VA New England Healthcare System

FALL 2014

VETERANS' healthy living

VISN 1 Initiatives Increase Access to Quality Care

VA HEALTH CARE | Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

Dear Veterans

A Message from the Network Director

Michael F. Mayo-Smith, M.D., M.P.H.
Network Director

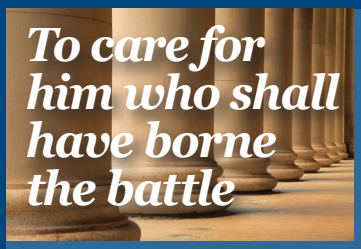
As the seasons change and summer turns to fall, the cooler temperatures and changing of the leaves mark the noticeable advance. As you visit the facilities or CBOCs across the network, you may notice the advances taking place at VA, too, so that we can serve you better.

On page 3, you will read about the recent appointment of Christine Croteau as the Director of Edith Nourse Rogers Veterans Affairs Memorial Medical Center. With more than 15 years' experience in executive healthcare, Croteau has proven skills that are "valuable assets for the facility."

On pages 4, 5, 6 and 7, you can see a few of the many initiatives taking place in VISN 1 that are increasing access to quality care for the Veterans we serve.

Thank you for your service. Now let us serve you!

Michael F. Mayo Smith, M.D., M.P.H.
Network Director



The words spoken by President Abraham Lincoln during his second inauguration in 1865, which are the motto of VA, were echoed by President Barack Obama on August 7, 2014, shortly before he signed the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act. "As a country, we have a sacred obligation to serve you as well as you served us an obligation that doesn t end with your tour of duty," said President Obama.

What is the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014? To meet the health care needs of our Veterans, this act, with a total estimated cost of $16.1 billion, is meant to increase access to quality care in a timely manner. Increasing access to care will be accomplished by a variety of tactics, including staff augmentation, the addition of more Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs), and expanded hours of operation.

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On the Cover:

VISN 1 initiatives increase access to quality care.

My healthevet
www.myhealth.va.gov

VA Mission:

Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

VA New England Healthcare System Announces Appointment of Bedford VA Medical Center Director

Croteau Brings Leadership, Proven Experience

The Department of Veterans Affairs is pleased to announce the appointment of Christine Croteau as the Director of Edith Nourse Rogers Veterans Affairs Memorial Medical Center, Bedford, Massachusetts (Bedford VAMC). Croteau will oversee a comprehensive healthcare system with an operating budget of $180 million that provides care to approximately 18,500 unique Veterans from eastern Massachusetts.

"We are pleased to appoint Ms. Croteau as the Director of Bedford VA Medical Center," said Dr. Michael Mayo-Smith, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 1 Director. "Her sound leadership qualities and proven experience will continue to be valuable assets for the facility, the employees and volunteers, and the Veterans we are honored to serve. I anticipate a smooth transition to this role, as she previously served as the Acting Director during a period in which Edith Nourse Rogers was ranked as the best Medical Center in VISN 1 in Population Health (Quality) and Patient Experience as determined by Veterans."

Croteau's more than 15 years of executive health care experience in progressively challenging leadership positions includes Business Office Manager and Assistant Director, VA Boston Healthcare System, Acting Medical Center Director, Bedford VAMC, and Deputy Network Director, VISN 1.

Croteau received her Bachelor of Science in Medical Technology from Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, formerly North Adams State College, and received her Master of Business Administration from Providence College. She is a graduate of the Federal Interagency Institute for Healthcare Executives and the VHA Healthcare Leadership Institute, and a member of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

How is **Bedford VAMC** increasing access to quality care for Veterans?

Here are examples of the outstanding work being conducted at Bedford VAMC:

Additional staffing: Bedford had a part-time podiatrist who was in the process of being replaced, and we supplemented hours to make this a full-time position.

Consult management: Bedford VAMC developed an Access and Consult Team that meets weekly to focus on review of the volume of new and pending referrals to clinics and to work closely with services to ensure compliance with the consult management business rules.

Increased auditing and review of scheduling practices: The Bedford Director personally met with all facility schedulers, observed scheduling practices, and listened to the feedback provided from staff.

Increasing clinical space and capacity: Bedford is reviewing opportunities to bring enhanced specialty services on site through our partnerships with sister facilities.

Outreach: Outreach events have been enhanced to offer on-the-spot enrollment and the initial Veteran appointment.

How is **VA Central Western Massachusetts Healthcare System (VA CWM HCS)** increasing access to quality care for Veterans?

Here are examples of the outstanding work being conducted at VA CWM HCS:

- Leadership approved 6.5 positions to improve Specialty Care capacity.
- The contracted urologist added extra clinic days to assist in backlog.
- A new scheduled hire for Primary Care has a cardiology background and will assist in addressing the cardiology backlog.
- The endocrinologist added Clinical Video TeleHealth practices to increase capacity, and increased Primary Care staff will permit the endocrinologist to shift her Primary Care patients, adding capacity to the Endocrine Clinic.
- In addition to the Specialty Care hiring authorities, 16 positions have been approved across the healthcare system.
- Senior management continues to meet weekly with involved staff, reviewing all clinics with wait times greater than 30 days.
- Fee services have been authorized where appropriate and where capacity in the community exceeds internal (VA) capacity.

How is **VA Maine Healthcare System** increasing access to quality care for Veterans?

Here are examples of the outstanding work being conducted at VA Maine Healthcare System:

- Specialty Care will improve once providers have been replaced. VA Maine Healthcare System is ensuring Veteran care needs are being met through the utilization of Non-VA Care referrals. Community access is beyond 30 days in many of these same specialties. Veteran preference is negotiated, as are appointment dates.
- Other specialties currently experiencing provider coverage gaps include Podiatry, ENT, and Dermatology. Recruitment is in process. Non-VA Care referrals are being utilized to ensure Veterans receive the care and services needed in these specific areas.
- Loss of a physiatrist impacted timely access, but Veterans contacted prefer to stay within VA for their care. Recruitment to replace the provider is underway; TeleHealth services have been initiated between VA Boston Healthcare System and Maine locations, including the main campus and the Caribou CBOC.
- Retirement of one cardiologist and reduction to part-time for another contributed to longer wait times; Veterans waiting 60+ days are offered referral to a Non-VA Care community provider, but most opt to stay within VA system. Reduction in provider availability pending retirement resulted in less clinic slots and increased wait times. Non-VA Care referrals were initiated in July to compensate for lack of internal access in this specialty; recruitment to replace the provider is underway.
- Reduction in provider availability resulted in less clinic slots and increased wait times. Non-VA Care referrals have been utilized to compensate for lack of internal access in this specialty. This capacity has always been limited to part-time provider coverage.
- Loss of two pulmonologists significantly reduced the availability of specialty access. All pulmonary referrals are currently handled through Non-VA Care referrals, except for Sleep Studies. One pulmonologist handles sleep studies, so overflow is sent to the community. Provider recruitment is underway. Loss of three general surgeons significantly impacted access in this specialty. Non-VA Care referrals are being utilized to ensure access to care, and new surgeons will be on board in September and October.
- There was a slight increase in wait times due to one urologist resignation, but recruitment is underway. Meantime, increased clinic slots by remaining providers will support access improvement.
- Provider vacancy resulted in reduced access, but we are actively recruiting for replacement; non-VA Care referrals are being utilized to ensure access to care is timely.

How is **Manchester VAMC** increasing access to quality care for Veterans?

Here are examples of the outstanding work being conducted at Manchester VAMC:

- We hired an additional audiologist, then increased the position to full time; increased utilization of overtime, and authorized an additional MSA position to support scheduling to be shared with Optometry.
- In the Pain Clinic, we are recruiting for an additional CRNA and authorized an additional MSA position to support Pain Clinic scheduling; we are also utilizing non-VA care for patients with extended waits.
- We are recruiting for a podiatry technician to manage low-risk patients.
- The part-time optometrist was increased to full-time; we authorized an additional MSA position to support scheduling and to be shared with Audiology.
- Non-VA Care was authorized for patients with extended waits for ENT.
- We are currently evaluating all wait times, with data provided to all services on a regular basis.
- Management is proactively evaluating feedback from scheduling staff and formalizing specific actions to improve the scheduling process.
- Management has chartered the development of a standardized training manual for all scheduling staff.
- We are recruiting eight additional scheduling staff to reduce the administrative burden of clinical staff.
- Recruitment for additional Urgent Care physicians, a dermatologist, and an oncologist is ongoing.
- We increased use of Non-VA care for patients with extended wait times.
- Ongoing review of NEAR list is occurring on a daily basis and ongoing review of the electronic wait list is also occurring.
- A Nurse First Program in Primary Care was established to reduce wait times in Urgent Care.

How is **VA Connecticut Healthcare System** increasing access to quality care for Veterans?

Here are examples of the outstanding work being conducted at VA Connecticut Healthcare System:

- A Speech and Language provider is seeing patients at lunch and at end of the day; Non-VA Care is offered for Veterans wanting to be seen within 30 days.
- Geriatric has added an additional clinic to improve access.
- Podiatry has hired a new Chief, hired an additional provider, and is using Non-VA Care.
- We offer training to staff in multiple areas of evidence-based psychotherapy (i.e., couples, social skills, multifamily group therapy).
- Refer Veterans in CBOC to West Haven/Newington/Community Partners/Fee Basis.
- We are conducting weekly reviews of clinics to identify issues and address potential access constraints.
- We are conducting weekend and evening clinics to meet surge and to improve access outside of usual administrative hours.
- We are continually assessing supply and demand to identify needs for additional staff.
- Non-VA Care is being used as clinically appropriate to meet the needs and desires of Veterans.
- Transition from Specialty Care to Primary Care has been improved to maintain access for new consults.
- We are continuing to communicate access issues and wait times to Service and Sections Chiefs to facilitate timely action.
- We're hiring above ceilings to improve appointment availability due to provider loss and coverage.

How is **VA Boston Healthcare System (VABHS)** increasing access to quality care for Veterans?

Here are examples of the outstanding work being conducted at VABHS:

Additional staffing:

- Leadership approved 15 administrative positions to assist with scheduling and clinic management.
- In response to the Gap analysis requested through the VISN, an additional 37.55 FTE for new positions were identified to assist further with reducing wait times and improving access.

Consult management:

- VABHS has an Access and Consult Committee that meets weekly to focus on review of the volume of new and pending referrals to clinics and to work closely with services to ensure compliance with the consult management business rules.

Increased auditing and review of scheduling practices:

- By the end of July, the Director will have met with schedulers from 20 VABHS clinics, including all CBOCs.

Increasing clinical space and capacity:

- At all three campuses, we are examining the clinical space and improving clinic operations to allow the services to maximize efficient use of space and expand clinic hours. Insufficient space remains a limiting factor.

Extended hours:

- All three campuses offer extended hours in the evenings, early mornings, and Saturdays for mental health and primary care clinics. As backlogs arise in other subspecialty clinics, Saturday clinics are sometimes used to reduce patient wait times.

New enrollees and the Vesting Clinic:

- VABHS developed and implemented a new clinic that provides a brief but comprehensive general medical exam for new patients to VABHS. This clinic reduced the wait time significantly for new patients waiting for specialty care.
- VABHS staff from the Eligibility Department and the Vesting Clinic collaborate closely to manage the new enrollees requesting appointments. Once a patient is deemed eligible to receive services, the Vesting Clinic calls and triages all new patients from the New Enrollee Appointments Request (NEAR) list into the Vesting Clinic or primary care.

Leadership involvement:

- There is a daily Access Huddle discussion among leadership in which the status of actions and improvements around access to care are discussed.
- Various stakeholder meetings have been held, which include briefings with congressional representatives, Veterans Service Organizations, Veterans Service Agents, and of course, employee Town Halls.

How is **Providence VAMC** increasing access to quality care for Veterans?

Here are examples of the outstanding work being conducted at Providence VAMC:

- We added fee basis physicians to Hyannis CBOC to reduce wait times.
- We are in various stages of recruitment for two PACT Teams.
- A new provider began this month in Providence.
- Recruiting for additional ENT and Dermatology staff is ongoing.
- The part-time neurologist was increased to full time.
- We added 117 clinics throughout the medical center.
- Providence VAMC now offers extended hours.
- We conduct “stand down” days wherein only new patients are seen.
- Six rooms are dedicated to CVT to increase services to CBOC.
- Permitted services to directly replace vice vacancies decreasing recruitment wait times.
- Expanding the physical footprint of CBOCs is occurring (under construction).
- Expand CVT use.
- We are continuing recruitment efforts for key positions.
- We are exploring additional space options.

How is **White River Junction VAMC** increasing access to quality care for Veterans?

Here are examples of the outstanding work being conducted at White River Junction VAMC:

The doctors, nurses, support staff, and medical center leadership at White River Junction VA Medical Center are committed to ensuring that all the Veterans we serve receive care that is not only excellent in quality, but also is timely.

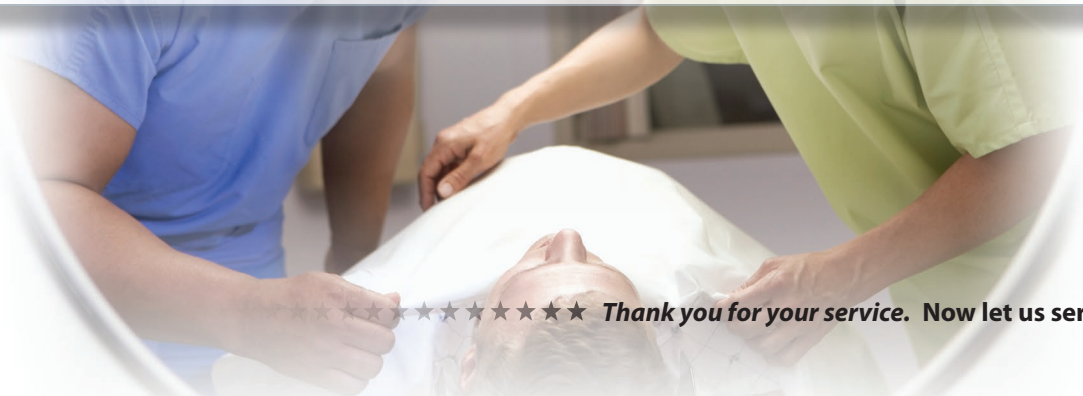
WRJ has recently brought on a number of new clinical and scheduling staff to ensure the best access to care for our Veterans and provide additional clinics and enhanced efficiencies. Here are a few of the changes we have implemented at WRJ to ensure our Veterans receive timely access to quality care:

- Radiology Service has expanded weekday MRI appointments to 8:00 p.m., and 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Saturdays.
- Audiology is now available six days per week.
- Mental Health Service has added a weekend open access clinic for its Primary Mental Health Clinic from 8:00 a.m. to noon on Saturdays.
- The Medical Center's Physical Therapy Department has increased hours of operation to seven days per week.
- We expanded Physical/Occupational/Speech Therapy service to each of the seven CBOCs and into Veterans' homes via TeleHealth.
- Audiology has expanded to the southern tier of Vermont at the Brattleboro CBOC.
- We have increased utilization of TeleHealth for psychotherapy and psychopharmacology at CBOCs.

White River Junction VAMC is proud of the health care services that we provide for northern New England Veterans. We provide Veteran centered health care services tailored to the specific needs of the Veteran population. White River Junction VA has a number of services we would like to highlight:

- White River Junction's Residential Recovery Center (RRC) Substance Abuse Residential Rehab Treatment Program is a six-week treatment program focused on recovery from substance abuse and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. Many Veterans see the RRC as a 'lifesaver'. It has proven to be a regional VA referral center, and plans are to expand the center to 28 beds.
- White River Junction has provided TeleMentalHealth services to rural Veterans for over five years. The program has developed into a robust system of TeleHealth services that now includes Speech Therapy, group MOVE (exercise and weight control) classes, and post-surgical Physical Therapy visits directly in the Veteran's home.
- Network executive leadership board members have recently praised White River Junction's Rehabilitation program as a benchmark program for the use of technology. The Chief of the Physical and Occupational Therapy clinic has developed a walk-in clinic through the deployment of a specialized Outlook scheduling package used by all providers.
- White River Junction developed and instituted the Primary Mental Health Clinic (PMHC) model that has been extended to all VA Medical Centers. Mental Health providers are embedded directly in primary care clinics and are active members of Patient Aligned Care Teams. Efficiencies inherent in the system provide patient's access to a Mental Health provider within 30 minutes or less.

At White River Junction, we utilize the current climate as an opportunity to continue to improve the care and access we provide to Veterans we have the privilege of serving.



VETERANS' healthy living

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Bedford, MA 01730

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VA MEDICAL CENTERS

CONNECTICUT

VA Connecticut Healthcare System

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Newington, CT 06111
(860) 666-6951

West Haven Campus
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West Haven, CT 06516
(203) 932-5711

MAINE

VA Maine Healthcare System
1 VA Center
Augusta, ME 04330
(207) 623-8411
(877) 421-8263

MASSACHUSETTS

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200 Springs Road
Bedford, MA 01730
(781) 687-2000

VA Boston Healthcare System

Brockton Campus
940 Belmont Street
Brockton, MA 02301
(508) 583-4500

Jamaica Plain Campus
150 S. Huntington Avenue
Boston, MA 02130
(617) 232-9500

West Roxbury Campus
1400 VFW Parkway
West Roxbury, MA 02132
(617) 323-7700

VA Central Western MA Healthcare System
421 North Main Street
Leeds, MA 01053
(413) 584-4040

NEW HAMPSHIRE

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Manchester, NH 03104
(603) 624-4366
(800) 892-8384

RHODE ISLAND

Providence VAMC
830 Chalkstone Avenue
Providence, RI 02908
(401) 273-7100
(866) 590-2976

VERMONT

White River Junction VAMC
215 North Main Street
White River Junction, VT 05009
(802) 295-9363

COMMUNITY-BASED OUTPATIENT CLINICS

CONNECTICUT

Danbury CBOC
7 Germantown Road
Danbury, CT 06810
(203) 798-8422

New London CBOC
4 Shaw's Cove, Suite 101
New London, CT 06320
(860) 437-3611

Stamford CBOC
Stamford Health System
1275 Summer Street
Stamford, CT 06905
(203) 325-0649

Waterbury CBOC
95 Scovill Street
Waterbury, CT 06706
(203) 465-5292

Willimantic CBOC
1320 Main Street
Tyler Square (next to Social Security Office)
Willimantic, CT 06226
(860) 450-7583

Winsted CBOC
115 Spencer Street
Winsted, CT 06098
(860) 738-6985

MAINE

Bangor CBOC
35 State Hospital Street
Bangor, ME 04401
(207) 561-3600

Lincoln Outreach Clinic (Bangor Satellite Clinic)
99 River Road
Lincoln, ME 04457
(207) 403-2000

Calais CBOC
50 Union Street
Calais, ME 04619
(207) 904-3700

Caribou CBOC
163 Van Buren Road, Ste. 6
Caribou, ME 04736
(207) 493-3800

Fort Kent CBOC
Medical Office Building
197 East Main St.
Fort Kent, ME 04743
(207) 834-1572

Houlton Outreach Clinic
Houlton Regional Hospital
20 Hartford Street
Houlton, ME 04730
(877) 421-8263, ext. 2000

Lewiston/Auburn CBOC
15 Challenger Drive
Lewiston, ME 04240
(207) 623-8411 Ext. 4601
(877) 421-8263 Ext. 4601

Mobile Medical Unit
Main Street
Bingham, ME 04920
(866) 961-9263

Portland CBOC
144 Fore Street
Portland, ME 04101
(207) 771-3500

Rumford CBOC
431 Franklin Street
Rumford, ME 04276
(207) 369-3200

Saco CBOC
655 Main Street
Saco, ME 04072
(207) 294-3100

MASSACHUSETTS

Causeway Street CBOC
251 Causeway Street
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 248-1000

Fitchburg CBOC
275 Nichols Road
Fitchburg, MA 01420
(978) 342-9781

Framingham CBOC
61 Lincoln Street, Suite 112
Framingham, MA 01702
(508) 628-0205

Gloucester CBOC
298 Washington Street
Gloucester, MA 01930
(978) 282-0676

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Greenfield, MA 01301
(413) 773-8428

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108 Merrimack Street
Haverhill, MA 01830
(978) 372-5207

Hyannis CBOC
233 Stevens Street
Hyannis, MA 02601
(508) 771-3190

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Lowell, MA 01852
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Lynn CBOC
225 Boston Street, Ste. 107
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(781) 595-9818

Martha's Vineyard Hosp.
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Oak Bluffs, MA 02557
(508) 771-3190

New Bedford CBOC
175 Elm Street
New Bedford, MA 02740
(508) 994-0217

Pittsfield CBOC
73 Eagle Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413) 499-2672

Plymouth CBOC
116 Long Pond Road
Plymouth, MA 02360
(800) 865-3384

Quincy CBOC
114 Whitwell Street
Quincy, MA 02169
(617) 376-2010

Springfield CBOC
25 Bond Street
Springfield, MA 01104
(413) 731-6000

Worcester CBOC
605 Lincoln Street
Worcester, MA 01605
(508) 856-0104

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Conway CBOC
71 Hobbs Street
Conway, NH 03818
(603) 624-4366, ext. 3199
(800) 892-8384, ext. 3199

Keene Outpatient Clinic
640 Marlboro Street
Keene, NH 03431
(603) 358-4900

Littleton CBOC
685 Meadow Street, Ste. 4
Littleton, NH 03561
(603) 444-1323

Portsmouth CBOC
302 Newmarket Street
Portsmouth, NH 03803
(603) 624-4366, ext. 3199
(800) 892-8384, ext. 3199

Somersworth CBOC
200 Route 108
Somersworth, NH 03878
(603) 624-4366, ext. 3199
(800) 892-8384, ext. 3199

Tilton CBOC
630 Main Street, Ste. 400
Tilton, NH 03276
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RHODE ISLAND

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Middletown, RI 02842
(401) 847-6239

VERMONT

Bennington CBOC
186 North Street
Bennington, VT 05201
(802) 447-6913

Brattleboro CBOC
71 GSP Drive
Brattleboro, VT 05301
(802) 251-2200

Burlington Lakeside Clinic
128 Lakeside Ave., Ste. 260
Burlington, VT 05041
(802) 657-7000

Newport Outpatient Clinic
1734 Crawford Farm Rd.
Newport, VT 05855
(802) 334-9700

Rutland CBOC
232 West St.
Rutland, VT 05701-2850
(802) 772-2300

WHERE TO FIND US