



CARES Monthly VISN Communication Report April 2003

The VISN-level CARES Communication Report for April 2003 is summarized on the attached spreadsheets. The first spreadsheet contains the “Stakeholder Outreach” summary; the second spreadsheet includes the unsolicited input or inquiries received from the stakeholders and others, and the third contains the substantive comments by VISNs.

In summary, there were 286,302 stakeholders, veterans, and members of the public briefed on the CARES process. This represents a decrease of 112,593 stakeholders and veterans briefed from the total briefed in March 2003. For April, all VISNs submitted CARES Stakeholder Outreach information. Most of the VISNs used communication modes consisting of briefings, websites, e-mails and mailings (e.g., brochures, newsletters). Of the 3,605 Veterans & Relatives contacts, 1,000 or nearly 27.7 % were from VISN 19 mainly in the form of newsletters, briefings and publications. Of the 79,883 Employee contacts, 13,815 or nearly 17.3% were from VISN 5. Of the 4,585 volunteer contacts, 1,320 or were 28.8% from VISN 20. Finally, of the 5,050 VSO contacts, 767 or 15.2% were from VISN 8– mostly in the form of briefings.

Overall, of the 286,302 total stakeholders and veteran’s contacts 191,953 (other) or nearly 67.0 % includes all outreach in the form of mail outs (e.g., e-mails, brochures, mass mailings and newsletters).

The April analysis showed that the outreach activities reported with the Affiliates, Unions, Local Organizations and DoD decreased from the previous month. This decrease could be attributed to the VISNs working on their presentations for the market area hearings and reviews.

According to the Substantive comments concerns continue to be voiced in the majority of the VISNs focused on the overall CARES process (i.e., Congressional involvement, funding, accuracy of CARES data and impact), employee anxiety, potential closures, and special populations. Most of the substantive comments are coming from coastal areas (especially VISNs 20-22 and VISN 1, 4, 6-8). Many of the comments are positive, particularly with respect to the special disability planning initiatives and plans to address “access” issues. In meetings with national VSO representatives at the VHA-VACO levels, a concern continues to be voiced that there has been insufficient contact to local, state, and regional VSO representatives regarding the CARES process. Town Hall meetings with stakeholders appear to be particularly effective in stimulating interest and comments from stakeholders.



Additionally, of the 286,302 total stakeholders contacts, 97 or 0.03% were face-to-face outreach contacts, and the contacts decreased from 117 in March to 97 in April.

Several areas were identified in which improvements was demonstrated in the communication reporting process. These are summarized below.

- The Networks increased their levels of outreach. The VISNs are reminded that there is a substantial and critical need for more face-to-face contacts and more outreach to local, state, and regional VSO representatives as well as affiliates, especially now that the Market Plans have been submitted and the VSO's and stakeholders will be attending market area hearings, and reviews. Public comments will
- Improvement in the outreach and face-to-face discussions especially with DoD, affiliates and unions for the month of April. Facility and VISN-level outreach on CARES will continue to be a priority.
- Further, our review of the substantive comments for each VISN showed an improvement in the reporting practices. Remember, VISN level staff are **reminded that any questions dealing with the analysis of the data and the planning initiatives should be completed with a response.**

May 20,2003

Distribution: 00, 00A, 10, 10A, 10B, 10N
VHA/VACO Program Offices
VISN Directors, Communications Coordinators
VSO Representatives

Outreach Audience											
VISN	Employee	Veteran/Rel	Congressional	VSO	Affiliate	Volunteer	Union	Local Org	DoD	Other	Total
0											0
1	9560	6	115	382	20	2	25	13	3	306	10432
2	1777	192	32	222	0	1008	0	36	0	0	3267
3	9971	599	42	542	42	540	119	103	48	2	12008
4	697	164	13	508	40	322	7	0	0	7	1758
5	13815	200	0	7	0	0	11	0	0	0	14033
6	6639	212	24	323	9	224	4	27	16	45	7523
7	1630	75	31	55	4	13	4	0	6	101	1919
8	837	0	22	767	0	0	0	0	0	92351	93977
9	559	0	7	170	1	0	0	0	0	0	737
10	6027	0	15	71	1	0	6	0	0	3	6123
11	7990	14	0	94	1	407	6	0	0	2	8514
12											0
15	2472	15	11	248	10	22	20	0	0	5	2803
16	253	275	13	269	0	10	2	0	10	55054	55886
17	3140	0	0	137	0	0	0	0	0	0	3277
18	80	0	5	46	0	0	0	0	0	18000	18131
19	305	1000	4	5	0	200	5	0	0	0	1519
20	6337	257	24	130	0	1320	2	20	10	26035	34135
21	5065	96	14	111	0	355	12	0	0	0	5653
22	100	55	27	434	20	0	4	55	0	40	735
23	2629	445	74	529	2	162	11	17	1	2	3872
	79883	3605	473	5050	150	4585	238	271	94	191953	286302

CARES Stakeholder Outreach

ALL VISNs

From: April / 2003

To: April / 2003

Contacts															
VISN	Employee	Veteran/Rel	Senator	Representative	VSO	Affiliate	Volunteer	Union	Local Org	DoD	State Gov	Local Gov	Media	Other	Total
0				1											1
1	6				6										12
2															0
3															0
4		1		1							2		2	1	7
5															0
6			1	1	4										6
7	1	1	1		2			2					1	1	9
8			2		4					1	2			2	11
9															0
10															0
11															0
12															0
15		4		1	2										7
16		1			3		1				1				6
17															0
18														1	1
19	1														1
20	7				1									1	9
21		2	1	2			3		2		2				12
22	2	1		1	1				1			1		3	10
23		3							1				1		5
	17	13	5	7	23	0	4	2	4	1	7	1	4	9	97

Summary of Substantive Comments

From: April / 2003

To: April / 2003

Facility	Who	What they said	Action taken / Impact on plan
00	Congressman Jim Marshall	Concerned that Carl Vinson VAMC was placed on the CARES PI small facilities list.	VISN 7 will evaluate alternatives for addressing the small facility planning initiative for Carl Vinson VAMC.
Beckley, WV	Charlotte Moreland, Legislative Asst. & Phil Lewis, Regional Area Coordinator	In agreement with original small facilities plan. Expressed concern with future of medical center.	No impact on plan.
Bedford, MA	American Legion	Will CARES address the Iraqi War?	No, only addresses present
Central Arkansas HCS	Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs	Supportive comments about certain planning initiative options in draft plan.	Forwarded to VISN.
Central Arkansas HCS	Jarry Babin, Commander of VFW Post 4615 in Monticello, AR	Encourages consideration of a CBOC in Monticello, AR, even though it did not meet criteria and is not included in draft CARES VISN 16 plan.	Comments forwarded to VISN 16. Another sign of continued stakeholder interest in Monticello as a CBOC site.
Columbia, SC	Lindsey O. Graham	Thank you for coordinating and hosting the stakeholders meeting on Monday, March 24, at Dorn VAMC in Columbia, SC. I am pleased that Christie Humphries from my Columbia office was able to attend as she found the meeting beneficial. I appreciate your commitment to serving our veterans and look forward to our working together to assist them. It is an honor to represent you in the US Senate and please do not hesitate to contact me if I can ever be of assistance.	Positive reinforcement of the CARES Process and planning assumptions to meet the needs of the veterans in SC.
Dublin, GA	Reporter from TV-13, Thahn Trung	Requesting info/interview on waiting times and how the future looks for Carl Vinson VA. How does CARES look for us?	Info provided as requested. CARES process explained, but no CARES info was included in broadcast.
Fargo, ND	Nathan Andreasen	Offered their assistance when CBOC is located in northwestern North Dakota	Returned phone call and sent response letter also.
Long Beach, CA	Col. Joseph Smith	Conceptually, the outline plan appears sound. However to date nothing has been released on the specific of its implementation. Reduction in waiting time / improve access can easily be improved by simply honoring the prescription of non-VA physician	Input suggestions as a gap.
Long Beach, CA	Jack Shaylain	requested copy of townhall meeting on CARES	zexox copy of land leasing agreement and slide show
Long Beach, CA	Jack Shayline	Is this the guideline to be used in all future land deal?	Submitted land usage / lease procedure and townhall sides
Long Beach, CA	female veteran	Do not want VA Long Beach to be moved to West LA.	forward information to veteran by telephone
Long Beach, CA	Park Estates Homeowners Association	Requested speaker to update them as our mission, vision, and overview of the facility	will provide speaker at the Mayn 29 meeting.

Long Beach, CA	Steve Emerson	1. For many years the VIST program in Long Beach has been a proponent of the VA Center based comprehensive blind rehabilitation program. Our Team has strong ties with community agencies to bring newly blinded and visually impaired veterans into the VA system and, if appropriate, provide them with the opportunity to participate in the VA's center based program. Last fiscal year, over 50 veterans new to the VA system were referred to VIST Long Beach by community agencies primarily to attend the VA blind center program in Palo Alto which provides resources their agencies can't match. Last fiscal year, 84 veterans were referred to the blind center by Long Beach VIST. Veterans who receive this training are placed in the complex reimbursement category. For many of the veterans who for one reason or another who are not able to attend the Palo Alto blind center, a center in VISN 22 will be a blessing. One of the primary issues in selecting a site will be accessibility. The VALBHS is unique in that it is served by both Los Angeles and Orange County transit and para-transit systems (submit letter
New Orleans, LA	A staffer from Congressman David Vitter's Office	Called to ask what stage of the CARES plan we are in	PR responded to the question--no further questions or concerns.
Northern California HCS	Don Boardman, Chairman Northern California Organized Veterans Advocates (NOVA)	For the North Valley Market you have established that the inpatient goal was to have either 65% of the veterans within 40 miles or 60 minutes or 12,000 outside the parameters therefore establishing "absolute numbers." You now have changed the policy by saying "and" and totally eliminating 17,000 known veterans and possibly 100,000 veterans who live in our area. Questions: Why are the rural veterans begin discriminated against? How do you propose to provide inpatient emergent care when veterans must travel up to 400 miles to the nearest VA Medical Center? Was our area sacrificed to save money in low populated states with large areas of land such as the Pacific Northwest and the Central North? How? who? Where? Did you get the number less than 5% growth in the next 10 years for the Redding VA OPC when in actuality it is the fastest growing area in the State of California?	North Valley Market Chair and staff are currently developing a response to this inquiry. North Valley Market Plan includes an initiative to address inpatient needs (through contract) in the Redding area. Enrollment and vet pop projections have been analyzed and taken into consideration in market plan.
Northern California HCS	Congressman Wally Herger	Inasmuch as the demand for primary care in the Redding catchment area has skyrocketed by 50% in the past 3 years, I am concerned that the VA's current projection is based on a seriously flawed assessment. I would appreciate a full explanation of the model used to arrive at the conclusion that patient visits in the Redding area will grow by less than 5% by 2012.	North Valley Market Chairman and staff are developing a response based on information provided by the National CARES program office, local CARES planning office and internal data. Veteran enrollment and population projections have been taken into consideration when developing market plan and planning initiatives.
Poplar Bluff, MO	Veteran who conducts weekly radio show on veterans issues in Houston, MO	negative comments about copay increase,need more doctors, should reinstate category 7's etc.	none; non CARES issues.
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Poplar Bluff, MO	veteran patient responding to CARES comment card	CARES has been explained clearly and will enable the VA to provide better health care to more of our nations veterans. Stated his VA health care and service were excellent.	none

Poplar Bluff, MO	Veteran who attends monthly VSO meeting with facility. Has had several CARES briefings and discussions.	Sees CARES as just another of a long line of VA planning programs that will not work and be discontinued when new President is elected and new Secretary elected. Wants to know if money will be there to hire staff to meet increased demand. Responded on CARES Comment Card	Will discuss issues raised at next VSO meeting.
Poplar Bluff, MO	Office Manager for Congresswoman Jo Ann Emerson	Informed that the congresswoman would be meeting with VACO officials on 4/30 to discuss CARES and its impact on VAMC Poplar Bluff	none
Portland, OR	a physician at the Bend CBOC	The doctor saw the CARES Market Plan on our intranet site and expressed concern that more specialty and hospital care should be available in the Bend area, that many patients couldn't realistically travel as far as Portland.	He was pleased to know that Market Plan actually includes increasing hospital access by expanded contracting in community, and the Bend specialty care issue has been recognized.
Portland, OR	Portland clinician	Hoped resources will be available to assist with current demand at Portland before construction of any new CBOCs.	Discussed that this is an ongoing issue being addressed by many individuals and groups at national level.
Roseburg, OR	Roseburg employee	Wants CARES process to look into the growing need for long term care services at Roseburg VAMC	Due to the review of workload data, Long Term Care is "off the table" for this cycle, but we expect that this will be an initiative in the next review cycle.
Roseburg, OR	Social worker with the Nursing Home Care Unit	Concerned about the Long Term Care issues not being addressed now	explained that Long Term Care would be addressed the next review cycle.
Roseburg, OR	Contracting Officer	Concerned about the CBOC in Eugene and glad to hear we have submitted PI to address this issue	Replied to employee with the PI on the workload for the CBOC in Eugene
Roseburg, OR	MST Counselor for Female Veterans	Concerned that overall planning includes women veterans	Assured her that planning does include female veterans
Salisbury, NC	Commander	Showed a clear understanding of Cares and how it will impact health care in the future.	
Salisbury, NC	Various service organizations were represented at the Town Hall Meeting held for VSO's and Congressional Staffers	Good questions were asked and explanations provided.	
San Diego, CA	Cal-Diego PVA, Don Hyslop on behalf of the San Diego Chapter	1. Concerned that the capacity for all health care for veterans in San Diego is strained. 2. Need more outpatient specialty clinics without changing current level of primary care capacity. 3. Orthopedics, plastic surgery, dermatology and dental clinics are in great demand. 4. Need to maintain full range of medical services for SCI,MS and the blind. Any consolidation of services elsewhere would be detrimental. 5. Need to complete the 2nd story of the SCI building. 6. Need a parking structure - not enough parking space for patients and staff. 7. VA San Diego needs more SCI long-term beds.	Told them I would submit these comments in the CARES report.
San Diego, CA	Todd Gloria, representative for Congresswoman Susan Davis	1. Think mental health projections are too low. Want to make sure there is adequate mental health services for San Diego veterans. 2. Happy that there will be a Blind Rehab program in Southern California. She says she frequently hears from constituents about this issue. 3. Wants to make sure there is adequate health care for veterans in San Diego. 4. She offered her support for any needs we feel we may have in San Diego.	Submit report to CARES.
Southern Arizona HCS	City of Tucson - Veterans Committee Briefing	Informational Briefing Only.	None - Informational in Purpose
Spokane, WA	Elwood Link, VFW Commander in Cashmere, WA	Mr. Link is a very strong advocate for a CBOC in Leavenworth, WA. He would like to be among presenters at Commission hearing.	AJ Allen submitted his name to Rich Larson. Mr. Link is also contacting the VFW office in DC to get his name on their presenter list.

Togus, ME	Darrell Savage, AL Post Commander, Lincoln, Maine	Pleased that our CARES action plan contained an initiative to serve Lincoln, Maine. Questioned prospect for funding and implementation.	Outlined process with CARES Commission that will take place over the next several months.
Togus, ME	Bud Findley, AL, Dover-Foxcroft, ME.	Pleased that proposed Far-North initiatives will include service in Dover-Foxcroft. Questioned when funding and implementation would occur.	Discussed the CARES Commission and planned activities over the next months.
VISN 1 Office	State Commander, DAV, NH	Concern about NH veterans, access to care at CBOCS	In collaboration with Market team, responded to issues raised
VISN 20 Office	After reviewing draft market plans, Alfie Alvarado sent comments on behalf of WDVA.	Expressed gratitude for maintenance of special disability programs and approval of new CBOC north of Seattle (suggested Snohomish County), recommended possibility of additional state support (in addition to proposed new nursing home at Walla Walla)for long term care throughout Tri Cities/Walla Walla catchment area.	
VISN 20 Office	ACOS for R&D, Puget Sound HCS	Commenting on Market Plan provision for re-evaluation of Puget Sound space scores for research, commented that identified need was based on current funding but that research funding has increased 72 percent in last 10 years at PSHCS, suggested that an allowance in plan is needed for continued increases. Mentioned that shortage of research space has been limiting physician recruitment.	Research is working with planners to consider alternatives for adding space
VISN 4 Office	PA War Council and PA Veterans Commission	Expressed support for establishment of CBOC in Northampton County.	Views will be taken into account in planning.
VISN 4 Office	Col. Robert Brenner	Seeking information on CARES Commission hearing. Indicated interest in attending.	Shared information with leadership.
VISN 6 Office	Staffer from Cong. Hayes office called about a CBOC for the Hamlet area.	She wanted to know the status and if we had identified the funds to start contracting for care in the area.	She was advised that we were committing to submit an "access point" in the area (Hamlet) as part of our CARES solution. She mentioned the space at Sandhills and was going to make some contacts to get updates there as well.
VISN 6 Office	Faxed and mailed letter in response to questions asked by American Legion Department Adjutant for NC; Adjutant stated letter will be sent to national Legion office.	Legion Adjutant stated he was asked to send VISN 6 response to national Legion office.	
VISN 7 Office	Tim Jones	Was interested in workload allocations for new CBOCs planned in Aiken SC and Athens GA.	VISN 7 CARES Coordinator explained the methodology.
VISN 8 Office	Jeff Soanpieus	Questions concerning CARES plans on construction of nursing homes.	Dr. Headley and Charlene Koonce explained to Mr. Soanpieus that by the summer, CARES will have an format and plan for nursing homes planning related to CARES.
VISN 8 Office	Jeff Scanpieus	Mr. Scanpieus was concerned about the space limitations within VISN 8. He was curious about the impact on delivering care.	Dr. Headley and Charlene Koonce addressed his question and informed Mr. Scapieus that the VA and DoD are working together to help provide better care to our veterans.
VISN 8 Office	Fred Harrop	Asked VISN 8 to explain the PIs throughout VISN 8.	Dr. Headley gave a presentation that covered all of the PIs for Florida and Puerto Rico at the Management Assistance Council.
VISN 8 Office	Harry Copenland	Mr. Copenland was curious about the Spinal Cord Injury services that will be offered in VISN 8 after the CARES process is complete.	The national issues were explained to Mr. Copenland along with other issues that the VA will look at (LTC...)
VISN 8 Office	Jeff Scanpieus	A representative from Senator Nelsons office asked Dr. Headley about future collaborations between the VA and DoD.	Dr. Headley explained to the to Mr. Scanpieus that the VA and DoD have a PI in Jacksonville Florida and possibly in Tampa Florida.

VISN 8 Office	Harry Copeland	Questions came up regarding the safety the medical center in San Juan. Also, concerns about the accuracy of the CARES data (specifically in Puerto Rico) came up.	Dr. Headley and Charlene Koonce addressed Mr. Copeland concerns and answered each question that he had.
VISN 8 Office	Representative for Senator Nelson, Jeff Scanpieus	Told Dr. Headley and everyone in the meeting that VISN 8 work on CARES has been phenomenal.	Assists VISN 8 CARES staff in doing the process correctly.
VISN 8 Office	Richard Camacho	Mr. Camacho had questions about the long term care plan VISN 8/CARES has. Also, Mr. Camacho wanted to know if Puerto Rico would ever receive a new medical center.	Dr. Headley and Charlene Koonce provided a PowerPoint presentation to address all major concerns about the CARES process. Included in the presentation was a Puerto Rico Planning Initiatives section.
VISN 8 Office	CDR Chuck Benninger	Mr. Benninger asked about the total beds needed within the CARES projections.	Dr. Headley and Charlene Koonce answered his questions and provided a Powerpoint presentation to support their information.
VISN 8 Office	Dr. Elwood J. Headley Network Director gave a VISN 8 CARES Briefing for 117 Staff 1 spouse of veteran	Wife of veteran voiced her concern that she had heard information stating that Congress was going to try and cut healthcare benefits to those veterans in Priority 7, that are not service connected. Network Director reassured spouse that he had not heard anything like this and that Congress has been very generous with VA providing 23 billion for healthcare and another 20 for benefits	Dr. Headley gave the individual the correct information.
West Haven Division	Employee	Concerned that West Market initiatives include a lot of contracting of services. As written, does not seem fitting with VA's mission and patient care focus.	
West Los Angeles HCS	Chief of Ophthalmology at GLA	Submitted e-mail justification to place the Blind Rehab Center at GLA	Provided to CARES Team for consideration
Wilkes-Barre, PA	Newspaper reporter	Reporter asked about the status of the CARES process, especially as it relates to the proposal to establish a CBOC in Northampton County, PA.	Update provided to the reporter, indicating that the CBOC for Northampton County is a proposal and will await the outcome of the CARES process for the next step. Discussion did not result in any press release.
Wilkes-Barre, PA	Reporter from the Times-Leader	The WBVAMC hosted a town mtg today for stakeholders on the recommendations for the Planning Initiatives. The newspaper was unable to send a reporter to the town mtg but asked for faxed information. Information was faxed.	An accurate accounting of the Planning Initiatives for CARES was presented in the 3/29/03 edition of the newspaper.
Wilkes-Barre, PA	Art Swezey, PA Governor's Veterans Outreach Ctr in Harrisburg	Mr. Swezet asked about the outcome of of our stakeholder mtg we held on 3/28/03. He was not able to attend. We shared the recommendations proposed to address the Planning Initiatives.	Mr. Swezey was pleased with our approach.
Wilkes-Barre, PA	Congressman Paul Kanjorski	The Congressman requested a meeting to be held at the W-B VAMC to discuss CARES, Pharmacy co-payments and the FY 04 Budget. Approximately 40 veterans and four different media were present. The Congressman indicated that he recently met with Secretary Principi and presented 30K signatures to support the Medical Center and to keep it open. The Congressman expressed the "need to keep on top of CARES". He also indicated that the veterans are proud of the staff, the hospital and the services it provides.	The Congressman indicated that he would like to have another meeting in August.