should contact one of our Choice Champions for assistance by calling 605-347-2511 ext 6846 or 605-745-2000 ext 2253.

Jo-Ann Ginsberg was appointed Director of the Marion VA Medical Center. We are grateful for her leadership as our Associate Director for Patient Care Services over the last five years and wish her well in her new role. While we are in the process of recruiting, Jennifer Hill, RN MSN, NE-BC has been detailed to VA BHHCS. Two new PACT providers have joined the Rapid City

CBOC and we continue to recruit for physicians to address critical staffing shortages, particularly in the areas of primary care/PACT and in-patient care in Hot Springs.

The final Environmental Impact Statement is nearly complete and is expected to be available to the public in November. The final publication will be followed by a Record of Decision giving the Secretary of Veterans Affairs the necessary information to make a decision. The reconfiguration of our health care system is a critically important discussion. This has been a long process for our Veterans and our employees and we look forward to a decision on our future.

There have been some changes in the way Veterans will receive their care in Northwest South Dakota. On August 25th, the solicitation to provide primary care in that area through a Community Based Outpatient Clinic closed with no bids. We communicated with Veterans the options of reassigning their primary care to Fort Meade or Pierre or scheduling future appointments under the Veterans Choice Program. We are planning a Town Hall by the end of October to meet with Veterans to address any questions or concerns regarding the change. Further south, Sterling Medical was awarded the contract to operate a CBOC in Scottsbluff and began providing those services on October 3rd in a new clinic location. The new clinic offers spacious exam rooms, waiting rooms, and administrative areas. Veterans in the panhandle of NE will see the same Patient Aligned Care Team and office staff they are used to seeing.

VA Black Hills is a proud commemorative partner in the 50th Anniversary Vietnam War remembrance. Director Sandra Horsman presented commemorative pins at the Honoring our Patriots Night in Rapid City and spoke during the program for the 10th Anniversary of the Vietnam Memorial Wall in Pierre.

On November 10, there will be a Homeless Veteran Stand Down at the Rapid City Civic Center. Several community partners will host resource and information booths in support of our efforts to end the destructive impact of homelessness among Veterans.

Flu vaccines are now being offered at our points of care. There is a continued partnership with Walgreens for enrolled Veterans to access free flu shots. A VA ID must be presented to ensure accurate records transfer. We encourage Veterans to take this important step to stay well and prevent the flu this season.

As always, we are available and open to any questions or concerns you have regarding Veteran health care throughout the VA BHHCS area of service.