



VETERANS  
EXPERIENCE  
OFFICE

# VA CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS REPORT

NOVEMBER 2020



VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs



Choose **VA**



*“Our first priority is customer service. That’s the prime directive.”*

—VA Secretary Robert Wilkie

## In 2015, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) embarked on the noble and innovative mission

of adopting and applying the best practices of customer experience (CX) from government and industry to our delivery of care, benefits, and memorial services for all our Veterans. The Veteran Experience Office (VEO) was established in the Office of the Secretary to lead the enterprise-wide goal to hardwire the “voice of the Veteran” into all policy, planning, programs, and practices to improve Veterans’ customer experience, earn their trust, and give them every reason to Choose VA.

In 2018, Secretary Wilkie reinforced these initial foundational actions by making CX his number one priority not only for Veterans but for their families, caregivers, survivors, and for all VA employees.

The accomplishments in this document represent just some of the major achievements in the strategic deployment of VEO’s shared CX capabilities—data, tools, technology, and engagement—to all customers over the last 5 years:

- » **Data**—such as the 65 VSignals surveys that have captured 5.8 million responses including 2.2 million free-text comments.
- » **Tools**—like the initial deployment VA’s “Own the Moment” CX training to over 100,000 employees, and the deployment of Red Coat Ambassadors to improve patients’ experience at VA health care facilities.
- » **Technology**—like the White House VA Hotline and 1-800-MYVA411 Contact Center that have answered nearly 2.8 million customer calls, and a redesigned VA.gov that has improved Veterans’ access to information.
- » **Engagement**—such as the #VetResources newsletter and #VetXL virtual events that have 238 million e-mail opens and video views, 44 million clicks to resources, and have answered more than 9,600 customer questions.

These have enabled us to listen to and learn from our Veterans, their families, caregivers, survivors, and employees in real time and to deliver more rapid, results-driven responses to their requests and recommendations.

To institutionalize the mission of customer service, VA also published our first-ever CX policy in 2018, and in 2019, codified CX Principles in the Code of Federal Regulations (38 C.F.R. Part 0 Subpart A § 0.603) as part of our Core Values. Enterprise-wide governance councils are now in place to standardize service recovery, modernize VA’s contact centers and digital platforms, and better coordinate outreach to our Veteran customers and to non-profit and Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), and the state and local agencies and community and corporate partners that also support them. These and other forward-leaning actions earned VA the designation of lead agency partner for the Cross-Agency Priority (CAP) Goal in CX from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Policies, regulations, and governance are essential to establish and sustain CX, but at VA we know that they alone do not make exceptional—easy, effective, emotionally resonant, and trustworthy— customer experiences a reality. They reinforce what must be accomplished by all VA employees through each and every interaction every day as we deliver exceptional care, benefits, and services.

This VA Customer Experience Accomplishments Report highlights just some of the improvements and innovations that VA’s employees and community and strategic partners have undertaken to meet our shared CX mission and earn the trust of our nation’s number one customers: our Veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors.

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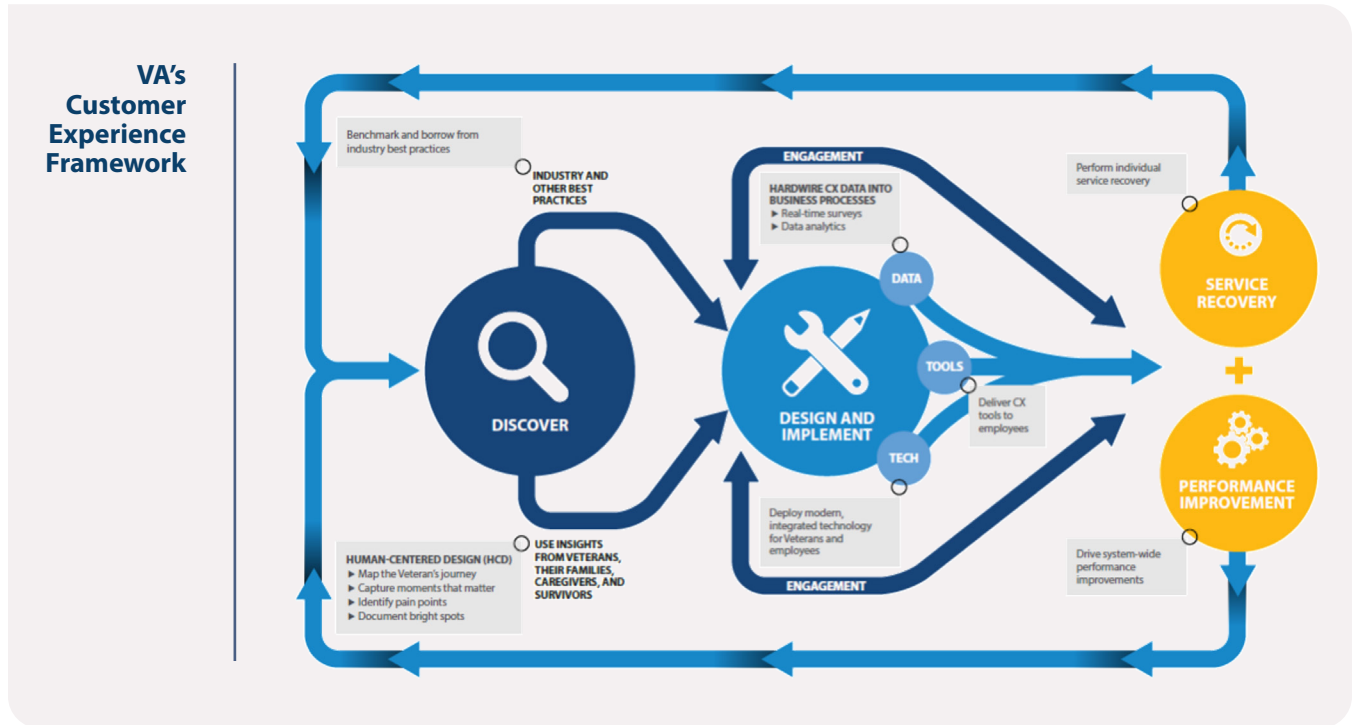


***“VA is not only listening to our Veterans but to the voices of their families, caregivers, survivors, and our employees” — VA Secretary Robert Wilkie***

*Reference to any 3rd party or external organization does not constitute an endorsement on behalf of VA.*

## VA'S CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE FRAMEWORK

VEO's CX Framework show how we use CX capabilities to collect, capture and analyze data through multiple channels to listen to the Voice of the Veteran. Their feedback helps VA understand and prioritize what matters most to Veterans so that we can respond with real and relevant services and solutions. It enables VA employees provide individual service recovery and promote program improvement. This framework ensures VA that its CX efforts are focused on what its customers want and need.



The accomplishments in this report will reflect which customers each project reaches and which major VA services they deliver.

### OUR CUSTOMERS

**V** VETERANS

**F** FAMILIES

**C** CAREGIVERS

**S** SURVIVORS

**E** EMPLOYEES

### OUR SERVICE AREAS

**+** HEALTH

**📄** BENEFITS

**★** MEMORIAL SERVICES



Look for these icons throughout this report.

# LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF THE VETERAN

## LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO THE VOICE OF THE VETERAN

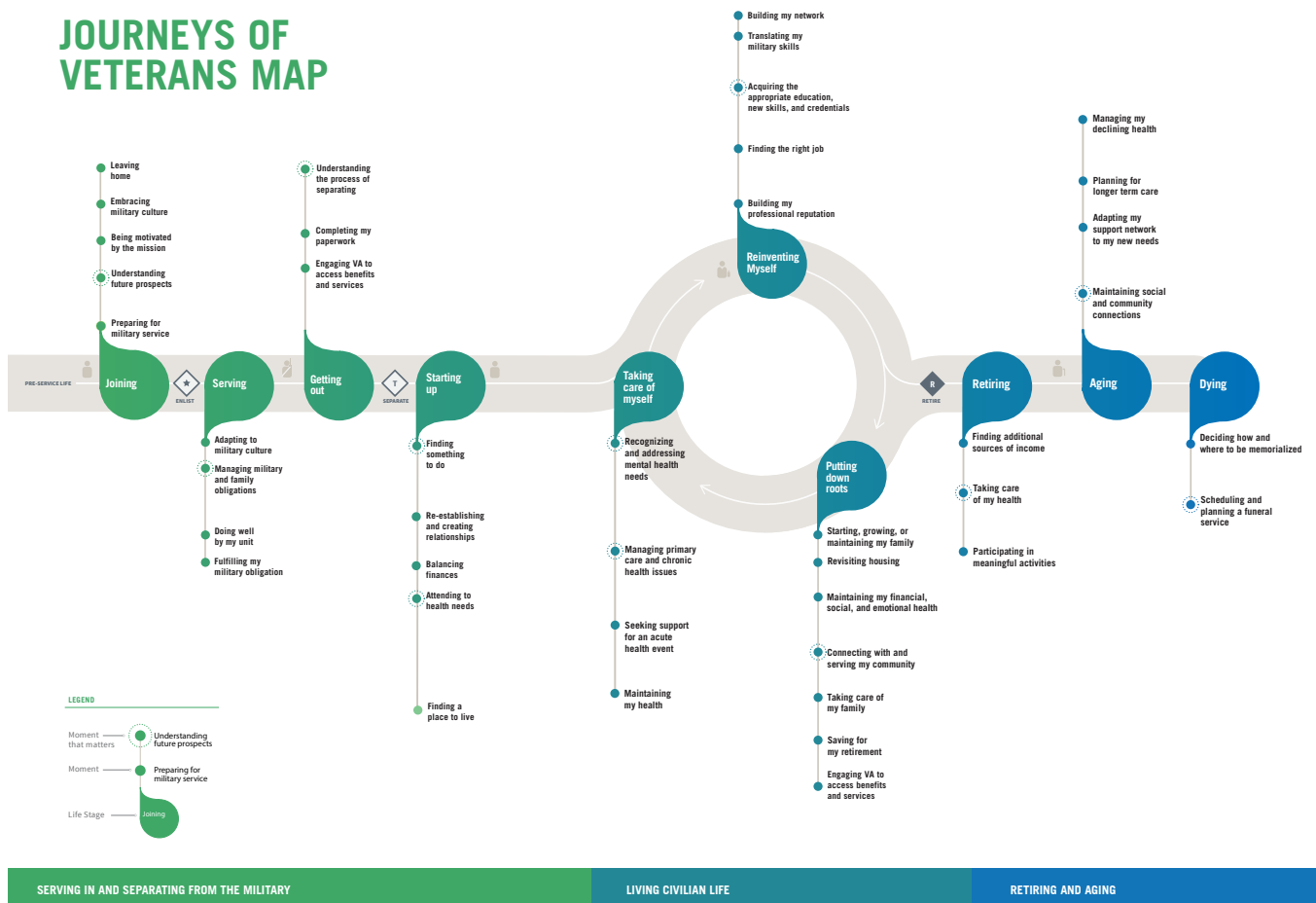
*“Listening to our Veterans plays an important role in providing world class customer service. VA is not only listening to our Veterans, but we are taking action on their concerns as well as their recommendations to improve VA.”*

—VA Secretary Robert Wilkie

VA is listening to feedback from Veterans, their families, caregivers, survivors, and employees through multiple feedback channels. These include calls to the White House VA Hotline and VA411, responses to VSignals surveys, in-person interactions, working with patient advocates, and/or participating in Community Veteran Engagement Boards (CVEB).

VA has spent the past few years conducting field research that has leveraged these feedback channels to more deeply understand what our customers (Veterans, caregivers, survivors, and families) want and need and their interactions with VA. VA recognizes the importance of not only asking customers what is most important to them during their journey but also translating those insights into actionable service recovery and program improvements.

Through this research VA has created 45 “journey maps” that identify a broad set of shared moments that many Veterans will encounter and live through including the moments that matter to Veterans. offer clear direction for VA program improvements. The journey map below was the first to be created and covers ten life stages that any Veteran may encounter, from pre-service to end of life. The map offers valuable information on the moments that



The Journeys of Veterans Map can be viewed in full detail at: <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAAntage/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Veteran-Journey-Map.pdf>

matter to Veterans to guide VA's more than 424,000 employees in their delivery of services and our commitment to continuous program improvements.

Since the creation of this first overarching journey map, VA has conducted additional research to create 45 unique maps of the experiences of Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors.

This VA Customer Experience Accomplishments Report is organized around projects that were undertaken to improve the moments that matter to Veterans. They demonstrate VA's commitment to listen to the voice of the Veteran and to improve customer experiences in the delivery of care, benefits, and services.

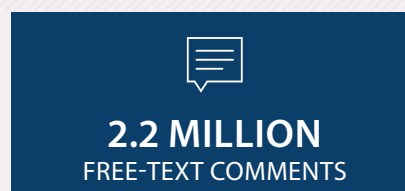
## LISTENING TO ONGOING VETERAN FEEDBACK

*"We listen, we prioritize, we respond, and then we listen again," —Dr. Lynda Davis, Chief, Veterans Experience Office.*

VA's CX approach multiple channels allows us to collect and analyze feedback from Veterans, Service members, their families, caregivers, and survivors – in real time.

One listening channel is our VSignals surveys. These help to identify and inform opportunities for immediate and short-term service recovery and long-term program and systems improvement. VSignals helps measure the Veteran customer experience with widely accepted CX metrics including ease, effectiveness, emotional resonance and VA-wide and service specific trust. Service-level surveys (e.g., outpatient services, contact centers, appeals), targeted community surveys, and social media scraping help create a more complete and useful understanding of the Veteran experience.

### VA has deployed 65 unique VSignals across VA benefits and services

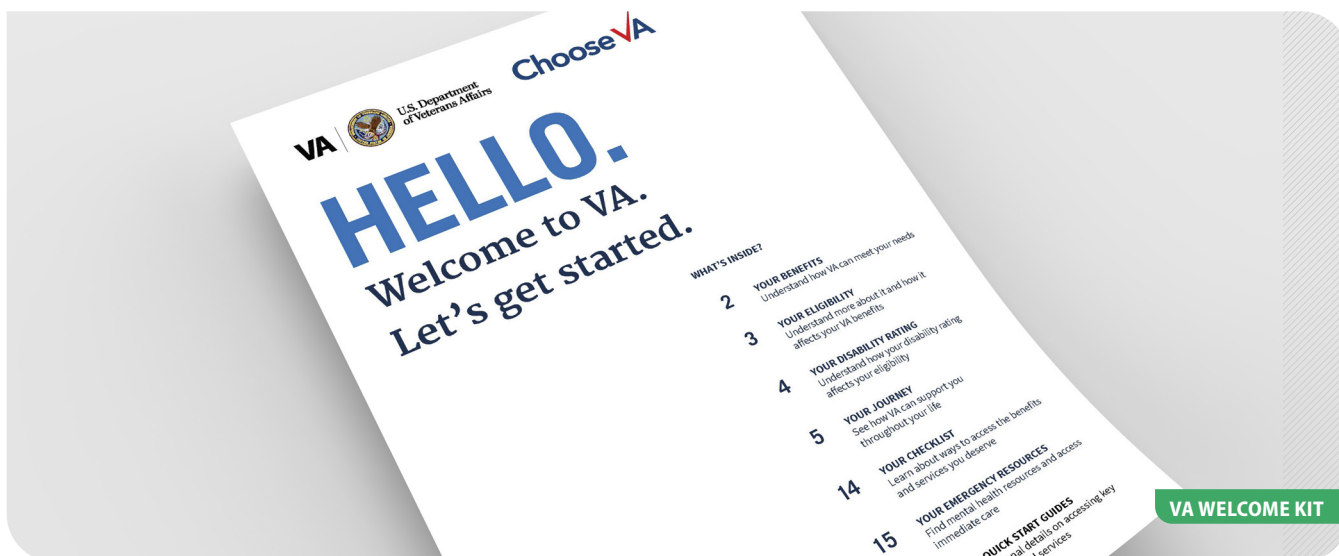


Data as of October 2020

With these surveys, VA can measure, for the first time, the level of trust its customers have in the organization, in real time. In [May 2020](#), Veteran trust in VA health care outpatient services reached 90.1%, the highest level attained since being measured.

The VA is also listening to feedback 24/7 from Veterans, family members, caregivers, and survivors who call the White House VA Hotline (1-855-948-2311). Since October 2017, live agents have answered over 463,000 calls with compliments, concerns, or recommendations. An integrated Client Relations Management (CRM) system across VA allows calls requiring service recovery to be quickly shared with the right program office for assistance. Callers in crisis are "warm transferred" immediately to the Veterans Crisis Line or to the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans. Nearly all Hotline staff are Veterans or family members of Veterans themselves, and their extensive knowledge of VA and their customer service training ensures that the call itself is a positive and helpful experience. <https://www.va.gov/ve/whvaHotline.asp>

VEO created and maintains a robust knowledge management library (KML) tool to provide Hotline, contact center and other VA employees with immediate access to accurate, consistent information and resources. Through this tool, employees have accessed over 21,000 pieces of knowledge to answer Veterans questions and address their concerns more than 7 million times. VA also leverages a robust knowledge management library tool to provide employees with accurate, consistent information and resources. Through this tool, employees have accessed over 21,000 pieces of knowledge more than 7 million times.



## GETTING OUT

### TASKS

- » Understanding the process of separating
- » Completing my paperwork
- » Engaging VA to access benefits and services

### MOMENT THAT MATTERS

Separation programs pack in a lot of good information but are delivered at a moment when many Veterans are not ready or able to absorb it.

## ALLEVIATING CHALLENGES FOR TRANSITIONING SERVICE MEMBERS








**Alleviated challenges for Service members transitioning into civilian life** through the VA Solid Start (VASS) program designed in partnership with the Department of Defense (DOD) and Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) that facilitates direct Veteran contact at three key intervals during their first year of transition. VASS agents connect transitioning Service members VA benefits and services including priority calling for mental health care, warm transfers to the Veterans Crisis Line if needed, information on COVID-19, and assistance with employment, financial information, and other resources to assist with successful transition into civilian life. The improved VASS customer relationship management system reduced the number of required record reviews from hundreds of records to less than five. <https://www.benefits.va.gov/transition/solid-start.asp>








## INTRODUCING VA BENEFITS AND SERVICES IN A VETERAN-CENTERED WAY



**Improved access for all Veterans to VA health care, benefits, and services** through the [VA Welcome Kit](#) that gives customers clear and accurate guided journeys to navigate VA's comprehensive offerings. Over 700,000 VA Welcome Kits have been downloaded, and over 260,000 printed and distributed to more than 250 organizations and individuals including Members of Congress, all State Directors of Veterans Affairs, and VSOs. <https://www.va.gov/VE/pressreleases/2019100801.asp>





**Designed and launched eleven one-page Quick Start Guides (QSGs)** that describe in simple steps and plain language how to access specific VA benefits and services. Current QSGs are: Apply for Burial in a VA National Cemetery, Apply for VA Survivor Benefits, Get Started With VA Mental Health Services, Get Started with Vet Center Services and Caregiver Benefits, Get Started with Women Veterans Health Services, Understanding VA Community Care, Understanding VA Urgent Care, Understanding the Modernized Decision Review Process, and VA COVID-19 Support.







## IMPROVING ACCESS AND ENROLLMENT THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

   **Launched VA's first enterprise-wide digital outreach product called "#VetResources" to Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors to ensure regular contact with all known-to-VA email addresses.** #VetResources is sent weekly to 11.6M addresses and has been opened more than 235M times driving 43M clicks to VA and non-VA resources including 150,000 clicks to the Veterans Crisis Line since 2019. <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/resources/vetresources/>    

   **Engaged over 75,000 combined viewers** through two virtual Secretary of VA community townhalls to hear the Secretary of the VA and other experts share information on VA priorities and key initiatives and answer questions from the community. VA has received over 1,400 comments during these largest live townhalls in VA history.    

  **Reached more than 2.42M customers through participation in virtual [Veterans Experience Live VetXL](#) events on RallyPoint and Facebook Live.**

Connected Veterans, families, caregivers, and survivors to VA and non-VA leaders and experts, answered more than 9,650 questions, and improved navigation of VA, community, and partner services. <https://www.va.gov/outreach-and-events/events/veterans-experience-live-vetxl-women-veterans-qa-with-acting-deputy/>    

  **Launched VA's first outreach calendar** providing Veterans and their families, caregivers, and survivors with a single online location to find events from VA and VA partners such as States, community organizations, and VSOs. In its pilot, 58 events were listed and viewed 415,000 times. <https://www.va.gov/outreach-and-events/events/>    

## STARTING UP

### TASKS

- » Finding something to do
- » Re-establishing and creating relationships
- » Balancing finances
- » Attending to health needs








### MOMENT THAT MATTERS

Finding something to do like returning to school, going to work, or connecting with the community decreases the risk of harmful behaviors like substance abuse.






### MOMENT THAT MATTERS

Veterans select health care coverage according to their individual set of needs and preferences, often choosing private health care over VA unless they seek care and compensation for a service-related disability or have no other option.

## PROVIDING A SINGLE SOURCE FOR VA CUSTOMER DATA

   **Streamlined Veteran interactions with all VA benefits and services** through the launch of "[VA Profile](#)" which synchronizes contact information for 14.7M Veterans and family members across VA systems. Since launching in 2018 as part of VA's data modernization efforts, more than 686,000 Veterans and family members have self-updated their contact information on VA.gov. Undeliverable mailings have decreased by 78%.    

## REDUCING CLAIM PROCESSING TIMES

 **Reduced claims processing time and time to direct deposit** through the "Digits-to-Digits" program which captures, shares, and updates contact and direct deposit information with partnering systems so Veteran claims are attributed in real-time and directly into their "eFolder" in the Veterans Benefits Management System. More than 1.3M claims have been submitted successfully since 2015.    



## PROTECTING VETERAN'S PAYMENTS

**B** **Increased enrollment in direct-deposit program**, which results in reducing fraud and ensuring that Veterans receive their VA monetary benefits more quickly. The Veterans Benefits Banking Program (VBBP) directly deposits Veteran benefits to a bank of choice instead of mailing checks which reduces fraud risk and helps Veterans get payments faster. Using HCD principles, VA improved outreach efforts for VBBP which resulted in increased enrollments. <https://www.benefits.va.gov/benefits/banking.asp> **V F C S**

**B** **Reduced benefits fraud cases by 96% in just 3 months** by adding two-factor authentication sign-on, launching direct deposit/electronic funds transfer for compensation and pension benefits, and moving direct deposit for compensation and pension from eBenefits to VA.gov in January 2020. Reported fraud cases decreased from 400-600 per month to less than 40. **V F C S**

## SUPPORTING APPEALS FOR BENEFITS

**B** **Launched a comprehensive Rapid Appeals Management Program (RAMP) communications plan that helped increase enrollment in the new Veteran-friendly interim appeals process by 10%.** The plan was developed in partnership with VBA's Office of Administrative Review through an HCD project. <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/48141/vas-rapid-appeals-modernization-program-ramp-now-open-appeals/> **V F C S**

**B** **Launched RAMP QSG** that provides clear and concise information for the next steps a Veteran or other claimant can take when they disagree with the decision VA made on their disability compensation claim. Appeals Modernization offers Veterans more choice, clarity and control over the decision review process and helps them seek faster resolution of their disagreement. <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/76497/quick-start-guide-modernized-veteran-appeals-process-now-available/> **V F C S**

## SUPPORTING EBENEFITS USERS

**B** **Provided seamless online interactions** for more than 8.7M registered eBenefits users in over 180 countries and more than 11,000 registered users of the Stakeholder Enterprise Portal. **V F C S**

## SUPPORTING BENEFITS APPLICANTS

**B** **Provided personalized assistance for more than 8,300 Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors through 16 Veterans Experience Action Centers (VEACs)** during which customers received direct access to experts in VA, community, and partner services including claims and appeals. Launched virtual-VEACs to serve at-risk and rural customers. During the first virtual-VEACs, more than 440 Veterans, family members, caregivers, and survivors received personalized service and answers to their questions. **V F C S**



**Developed and launched several new online features** with the redesign of the now-retired Vets.gov into VA.gov. New self-service features include online prescription requests, appointment scheduling, and benefits enrollment. Through September of 2020 6.6M visitors have completed more than 27.7M transactions.

- » Engaged with over 3M users to ensure their access to information was uninterrupted when eBenefits services were migrated to VA.gov.
- » Launched a new Veteran Debt Landing Page providing access to debt information for over 2M impacted Veterans.
- » Deployed Portal Comment Card to capture real-time Veteran feedback about their experience using VA.gov for continuous site improvement.

**Simplified Veterans' access to VA information with the launch of VA411 (1-800-698-2411)**, part of VA's contact center modernization effort. VA411 is a national, toll-free number that serves as a "front door" to VA. With only one number to remember, Veterans can more easily and quickly access information on VA benefits and services, connect to contact centers across VA, or select live, personalized assistance 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Callers choosing live agent support are quickly connected to someone who can provide personalized assistance. Veterans can still reach VA at any other hotline, contact center, or direct numbers they have been using, but VA411 offers another option as the "number to call when you don't know who to call." VA411 has received more than 1.3M calls including live agent support for 255,000 callers.

## TAKING CARE OF MYSELF

### TASKS

- » Recognizing and addressing mental health needs
- » Managing primary care and chronic health issues
- » Seeking support for an acute health event
- » Maintaining my health

### MOMENT THAT MATTERS

A lack of formal or informal knowledge transfer between Veterans experiencing discontinuity within VA and between external sources of health care.



## SUPPORTING MISSION ACT

**+ B Streamlined VA Call Centers with easy directory assistance and live support for questions related to expanded community care services associated with the MISSION Act.** Over 1.1M callers accessed MISSION Act self-service information, and 320,000 callers were served by live agents. **V F C S**

**+ Sent 97M emails with critical community care access information for Veterans** via the #VetResources newsletter that were opened 29M times by Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. **V F C S**

**+ Updated more than 9M Veteran records** with health benefits determinations to ensure their access to care in the community. **V**

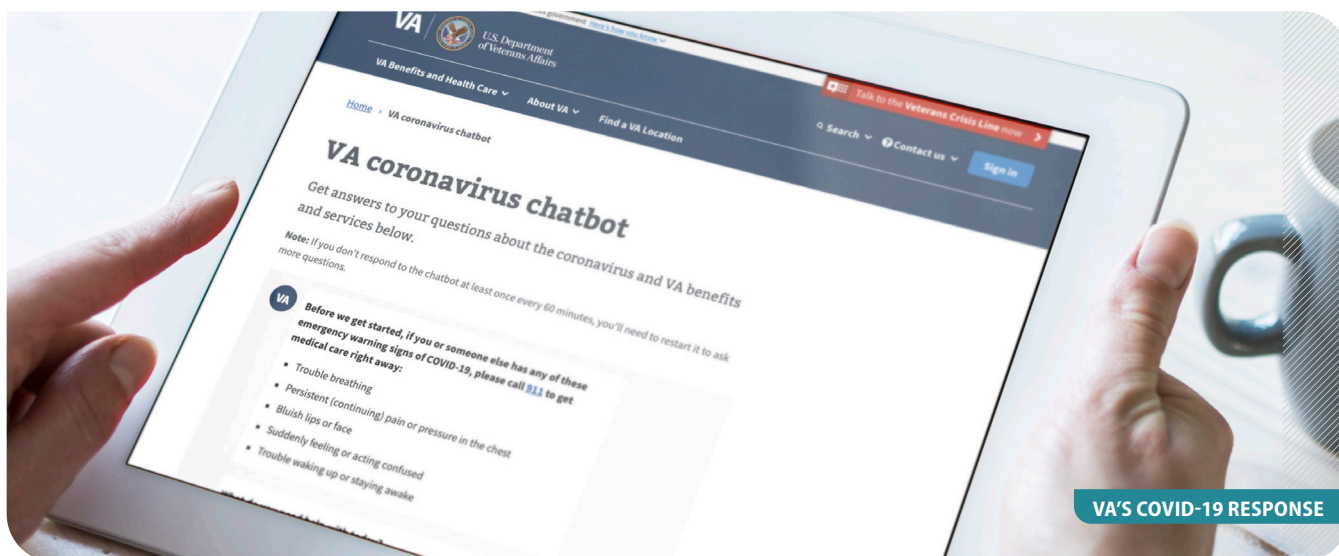
**B Launched guides to assist with navigation of expanded Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregiver (PCAFC) Benefits**, including a Caregiver QSG and a Caregiver Support Guide to help caregivers navigate support at VA that may include caregiver education and training, mental health services, peer support, health care benefits, financial assistance, and respite care. <https://www.va.gov/caregiver-quick-start-guide.pdf> **C**

**B Incorporated insights from caregiver listening sessions to redesign the Caregiver Record Management Application (CARMA)**, allowing individuals to apply online for PCAFC benefits and decreasing processing time for benefits determinations. CARMA automatically calculates caregiver stipends, alerts caregivers when annual reassessments are required, and creates an electronic health record to document a caregiver's clinical interactions. <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/> **C**

## RESPONDING TO COVID-19

**+ Launched virtual appointment check-in tool called "I'm Here,"** that allows Veterans to check-in to their appointments from the parking lot, so they do not have to wait inside a VA facility before their appointment. **V F C**

**+ Streamlined contact center operations to address influx of COVID-19 related inquiries** by providing callers with general COVID-19 information as well as updates on closures and re-openings. Live agent COVID-19 support was given to more than 44,000 callers through the White House VA Hotline or VA411. More than 38,000 COVID-19 administrative calls were alleviated from the queues of Veterans Integrated Service Networks 20 and 22, allowing those facilities to focus on clinical calls. **V**



➤ **Launched VA's first interactive "chatbot" on VA.gov** to answer COVID-19 questions or route customers to the correct resource. The chatbot has served over 110,000 customers with an average of 500 unique visitors daily since April 2020. <https://www.va.gov/coronavirus-chatbot/> V F C

➤ **Sent 79M emails with critical COVID-19 information for Veterans**, leveraging new #VetResources newsletter that was opened 25M times. Critical COVID-19 information and updates included guidance to stay home and what to do if experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. Each #VetResources newsletter sent now includes a VA COVID-19 status update. V F C

➤ **Texted critical COVID-19 information to more than 32.2M Veterans**, leveraging contact information in new VA Profile database. <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/73455/are-you-getting-va-text-messages-health-care-updates-reminders/> V

## SUPPORTING THE ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS ROLLOUT

➤ **Improved point of service experiences through the launch of Veteran Health Administration Profiles (VHAPs) as part of the new Electronic**

**Health Records (EHR) system rollout.** The VHAP simplifies Veterans' medical benefits information for 12.2M Veteran records by applying laws, policies, and regulations to Veterans' contact details, service connection, disability rating, and other data to ensure accurate information on medical coverage and copayments. V F C S

➤ **Supported the launch of a new self-scheduling tool** that integrates VHAP information with new EHR scheduling tool allowing Veterans to self-schedule and adjust medical appointments. Engaged with 30,000 Veterans in the Columbus, Ohio, region to raise awareness of the self-scheduling pilot. V F C S

➤ **Partnered with DOD to ensure a single, comprehensive Veteran health record is available to community providers.** Using VHAPs and the Joint Health Information Exchange, VA validates EHR data such as contact information, Veteran health benefits status, disability rating with federal partners including DOD, Internal Revenue Service, and Social Security Administration, simplifying benefits validation for Veterans at the point of service with community providers and combining VA and DOD information into a single Clinical Content Document. V F C S



## IMPROVING PATIENT EXPERIENCE (PX)

⊕ **Launched the VA PX Symposium** to facilitate an enterprise-wide foundational understanding of PX, promote strategic PX goals, share best and promising practices, and feature innovative solutions from around VHA. Annual awards were established for improvement, innovation, and excellence, to solidify and hardwire PX strategies into facility planning. **V F C S E**

⊕ **Developed and implemented “Own the Moment” (OTM) CX training.** Over 100,000 employees have attended the workshop which leverages industry best practices to standardize CX guiding principles, behaviors, and service recovery strategies across the enterprise. **V F C S E**

⊕ **Designed and implemented leadership rounding program called “WECARE” at VHA facilities** to improve employee engagement and patient outcomes through improving leadership engagement. **V F C S E**

⊕ **Launched VHA-wide PX Community of Practice (COP)** to share promising practices, provide an opportunity to showcase innovations in the field, and build PX Champions in VHA facilities across the country who are leading improvements to patient care. **V F C S E**

⊕ **Launched Red Coat Ambassador program across all VA health care facilities** to deliver a compassionate first impression to Veterans, their families, and visitors by providing personal navigation assistance by a trained volunteer or staff member. This contributed to an improvement in positive responses to the Ease of Navigation to Appointment question on the VSignals Outpatient Health care Visit Survey from 90% in FY18 to 94% in FY19. **V F C S**

⊕ **Designed and deployed standard phone training** to help employees provide a consistent greeting and other etiquette when engaging with Veterans or other customers on the phone. **V F C S**

⊕ **Developed VA PX Week** as an annual opportunity to recognize health care employees impacting PX. The series of weeklong events is designed to reenergize PX efforts to foster positive culture change and educate employees on PX and socialize new PX initiatives. **E**

⊕ **Devised employee “I Choose VA Badges”** to orient Veterans to their care team and foster meaningful introductions, enhancing communications and ease. The Veterans Experience Office (VEO) purchased and disseminated over 400,000 badges to VHA facilities. **V F C S E**

⊕ **Created the “10-4” initiative** that focuses on increasing interaction by encouraging employees to make direct eye contact and smile when within 10 feet of another person, and to offer a friendly greeting when within 4 feet of another person. This improves employee interaction with customers and each other. **V F C S E**



➤ **Deployed the “Green Gloves” initiative to improve cleanliness in hospital environments.**

This facility-based initiative helps employees and Veterans feel more comfortable at VA facilities by encouraging a clean and safe environment. The program ensures VA employees understand that regardless of their role, they have an important role to play in facility ownership. As a result, the SHEP Cleanliness score increased from 69% to 72% from FY18 to FY20. **V F C S E**

➤ **Implemented a “Commit to Sit” innovative initiative** that encourages health care professionals to communicate with patients in a way that demonstrates compassion, respect, empathy, and competence. **V F C S**

➤ **Implemented hourly nurse rounding** as a purposeful method for anticipating patient needs, addressing concerns, and discovering what is truly important to patients. **V F C S**

➤ **Expanded the My Life, My Story (MLMS) initiative nationally.** MLMS is an interview between VA staff and the Veteran that is produced into a 1,000-word story of the Veteran’s life that is then placed as a note in their clinical record for VA employees to read to personalize PX. **V F C S**

➤ **Developed a “Pre-Visit Checklist”** that is provided to patients while waiting to see their provider. The checklist encourages goal setting and ensures that patient questions are addressed. **V F C S**

➤ **Deployed a new Change in Primary Care Provider Letter** to reduce confusion and simplify the notification to Veterans when they have a new provider. This tool has been implemented at 64 VHA facilities. **V F C S**

➤ **Developed the “Take Five” initiative** that encourages practitioners to take a time out from all electronics and focus on listening to the patient for at least the first 5 minutes of the appointment or consultation. **V F C S E**

## IMPROVING TELEHEALTH EXPERIENCE

➤ **Increased use of telehealth services by 1400%** and implemented the Remote Patient Monitoring-Home Telehealth program to improve access to care and clinical outcomes for Veterans most at risk. **V F C**

➤ **Developed a “Welcome to Telehealth” Kit** to improve Veteran understanding and utilization of telehealth services. Developed in collaboration with the VHA Office of Telehealth, the release of the toolkit resulted in a 25% increase in patients successfully completing their first telehealth appointment. <http://vaww.telehealth.va.gov/welcome/> **V F C**

➤ **Improved provider understanding and utilization of telehealth modalities.** With the National Telehealth Quality Team, data collected from nearly 4,000 clinical care providers was used to improve provider utilization and provide better telehealth experiences for patients. **V F C**

➦ **Created and launched the ATLAS (Accessing Telehealth through Local Area Stations) program** to improve access to VA's telehealth services as part of VA's "Anywhere to Anywhere" telehealth initiative. With public and private organizations such as Veterans of Foreign Wars and Walmart, Atlas is enhancing underserved Veterans access to health care by offering options to receive health care closer to home. This reduces long travel times and overcomes poor internet connectivity at home. <https://connectedcare.va.gov/partners/atlas> V F C

## IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SERVICE RECOVERY

➦ ➦ ➦ **Established a VA-Wide Service Recovery Council** to set standards and establish priorities for service recovery activities to ensure that all VA employees use standard methods and procedures to resolve Veterans' concerns. Developed service recovery tools for staff, a service recovery feedback

survey, standard operating procedures for employee interactions with Veterans, and a method for responding to Veterans comments on social media. These efforts help ensure that VA provides an easy, efficient, and responsive resolution process. V F C S E

➦ ➦ ➦ **Improved response time and case management** through the nationwide deployment of the Patient Advocate Tracking System Replacement (PATs-R) that enables patient advocates, service line representatives, facility leadership, and other customer experience representatives a single view of patient and other customer service issues for tracking and resolution. After integrating with PATs-R, the White House VA Hotline case resolution time decreased significantly. More than 27,000 VA employees who have direct responsibilities and impact on service recovery and resolution now use PATs-R. <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/72212/patsr/> V F C S E

## PUTTING DOWN ROOTS AND REINVENTING MYSELF

### TASKS

- » Starting, growing, or maintaining my family
- » Revisiting housing
- » Maintaining my financial, social, and emotional health
- » Connecting with and serving my community
- » Taking care of my family
- » Saving for my retirement
- » Engaging VA to access benefits and services
- » Building my network
- » Translating my military skills
- » Acquiring the appropriate education, new skills, and credentials
- » Finding the right job
- » Building my professional reputation

### MOMENT THAT MATTERS

Through bonding over shared experiences on social media, and in-person events, and via support networks, Veterans create a sense of community.

### MOMENT THAT MATTERS

Veterans expect to be able to translate their skills and leadership abilities easily from the military to a civilian career and rely on resources to identify and fill gaps in their skill sets.

## IMPROVING ACCESS TO BENEFITS AND INFORMATION

➦ ➦ ➦ **Improved the Board of Veterans' Appeals Hearing Process** by making more information available online, re-writing decision letters in plain language, and offering virtual appeals hearings. The Board held more than 75 training or informational events with Veteran Service Organizations to improve awareness and understanding of changes in the appeals process. As a result, over the past 3 years, the Board has reduced legacy appeals by over 300,000 cases. V F C S



**Reduced 11 regional VA-loan information phone numbers into a single toll-free number (1-877-827-3702)** as part of the enterprise-wide Contact Center Modernization effort. This reduces confusion and ensures that Veterans have easy access to loan information. Data on Loan Guaranty call volume and resolution is now available for continuous improvement. **V F C S**

**Established the first ever Federal Advisory Committee (FAC) dedicated to listening to recommendations about family, caregiver, and survivor services at VA.** This Veterans' Family, Caregiver and Survivor FAC receives public comments on the operations of care, benefits, and memorial services to make recommendations which have been accepted by the Secretary of the VA. **V F C S**

**Partnered with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation to co-host an annual Caregiver Convening for at least the next five years** to bring together nationally recognized thought leaders, Veterans, and caregivers to explore issues specific to military caregivers. The convening provides the opportunity for collaboration with VA partners to maximize the impact of caregiver benefits. In its first year, the convening focused on caregiving during the time of COVID and the expansion of PCAFC benefits. **V F C S**

**Offered more than 7,500 LinkedIn premium subscriptions to caregivers and survivors,** building upon LinkedIn's program that provides 12 months of free premium services for all Veterans. This service

can improve access to economic opportunities by expanding professional networks and providing access to job searching capabilities and short professional development courses. **V C S**

## EXPANDING ACCESS TO SERVICES

**Validated status for over 4.1M Veterans and caregivers,** ensuring their access to DOD commissaries, recreational facilities, and bases as part of DOD's largest expansion of Morale, Welfare, and Recreation programs in over 65 years. **V F C S**

## EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES TO SERVE AND SUPPORT VETERANS

**Engaged Veterans and community leaders through 163 Community Veterans Engagement Boards (CVEBs)** to increase the delivery and maximize the impact of VA, community, and partner resources. VA's CVEBS represent more than 50M Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors, and have engaged more than 500 Veteran community leaders and 300 partner organizations including the DOD's Building Healthy Military Communities program. Through training and networking events, VA shares critical information about health care, benefits, and services including whole health, mental health, caregiver support, community care, and telehealth. **V F C S**



VETERANS' FAMILY, CAREGIVER, AND SURVIVOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE

**+ D Worked directly with Mayors' and Governors' Challenge action teams to integrate suicide prevention plans.** Shared best practices in community engagement and toolkits, led Technical Assistance Workshops for community leaders, and supported enhancements to suicide prevention plans. **V F C S**

**+ D S Sponsored the Greater Los Angeles (GLA) Campus Veterans and Community Oversight and Engagement Board (VCOEB) Federal Advisory Committee (FAC) to meet**

congressional requirements to collect input from stakeholders to determine the best use of the GLA campus in a Veteran-centric manner such that Veterans living on or visiting the campus will be able to experience superior care, support, convenience, and exceptional customer service. Recommendations by the FAC were accepted by the Secretary. Increased communications and collaboration throughout the entire GLA network to improve the lives of homeless Veterans in the area. **V F C S**

## RETIRING, AGING, AND DYING

### TASKS

- » Finding additional sources of income
- » Taking care of my health
- » Participating in meaningful activities
- » Managing my declining health
- » Planning for longer term care
- » Adapting my support network to my new needs
- » Maintaining social and community connections
- » Deciding how and where to be memorialized
- » Scheduling and planning a funeral service

### MOMENT THAT MATTERS

Veterans seek supplemental coverage to fill health care coverage gaps caused by insurance changes during retirement. Some Veterans reengage or engage with VA for the first time at this moment.

### MOMENT THAT MATTERS

Veterans increasingly seek alternatives to institutional-based care and instead wish to stay independent for longer, remaining in their homes and communities.

### MOMENT THAT MATTERS

Sustaining a sense of community and social connection is critical to Veterans' well-being as they age.

### MOMENT THAT MATTERS

Often the first time a Veteran's family interacts directly with VA is during the highly emotional time of a Veteran's death.



CHOOSE HOME INITIATIVE

## EMPOWERING VETERANS' CHOICE OF CARE

**⊕ ⊞ ⚙️ Piloted the “Choose Home” Initiative** to understand the journey of Veterans, their families, caregivers, and VA employees caring for Veterans who are at-risk for nursing home placement and to coordinate and improve access to services to help them stay at home as long as possible. Engaged caregiver- and Veteran-friendly communities to: develop a more efficient and effective care process for receiving Choose Home services; strengthen community collaboration and improve navigation; and establish a VA Choose Home Center of Excellence to sustain initiatives for those at risk for institutionalization. Piloted best practices at VA Medical Centers in 6 states to integrate clinical and non-clinical care services and benefits into a single, comprehensive, and coordinated plan. **V F C**

**⊕ ⊞ ⚙️ Created the Elizabeth Dole Center of Excellence for Veteran and Caregiver Research** to better understand the experience of caregivers and expand the capacity of VA to deliver integrated, Veteran- and caregiver-partnered, data-driven approaches to care. The Center provides a model for excellence in peer-reviewed research on innovation, training, implementation, evaluation, adoption, and dissemination of best practices in supporting the caregivers of Veterans across VA and private and non-profit sectors to care. <https://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/centers/dole/default.cfm> **V F C**




## ENSURING ACCESS TO AVAILABLE BENEFITS

**⊞ Published a Survivor’s QSG** in partnership with the Office of Survivor Assistance that helps families identify VA Survivor benefits and services for which they may be eligible and provides a step-by-step checklist for preparing, applying for, and following up on available benefits. Each step spells out in plain language what to do, what forms to fill out, and who to call for assistance. <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/63171/va-releases-survivors-quick-start-guide/> **F S**

**⊕ ⊞ ⚙️ Validated and distributed Veteran ID Cards (VIC).** Over 270,000 Veterans requested and received a VIC giving them access to discounted goods, services, and resources at participating retailers, enabling them to stretch their income purchasing power. <https://www.va.gov/records/get-veteran-id-cards/vic/> **V F C S**




**⊞ Coordinated a donation to provide disposable video-capable phones to Veterans experiencing homelessness.** A \$600,000 donation from Amazon Prime enabled VA staff to conduct telehealth appointments, ensure follow up care and reach out regarding housing services. **V**



**Partnered to distribute over 7,400 Portal devices to Veterans and caregivers.** With Facebook and the American Red Cross Military Veterans Caregiver Network, provided Portal video calling devices that help Veterans connect with their caregivers, families, and friends to improve communication and reduce isolation. <https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/73756/eligible-veterans-can-get-free-portal/>   

**Trained over 400 Community Clergy to better engage with Veterans with mental health challenges,** particularly those who are homebound. Developed in partnership with the VA Chaplain Service and VHA Office of Rural Health, the training program helps community clergy recognize unique Veteran mental health challenges and understand avenues to connect to VA, partner, and community resources. [https://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/providers/promising\\_practices.asp](https://www.ruralhealth.va.gov/providers/promising_practices.asp)    

## HONORING VETERANS'S LEGACIES

**Built upon the National Cemetery Administration (NCA)'s award-winning customer service with the Veterans Legacy Memorial Project.** As the nation's first digital platform dedicated to memorializing more than 3.7 million Veterans interred in VA's national cemeteries, the project honors Veterans service and sacrifice by allowing family and friends to honor their Veteran's service and sacrifice by creating a page to post tributes, upload photos, and share personal stories. Veteran pages can be shared via social media. More than 6,500 Veterans have had their memories shared by family and friends. <https://www.vlm.cem.va.gov/>   

# EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE (EX)

## LISTENING AND RESPONDING TO THE VOICE OF THE EMPLOYEE

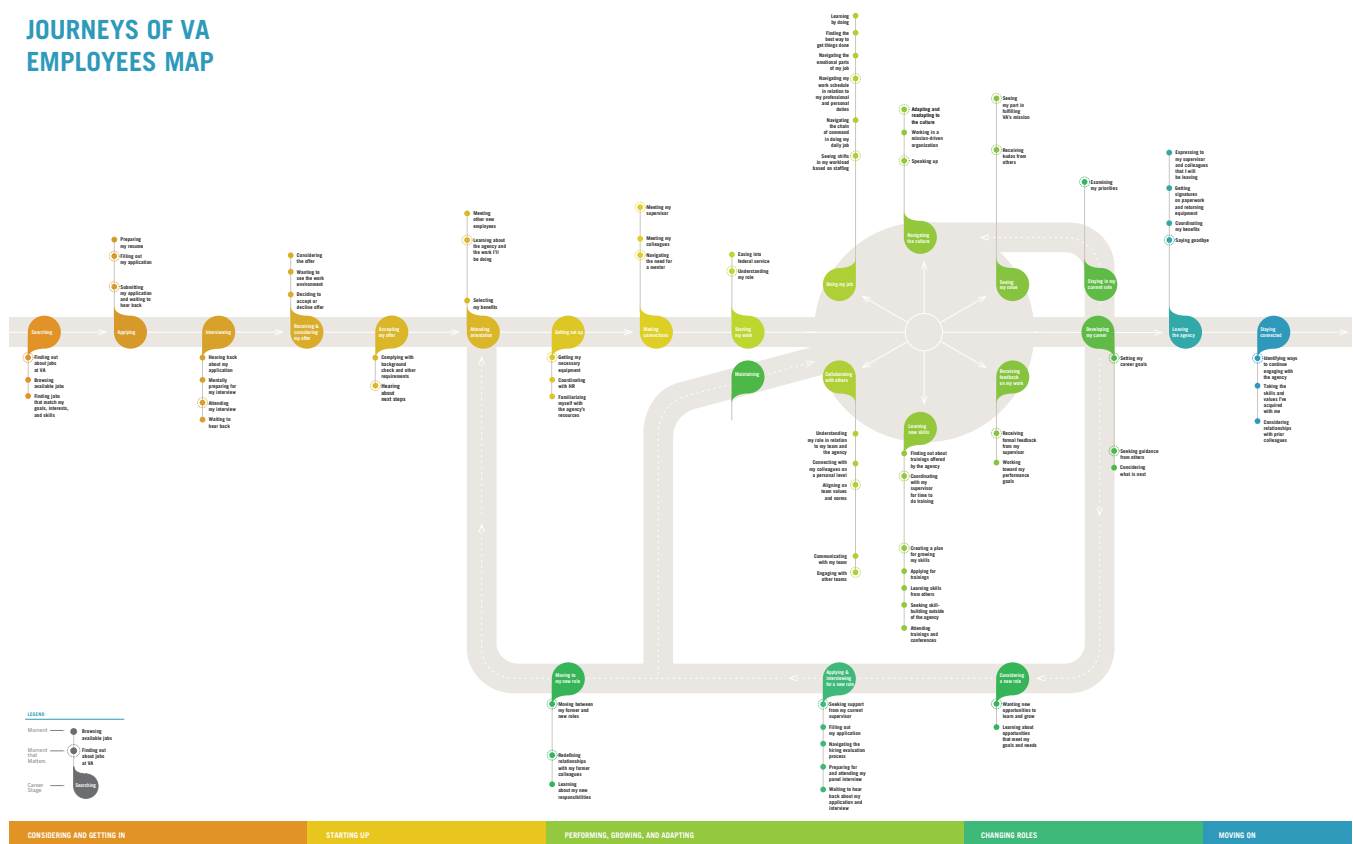
VA Secretary Wilke's commitment to exceptional CX extends not only to Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors, but also to VA's over 424,000 employees. The VA endeavors to provide exceptional experience to our employees to help them fulfill their professional goals and their personal interest to serve our Nation's Veterans and their loved ones. To do this, VA has not only listened to the voice of the Veteran, but also to the voice of the employee. Using the same Human Centered Design (HCD) processes that guide Veteran customer research, VA researched and developed the first EX Journey Map out of a partnership between VEO and the Office of Human Resources and Administration/Operations, Security, and Preparedness. This journey map identifies key Moments that Matter to VA employees along their VA employment journey.

This journey map is one of many tools that will help VA meet CX/EX goals by helping us understand what matters most to employees. By knowing what moments matter, VA can reduce barriers for employees to access the data, tools, technology, and engagement that will help them to meet their responsibilities, support their drive to innovate, and improve their overall experience as well as that of their Veteran customers.

**Another tool that VA offers employees to meet their responsibilities our CX training, called "Own the Moment (OTM)."** OTM has improved Veteran experience and trust by teaching guiding principles that assist all staff in connecting with Veterans and understanding and responding to their needs. Over 100,000 VA employees have completed this training, and they and Veterans are acknowledging its benefits. For example, VHA Trust scores increased from 85.2% to 89.6% between FY17 and FY20, demonstrating that OTM is helping reinforce a principles-based culture to ensure ease, effectiveness, and emotional resonance in Veteran experiences.

Progress in recent employee surveys independently confirm the benefits of a CX focused culture. In 2018 and 2019, VA was ranked 6th out of the largest federal agencies in the "Best Places to Work" survey, an 11-place increase from 2017.

### JOURNEYS OF VA EMPLOYEES MAP



## HARDWIRING AND SUSTAINING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AT VA



*“VA ‘The Veterans Experience Office (VEO) is my lead organization for achieving our customer service priority and provides the department a core customer experience capability. VEO offers four core customer experience capabilities, including real-time customer experience data, tangible customer experience tools, modern technology, and targeted engagement.’ —VA Secretary Robert Wilkie*

VA is hardwiring customer experience (CX) to ensure Veterans, their families, caregivers, survivors, and employees are reliably provided with the best CX wherever they are in their lifecycle journey. VA – through the shared, best practices capabilities of the Secretary’s Veterans Experience Office (VEO) – has developed and deployed data, tools, technology, and engagement to listen, learn, and lean in with corrective action and to reach out with connective information to improve the moments that matter across these journeys.

Sustaining the CX mission means hardwiring policy, programs, and practices. So far, VA has:

- » Created VA’s first customer service policy.
- » Codified CX principles in the Code of Federal Regulations.
- » Developed and published a VA-wide CX directive.
- » Incorporated CX and PX behaviors into annual training on VA’s ICARE values.
- » Developed and trained over 100,000 VA employees in the first phase of VA’s “Own the Moment” CX training.
- » Established customer-focused enterprise-wide governance boards, including the Service Recovery Council, Contact Center Modernization effort, and the VA Outreach Working group to coordinate process improvements.
- » Initiated the Customer Experience Institute (CXi) to build CX capacity at VA and across government.

These will help sustain VA’s commitment to its CX mission and enable our employees to deliver the highest quality care, benefits, and services. By hardwiring CX into everything that we do, VA is ensuring that our mission is clear, and our employees are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet the needs of our Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors every day.

*“VA will continue to work with and for our Veterans and their families, caregivers, survivors, and our employees to ensure their voices are heard, their needs understood, and their requests are addressed in our continued commitment to ensure their best customer experience.” —Dr. Lynda C. Davis, Chief Veterans Experience Officer, VEO*



For more information about any of the accomplishments in this report, please e-mail [Vets-Experience@va.gov](mailto:Vets-Experience@va.gov).



*"Our first priority is customer service. That's the prime directive."*

-VA Secretary Robert Wilkie

**Visit our Website**

[VA.gov](https://www.va.gov)

**Don't know what number to call?**

1-800-MyVA411 (800-698-2411)

**White House VA Hotline**

1-855-948-2311

**Veterans Crisis Line**

1-800-273-8255 and press 1, Chat, or Text 838255.

**Download the VA Welcome Kit**

<https://www.va.gov/welcome-kit/>

**VA events calendar**

<https://www.va.gov/outreach-and-events/events/>

**Sign up for #VetResources weekly e-mails**

<https://www.va.gov/vetresources/>