ENGAGE IN EXCELLENCE

RALPH H. JOHNSON
VA Medical Center

STRATEGIC PLAN
2018-2021

RALPH H. JOHNSON
VA Medical Center
“To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan.”

- Abraham Lincoln
In early 2017, we began a journey called “Engage in Excellence.” We asked every employee to make their promise of what they would do to better serve Veterans. In November 2017, the senior leadership team invited a representative sample of service chiefs, supervisors and front-line employees to an annual facility strategic planning retreat. Some of the attendees were Veterans who receive their care at our facility. The purpose of the retreat was to provide a leadership and key stakeholder approach to the development of priorities aimed at improving the care and service we provide, and embracing the model of being an employer and health care provider of choice.

In the months following the retreat, we have refined and communicated our facility’s Mission and Vision - our “True North” - a foundation to guide us as we strive to achieve our goals and build trust in a continually changing world of health care. I am thrilled to share this Strategic Plan with each of you, and ask you to consider your role and how you can go beyond as we each lead our VA to Engage in Excellence every day.

VHA recently published the Veterans Health Administration 2018-2019 Operational Plan, a document similar to our facility Strategic Plan. The plan states, “The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will continue to transform into an organization that delivers an excellent customer experience.” VA’s vision is to become truly Veteran-centric through “building trust with Veterans and the American people by modernizing VA.” The plan also communicates VA’s Five Priorities on which our strategic plan is built:
VA’s Five Priorities

1. Providing Greater Choice for Veterans
2. Modernizing Our Systems
3. Focus Resources More Efficiently
4. Improve Timeliness of Services
5. Prevent Veteran Suicides

As we plan for this growth trend to continue, we must also expand access while maintaining the high level of quality and patient satisfaction this VA is recognized for.

Simply, there is more to be done because our Veterans deserve nothing less than the best in every aspect of their medical care and care experience. Our goal is to be the most trusted provider for their distinct clinical needs - a goal we will achieve as we continue our journey to be a High Reliability Organization. As stated in the Veterans Health Administration 2018-2019 Operational Plan, “VHA must deliver bold transformation to restore Veterans’ trust and position VA to be competitive within a dynamic, evolving health care market. As leadership has noted on repeated occasions, to rebuild trust within VA, we must strengthen our ability to provide timely and high-quality medical care while improving experiences and outcomes for Veterans seeking health care and benefits.”

Together, each of us must fulfill our responsibilities as health care professionals and Americans to serve our nation’s heroes every day, honoring them with our service just as they have honored each of us with our freedom.

Scott K. Grassie
ENGAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP, EXCELLENCE

Since beginning our Engage in Excellence journey, hundreds of our team members, volunteers and Veterans have participated in improvement teams and projects that yielded real results, such as scoring equal to or higher than the national average in 73 percent of All Employee Survey categories, leading VA in Tele-Mental Health encounters, creating new programs for employee development, and standardizing new patient orientations to help Veterans better navigate VA health care. We are sustaining improvements by continually engaging our team members, which will expand even more in coming years as we ask each of them to Engage in Leadership in their daily work, work teams, and as they develop professional skills for career advancement. The goal is simple … create a fully engaged workforce that leads by example with dedication to the mission and professionalism at every turn, resulting in excellent medical care and patient experiences that make our VA the trusted provider of choice for Veterans across the Lowcountry and beyond.
MISSION STATEMENT
RALPH H. JOHNSON
VA MEDICAL CENTER

“As a recognized VA and community health care leader, our mission is to embody the legacy of our namesake, Ralph H. Johnson, honoring and celebrating America’s Veterans by providing timely high-quality world-class health care, groundbreaking research, and cultivating tomorrow’s health care professionals in an environment where team members flourish and provide exceptional customer service.”

VISION STATEMENT
RALPH H. JOHNSON
VA MEDICAL CENTER

“Passionately pursuing ways to improve Veterans’ lives.”
Our strategic plan is based on five foundational Pillars of Excellence that set the priorities for our VA. These priorities support and are supported by VA’s Five Priorities. Each pillar focuses on purposeful key strategies that will help us achieve our strategic goals. The pillar strategies are designed to drive our work.
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The emotional commitment an employee has to an organization and its goals, how it influences his/her behaviors, and the level of effort in work related activities.
Employee Engagement

Engaged employees are fully invested in both their professional roles and the mission of their organization. To develop fully engaged employees, the organization must provide an environment free of discrimination and harassment, embrace a culture of servant leadership that promotes professional development and advancement for all, encourages initiative and collaboration, and recognizes employee achievements and excellence. The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center is implementing several strategies to further our commitment to employee engagement.

Strategies

1. Our VA will better serve Veterans when we actively hire a diverse workforce and cultivate a highly-motivated team of employees from different backgrounds that embraces each member’s unique skills, perspective and talents. We will transform our hiring interview process to not only identify knowledge, skills and abilities, but also measure job/employee fit, motivation and alignment with our cultural values.

2. Services to Veterans will continue to improve when employees are empowered to make greater contributions to the organization. We will transform our leadership approach from directing to coaching employees, which gives them greater autonomy and focuses their efforts on what they do best.

3. Employees who know their efforts are recognized and appreciated will be self-motivated and will motivate others to be engaged in creating a culture of excellence. We will create a recognition-rich culture with praise coming from multiple sources at multiple times so each employee feels valued, appreciated and rewarded for their ideas, efforts, talents and contributions.
STEWARDSHIP

Prudent and wise management of all resources to ensure the long-term health, success and viability of the organization and our stakeholders.
Effectively managing resources is essential to consistently provide the breadth and volume of high-quality medical services needed by our rapidly increasing, complex Veteran patient population in a changing health care marketplace. The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center is a recognized leader in efficiency – a legacy we will continue as we grow our areas of clinical and administrative expertise, and collaborate with our partners to offer the full gamut of medical treatments and clinical advancements to our patients. To achieve this goal, we are following strategies:

**STEWARDSHIP**

1. Good stewardship builds and maintains valued partnerships with community providers for continuity and quality of Veteran health care. We will become a payor of choice with Community Care vendors through collaboration, communication and timely payment.

2. We will be effective stewards of taxpayer funding by judiciously managing and operating within our facility budget and ensuring proper capture and reimbursement of relevant clinician workload.

3. We will make strategic make-buy decisions based on sound health care management, business principles and research to effectively and efficiently manage resources and best utilize medical center resources to include people, space and funding. These make-buy decisions will help determine in-house health care services and when to collaborate with partners for Veteran care.

**STRATEGIES**
QUALITY CARE

To be a Veteran-centric health care provider, we will continue to enable shared decision making and patient engagement in health care decisions and treatment plans by continually improving patient and provider communication and education, and further implementing patient focused care processes in a patient centered environment.
QUALITY CARE

The Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center team is committed to building on the trust our patients place in us to deliver the highest quality of care every time they need us. Our focus is two-fold: to be a High Reliability Organization utilizing world-class processes and evidence-based therapies that ensure the highest quality and safety for our patient; and to provide that care in a Veteran-centric environment that encourages patient participation in care decisions resulting in the best health outcomes and quality of life for each individual patient.

STRATEGIES

1. To empower Veteran patients to be full partners in their health care, we will employ shared decision making and patient engagement at all transactions of care by using effective patient-centric communication, offering a clinical pathway with relevant patient/family/caregiver education, and comprehensive easy access to support systems and models of success at each transition of care. We will also help Veterans better understand and navigate the health care marketplace to support positive outcomes through patient engagement and coordination of care.

2. We will ensure we consistently provide quality care, health care innovations discovered through collaboration with other VA hospitals, and transitional research focused on medical needs prevalent in Veteran patients in a high reliability medical center that is as good as or better than the community and the rest of VA.

3. We will improve important clinical documentation to support enhanced clinical care and communication among health care staff. We will create opportunities for relevant, streamlined and accurate clinical documentation episodes.
The Veteran Experience is the sum of all interactions, shaped by an organization’s culture, that influence patients’ perceptions across the continuum of care.
VETERAN EXPERIENCE

At the Ralph H. Johnson VAMC, our goal is to provide positive, memorable patient experiences at every point of Veteran/employee engagement that enhances the patient’s care and serves to positively impact health outcomes. Simply, this means to care for and treat our Veteran patients with the respect, understanding and compassion we would want for our loved ones or ourselves. We are fully committed to achieving this level of compassionate service and are implementing the following strategies to do so:

STRATEGIES

1. Creating a lasting impression of personal attention and compassion that honors the Veteran and builds their trust in VA by transforming behavior to drive positive employee-patient interactions to create a culture of service.

2. We will create a transparent patient experience measurement system that allows for benchmarking and is visible to all levels of the organization.

3. We will enhance the patient experience through foundational and innovative tactics that build employee knowledge and understanding of experience touch points and engage employees in identified opportunities to positively impact patient experience.
MANAGING GROWTH

Strategically planning for expanding the organization with a focus on Veteran patient growth and the needs for infrastructure and resources to meet their health care needs both now and in the years to come.
MANAGING GROWTH

As one of the fastest growing VAMCs in the country for percent unique Veteran patient increase, effectively planning to meet our patients’ demand for needed health care is critical to fulfilling our mission. We must continue to expand health care services and access to those services in all clinical areas for both outpatient and inpatient care, while also sustaining a solid infrastructure of appropriate space, staffing and other resources to support our Veterans’ needs. We are implementing these strategies to achieve this goal:

1. Because our VA’s patient population continues to grow at a very rapid rate each year, we must develop a proactive plan to ensure staffing and resources are in place at the right time to meet demand for services. We will continue to develop clinical programs, infrastructure and capacity to sustain and expand clinical services in inpatient and outpatient care settings in the locations and at times that are convenient for our highly complex Veteran patient population.

2. To continue providing timely access to care for Veteran patients, we must effectively and efficiently utilize all current and future space and resources, and follow an effective methodology for proactive planning for personnel and capital needs.
CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

A lot of great things have happened at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center since we began our journey to Engage in Excellence. Employees from across the facility have engaged in exciting activities supported by the strategic planning framework. Our strategic plan sets the course for us to continue our journey, and as we do so, we recognize that with such a great team, even greater things are possible.

Now, we ask once again the question we each must answer every day …

WHAT WILL YOU DO? to better serve our Veterans today.