



CARES Monthly VISN Communication Report JULY 2003

The VISN-level CARES Communication Report for July 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 282,717 stakeholders, veterans, and members of the public briefed on the CARES process. This represents a decrease of 271,412 stakeholders and veterans briefed from the total briefed in June 2003. Sufficient information was not available until the release of the draft National CARES Plan and may be attributed to the decrease in stakeholders briefed. The stakeholders will have opportunities to submit their comments to CARES Commission at field hearings that will begin on August 12, 2003. For July, 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 104,655 Veterans & Relatives contacts, 100,009 or nearly 95.6 % were from VISN 8 mainly in the form of newsletters, briefings and publications. Of the 69,481 Employee contacts, 10,921 or nearly 15.7 % were from VISN1. Of the 2,951 volunteer contacts, 1,000 or 33.8 % from VISN 11. Finally, of the 2,284 VSO contacts, 532 or 23.3% were from VISN 15– mostly in the form of briefings.

Overall, of the 282,717 total stakeholders and veteran’s contacts 101,465 (other) or nearly 35.9 % includes all outreach in the form of mail outs (e.g., e-mails, brochures, mass mailings and newsletters) and 99% of these were in VISN 8.

The July analysis showed that the outreach activities reported with the Affiliates, Unions, Local Organizations, and DoD showed a slight decrease from the previous month.

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 from (VISNs 4, 7, 10) that may be slated for hospital closures. Other comments from (VISNs 3, 6, 8) had comments related to the status of the CARES hearings, web site address and the date of the release of the Draft National CARES Plan.



Additionally, of the 282,717 stakeholder contacts, 69 or 0.02% were face-to-face outreach contacts, and the contacts increased from 43 in June to 69 in July.

Now that the CARES Commission public hearings have been scheduled the Networks and VISN level staff are reminded **to report any questions dealing with the Commission in the substantive comment section, and to refer the stakeholders to the CARES Commission Web site, <http://www/cares.commission.va.gov>**

-

August 6, 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	10921	6	101	150	21	3	29	11	4	3	11249
2	2855	261	4	19	1	275	4	0	0	205	3624
3	10846	538	28	274	27	504	823	152	4	9	13205
4	213	12	29	37	0	10	1	0	0	6	308
5	1200	50	0	10	0	10	2	0	0	0	1272
6	6183	327	17	250	24	100	5	0	2	13	6921
7	6205	2054	3	76	8	77	29	6	6	33	8497
8	52	100009	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100000	200061
9	2005	1000	8	120	2	200	2	0	0	1	3338
10	1173	3	4	130	2	0	1	5	1	20	1339
11	8460	105	12	259	10	1000	19	30	0	4	9899
12											0
15	6213	8	87	532	40	511	16	34	16	233	7690
16	79	55	21	227	0	0	1	0	5	0	388
17	3100	0	0	90	0	0	0	0	0	0	3190
18	44	0	1	31	0	0	0	0	3	5	84
19	313	0	3	6	0	200	1	0	0	0	523
20	444	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	451
21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
22	208	127	17	45	1	38	2	36	0	11	485
23	8967	100	155	28	0	23	2	0	0	917	10192
	69481	104655	492	2284	136	2951	937	275	41	101465	282717

CARES Stakeholder Outreach

ALL VISNs

July/2003

Contacts															
VISN	Employee	Veteran/Rel	Senator	Representative	VSO	Affiliate	Volunteer	Union	Local Org	DoD	State Gov	Local Gov	Media	Other	Total
0															0
1	3				2										5
2															0
3					2			1							3
4		1	2	2	1						1	1		1	9
5															0
6				1										1	2
7	6	3	2	3	2							3	5		24
8	2	1							1					2	6
9				1	1										2
10		2									1		1	1	5
11	3														3
12															0
15													1		1
16		1					1						1		3
17															0
18															0
19															0
20		1	1	1									1		4
21															0
22				2											2
23															0
	14	9	5	10	8	0	1	1	1	0	2	4	9	5	69

Summary of Substantive Comments

For: July/2003

Facility	Who	What they said	Action taken / Impact on plan
Asheville, NC	Art DeWitt with the Blue Ridge Advocates for Outreach Services called regarding postponement of CARES hearings.	Public Affairs Officer gave him new date for hearings.	NONE
Augusta, GA	Augusta-Richmond County Mayor Bob Young	Augusta-Richmond County Mayor Bob Young requested a briefing from the medical center on CARES. The mayor expressed his concern after reading articles in the local newspaper about the potential impact on Augusta's Uptown Division. He was briefed on the CARES process, how the data was collected, which planning initiatives were included in the VISN 7 market plan, how the independent Commission will hold hearings across the United States and that a final decision has not been made at this point. He also expressed concern about the planned demolition of the buildings at the Uptown Division. The Mayor also stated he will be in Washington, DC next week and will contact the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and voice his concerns.	N/A
Augusta, GA	Vicki Travis	She was very concerned that her son, who had been hard to place in a community home, would not be able to continue his care at the Augusta VA Medical Center's Uptown Division. She asked that she be notified when the CARES hearings were scheduled.	The Public Affairs Officer provided Ms. Travis the website address and told her where the hearings were scheduled (Atlanta and Charleston) and when.
Augusta, GA	Tom Corwin, Medical Reporter	He asked about the AP story he received stating the possible elimination of 24/7 services at the Uptown Division. He asked when the hearings were scheduled.	The Public Affairs Officer spoke with the reporter and gave him the information he requested (where and when hearings are scheduled).
Augusta, GA	Jim Irvin	He provided the Public Affairs Officer as copy of the letter written to Secretary Principi stating his concerns with the scaling back of service at the Uptown Division and a copy of the news release sent from the Senator's office.	
Augusta, GA	Dana Lynn McIntyre, reporter	Channel 6 visited the Uptown Division to interview the Blind Rehab Center's Chief. Her story revolved around the special programs offered by the Augusta VAMC and how difficult it would be for veterans to receive these services if the 24/7 operation were reduced to 8 hours/5 days a week. She also included the psychiatric and long-term care services offered at the Uptown Division.	
Augusta, GA	Assignment Intern	They wanted an interview with the Director regarding the possible elimination of the 24/7 services at the Uptown Division.	An appointment will be set up for this interview when the Director returns to Augusta.
Bedford, MA	DAV, American Legion, etc.	Wanted a separate Cares meeting for update of the CARES process	Meeting of VSo's of CARES will be held on 8/5/03
CAVHCS	N/A	N/A	N/A
Cleveland, OH	Reporter preparing article on CARES process and proposal to consolidate Inpatient programs to Wade Park.	Information on VA programs at Brecksville and CARES process was provided in a twenty minute interview.	
Cleveland, OH	Veteran	I am concerned about the Closure of Brecksville. I don't like to drive into Cleveland."	

Cleveland, OH	Family member of veteran	Glad to hear that this is a consolidation, not a closure. Also appreciated information on the CARES process and the timelines for decision and action.	
Columbia, SC	Dick Mayhew	Asked for CARES Market Plan in preparation for upcoming hearings	Forwarded website and a copy of the VISN 7 CARES Executive Summary
Columbia, SC	Gerry Pothier	Hearings will be held by the CARES Commission to enable its membership to take into consideration veterans' input as they develop the recommendations they will present to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The CARES process is a nationwide study in which the Department of Veterans Affairs is making a systematic, detailed analysis of its capital assets and the suitability thereof to meet the needs of our veterans population through the year 2022. State Commander Bell has appointed me to present oral testimony before the Commission on behalf of the South Carolina VFW and I have been allocated five (5) minutes to deliver such testimony. My testimony will be given on 8 September 2003 in Charleston. It is of the utmost importance that my testimony speak to the issue of how the CARES proposal for South Carolina will effect direct care to veterans. The VFW Washington office encourages me to be "forthright and hard-hitting" in my testimony, if we have concerns. The VFW Washington office has deep concerns on how CARES	Have scheduled a time to meet and discuss.
Dublin, GA	Reporter with Macon Telegraph looking for information about CARES & the Carl Vinson VA	He had news release from Senator Miller; wanting comments from our medical center	General information provided regarding the market plan submitted for Carl Vinson VA.
Dublin, GA	Reporter with Courier Herald	Seeking quote in response to Senator Miller's news release regarding cuts at Carl Vinson VA	General information provided regarding market plan submitted for Carl Vinson VA
Dublin, GA	Staffer in Senator Chambliss' Washington office (Jim Irwin) called in response to latest CARES articles about Dublin VA.	Looking for general info; insight into recent articles	Explained origin of articles, as well as the market plan for Carl Vinson VA
Dublin, GA	Employee	Concerned about recent articles	Explained origin of articles and again explained our market plan
Dublin, GA	May Phil Best	Seeking info about articles regarding CARES & possible cuts at Carl Vinson VA	Explained origin of articles and market plan for Dublin VA
Erie, PA	Andy Kistler, Past National Commander of the DAV Kathy Sherleck, Veterans Coalition in Venango County	They had questions regarding the upcoming CARES Commission hearings.	I answered their questions with the information I had.
Philadelphia, PA	Staffer from Congressman Robert Andrews Office, Amy Simmerman	Requested confirmation of CARES Commission dates in Coatesville. Awaiting further details from CARES commission. No communications recieved to date	Provided information requested
Poplar Bluff, MO	Gary Exelby of Paragould Arkansas Tribune	Asked about CARES and possbile closures and consolidations of facilities.	Provided most recent Q&A's and referred to Communication, VACO

San Juan, PR	CARES Commission arrived in San Juan.	They performed a site inspection, visited the Ponce Community Based Outpatient Clinic, the Roosevelt Roads Naval Base and Fort Buchanan. They met with SJVAMC officers and had a brief meeting with the M.A.C. committee which included representatives from the VBA, PVA and the Veterans' Advocate Office.	
VISN 22 Office	Benjamin Cardenas, Staffer, Grace Napalitano	Requested a copy of the Network 22 CARES Plan	Agreed to send approved VA plan on August 1st.
VISN 3 Office	Mike Suter Chairperson NY State	Asked about the updated information requested regarding St. Albans, Montrose and Lyons. He is becoming very concerned that the VSO's are not hearing or receiving all of the planning data/information. Also concerned about reports of VISN 21 and asked if we had similar directives.	Replied to e-mail and recommended that we should review the national plan when released expected on Aug. 5th, that we do not know what will be in the plan. The VSO's would have time to comment and have discussions, testify at hearings etc.
VISN 3 Office	Ms. Ena Judd-Thompson	Concerned that they had not been invited to the CARES Commission site visit.	Shared with Ms. Judd-Thompson that details had not been finalized (we had some last minute changes) and that the unions would be invited to all of the CARES commission stakeholder meetings.
VISN 4 Office	PA State Director for Veterans Affairs	Interested in more details about CARES Commission stakeholder meeting during their upcoming site visits. During the call, he expressed his support for what VISN 4 had submitted at the end of Step 4 of the process and expressed concerns about any efforts that might change VISN 4's proposal-- if that resulted in reducing services in any way. He said that the state had built a very close relationship with the VISN and was looking forward to further increasing its patient referral relationship with our network in the future.	None at this time.
VISN 4 Office	Jennifer Shirley from Cong. LoBiondo's office	Asked for more details about letter inviting Congressman to stakeholder meeting at upcoming Commission site visits	None
VISN 4 Office	Allen Glass of Sen. Biden's DC office.	In addition to asking some questions about the Commissioners' meeting with stakeholders during their site visit to Phila. VAMC this week, Mr. Glass expressed concern that the CARES hearing for VISN 4's eastern market was scheduled on the Friday before Labor Day weekend. He did not think this would be a good time to hold the hearing.	None at this time.
VISN 6 Office	Staffer from office of Rep. Goode	Asked if Saltville, Va. will get a CBOC	Advised that Saltville is not in draft plan; shared Commission's Web site address
VISN 8 Office	William Judy	"Planning on having one hearing in Florida--in Orlando. The Commissioner's will separate into two groups with one group going to site visit Tampa and Bay Pines and the other group going to Ft. Myers and Miami. We have had some issues with how we are doing logistics on the Commission"	Preparation for hearings.
VISN 8 Office	George Burt	Mr. Burt asked VISN 8 not to close any services in Lake City. Mr. Burt is very concerned about any closures that may take place in NFSG.	Charlene Koonce responded to Mr. Burt and fully answered any question or concerns he had.
VISN 8 Office	Cara Lashley	Mrs. Lashley was very concerned with Lake City turning into an outpatient center. Mrs. Lashley also is concerned with possible jobs being lost.	Charlene Koonce responded with a very careful response. Charlene Koonce pointed out possible benefits of CARES projects in NFSG.
VISN 8 Office	Barbara J. Harker	Mrs. Harker requested a White Paper from Nancy Reissener regarding Lake City.	The information was passed to several stakeholders including union, VSOs, and other key people.
VISN 8 Office	MSgt. Keaton	MSgt. Keaton was very concerned with the proposed changes to the Lake City facility (NFSG).	With the response from Charlene Koonce, the impact on the CARES plan should be minimal. Mrs. Koonce replied with a careful, neutral email/letter which answered MSgt. Keaton's questions.

Walla Walla, WA	Senator Murray was at a public meeting in Walla Walla on 7/1/03	AFGE rep from facility asked what her thoughts were on CARES and impact on Walla Walla	Senator Murray replied she was "opposed to any Mission changes including closure of beds at Walla Walla
Walla Walla, WA	Scott Gruber, congressional aid to Cong. George Nethercutt	Saw press release in local newspaper 7/25 re: CARES and wanted to know what was going on.	Mr. Gruber is well informed regarding CARES process. Is making call to DC office to inform congressman about change in proposals
Walla Walla, WA	Jessica Reyes, reporter for the Walla Walla Union Bulletin	Wanted facts and figures relating to the announcement of "the Presidents closure of VA hospitals"	Her questions were answered
Walla Walla, WA	veteran, Abogast	concerned about newspaper article in Union Bulletin 7/25 and where veterans will go for care	Questions answered
West Los Angeles HCS	Lisa Pinto District Director	Lisa wanted to make sure GLA was not holding back any information. She requested two color hard copies of the seventy-eight page Network report on CARES. She wanted insurance that nothing else was sent forward from the Network that she did not receive.	Action taken: Rtwo color copies of report from Network were sent to Lisa Pinto on 7-24-04. Impact on Plan: Will probably impact what the community and the congressional office will say in the future about the Newtorks CARES plan and committee
Wilkes-Barre, PA	Mike Kovalevich, veteran	Mike Kovalevich indicated that Sen. Specter visited the area of Bangor, PA and indicated his support of the CBOC initiative for that area. He said about 300 people attended the program. Mike also mentioned that the Senator will be revisiting the area in early August.	Strong support continues to be demonstrated by veterans from the Bangor, PA area for a CBOC in the area.
Wilkes-Barre, PA	Mr. Joseph Capozzolo, Mayor, Bangor, PA	The Mayor expressed a strong interest in providing oral testimony at the CARES Commission Hearing in August. He also indicated that he would also provide written testimony.	Mr. Capozzolo's name has been provided to Network 4 for consideration to provide oral testimony at the CARES Commission Hearing.
Wilmington, DE	Staff from Senator Biden's Washington office called requesting information on number of employees. Still concerned on outcome of CARES process as related to Delaware.		