

Michigan Center for Rural Health

IREACH – Rural Veterans



I-REACH
Improving Veterans Access
to Healthcare



*Improving Rural Enrollment,
Access, and Health in Rural
Veterans*

(I-REACH Rural Veterans)

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Program Manager

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What I-REACH Does

- ❖ Promotes “Asking the Question” “**Have You Served?**”
 - Screening during intake.
- ❖ Assists facilities and providers in joining the VA Community Care Network, through Optum.
- ❖ Coordinates the U.P. Together With Veterans Program.
- ❖ Promotes other agency programs.



I-REACH
*Improving Veterans Access
to Healthcare*



**MICHIGAN CENTER
for
RURAL HEALTH**

Veterans Care in the Community, Today's Objectives

1. Importance of screening for military service
2. Advantages of being in the VA Community Care Network, including Urgent Care services
3. Learn about the Request For Services process including:
 - a. Prescription procedures and payment processes
 - b. VA billing procedures including Medicare/ Medicaid & Medicare Supplemental services
4. Partnering with your local VA Medical Center



Veterans Care in the Community, Presenters

❖ Tim Ellison, Public Affairs Office, Iron Mountain VA

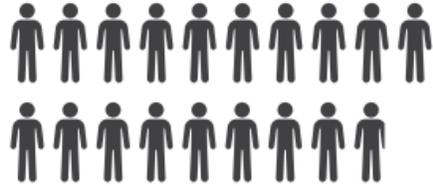


Veteran Population & Access to Benefits

United States

20.7
Million Veterans

18.9
Million
Males



1.8
Million
Females



Veterans that do not receive
VA benefits or services.

10.2
million

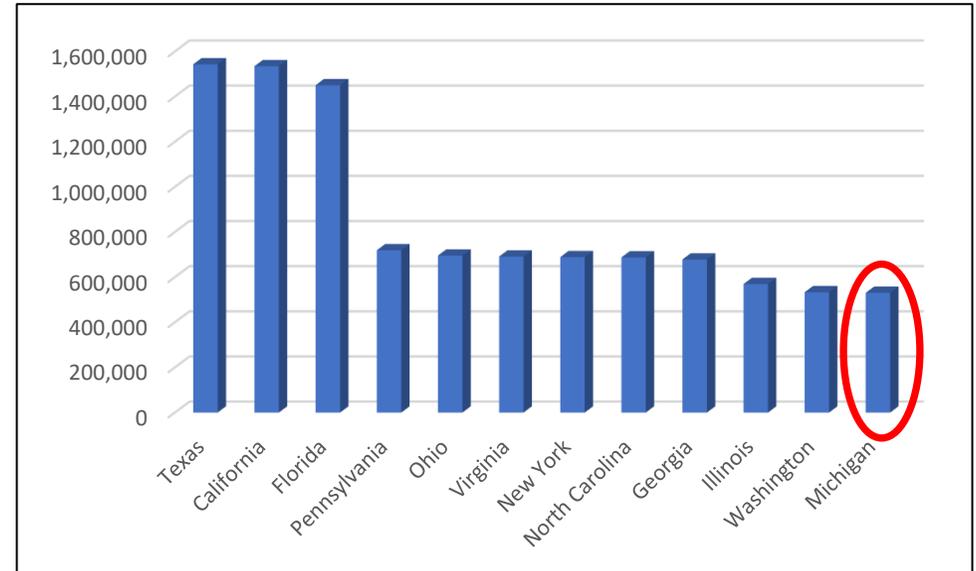
9.7
million

Veterans that use at least one
VA benefit or service.

Of these, about **6 million** Veterans
receive VA health care (about **30%**
of all U.S. Veterans).

Of the approximately 20 million Veterans in the U.S., less than 10 million receive one or more benefits or services from VA. Of these, approximately 6 million receive VA health care

State of Michigan



Michigan has one of the largest Veteran populations in the country, ranking 12th in 2021 with over 530,000 Veterans

Over 372,000 had not received treatment
at a VA facility in 2022 (71%)

“Have You Served?” Screening during intake

- ❖ **Less than 50% of Veterans are connected** to all their earned military benefits. Awareness and how to get started are largest barriers.
- ❖ Connection to benefits saves lives and improves quality of life; we need help identifying those who have served.
- ❖ A national movement, aligns with SAMHSA and VA programs (Governors Challenge), promoted by the American Academy of Nursing & many other health organizations.



How to Ask

- “Have you served?” versus “Are you a Veteran?” enables those who do not feel comfortable or don't identify as a Veteran to be recognized.
- Even better: “Have you, a family member, or member of your household ever served in the military?”



Ask the Question

“Have You Served?”

It's the right thing to do

“Have You Served?” Screening during intake

Reporting Year	Number of Unique Patients (less children under age 18)	Number of Veterans identified	Percentage of total patients	Percentage of adult patients
2015	17,459 (11,937)	56	.32%	.46%
2016	16,221 (11,306)	229	1.41%	2.01%
2017	16,827 (11,370)	506	3.01%	4.45%
2018	17,976 (12,182)	527	2.93%	4.37%
2019	17,641 (11,461)	555	3.14%	4.84%

The change was made to the EMR in February 2017

Howren MB, Kazmerzak D, Kemp RW, Boesen TJ, Capra G, Abrams TE. Identification of Military Veterans Upon Implementation of a Standardized Screening Process in a Federally Qualified Health Center. *J Community Health*. 2020 Jun;45(3):465-468. doi: 10.1007/s10900-019-00761-3. PMID: 31620908.



“Have You Served?” Screening during intake

Veterans have unique health care needs, disease patterns, experiences and cultural backgrounds.

More likely than non-veterans to have:

- ❖ Toxic exposures: Agent Orange, contaminated water, burn pits, asbestos, radiation, etc.
- ❖ Diabetes, ALS, chronic pain, moral injury, and adverse childhood experiences (increases risk for PTSD and suicide), etc.
- ❖ Vaccines and/or exposure to hepatitis A & B, rabies, typhoid, cholera, yellow fever, anthrax, smallpox, malaria, botulinum toxoid, meningitis, PB, etc., etc.,



Screening during intake / Presumptive Conditions

Post-traumatic osteoarthritis
Heart disease or hypertensive vascular disease
Psychosis
Any of the anxiety states
Dysthymic disorder (or depressive neurosis)
Organic residuals of frostbite
Stroke and the residual effects
Osteoporosis, when the Veteran has posttraumatic stress disorder
Beriberi (including beriberi heart disease)
Chronic dysentery
Helminthiasis

Malnutrition (including optic atrophy)
Pellagra
Other nutritional deficiencies
Irritable bowel syndrome
Peptic ulcer disease
Peripheral neuropathy
Cirrhosis of the liver
Avitaminosis
Osteoporosis
AL amyloidosis
B-cell leukemia
Chronic lymphocytic leukemia
Multiple myeloma
Type 2 diabetes
Hodgkin's disease

Ischemic heart disease (including but not limited to, coronary artery disease and atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease)
Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
Parkinson's disease
Parkinsonism
Prostate cancer
Respiratory cancers
Soft-tissue sarcoma (not including osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma or mesothelioma)

Bladder cancer
Hypothyroidism
Hypertension
Monoclonal gammopathy of underdetermined significance (MGUS)
Acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy
Chloracne or other similar acneform disease
Porphyria cutanea tarda



Screening during intake / Presumptive Conditions

Atomic Veterans exposed to ionizing radiation
Participated in atmospheric nuclear testing
All forms of leukemia, except chronic lymphocytic leukemia
Thyroid cancer
Breast cancer
Pharynx cancer
Esophagus cancer
Stomach cancer
Small intestine cancer
Pancreatic cancer
Bile ducts cancer
Gall bladder cancer

Salivary gland cancer
Urinary tract cancer
Brain cancer
Bone cancer
Lung cancer
Colon cancer
Ovary cancer
Bronchioloalveolar carcinoma
Multiple myeloma
Lymphomas, other than Hodgkin's disease
Primary liver cancer, except if there are indications of cirrhosis or hepatitis B
Chronic fatigue syndrome

Fibromyalgia
Irritable bowel syndrome
Fatigue
Skin symptoms
Headaches
Muscle pain
Joint pain
Neurological or neuropsychological symptoms
Symptoms involving the upper or lower respiratory system
Sleep disturbance
Gastrointestinal symptoms
Cardiovascular symptoms

Weight loss
Menstrual disorders
Brucellosis
Campylobacter jejuni
Coxiella burnetii (Q fever)
Nontyphoid Salmonella
Shigella
West Nile virus
Malaria
Mycobacterium tuberculosis
Visceral leishmaniasis



Screening during intake / Presumptive Conditions

Squamous cell carcinoma of the larynx

Squamous cell carcinoma of the trachea

Adenocarcinoma of the trachea

Salivary gland-type tumors of the trachea

Adenosquamous carcinoma of the lung

Large cell carcinoma of the lung

Salivary gland-type tumors of the lung

Sarcomatoid carcinoma of the lung

Typical and atypical carcinoid of the lung

Brain cancer

Gastrointestinal cancer of any type

Glioblastoma

Head cancer of any type

Kidney cancer

Lymphatic cancer of any type

Lymphoma of any type

Melanoma

Neck cancer of any type

Pancreatic cancer

Reproductive cancer of any type

Respiratory cancer of any type

Asthma that was diagnosed after service

Chronic bronchitis

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

Updated October 2022



“Have You Served?” Screening during intake

Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act of 2022 (PACT Act)

- ❖ A new law, and the most significant expansion and extension of Veteran benefits, eligibility, and care in more than 30 years.
- ❖ Previously not eligible / denied, as of March 5, 2024, most are eligible for VA healthcare.
- ❖ Could benefit nearly all U.S. Veterans and their families, including the over **530,000 veterans in Michigan**.



Success Stories!!

A woman 92 years young was asked, and she acknowledged being a Veteran. She was referred to the VA and received assistance with her in-home care needs.

A man in hospice care with lung cancer was asked. He served in the Navy and was exposed to asbestos. He had not applied for disability from the VA. He was connected to the local Veteran Service Officer and filed a claim. After he passed, his widow received a pension based on this disability.

An older woman was asked, and she acknowledged being a military widow. The provider helped her access health insurance coverage to use services at the VA Medical Center, saving her a precious \$300 a month.



“Have you or member of your household ever served in the military?”

Participate in the VA Community Care Network

- ❖ Over 1/2 of all Veterans are enrolled in VA healthcare.
 - As of March 5, 2024, millions more are eligible
 - Over 1/3 receive care via VA Community Care Network
- ❖ More in-network providers are needed (through Optum)
 - VA is short-handed.
 - Distance to the nearest VA provider can be a barrier.



Join the VA Community Care Network (CCN)

- ❖ VA MISSION Act of 2018 established the Veterans Community Care Program (VCCP).
 - VA can purchase health care services from community.
- ❖ VA is improving relations with community providers.
- ❖ VA CCN addresses previous challenges, including claims processing and billing.



Join the VA Community Care Network (CCN)

- ❖ CCN is VA's network of community providers – built and managed by Optum.
- ❖ CCN works better than VA's previous networks.
- ❖ Improved customer service between VA and the Third-Party Administrator, which is now Optum.



Support and Sponsor U.P. Together With Veterans

- ❖ Rural Veteran suicide prevention program.
 - Encouraging participation in healthcare and well-being activities.
 - Organizing events for Veterans, their families and their caregivers.





Connecting service members, Veterans, their families, and their caregivers with care services and well-being activities



Help us improve Veterans access to healthcare



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Department of Veterans Affairs Healthcare Administration

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Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)



Administers Benefits
(Compensation, Pension, Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment, Education, Home Loan Guaranty, and Life Insurance)

Veterans Health Administration (VHA)



Provides Healthcare Services
(Primary Care, Mental Health, and Specialty Care); Veteran-Focused Services (Amputation Care, TBI, PTSD, Spinal Cord Care, etc); and Long-Term Care

National Cemetery Administration (NCA)



Honors Veterans & families with final resting places & commemorates their service and sacrifice

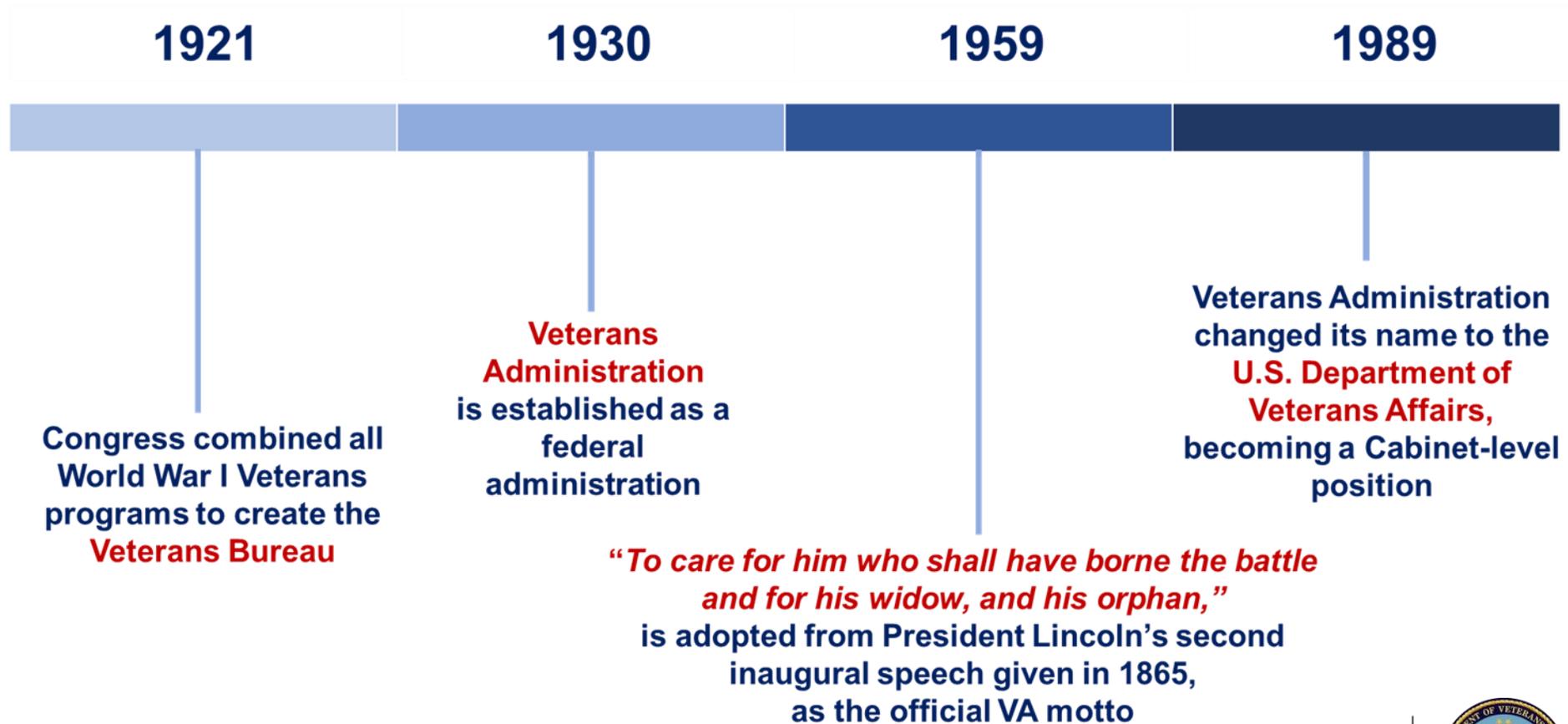
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History of VA



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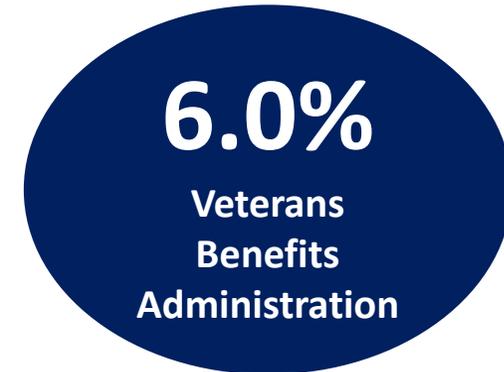
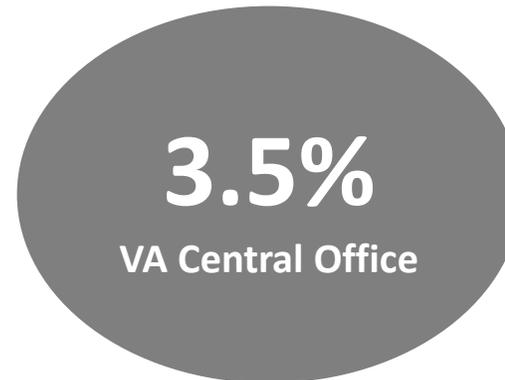
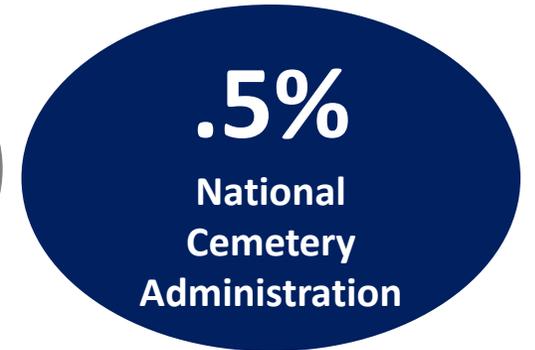
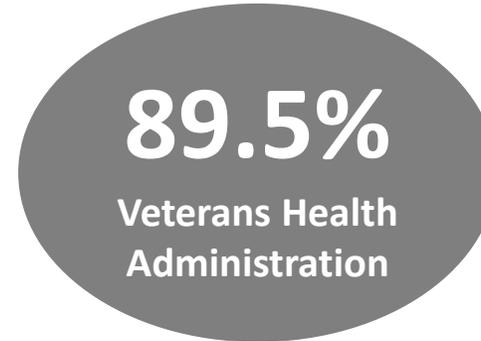
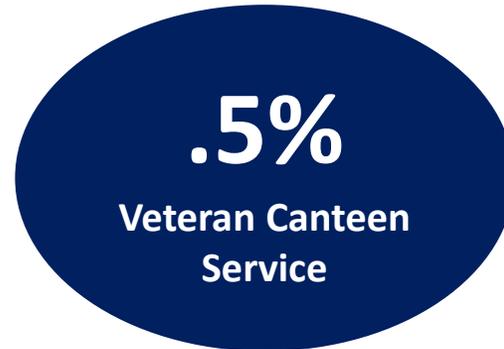


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Who are we?

427,000
Employees
29%
Veterans



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Overview – VA Sites of Care

Number of VA Medical Centers: **172**

Number of VA Outpatient Sites: **1,138**

Number of VA Vet Centers: **300**

Number of VBA Regional Offices: **60**

Number of VA National Cemeteries: **155**



VA Eastern Colorado Health Care System



*Orlando VA
Medical Center*

*VA Southern Nevada
Healthcare System*

*Southeast Louisiana Veterans
Health Care System*



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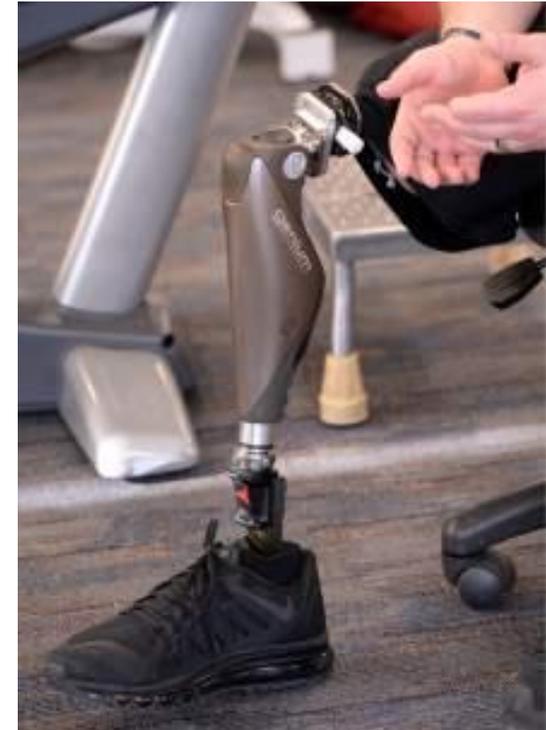
Leaders in Medical Research

Awards

- 3 Nobel Prizes
- 6 Lasker Awards

Developments

- First Successful Liver Transplant
- Artificial Kidney
- CT Scanner
- Cardiac Pacemaker
- Nicotine Patch
- Vaccine for Shingles (Assisted)
- Cutting edge work in advanced prosthetic devices (including hydraulic knees and robotic arms).



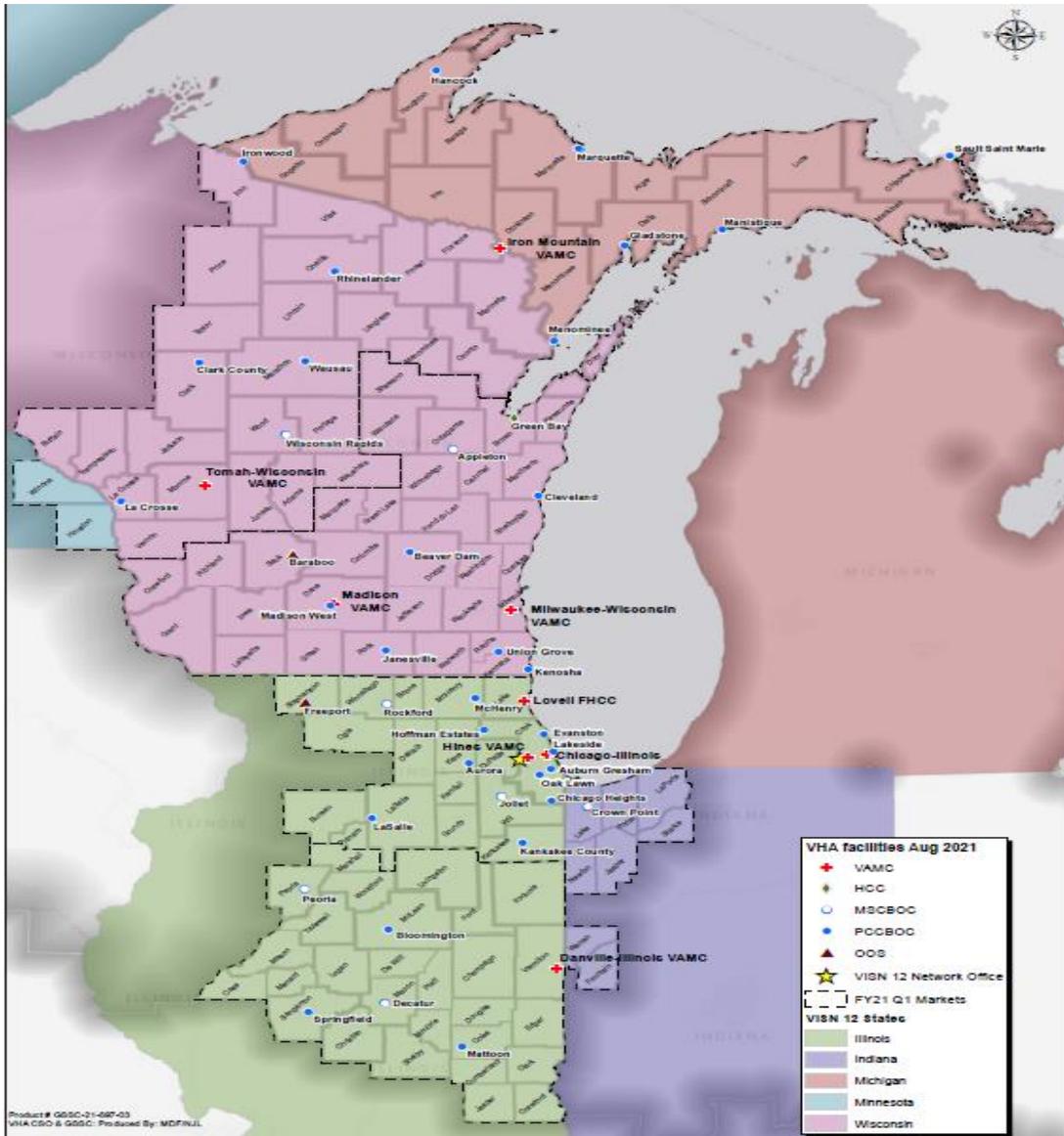
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Hospital System to Health System

Iron Mountain VAMC is part of the VISN 12 VA Great Lakes Health Care System.

In 1996, VA began the creation of Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) to transform VA Health Care from a “*Hospital System*” to a “*Health System*.” VHA currently has 18 VISNs.



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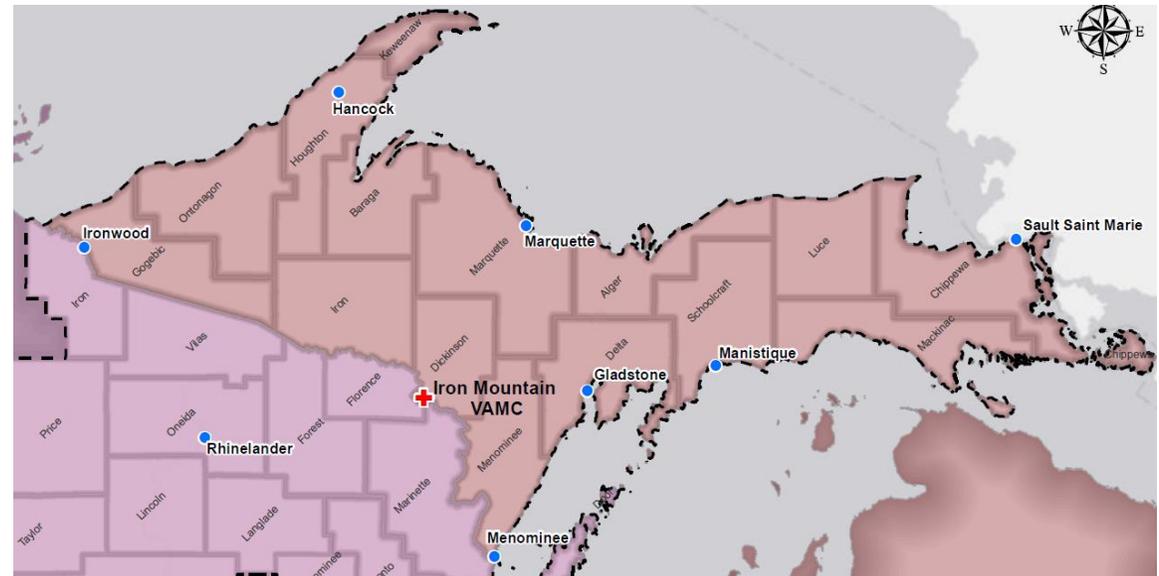
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Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center

MISSION: Improving the health and well-being of Veterans through exceptional, comprehensive and compassionate care.

VISION: Medical Center of Choice!



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Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center
325 East H Street, Iron Mountain, MI 49870 | Ph: (906) 774-3300
Outpatient Visits: 144,946 Veterans Served: 21,060

Gladstone VA Community Outpatient Clinic
2001 Minneapolis Ave, Gladstone, MI 49837
Outpatient Visits: 12,519 Veterans Served: 1,757



Hancock VA Community Outpatient Clinic
787 Market Street, Suite 9, Hancock, MI 49930
Outpatient Visits: 12,107 Veterans Served: 1,916

Ironwood VA Community Outpatient Clinic
629 West Cloverland Drive, Suite 1, Ironwood, MI 49938
Outpatient Visits: 3,685 Veterans Served: 1,039



Manistique VA Outpatient Clinic
813 East Lakeshore Drive, Manistique, MI 49854
Outpatient Visits: 4,496 Veterans Served: 792

Marquette VA Outpatient Clinic
1414 West Fair Avenue, Suite 285 Marquette, MI 49855
Outpatient Visits: 15,816 Veterans Served: 3,190

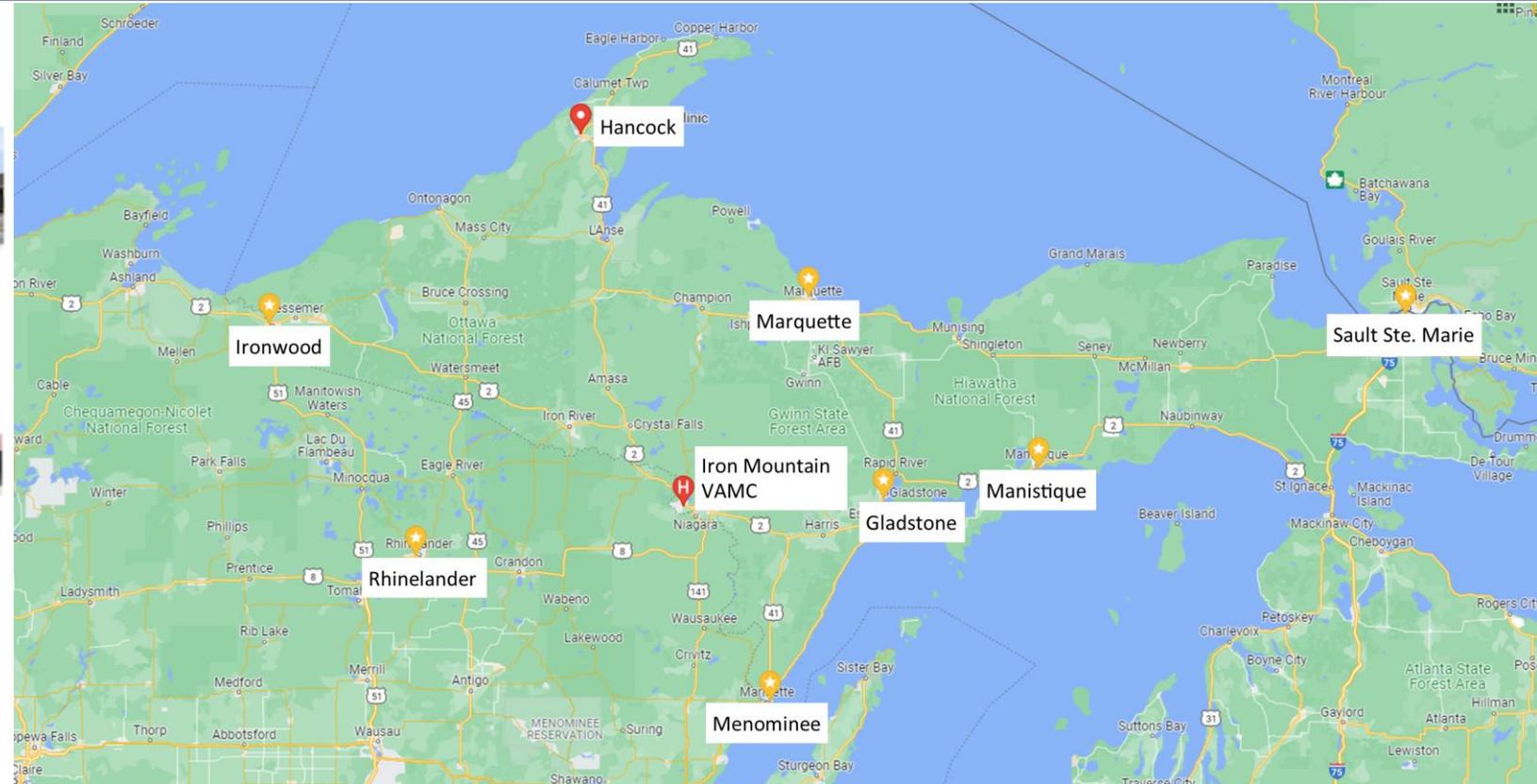


Menominee VA Outpatient Clinic
1110 10th Avenue, Suite 101, Menominee, MI 49858
Outpatient Visits: 4,754 Veterans Served: 1,305

Rhinelanders VA Outpatient Clinic
639 West Kemp Street, Rhinelanders, WI 54501
Outpatient Visits: 13,696 Veterans Served: 3,175



Sault Ste. Marie VA Outpatient Clinic
3440 1-75 Business Spur, Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783
Outpatient Visits: 9,325 Veterans Served: 1,461



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Primary and Specialty Care Services offered on site include:

- ALS clinic
- Audiology
- Anticoagulation
- Cardiology
- Diabetes Education
- Dental
- Geriatrics/Extended Care
- Home Based Primary Care
- Mental Health
- MOVE/Weight Management
- Nutrition
- Occupational Therapy
- Oncology/Hematology

- Optometry
- Orthopedic
- Palliative/Hospice
- Pain Management
- Physical Therapy
- Podiatry
- Primary Care
- Women's Wellness
- Whole Health
 - Health Coaching
 - Acupuncture
 - Chiropractic
 - Massage Therapy
 - Tai Chi
 - Exercise
 - Take Charge of My Life

- Prosthetics
- PTSD
- Psychiatry
- Radiology
- CPAP education
- Speech
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Substance Abuse
- Surgery
- Urology

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OGJVAMC Expanding Telehealth

- Using **state of the art** telehealth audio visual technology to deliver health care to rural Veterans.
- First to use telehealth technology (telepathology) in 1996 and now **expanded to 54 specialty care areas.**
- **Benefits:** Decreases travel costs, saves time, and increases access to specialty care in rural areas. **Enhances, but does not replace, face-to-face care.**

- ALS Care
- Audiology
- Behavioral Health (Gen)
- Cardiac Device - Medtronic
- Cardiac Device - St. Jude
- Cardiology
- Cardio Arrhythmia
- Comp & Pension (MH)
- Dermatology
- Diabetes
- Diabetic Education
- Endocrinology
- Epilepsy
- GI
- Hematology
- Hepatology
- Home Based Care
- Infectious Disease
- Mental health
- Multiple Sclerosis
- Nephrology
- Neurology
- Nutrition
- Occupational Health
- Orthopedic
- Pain University
- Palliative Care

- Pathology
- Pharmacy
- Plastic Surgery
- Post-Op Surgery
- Pre-Natal
- Pre-Op Anesthesia
- Primary Care
- Prosthetics
- PT/OT DME Education
- Psychiatry
- PTSD
- Pulmonology
- Retinal Imaging
- Rheumatology
- Sleep Clinic
- Social Work
- Speech
- Spinal Cord Injury
- Spirometry
- Substance Abuse
- Thoracic Surgery
- Transplant Care
- Urology
- VA Video Connect
- Weight Mgt - Individual
- Weight Mgt – Group



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Veteran Transportation – VTS & VTN

Veteran Transportation Service (VTS)

- **One coach bus** for twice weekly trips to Milwaukee VAMC for specialty care appointments.
- **4 dedicated drivers and vehicles** to transport Veterans to/from VA appointments.
- Focusing on Veterans within a 50-mile radius of the IM VAMC.
- Weekly route to Marquette CBOC.



Veteran Transportation Network (VTN sponsored by Disabled American Veterans)

- **10 DAV van routes** operated by **125** volunteer drivers.
- During FY23, drivers logged **166,384** miles and **6,454** hours transporting **1,555** Veterans to their appointments.
- **ALL Veterans** qualify for this **FREE** service.



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Satisfaction Metrics	National	Iron Mountain
Overall Rating of Hospital (9 or 10)	FY21 – 69% FY22 – 69% FY23 – 71%	FY21 – 88% FY22 – 89% FY23 – 89%
Overall Rating of Primary Care Provider (9 or 10)	FY21 – 73% FY22 – 73% FY23 – 73%	FY21 – 78% FY22 – 81% FY23 – 81%
Overall Rating of Specialty Care Provider (9 or 10)	FY21 – 74% FY22 – 74% FY23 – 75%	FY21 – 76% FY22 – 83% FY23 – 83%

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Best Patient Experience Award

OGJVAMC is the only VAMC to receive a Best Patient Experience Award five consecutive years, every year since the awards inception.



FY 2018 Facility Complexity Level 3 Best Experience Award

FY 2019 Facility Complexity Level 3 Best Experience Award

FY 2020 VHA's Best Overall Experience

FY 2021 Facility Complexity Level 3 Best Experience Award

FY 2023 VHA's Best Overall Experience

*Three years, OGJVAMC won for the best Small level facility.
Two years, OGJVAMC won for the best overall out of all VAs!*

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OGJVAMC Accreditations



The Joint Commission (TJC) - for the Hospital and programs in Home Care, Pathology and Laboratory Service, and Behavioral Health Care. TJC is the leading accreditor of health care organizations in America.

Ascellon (Long Term Care) - is a leading organization focused on long term care quality and performance improvement, compliance program development, and review in long term care, hospice and other residential care settings.

Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) - for OGJVAMC's Health Care for Homeless Veterans Program and E-Range Program.

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Making the connection!

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Iron Mountain VA Medical Center contacts:

Public Affairs: Tim Ellison

Email: Timothy.Ellison@va.gov

Phone: 906-774-3300 X32001

Patient Advocate Office:

Phone: 906-774-3300 X34400



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PACT Act

March 5, 2023 expansion

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The PACT Act outlines common exposures or hazards Veterans may have experienced during their military service and assumes presumptive conditions can be caused by those toxins.

Chemicals	Herbicides (Agent Orange) used during Vietnam era, burn pits, sulfur fire in Iraq, Camp Lejeune water supplies, pesticides used during Gulf War, depleted uranium, industrial solvents
Air Pollutants	Burn pits, oil well fire during Gulf War, sulfur fire in Iraq, Atsugi (Japan) waste incinerator, sand, dust, and very small, fine particles or liquid droplets
Occupational Hazards	Asbestos, industrial solvents, lead, radiation, vibration, noise, fuels, polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs), and special paint used on military vehicles
Radiation	Nuclear weapons and testing, x-rays, depleted uranium
Warfare Agents	Chemical weapons, Project 112/Project Shipboard Hazard and Defense (SHAD), herbicide tests and storage, and chemical experiments

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**Direct enroll in VA healthcare
based on toxic exposures.**

Call the Healthcare Enrollment Center
1-877-222-VETS (8387)

Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

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Helpful websites

PACT Act additional information

<https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/>

Registries

[Environmental Health Registry Evaluation for Veterans - Public Health](#)

PACT Act performance data

[PACT Act Performance Dashboard \(va.gov\)](#)

List of military exposures

[Military Exposures - Public Health \(va.gov\)](#)



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The Mission Act of 2018

Eligibility

- **Must receive approval from VA prior to obtaining care from a community provider.**
- **Must be enrolled in VA health care and have received VA care or community care within the last 24 months.**

Criteria

- **Services not available through VA medical facility, VA cannot provide care within access standards, or best medical interest.**

Access Standards	Primary Care, Mental Health, Noninstitutional	Specialty Care
Drive Time	30 minutes	60 minutes
Wait Time	20 days	28 days

REMEMBER: Community care must be PRE-AUTHORIZED and is TIME SENSITIVE. Monitor referral dates and review approval letters for detailed information.

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Top 10 by VAMC

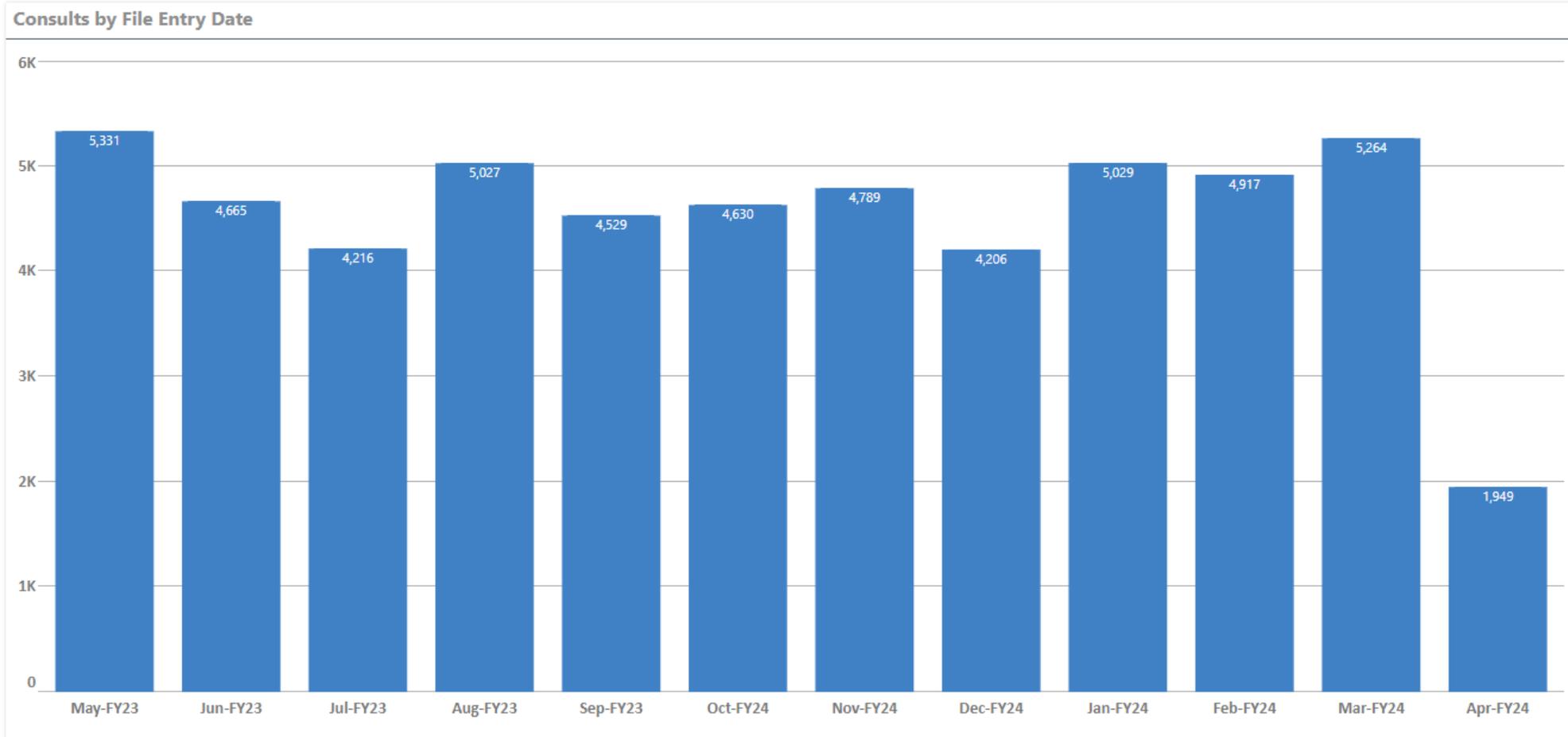
V12, CommunityCare, (V12) (585) Iron Mountain, MI HCS, FY24

Consult Service Name	Consults							
	Oct-FY24	Nov-FY24	Dec-FY24	Jan-FY24	Feb-FY24	Mar-FY24	Apr-FY24	Consults Sub Totals
COMMUNITY CARE-CARDIOLOGY	275	268	215	296	292	329	116	1,791
COMMUNITY CARE-DERMATOLOGY	228	280	201	254	281	320	138	1,702
COMMUNITY CARE-ORTHO GENERAL	266	256	264	290	252	270	86	1,684
COMMUNITY CARE-CHIROPRACTOR	207	233	211	263	233	287	92	1,526
COMMUNITY CARE-DENTAL	181	238	171	294	274	247	55	1,460
COMMUNITY CARE-RADIOLOGY	180	180	224	239	170	214	88	1,295
COMMUNITY CARE-UROLOGY	183	200	134	182	212	165	75	1,151
COMMUNITY CARE-OPTOMETRY	144	159	142	178	186	197	62	1,068
COMMUNITY CARE-IMAGING ULTRASND	168	152	150	176	155	169	77	1,047
COMMUNITY CARE-OPHTHALMOLOGY	151	175	147	137	179	187	71	1,047
Grand Totals	1,983	2,141	1,859	2,309	2,234	2,385	860	13,771



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