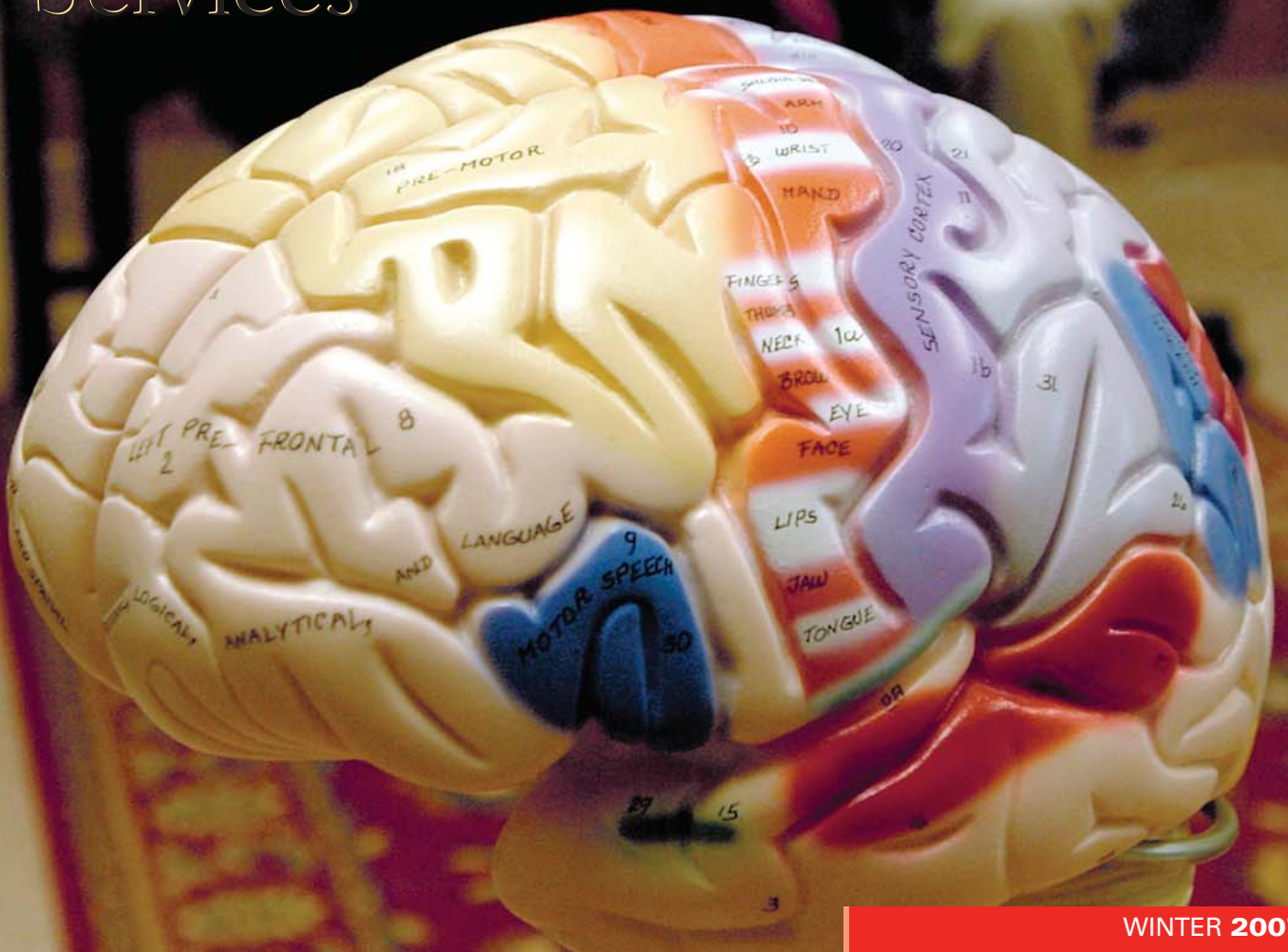


# VISN 4 Expands and Enhances Behavioral Health Services



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# Director's Message

Vision  
FOR  
Excellence



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VISN 4's *Vision for Excellence* is published for the employees, volunteers, patients and friends of VA Healthcare - VISN 4.

To submit articles, editorials, letters or story ideas for possible inclusion, please contact David Cowgill at 412-365-4052 or via email: david.cowgill@va.gov.

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Volume One | Issue Two

DEAR FELLOW EMPLOYEES, VOLUNTEERS, VETERANS AND FRIENDS OF VISN 4,

As the end of my first year as Director for the VA Healthcare – VISN 4 rapidly approaches; I find that I have many reasons to be proud of the success and achievements of this Network and am very much looking forward to leading VISN 4 to even further success in the coming years.

I have visited all 10 VA Medical Centers that comprise VISN 4 traveling to Delaware, West Virginia and throughout Pennsylvania. I truly enjoyed being able to tour each facility and having the opportunity to meet with the employees of VISN 4 that are working to make a difference in the lives of our veterans.

Some of the employees that are working diligently to improve services for veterans can be found in our behavioral health department. VISN 4 has created 221 new behavioral health positions in the past three years, 83 percent of these positions have been filled and VISN 4 is actively recruiting to fill the remaining positions. VISN 4 is committed to providing the highest quality mental health, substance use and psychosocial rehabilitation care to our veterans.

VISN 4 continues to improve services for veterans through the installation of self-service kiosks, which have automated patient check-in. All medical centers and many community based outpatient clinics will receive these kiosks. Many facilities have already begun to implement installation of the kiosks.

Please read on, in this issue of 'Vision for Excellence', to find out more about some of the accomplishments of our outstanding employees, the opening of a newly renovated, state-of-the-art Emergency Department located at the University Drive Division of the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System and watch out for Flu season.

Thank you for taking an interest in VISN 4!

Sincerely,

MICHAEL E. MORELAND, FACHE  
NETWORK DIRECTOR, VISN 4



Mr. Moreland receives his flu shot from Pamela Stock, a graduate nurse, during his site visit at VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System.



# Report Card

## OUTPATIENT STATISTICS

Network wide for FY2007 to Date:

**2,733,415**

outpatient hospital visits

**492,655**

home and community-based visits

## INPATIENT STATISTICS

Network wide for FY2007 to Date:

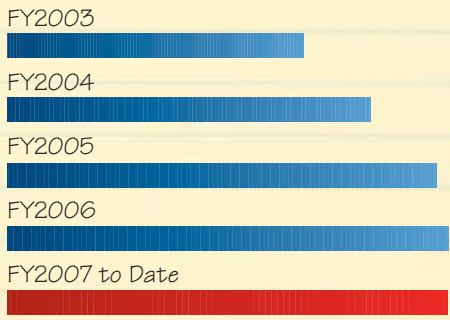
**25,881**

hospital admissions

**5,952**

nursing home and domiciliary admissions

## VISN 4 UNIQUE PATIENT GROWTH (ESTIMATED)

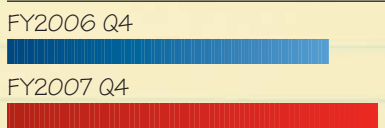


## FY07Q3 - VETERAN SATISFACTION (INPATIENT SATISFACTION, OUTPATIENT SATISFACTION AND PROVIDER WAIT TIME)

NOTE: VISN 4 is above the national average

	National	VISN 4 (Overall)
Inpatient Overall Quality (Mean)	77.4	80.1
Outpatient Overall Quality (Mean)	77.5	81.5
Provider Wait Time (Mean)	74.3	82.5

## MEDICAL CARE COLLECTION FUND COLLECTIONS THRU Q4:



\* All data for statistical information was collected in October 2007

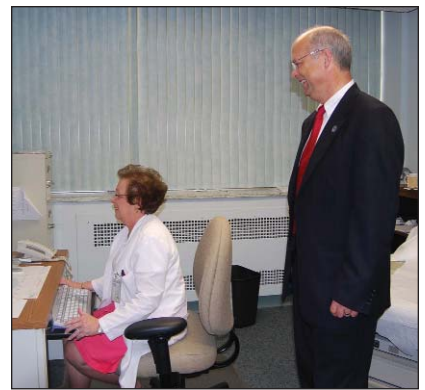
# Network Director Visits All 10 Facilities

Michael E. Moreland, VA Healthcare - VISN 4 Director, visited all 10 facilities within the VISN 4 beginning in January of 2007 and ending in October - one facility each month. He took the time and initiative to visit each facility and to tour each site so that he could better lead all of VISN 4 in the Vision for Excellence. ★

- Wilmington** January 23-24, 2007
- Clarksburg** February 26-27, 2007
- Philadelphia** March 27-28, 2007
- Wilkes-Barre** April 11-12, 2007
- Coatesville** May 22-23, 2007
- Erie** June 19-20, 2007
- Altoona** July 24-25, 2007
- Butler** August 28, 2007
- Lebanon** September 25-26, 2007
- Pittsburgh** October 30, 2007



Mr. Moreland and Clarksburg Medical Center Director, William E. Cox, view the Veterans Canteen Service (Cafeteria) for possible renovation, while Associate Director, Frank Miles, and John Bargo, Chief Facility Manager, look on at the Louis A. Johnson (Clarksburg) VAMC.



Janis Thompson, CRNP, demonstrates the SUN System to Mr. Moreland during his site visit to the James E. Van Zandt (Altoona) VAMC.



During his tour of the Butler VAMC, Mr. Moreland takes time out to visit with a nursing home patient.



Mr. Moreland shares a friendly greeting with Environmental Services staff member Jimmy Coyle at the Butler VAMC.

# VISN 4 Enhances Behavioral Health Services

THE MISSION of the VA Healthcare – VISN 4’s Behavioral Health Services is to provide the highest quality mental health, substance use and psychosocial rehabilitation care to veterans throughout Pennsylvania, Delaware, southern New Jersey and portions of West Virginia.

A primary focus of VISN 4’s behavioral health plan has been the implementation of the Recovery Model. A key component of the Recovery Model is ensuring that mental illness is not the center of the veteran’s world and that treatment is focused on restoring the capability of the veteran to the greatest extent possible. The Recovery Model is about promoting the highest level of wellness, happiness and life satisfaction for the veteran. The model reflects the fact that mental illness can be successfully treated and that people with mental illness can work, have relationships and lead fulfilling lives. The Recovery Model challenges VISN 4’s behavioral health staff to strive for continuous improvement in care for veterans with serious mental illnesses, substance abuse and homelessness while enhancing community and family involvement in the veterans’ treatment.

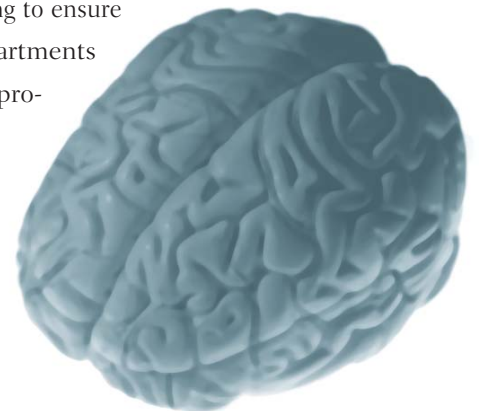


**VISN 4 has created 221 new positions in the past 3 years. 83 percent of these positions have been filled and VISN 4 is currently recruiting for more than 20 positions including: telemental health staff, suicide prevention coordinators, peer to peer support specialists, mental health nurses, psychologists,, mental health technicians and mental health social workers.**

## **VHA’s recent mental health enhancements include:**

- Employing more than 9,000 front-line mental health professionals, a 15 percent increase over four years ago
- Providing mental health services at each of VHA’s 153 medical centers and 900 outpatient clinics, and every VHA hospital now has special capabilities for treating post traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD)
- Increasing funding for readjustment counseling for veterans of Operation Iraq Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), including the hiring of 100 additional OIF/OEF veterans to enhance outreach to all veterans and those on active duty, in the National Guard or Reserves
- Hiring Suicide Prevention Coordinators for each of VHA’s medical centers and establishing an around the clock Suicide Prevention Hotline Center
- Increasing availability of “telemental health” programs, which treated about 20,000 patients last year
- Integrating mental health services into geriatric program;
- Adding psychologists and social workers to the staffs of VHA’s polytrauma centers
- Increasing the number of Vet Centers from 209 to 232, and adding 100 new combat veterans to run outreach programs to their former comrades

Key changes VISN 4 has recently made include a commitment to evaluate a veteran within 24 hours after the veteran has asked for or been referred for mental health or substance abuse treatment. If there is an emergency, our staff will conduct an immediate assessment and provide appropriate intervention. VISN 4 is also working to ensure that emergency departments have mental health professionals available around the clock, seven days a week.



## National Suicide Crisis Hotline for Veterans 1-800-273-TALK

TO ENSURE veterans with mental health crises have immediate access to trained coordinators, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has established a 24-hour, national suicide prevention hotline, 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

The hotline is based at the Canandaigua VA Medical Center in New York State. Staffed by mental health professionals, it operates seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

Dr. Janet Kemp, VA's national suicide prevention coordinator who also is associate director for education and training at the mental health Center of Excellence at Canandaigua, NY, said the hotline has received more than 1,000 calls from veterans since it became operational.

“This is quite literally a life and death situation for many of those who call, and we have already made a difference in a number of veterans’ lives,” Kemp said.

The Canandaigua-based hotline counselors who take the calls are professionally trained in crisis intervention in order to deal with any and all situations. They have referred more than 300 veterans to local suicide prevention coordinators or mental health professionals for further counseling and treatment. Several callers received emergency rescue services or urgent referrals to their VAs for immediate care.

Dr. Ira Katz, deputy chief patient care services officer for mental health for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), said the VA's Suicide Prevention Program is unique because the hotline counselors can deal with the immediate crisis and refer callers to the suicide prevention coordinators who can help the veteran receive needed mental health services or be admitted for treatment.

“This program gives us the ability to deal with the immediate crisis and to conduct follow up to make sure the veteran's mental health issues are dealt with on an ongoing, long-term basis to help prevent future situations from arising,” Katz said. ★

# Veterans get help...

DEAR DIRECTOR:

When I came to the *Lebanon VA facility* I was close to ending my life. My depression was out of control; my anxiety was thru the roof and my self-esteem was non-existent. All was lost! With the professionalism and care of the staff in Ward 1-3B I was diplomatically and professionally rescued and slowly brought back to normalcy. I feel great; I'm optimistic and I'm happy!

I thank the staff of Ward 1-3B and the VA Hospital at Lebanon for my rescue.

I've, unfortunately, been to a lot of VA hospitals and, by far, Lebanon is the best! There is no contest. It's the employees that, by far, make the difference – they care.

Sincerely Yours,  
Mr. G.



## Ford Appointed as Behavioral Health Manager/ Homeless Coordinator

LOVETTA FORD was appointed as the Behavioral Health Manager/Homeless Coordinator for VA Healthcare – VISN 4 July 8, 2007.

In this position, Ms. Ford will be responsible for the oversight of all behavioral health programs within VISN 4. “Being selected as the Behavioral Health Manager/Homeless Coordinator gives me a great opportunity to broaden my spectrum with the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, work with great people and to ensure that our veterans continue to receive great quality care and services,” said Ms. Ford.

Prior to this appointment Ms. Ford was the Program Leader for VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System's social work department at University Drive since 2001.

Ms. Ford received her master's degree from West Virginia University and began an internship with VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System. Once her internship was completed, Ms. Ford began an appointment with the acute psychiatry program then went on to work the substance abuse program and later became the coordinator for the Supportive Housing program followed by becoming the coordinator for the Health Care for Homeless Veterans program. ★

# And the Award goes to...



Team members from left to right: Jackie Teeter, Debbie Doria, BJ Parker, Kimberly Toland, Robin Lattieri, Vera Gehringer, Barbara Schuster, Cheryl Bencho and Sandra Kijek.

**VISN 4 and VISN 6** received the outpatient care, team contribution, award at the National Level for their accomplishments and contributions to the redesign of the Advanced Clinic Access Measurement Guide, which is a data management training manual for the Advanced Clinic Access performance measures and monitors. ★



First row (seated): Linda Stout, Roland Moore (former Wilkes-Barre VAMC Director, retired).  
Second row: Patricia Delisle, Thomas Patts, Valerie Boytin, Steven Kichka, Dr. Diane Smith and Dr. Mirza Ali

**Wilkes Barre VAMC** received a facility level award for the inpatient flow improvement, team contribution, category for their accomplishments and contributions that led to the redesign and improvement of inpatient flow. The basis for the award was the ongoing redesign along the health care continuum. The team stimulated process redesign at all levels of care by initiating 100 percent review of all admissions and continued stay days. This allowed the organization to “stress” the system and flush out process issues. The outcome was the creation of additional bed capacity and numerous process improvements. ★



**David E. Cowgill**, Public Affairs Officer for the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System and VISN 4, was selected as VHA Communicator of the Year for the 2007 VHA Excellence in

Communications Awards. The award was presented to Mr. Cowgill at the OPIA Conference in Cleveland on July 23. ★



**Melissa Heinlein**, Philadelphia VAMC Chief of Voluntary Services, was selected as the Evelyn Burston Award recipient for 2007. The award was presented to Ms. Heinlein on Oct. 11 in Pittsburgh at The Pennsylvania Society of Directors of Volunteer Services in Healthcare, Inc state conference. Each year the society selects one individual who demonstrates outstanding leadership in the field of volunteer

management. Ms. Heinlein’s leadership paralleled the innovations and accomplishments set forth by Evelyn Burston, who pioneered professionalism in the field of volunteer management in healthcare facilities. ★

# VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System Opens state-of-the-art Emergency Department.



VA PITTSBURGH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM now boasts a newly renovated, state-of-the-art Emergency Department located at the University Drive Division. Approximately 10,000 square feet was completely renovated for the Emergency Department that now includes a beautiful waiting area, check-in desk, 16 patient rooms, an ambulance bay large enough to accommodate three ambulances, office space, a conference room, a supply room and a break room for staff.

Although all 16 patient rooms can be used for the general patient population, some of the rooms were designed with special features to accommodate different types of patients. The respiratory isolation room was designed to treat patients who may have an infection such as tuberculosis that can be transmitted through the air. Two rooms were designed to treat psychiatric patients and feature garage-type doors that can be lowered to protect patients from accessing equipment that could harm themselves or others. A “major” room was built slightly larger than the others with the treatment of severe trauma patients in mind. The Emergency Department also has a room designed specifically for obstetrics and gynecology.

Construction of the Emergency Department began in October 2005 and was completed in June 2007 at a cost of \$3.74 million. The architect who designed the department was IKM Incorporated and Firsching, Marsteller, Rusbarky and Wolf Engineering, Inc. was the engineering firm; both are based in Pittsburgh. The contractor was Sterling Contracting LLC based in Homestead, Pa.

Staffed by attending physicians, residents, nurse practitioners, nurses and clerks, the Emergency Department is open 24 hours a day and treats an average of 65 patients a day. ★



## Veterans Are Experiencing More Ease than Ever When Checking In With VISN 4



*A veteran uses the self-service kiosk to check in at the Philadelphia VAMC.*

The VA Healthcare System has made enormous strides in improving patient services in order to continue the quality of world-class health care that veterans have come to expect and deserve. One such improvement has been the addition of automated patient check-in using self-service kiosks.

The VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System was the first within the VA Healthcare – VISN 4 network to automate

the patient check-in process in conjunction with the opening of their consolidated business service center in October 2005. VAPHS successfully implemented the VA's first comprehensive self-service pre-registration and patient check-in system. The patient self-service system has reduced manual efforts and costs associated with pre-registration while also reducing the wait time for patients.

The system allows a patient to self check-in for appointments by using a combination of the Veteran Identification Card (VIC) and touch screen input at the kiosk.

Numerous benefits have occurred following the installation of the self-service kiosks to include the support the system has provided in clearing thousands of errors present in the organization's Vista database. More than 8,000 corrections of addresses, next of kin, phone numbers and insurance information have been made and the ratio of patients pre-registering at VAPHS has increased by 20% since implementation in October 2005.

**The success of VAPHS has laid the ground work for implementation of the self-service kiosks at all facilities within the VA Healthcare – VISN 4.**

Philadelphia VAMC and Lebanon VAMC completed phase one of implementation in March of this year and are working to expand their capacity and implement additional functionalities. Butler VAMC began installation of the kiosks at the end of August. Clarksburg VAMC and Erie VAMC began installation of kiosks in October and Altoona VAMC and Wilmington VAMC will begin installation of kiosks by the end of November. Wilkes-Barre VAMC expects to begin installation in November. Numerous Community Based Outpatient Clinics will also receive the self-service kiosks. ★

# “Don’t Wait— Vaccinate!”

## Flu Shot

According to CDC each year in the United States, an average of 5% to 20% of the population gets the flu and each year more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications, and about **36,000 people die from the flu**.

Influenza—the flu—is a febrile (fever-causing) respiratory illness caused by an influenza virus. Both the illness and its serious medical complications can be prevented by vaccination.

It is highly recommended that the following people receive the ‘flu shot’ **each year in October or November** since most influenza activity occurs in January or later in most years:

- People 50 years of age and older
- People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
- Those who live in nursing homes and other long term care facilities
- Children aged 6 months until their 5th birthday and pregnant women
- Those who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from flu, including: healthcare workers, household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu and household contacts and out of home caregivers of children less than 6 months of age (these children are too young to be vaccinated).

Symptoms of influenza:

1. High fever (over 101°F)
2. Extreme fatigue and body or muscle aches lasting 3 to 4 days or more

## Pneumonia Shot

According to CDC, certain groups of people are considered to be at a particularly high risk for development of pneumonia. **As such, the CDC recommends vaccination for the identified risk groups.**

- people age 65 or older
- those who have chronic problems with their lungs, heart, liver or kidneys
- people with health problems like diabetes, alcoholism, or a disease or treatment which weakens the body’s immune system.

Pneumonia caused by pneumococcus infection is **responsible for more than 6,000 deaths per year in the US**, a high number for any vaccine-preventable disease. The viruses and bacteria that cause vaccine-preventable diseases and death still exist and can infect people who are not protected by vaccines.

Symptoms of pneumonia:

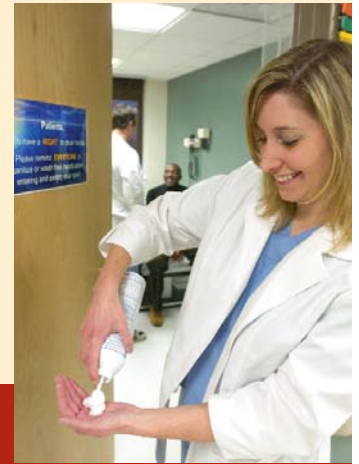
1. A high, persistent fever and chills
2. A productive cough
3. Shortness of breath

## MRSA — ‘Getting to Zero!’

‘Getting to Zero!’ is the VHA initiative to eliminate health care acquired MRSA infections from our hospitals. The VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System (VAPHS) was chosen to lead these efforts based on their success in reducing MRSA rates by 60%.

As of July 2007, all VISN 4 facilities have implemented the MRSA Prevention Initiative in their acute care divisions. Seven of the ten VISN 4 facilities have expanded the program to include their long-term care divisions. The Lebanon, Wilkes-Barre, Erie and Altoona medical centers have taken the initiative a step further by participating in community forums to educate local hospitals and nursing homes on effective MRSA reduction strategies.

Additionally, each VISN 4 facility has hired a MRSA Prevention Coordinator (MPC). The MPC ensures that patients and staff receive appropriate education, coordinate with infection control to track MRSA rates and manage the program on a daily basis.



### VISN 4 MRSA Prevention Coordinators:

Facility	MPC	Phone Number
Altoona	Jennifer Fouse	(814) 943-8164
Butler	Danielle Wiesenstien Sheila Howard	(724) 285-2248
Clarksburg	Brian Moreno	(304) 623-3235 x3534
Coatesville	Susan Burke	(610) 384-7711 x3817
Erie	Victoria Wiesner	(814) 860-2586
Lebanon	Teresa Haley	(717) 272-6621 x5452
Philadelphia	Brenda Foster	(215) 823-5800
Pittsburgh	Candace Cunningham (UD) Cheryl Creen (Heinz)	(412) 784-3632 (412) 688-5612
Wilkes-Barre	Colleen Chapple	(570) 824-3521 x7979
Wilmington	Rhonda Montgomery	(302) 994-2511 x4583

For more information on the VHA MRSA Initiative please visit the website at: [http://vawww.va.gov/pittsburgh/mrsa/mrsa\\_home.htm](http://vawww.va.gov/pittsburgh/mrsa/mrsa_home.htm) or contact the VHA MRSA Program Office at 412-688-6231. ★

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