

## **Testimony for CARES Commission Hearing – Leavenworth**

Distinguished Commissioners, Veteran Service Officers, Congressional Delegates, Affiliates, Fellow Employees, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Morning and welcome to the Capital Assets Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) Commission Hearings for the Central and Western Markets in VA Heartland Network-Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN 15). Thank you for this opportunity to address you this morning. Please allow me to introduce the other members of the Leadership Panel to you. With me are Dr. James Sanders, Acting Chief Medical Officer for the Network; Mr. Carlos Escobar, Capital Assets Manager for the Network; Mr. Thomas Sanders, Director of the Robert J. Dole VA Medical and Regional Office Center in Wichita, KS; Mr. Gary Campbell, Director of the Harry S. Truman VA Medical Center in Columbia, MO; Mr. Kent Hill, Director of the VA Medical Center in Kansas City; and Mr. Robert M. Malone, Jr., Director of the Eastern Kansas Health Care System that is comprised of Colmery O'Neill VA Medical Center in Topeka, KS, and the Dwight D. Eisenhower VA Medical Center in Leavenworth, KS.

VISN 15's Central and Western Markets analyzed and accepted the official CARES data and projections. In the process we explored a variety of alternatives for health care delivery, such as contracting out services, establishing sharing agreements, referring patients to other medical centers throughout the VISN and developing Enhanced Use Lease agreements. Medical center staff, veterans service organizations, affiliates, union partners,

Congressional offices, and other key stakeholders were kept informed of the process and their input was encouraged.

Our study encompassed three Markets Identified through the CARES process. For purposes of this hearing, we will be discussing the Central and Western Markets only.

Characteristics for the Central and Western CARES Markets include:

- Counties in three states: Kansas, Missouri, and Illinois.
- The Western Market covers over 400 miles of Kansas from east to west and has less than three veterans per 100 square miles in some areas.
- Ninety-two percent of the counties are considered highly rural or rural. It should be noted that 85% of the counties in these two Markets are designated as medically underserved in the Department of Health and Human Services Medically Underserved Listing (MUL).
- Five Medical Centers serve the two markets: VA Medical Centers in Kansas City and Columbia, MO, the Eastern Kansas Health Care System, which includes Leavenworth and Topeka, KS, and the VA Medical and Regional Office Center in Wichita, KS.

VISN 15 has had a significant increase in veteran enrollment over the past six years combined with a high percentage of active users. This can be attributed to the open enrollment decision in 1996, improved access to care, and the high quality of care of the services we provide. The plans address gaps

identified for Primary Care, Specialty Care, and Inpatient Psychiatry. Increased primary and specialty care demand has been identified in the Central and Western Markets. These Markets propose to meet the majority of their needs through expansion of in-house space via new construction of primary care/specialty care clinics, conversion of vacant space, lease space and community contracts. Due to the vast geography of these markets, the expansion of current Tele-video, Tele-Medicine, and Tele-imaging programs will play a critical role in meeting this demand for service. In addition, some shifting of care between facilities is proposed. Concurrently, we will deploy state-of-the-art diagnostic imaging and digital equipment to improve access and enhance the delivery of care.

Projected decreased demand for inpatient Psychiatry in the Central Market will be offset by the increased workload from the Western Market, which has no inpatient Psychiatry beds. Inpatient workload will be met through a combination of in-house capacity and community contracts.

Vacant space in this market is being aggressively managed through the development of an Enhanced Use Lease at Leavenworth. Thirty-nine historic buildings will be restored for an assisted living facility and other adaptive uses at Leavenworth, while providing land for expansion of the National Cemetery.

The plan capitalizes on the strengths of Leavenworth and Topeka's integration and their relationship with the Kansas City VAMC as the tertiary care facility, through the implementation of the Advisory Board recommendations,

authorized by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and recently approved by the Under Secretary for Health. These include:

- Realignment of psychiatry and nursing home beds between the Leavenworth and Topeka campuses
- Realignment of intensive substance abuse treatment program
- Continuation of urgent care services at both campuses 24/7/365
- Maintain up to 38 acute inpatient beds at Leavenworth
- Establishment of a same day surgicenter at the Leavenworth and Topeka campuses.
- Referral of complex major surgical procedures would be performed in Kansas City.

All the facilities will continue to provide support for their DoD installations (Fort Leonard Wood, Fort Leavenworth, Fort Riley, Whiteman Air Force Base, and McConnell Air Force Base).

Over the last six years, VISN 15 has seen many changes. The number of patients receiving care has risen over 58% from 128,000 in 1997 to 203,000 in 2002. The Market Plans show that in 2012, the Central Market is projecting increases of nearly 81% in Primary Care and more than 110% in Specialty Care over the baseline workload in 2001. In the Western Market, the increases are 60% in Primary Care and 188% for Specialty Care. While the demand diminishes somewhat between 2012 and 2022, the Central Market is still anticipating increases in workload of 53% in Primary Care and 87% in Specialty Care over the baseline in 2001. In the Western Market, the increase is 35% in

Primary Care and 156% in Specialty Care. The number of Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) has gone from zero to over 25 in these two markets. Five of these CBOCs are co-located at Missouri and Kansas State Homes and one is co-located with a National Guard Armory. Additionally, approximately three years ago the Network developed and implemented a concept to integrate its databases from a facility-based structure to a “hub and spoke” Orbit of Care concept. Collectively, the Central and Western CARES markets make up the Western Orbit of Care for VISN 15.

Capital Assets planning for VISN 15 over the last six years has strategically aligned the Central and Western Markets consistent with the future growth identified in the CARES process. Some examples include:

- At Leavenworth, a Domiciliary was activated in 1995. This serves as a resource to both the Central and Western CARES Markets.
- Renovation of Ambulatory Care Clinics at all sites (Columbia and Kansas City, MO Eastern Kansas and Wichita, KS).
- Construction of a new Operating Room in Kansas City, MO.
- Upgrading of several Intensive Care Units at Columbia, Kansas City and Wichita.

We do have our share of challenges. For example, both the Kansas City and Columbia facilities are aging and have infrastructure needs; such as replacement of electrical and air handling systems, elevators, and generators. All of the facilities are faced with increased workload levels in structures that have reached maximum capacity.

Recent changes in the health care market such as the departure of the Menninger Institute, a long-standing provider of mental health services, and the closure of several medical centers within the Kansas City Metropolitan area are having a negative impact on our ability to contract for services in the community.

What does the future hold for these Markets in VISN 15?

- VA recognizes the need to work within the healthcare community to secure additional healthcare providers to meet the projected demand on the system.
- VA will continue to partner with our academic affiliates to ensure trained provider availability.
- Additional space will be needed to meet projected demands.
- Existing underutilized infrastructure will be addressed through Enhanced Use Leases, selling of property, or demolition.

This completes my testimony regarding the Central and Western Markets. Our Leadership Panel will gladly answer any of your questions at this time.