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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
El Paso VA Health Care System

Veteran Service Organizations Quarterly Update

“Forging Partnerships in support of Veterans”

June 06, 2024



El Paso VA Health Care System Executive Leadership Team



Froylan Garza
Executive Director (JUN 2022)
Via Miami VA



Tracey Arensmann
Associate Director (JUL 2021)
Via EPVAHCS



Eric Kendle, MD
Chief of Staff (JUL 2021)
Via Valley Coastal Bend VA



Lesa Brown
Assistant Director (JUL 2023)
Via EPVAHCS



**Blanca Aragon, DNP,
MSN, RN**
Nurse Executive (OCT 2019)
Via EPVAHCS



Who We Are



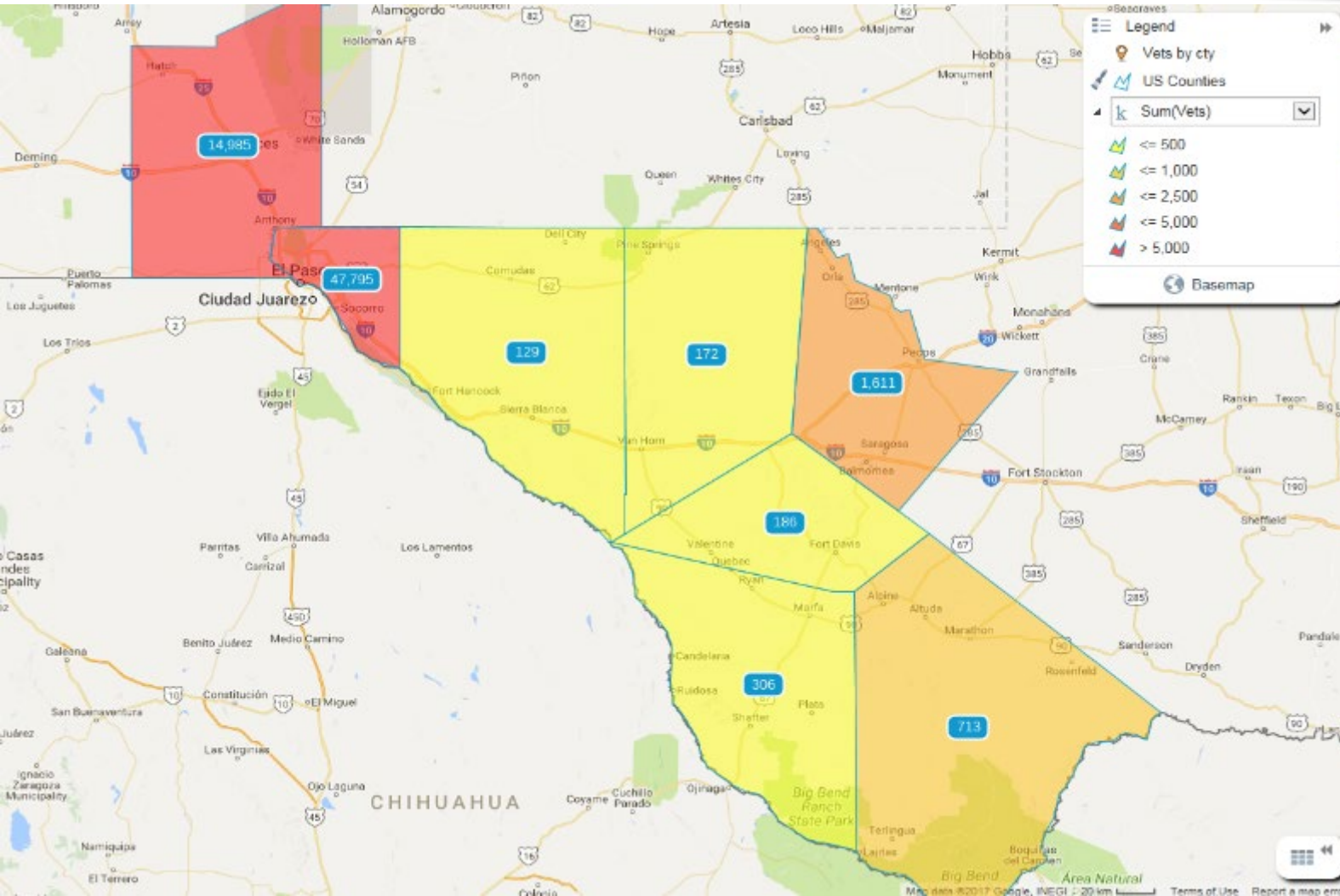
Mission:

To fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.

Key Strategic Pillars



El Paso VA Health Care System Service Area by County



New Mexico

- Doña Ana County

Texas

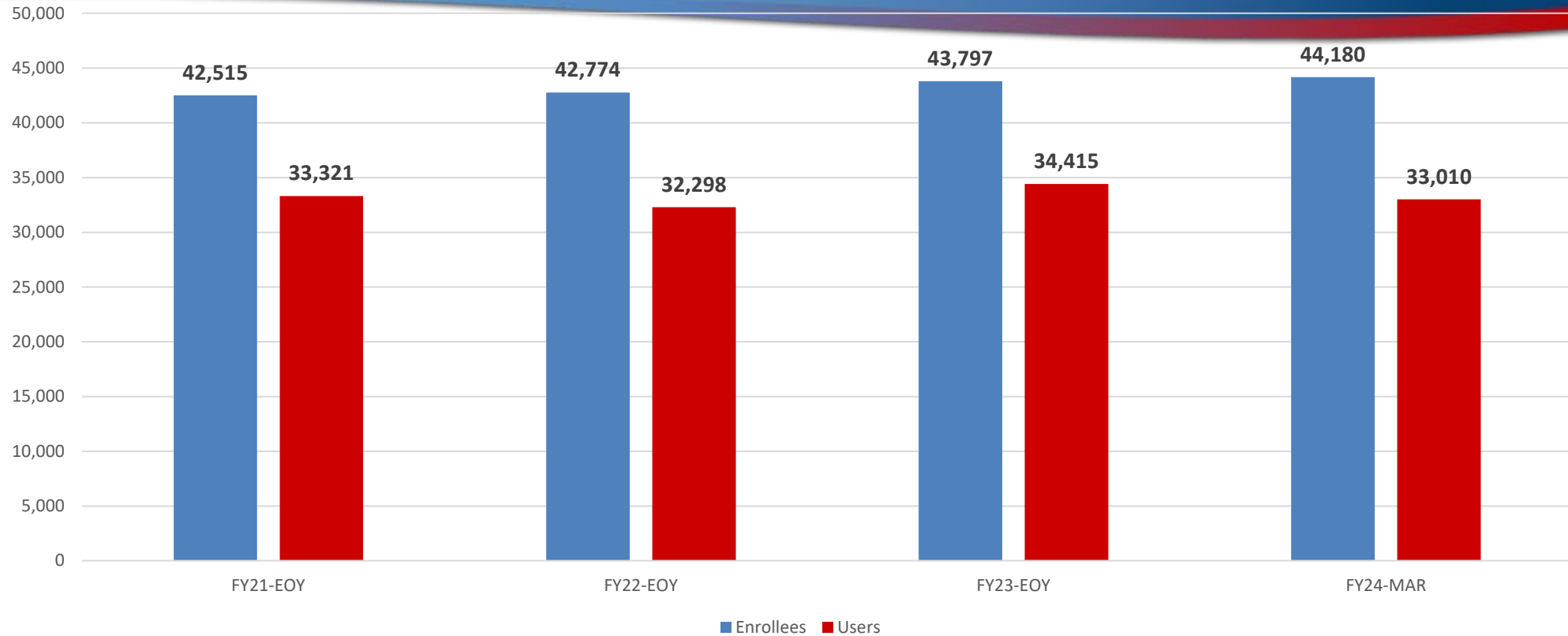
- El Paso County
- Hudspeth County
- Culberson County
- Reeves County
- Jeff Davis County
- Brewster County
- Presidio County

Clinical Services

- Acupuncture
- Ambulatory Surgery
- Audiology
- Behavioral Health
- Cardiology
- Chiropractic
- Compensation & Pension
- CT / MRI
- Dental
- Embedded Fragment Screening and Evaluation
- Endocrinology
- ENT
- Gastroenterology
- Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
- Home Based Primary Care
- Homeless Services
- Infectious Disease
- Laboratory
- Medical Foster Home
- Military Sexual Trauma
- Neurology
- Neuro-Psychology Testing
- Neurosensory Injury
- Non-Institutional Care
- OB-GYN
- Occupational Therapy
- Oncology
- Ophthalmology
- Optometry
- Orthopedics
- Pain
- Pharmacy
- Physical Therapy
- Podiatry
- Poly-trauma
- Post 9/11 M2VA
- Primary Care (PC)
- Primary Care/Mental Health Integration
- Prosthetics
- Psychiatry
- Pulmonary
- Radiology
- Respiratory Therapy
- Sleep Medicine
- Social Work
- Special Exams
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Suicide Prevention
- Tele-Health
- Tele-Mental Health
- Traumatic Brain Injury (spoke)
- Urology
- Visually Impaired Services Team (VIST)
- Whole Health
- Women's Health



Veteran Enrollees & Workload



VA Outpatient Workload	SEP-FY20	SEP-FY21	SEP-FY22	SEP-FY23	% Change
(V17) (756) El Paso, TX HCS	316,599	357,818	367,953	383,323	21%

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Access Update

Access to Care – Primary Care



Site of Care	New Patient Wait Time	New Patient Wait Time *03/16/2023	Established Patient Wait Time	Established Patient Wait Time *03/16/2023
El Paso Clinic	15 days	40 days	2 days	4 days
Las Cruces Clinic	16 days	51 days	4 days	4 days
Eastside Clinic	36 days	At Capacity	4 days	4 days
Westside Clinic	10 days	45 days	2 days	4 days
Northeast Clinic	16 days	30 days	5 days	4 days

As of 6/4/2024

Source: www.accesstocare.va.gov



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Access to Care – Mental Health (Individual)



Site of Care	New Patient Wait Time	Established Patient Wait Time
El Paso Main Campus	5 days	No Wait
El Paso South Central	34 days	8 days
Las Cruces Clinic	105 days	9 days
Eastside Clinic	60 days	7 days
Westside Clinic	58 days	12 days
Northeast Clinic (PCMHI)	6 days	1 days

***Primary Care Mental Health Integration (PCMHI) has same day access; each CBOC also provides same day crisis care.*

As of 6/4/2024

Source: www.accesstocare.va.gov



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Access: New Initiatives and Opportunities

New Initiatives/Expanded Services:

- Filling critical vacancies (PC & BH)
- Expanding our clinical footprint (Main, ES, & LC)
- Expanding Telehealth & VVC opportunities
- Affiliate opportunities

Ongoing Focus:

- Provider Recruitment & Retention
- Community Care network challenges
- Community Care coordination
- DOD/DHA partnership



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Clinical Contact Center

VA Health Connect is available in El Paso
Call 800-672-3782

Press 3 to access our 24/7 Nurse Line



Get your health concerns addressed 24/7 by our team of nurses

With VA Health Connect, you can also:

- Press 1 for Pharmacy
 - Refill, request medication renewals and check the status of your medications
- Press 2 for Scheduling
 - Schedule, cancel, verify or reschedule primary care appointments
- Virtual Clinic Visits available when appropriate via Nurse Line



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THE RIGHT CARE, RIGHT NOW

What can VA Health Connect do for you?

VA Health Connect makes high quality health care accessible to Veterans from anywhere, 365 days a year. You can reach VA Health Connect's primary care scheduling and administration, clinical triage, virtual clinic visits and pharmacy services through a single toll-free phone number.

CALL 1-800-672-3782



Press option 1

PHARMACY SERVICES

You can speak directly with a pharmacy technician or pharmacist to refill and renew prescriptions, ask medication-related questions, receive medication information, and review treatment plans. Pharmacists will be aware of any current prescriptions, prescription interactions, and previously documented allergic reactions to medications.



Press option 3

CLINICAL TRIAGE

Licensed Registered Nurses can discuss your symptoms and concerns or provide guidance for health care needs. If needed, Registered Nurses can refer you for a same day Virtual Care Visit with a provider. Registered Nurses can provide health information, care coordination, and advocacy in support of your needs.

Press option 2

PRIMARY CARE SCHEDULING AND ADMINISTRATION

Scheduling and Administration professionals will be available to assist you in making, rescheduling, and canceling primary care appointments. Your call will be directed to other services as needed. Scheduling and Administration professionals are ready to help you find the information you need about VA services.



Press option 3

VIRTUAL CLINIC VISITS Physicians and nurse practitioners are available for same day private phone or video appointments to discuss your health care needs in detail. Prescriptions, medical advice, and diagnoses can be provided through Virtual Clinic Visits, as with in-person appointments. Virtual Clinic Visits are confidential between you and your health care provider, with precautions in place to maintain privacy.



Health information from Virtual Clinical Contact Center visits will be available to VA primary care physicians to ensure your providers are familiar with your current medical needs.

When VA Health Connect Isn't the Right Fit

For serious or potentially life-threatening symptoms, call 911 or access the nearest emergency room. Veterans experiencing thoughts of suicide or self-harm should immediately contact the Veteran Crisis Line.

For routine primary care visits, chronic illness treatment, or wellness exams, Veterans should contact their primary care physician.



El Paso VA Health Care System Clinics



-  Current Facilities
-  Future Facilities
-  New Main Facility

Expansion Projects

- 756-23-305 East Side Urgent Care Center & Ancillary Services – 39,000SF
- 756-23-300 Horizon City CBOC – New Build 21,000SF
- 756-23-304 Las Cruces CBOC II– 16,000SF facility to cover the current space gap and provide Specialty services.
- 756 - 23-310 North East CBOC replacement facility- 27,000SF – 8 PACTs, Lab and Specialty services
- 756-24-304 Women’s Health Clinic – 4,500SF standalone facility on ES El Paso
- 756-24-300 & 301 Dental Clinic As-Built: El Paso 9,000SF & Las Cruces 3,000SF



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New El Paso Health Care Center Project



- Project proposed:
March 2018
- Award for the Design Build:
December 19, 2023
- Groundbreaking Ceremony:
August 28, 2024

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Home Health Aide Update

Laura Escobar BSN, RN
Non-Institutional Care (NIC) Program Manager

Home Health Aide Personal Care Services Services at El Paso VA VA

The Home Health Aide Personal Care Services program at the El Paso VA provides assistance to Veterans who require help with activities of daily living (ADLs) and personal care. This program aims to support Veterans who are isolated or have caregivers experiencing burden, allowing them to remain living in their own homes.



Program Overview

1 Eligibility Criteria

To qualify for this program, Veterans must be dependent in *two or more* primary ADLs, have significant cognitive impairment, or be currently using community hospice services. ADLs include bathing, grooming, dressing, toileting, transfers, bed mobility, walking, and eating.

3 Evaluation Process

Veterans are evaluated for Home Health Aide hours based on their clinical needs and circumstances, using the National Case Mix Tool and chart review. The service is initiated by the Primary Care Provider.

2 Service Delivery

Home Health Aides work for organizations contracted by the VA. Their services can be combined with other Home and Community Based Services, providing respite care for Veterans and their caregivers. The program focuses on ADL assistance, including instrumental ADLs such as light meal preparation.

Washing



The ability to wash in the bath or shower (including getting into and out of the bath or shower) or wash by other means.

Dressing



The ability to put on, take off, secure and unfasten all garments and, as appropriate, any braces, artificial limbs or other surgical or medical appliances.

Feeding



The ability to feed oneself food after it has been prepared and made available.

Toileting



The ability to use the lavatory or manage bowel and bladder function through the use of protective undergarments or surgical appliances if appropriate.

Walking Or Moving Around



The ability to move indoors from room to room on level surfaces.

Transferring



The ability to move from a bed to an upright chair or wheelchair, and vice versa.

Key Requirements

1

Accept Help

Veterans must accept help with primary ADLs from the agency caregiver.

2

Hands-On Assistance

Veterans must require hands-on assistance with primary ADLs, not just standby assistance.

3

Clinical Evaluation

Veterans are evaluated for Home Health Aide hours based on their clinical needs and circumstances, using the national Case Mix Tool (CMT) and chart review.

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Primary Care Reintegration

Rita L Moreck, MD, FAAP, DipABLM
Associate Chief of Staff, Primary Care

Primary Care Reintegration update

Staffing

- 53 Primary care providers including physicians and nurse practitioners
- GAP providers for extra coverage

PACT model

- Every Veteran assigned to a PACT (Patient Aligned Care Team)
- PACT team: provider, RN, LVN, MSA, behavioral health provider, social worker, pharmacist, nutritionist
- Adding more services to the team
- The PACT team huddles several times daily focusing on the Veteran
- Integrating Whole Health in Primary Care



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Primary Care Reintegration update



Access

- Currently, El Paso VA has the best access in the VISN for new patients
- Several modalities for access: Face to Face, Video Connect, Telephone appointments, secure messaging, VA Health Connect (after hours, available 24 hours)
- Same day access always available

Quality care

- All our providers go through a very thorough credentialing process before hire
- Ongoing providers evaluation and focused provider evaluation process
- Peer review process
- Culture of safety with many processes in place
- Policies in place, adherence tracked

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Behavior Health Reintegration

Mr. Brian Phillips LCSW Substance Use Disorder Program Manager
Behavioral Health Service

Behavioral Health- Reintegration of Community Care to VA

1st Phase – Medication Management

- Behavioral Health(BH) Service is staffed with Medication Providers and now meeting the 20-day minimum for wait-time
- Process for reintegration was as follows:
 - Step 1: Letters sent to Veterans notifying that community care consults would not be renewed due to care being available in-house.
 - Step 2: Discontinued sending new consults to community.
 - Step 3: Offered intake appointments for VA BH Med Management 4-6 weeks prior to the community consult expiration date. Purpose was to ensure an overlap between community care and VA reintegration. Will continue Step 3 process until all community care has been reintegrated.



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BH Reintegration of Care Continued

- Results for BH Medication Management
 - Out of estimated 900 patients receiving medication management in FY24, VA has offered medication intakes to approximately 650 Veterans.
 - Completion of this task is expected by Sept 1, 2024.
- 2nd Phase- Psychotherapy
 - Step 1: Currently decreasing the number of referrals to community and maximizing current provider schedules.
 - Step 2: Increasing the number of Veterans that can be treated by BH providers embedded in PACT (mild to moderate symptoms).
 - Step 3: Return Veterans from community to VA care. Ongoing.

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VHA Clinical Appeals

Clarice Graham, Executive Assistant to the Director

Clinical Appeals Defined



What is a Clinical Dispute?



A disagreement between a patient, or the patient's surrogate, and VA provider/decision maker regarding a medical determination or determinations.

What is a Clinical Appeal?



A written request for higher review of one or more medical determinations.



Are all complaints Clinical Appeals?

No, A complaint is a perceived gap between service expectations and an actual experience. A complaint may be resolved at the lowest level, point of care or with a Patient Advocates assistance, without the need for a clinical appeal.

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Clinical Appeals Process



Who can submit an appeal?



Veteran/Patient or health care surrogate as **designated** by an Advance Directive Caregiver who submitted the original application can file for PCAFC

How is an appeal submitted?



In **writing** to a **Patient Advocate (PA)**
In writing can be by mail, fax, email or MyHealthVet
A Veteran may ask a Patient Advocate to help transcribe the appeal

What does a PA need to start an appeal?



- Name of Veteran or surrogate (and Caregiver if applicable).
- Veteran identifier (#ID number, SSN or DOB)
- What is being appealed
- Contact information

When does an appeal begin and end?



The **day the appeal is received by the PA**, it is entered into Patient Advocate Tracking System to officially begin the process
They **day the PA receives the closing documents/decision memo** and closes the appeal
A decision at the VAMC level is **generally** adjudicated within **45 business days***



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El Paso VA Community Care Update

Andrea E. Blea, MSN, RN

CCS Outpatient Nurse Manager

Recoupment of Payments

- A retrospective audit conducted by TriWest (April 2024) found erroneous payments involving the administration of medications that are not FDA approved – and not covered under Community Care Network (CCN4) funding
- El Paso VA was notified of the erroneous payments affecting local pain and orthopedic community providers
- TriWest sent “Recoupment of Funds” letters to the at least 5 known vendors in El Paso
- Two vendors have chosen to “drop out” of CCN4 and will no longer see Veterans moving forward
 1. Sun City Orthopedics
 2. Texas Pain Management
- El Paso VA is dedicated to ensuring our Veterans have their needs met either at our local VA or with another community provider

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Recoupment of Payments

- Reminder: Services that are considered experimental / investigational **are NOT** payable under CCN4
- Services specifically identified during audit are:
 1. PRP injections (platelet-rich plasma)
 2. ClarixFlo injection (amniotic tissue)
- El Paso VA is working with affected community providers and Veterans to resolve this issue quickly
- Veterans **will NOT** receive bills for the erroneous payments – Please ensure this message is relayed to our Veterans



Highlights



- #1** | Caregiver Support Program was 1st in the country to process an extended benefits application.
- #1** | 1st Facility in VISN 17 to exceed the “national score” for the Substance Use Disorder-16 measure.
- #1** | 1st VA Sleep Center in VISN 17 to be accredited by the American Academy for Sleep Medicine (AASM) & 3rd VA Sleep Center in the nation.
- #1** | 1st Laboratory in the VA to implement ToxAssure (drug screen) with Lab Corp
- #1** | Achieved SimLEARN Innovation Center for Education (SLICE) designation
- #1** | 1st Facility in VISN 17 for Operating Room (OR) on-time start
- #1** | 1st in the Nation in meeting Flu Vaccine requirements in all age categories
- #1** | Medication reconciliation completion is almost at 90% - double the national rate and above VISN 17 standard
- #1** | Biomed recognized as #1 in the VISN for maintenance completion and at ~96% in the Nation
- #1** | Beneficiary Travel currently #1 in the Nation and at function zero on travel voucher backlogs

Top 10% of VHA SAIL Metrics

- SC patient wait times
- Adv. Practice Provider Capacity
- EPRP-based Behavioral Health Screenings
- Communication of All Test Results
- Tobacco Use & Cessation
- Prevention composite



Upcoming Events

- **June 6: ES CBOC Veteran Tele Townhall, 5pm – 6pm**
- **June 6: VSO Quarterly Briefing**
- **June 12: Women Veteran Recognition Day:** Women Veteran Program Information table - 9:30am-12:30pm, Main VA, Atrium (5001 N. Piedras Street)
- **June 12: El Paso Women Veteran Tele Townhall, 5pm-6pm**
- **June 14: Juneteenth Jubilee** - Old WBAMC Picnic Area 11am – 3pm (5001 N. Piedras Street)
- **June 14: Women Only Focus Group-Lesser-Known Services - 2pm-3pm**, Annex, 3rd Floor, RM E339 (Women Veteran Conference Room) (5001 N. Piedras Street)
- **Saturday, July 27: An Evening at Summer VetFest & Pact Act Claims Clinic** - Pact Act Clinic: 3pm-6pm Summer VetFest: 4pm-8pm El Paso Main VA (5001 N. Piedras Street)



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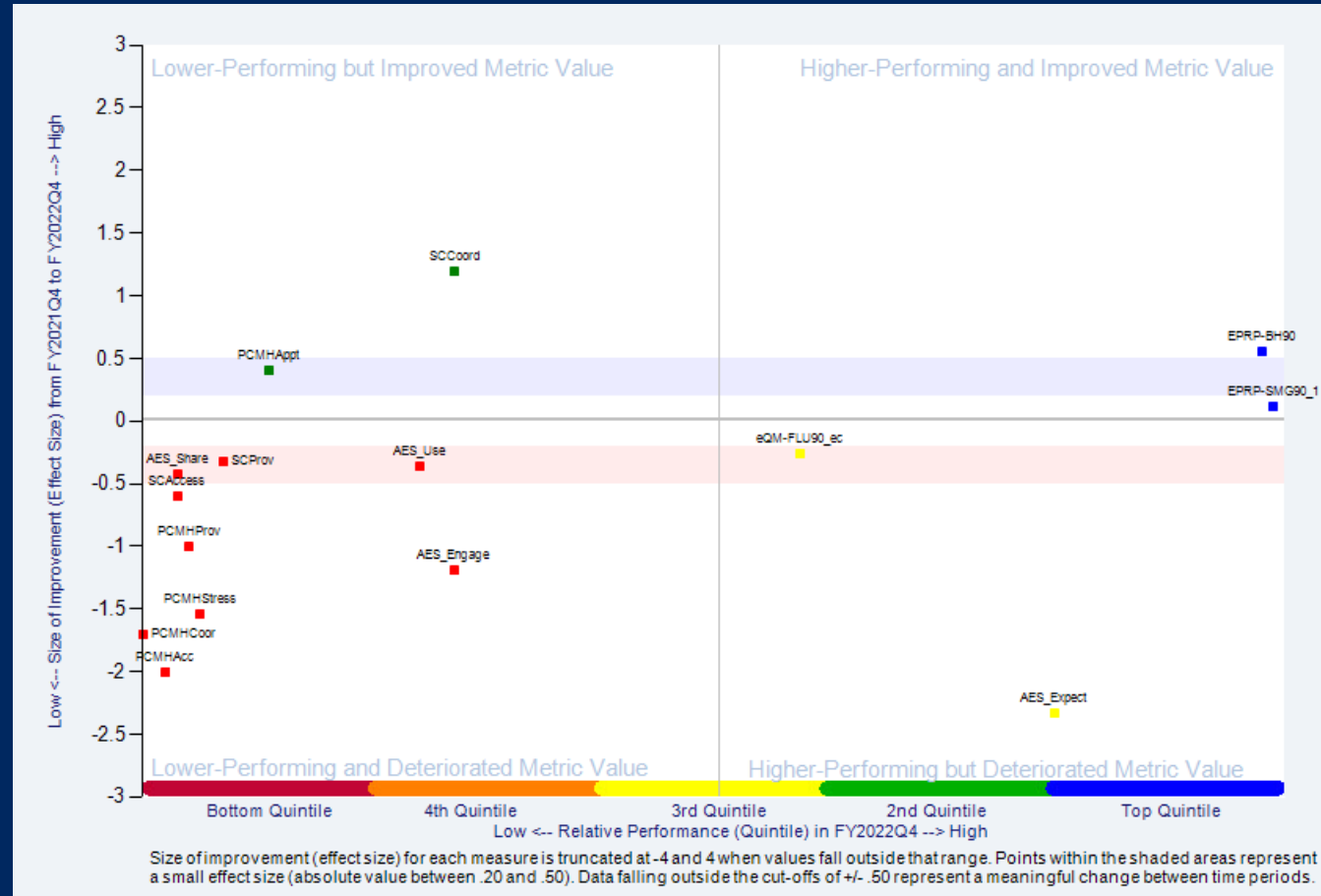
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Strategic Analytics for Improvement & Learning (SAIL) Comparison Tool

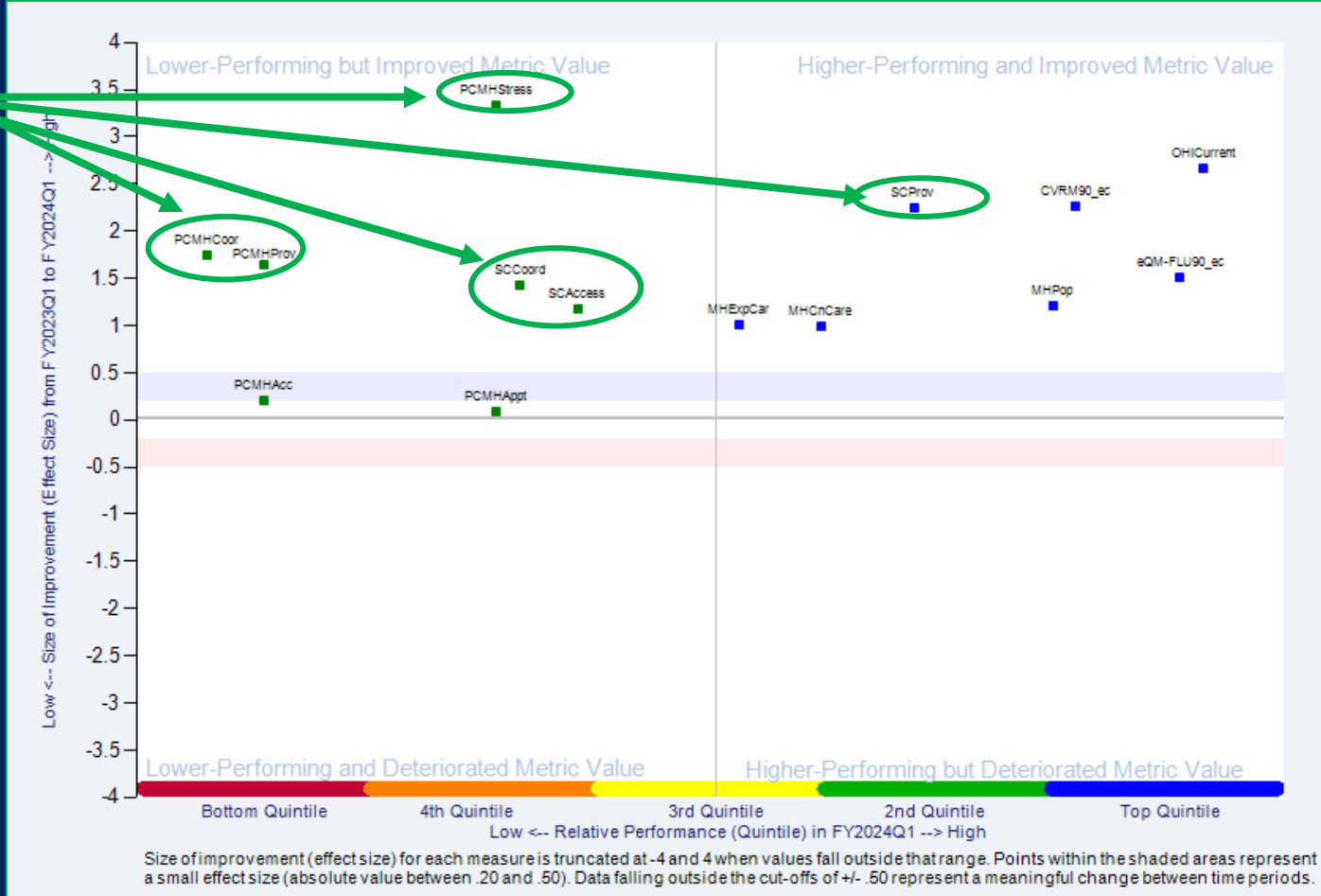
The Strategic Analytics for Improvement and Learning Value Model (SAIL) by the Office of Reporting, Analytics, Performance, Improvement and Deployment (RAPID) is modelled after the 2011 report study and includes additional measures on healthcare quality, employee satisfaction, access to care, and efficiency. The measures are divided into 10 domains, with 9 domains representing healthcare Quality and one domain representing health care Efficiency and Capacity. Data are either acquired from program offices or extracted from VHA reporting systems. The current model benchmarks Quality and Efficiency/Capacity of 126 acute care VA medical facilities (VAMCs) and 17 non-acute care facilities.

SAIL Transformation: FY22Q4



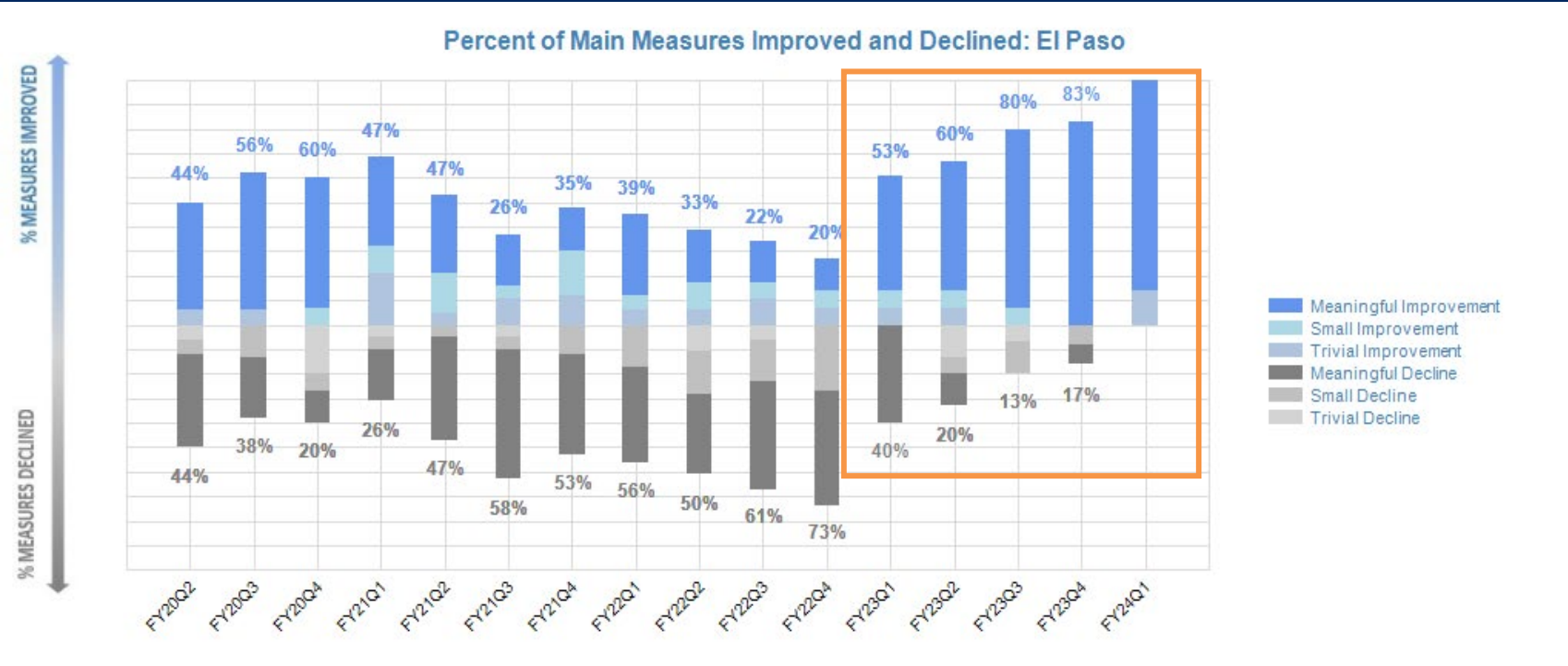
SAIL Transformation: FY24Q1

Nearly all PC & SC Experience metrics showing meaningful improvement.



100% of measures showing improvement with 86% showing meaningful improvement.

SAIL Transformation: FY24Q1



We Need Your Help



- Encourage Veterans to complete their SHEP surveys via mail
- Help us share the good news/experiences of Veterans
- Reach out to me for any issues that may be brewing: AskElPasoVA@va.gov
- Think about VA for Community Events

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Questions?



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