



Claire McCaskill

United States Senator

Review:

Kansas City Region
Veterans Affairs Medical Centers
Customer Satisfaction Report

November 2011

Report No: 2011 – 01 - KC



<http://www.mccaskill.senate.gov>



Kansas City Region Veterans Customer Satisfaction Program

Since arriving in the United States Senate, Senator Claire McCaskill has made keeping our promises to veterans one of her highest priorities. As a daughter of a World War II veteran, Claire knows the vital sacrifices that veterans have made for the security of our country in order to safeguard America's core values and freedoms. In return for their contributions, she believes that our country owes veterans important benefits, including access to safe, respectful, reliable medical care through our Veterans Affairs (VA) system of hospitals and clinics, both in Missouri and across the country.

Following a series of highly-publicized problems in 2010 with the quality of care at the St. Louis Veterans Affairs Medical Center - John Cochran division, Claire reached out to Missouri veterans and VA administrators to address the erosion of confidence in the overall quality of care and customer service at John Cochran VA Medical Center. Although many veterans reported positive experiences with the medical care at John Cochran VA Medical Center, frustration exists among veterans with the customer service that they receive at John Cochran VA Medical Center, and to a lesser extent, other VA medical facilities in Missouri. In response, Claire announced plans for a "secret shopper" program for veterans – formally named the Veterans' Customer Satisfaction Program – to rate the quality of service at Missouri VA facilities and to provide the VA targeted, quick-turnaround feedback about veterans' positive and negative experiences with the VA medical centers.

Following the announcement of the Veterans' Customer Satisfaction Program, Claire and her staff collaborated with leaders from various Missouri veterans' organizations and VA administrators to shape the program. Through this cooperation, a constructive, confidential survey was developed that would both be useful to the Kansas City VA Medical Center and also act as an independent resource for veterans that they could use to make recommendations to the VA Medical Center. The Veterans' Customer Satisfaction Program acts as an independent, transparent voice for veterans. It has three major goals:

- (1) Improve communications between veterans and VA medical center personnel;
- (2) Improve overall customer service ratings of VA medical centers in Missouri;
- (3) Improve the willingness of veterans to positively recommend Missouri VA medical facilities to other veterans.

This report represents the first Veterans' Customer Satisfaction Program summary report for the Kansas City region facilities and includes the compilation of the survey data as reported directly by Missouri veterans.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents	Page
Report	6
Scope and Methodology	7
Observation & Results	9
▪ Background.....	9
▪ Review of survey question results.....	10
1. Ease of scheduling appointments.....	10
2. Ease of access to appointment location at the facility.....	11
3. Respect shown to the veteran while at the VA facility.....	11
4. Communication by the VA staff while the veteran was at the facility.....	12
5. Amount of time to be seen by a provider.....	13
6. Cleanliness of the facility.....	14
7. Overall experience at the VA facility.....	14
8. Willingness to recommend the VA facility to other veterans.....	15
Veterans' Recommendations	17
Recognition of Professionalism	19
Conclusion	23

CLAIRE MCCASKILL
MISSOURI

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 4, 2011

To the Director of the Kansas City Veterans Affairs Medical Center,
Members of the Kansas City Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and Missouri's Veterans:

I am pleased to release the results of my first Veterans' Customer Satisfaction Program for the Kansas City region. When I proposed this "secret shopper" program, I told you that I wouldn't be happy until Missouri's veterans are happy. After reviewing the responses from the first round of surveys, the results signal general satisfaction with the VA facilities in the Kansas City region. These results confirm my belief that we are continuing on the path to achieving a high rate of veterans' confidence in the Kansas City Region Veterans Affairs.

I commend the VA administrators, employees, and staff for their service and professionalism, and I know you want to continue to strive for improvements to ensure veterans have nothing but a positive experience while at Missouri VA medical centers. In this first summary report, Missouri veterans rate significant satisfaction with the Kansas City VA Medical Center while noting some room for improvement with their overall experiences at the Kansas City VA. It is clear that under your leadership of the Kansas City VA Medical Center you recognize the tremendous obligation of serving Missouri's veterans, and I appreciate your commitment to responding to the concerns expressed to me in these surveys within 30 days.

I appreciate the help and support from my partners at the Kansas City Region VA and several Missouri veterans' organizations. And most importantly, I appreciate our veterans for their service, sacrifice, and support for the Veterans' Customer Satisfaction Program. Together we *can* and *will* improve the quality of customer care in Missouri VA medical facilities.

Respectfully,



Claire McCaskill
United States Senator

The following members of my staff participated in the preparation of this report:

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Would you like your voice heard?

Veterans can complete a survey of their current experience at a VA facility at:
<http://mccaskill.senate.gov/vcsp/>.



REPORT

We have reviewed the responses received from the Veterans' Customer Satisfaction Program (VCSP) survey for the Kansas City region. The small number of survey results that we received from veterans visiting VA medical centers in other regions in the state were reviewed by senate office caseworkers and responded to on a case-by-case basis if casework was necessary. When these survey results from other regions included recommendations for improvements with the overall Veterans Affairs (VA) medical system, we incorporated those comments in the current report. The scope of our review included, but was not necessarily limited to, comments received about Kansas City VA medical centers from June 1 through September 15, 2011. Comments after that period will be reviewed in the next summary report.

The objectives of our review were to:

- Identify specific concerns from veterans regarding the customer service received while interacting with the Kansas City VA Medical Center;
- Identify areas where communication can be improved between veterans and the Kansas City VA Medical Center;
- Identify criticisms impacting the overall customer service ratings of the Kansas City VA Medical Center;
- Identify concerns that impact the willingness of veterans to positively recommend the Kansas City VA Medical Center to other veterans;
- Report the full range of responses received from the veterans regarding the Kansas City VA;
- Issue a public report of the survey conclusions and resolutions of any identified issues.

Our methodology included reviewing responses submitted on the Veterans' Customer Satisfaction Program surveys, identifying any specific urgent issues and working directly with the veteran to get an immediate response from the VA, and submitting other concerns identified on the Veterans' Customer Satisfaction Program to the VA. Some of the veterans elected not to take immediate action regarding issues identified in the Veterans' Customer Satisfaction Program survey.

Prior to the issuance of the report, representatives of various veterans service organizations reviewed the summary report and made recommendations for suggested improvements at the VA facilities. Their comments and recommendations have been incorporated in this report.

The VA has provided responses to all recommendations.



SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) oversees the largest healthcare system in the nation through a network of 23 Veterans Integrated Service Networks. Missouri is mostly comprised in Veterans Integrated Service Network 15 with a large portion of Southwestern Missouri in Veterans Integrated Service Network 16 and small portions of Northern Missouri in Veterans Integrated Service Network 23. In order for the VA to gauge the satisfaction of veterans receiving care at individual VA Medical Centers, the VA established the Survey of Healthcare Experience of Patients in 2002. The Survey of Healthcare Experience of Patients was designed to consolidate multiple VA healthcare survey programs into a single program that collects data on both inpatient and outpatient experiences of veterans at a VA Medical Center. The Survey of Healthcare Experience of Patients focuses on the quality of care.

With the Survey of Healthcare Experience of Patients serving as a blueprint, Senator McCaskill's office, veteran leaders, and the Kansas City VA Medical Center worked together to develop an independent survey to serve as a resource veterans can use to make recommendations to each individual VA Medical Center regarding the quality of customer service.

Scope

The scope of this review included, but was not necessarily limited to, those VA facilities located in the Kansas City region and statewide locations that received a Veterans' Customer Satisfaction Program survey during the period June 1 through September 15, 2011. In the Kansas City region, 88 veterans completed surveys during that period.

Information used to complete this report included:

- Completed surveys received from veterans who received care at a VA facility.
- Communications with, and information received from, representatives from the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans of America, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans of Modern Warfare, Disabled Veterans of America, the Missouri Association of Veterans Organizations and VA officials.

Methodology

During our review, a database established by and internal to the senate office was used to accumulate results and compile data in tabulated form. In instances where veterans reported the need for immediate or urgent assistance in response to their case, additional information was gathered so the VA could respond immediately to their needs.

Survey questionnaires were available through veteran's service organizations, from VA patient representatives and online at www.mccaskill.senate.gov/vcsp. Veterans self reported their customer service experience at the VA facility either directly online or by submitting a written survey to a veterans service organization or to Senator McCaskill's office that was then entered into the database.

All completed surveys were reviewed independently by representatives of the veterans service organizations who selected specific comments to be included in the report based on the significance and relevance of the comment to the question. Those comments not selected for reporting were taken into consideration when writing the report but were not directly quoted due to the comments either not having as significant a level of relevance to the question asked or missing key information to draw a conclusion.

Limitations

Data presented are compiled from survey information submitted by veterans. The comments included were obtained directly from the surveys. These comments were not verified by the senate office through additional procedures for accuracy, validity, or completeness.

This is not meant to be a scientifically-constructed study.



OBSERVATIONS & RESULTS

Background

This summary report covered the period from June 1, 2011 to September 15, 2011. During this period, 88 veterans completed the Veterans’ Customer Satisfaction Program survey for the Kansas City region. A majority of the veterans indicated that they had received services at the Kansas City VA Medical Center division.

In the survey, veterans reported the era that they served. All eras of veterans from World War II to present day were represented with Vietnam era veterans comprising 64.4% of the respondents. Some veterans indicated they served in multiple eras of service. Below is a chart which details the composition of veterans participating in the survey:

WWII	11.5%
Korea	9.2%
Vietnam	64.4%
Desert Shield/ Desert Storm	13.8%
Iraq/Afghanistan	4.6%
Other	8%

These veterans utilized multiple services while at the Medical Center. Out of the 88 surveyed, veterans reported using the following VA clinic categories:

Primary Care	40%	Emergency Room	15.3%	Extended Care	2.4%
Outpatient Clinic	18.8%	Mental Health Services	40%	Dental	20%
Pharmacy	29.4%	X-Ray	22.4%	Laboratory	31.8%
Travel/Enrollment	14.1%	Main Lobby	22.4%	Specialist Visit	17.6%
Inpatient Care	10.6%	Women’s clinic	1.2%	Spinal Cord Injury Unit	2.4%

Prosthetics	8.2%	Podiatry	9.4%	CHAMP VA	0.0%
Other	23.5% (Senior Veterans Clinic, Neurology, Dermatology, Cardiology)				

Review of survey question results

This section summarizes the results of each of the survey questions.

1. Ease of scheduling appointments

Improvements were made in the ease of scheduling appointments at a VA facility; however, concerns were noted.

Were you able to schedule your appointment easily?

	Q1 (original)
Yes:	88.2%
No:	11.8%

Out of the 88 surveys completed, 76 veterans responded to this question with 67 veterans stating they did not have a problem with scheduling their appointments at the VA medical facilities in the Kansas City region. Although the vast majority of the veterans were pleased with the ease of scheduling their appointments, the veterans who indicated they were having trouble with making appointments state most of their issues were with scheduling appointments over the phone and being unable to reach a VA official who could schedule an appointment.

Below is a sample of some concerns from veterans:

- “I couldn’t get through due to high call volumes and had to make multiple attempts to speak to a representative. After getting through, the representative was rude and unhelpful.”
- “I Could not get a human at the other end of the line of my phone call. I was put on hold for hour.”

Recommendation: Improve the phone and appointment system to be more responsive and courteous. Improve call-back / response times with targeted tracking systems to track returned calls.

VA Medical Center’s Response:

Kansas City is actively already working on improving this aspect of our hospital. In order to improve upon our scheduling practices, we developed an appointment center.

This appointment center allows patients to dial one number (816-922-2000) to schedule, reschedule or cancel any appointment. This was communicated through a letter sent to all patients and has shown to decrease the confusion for our patients and.

We also addressing the overall difficulties that our patients are experiencing in reaching their desired destination through our telephone system. Our facility currently has a team that is working actively to improve upon our telephone access to our veterans. The team reviews reports for length of time on hold, the abandonment rate (percentage of calls that end with the caller hanging up before the call is actually engaged), and the number of calls to a given number and time to answer. Several changes have been made which has improved the access. One improvement has been expanding the hours of operation for a centralized phone team – now available 7:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

2. Ease of access to the appointment location at the facility

Most veterans continue to report that they were able to navigate the VA medical facilities in the Kansas City region in order to find the location of their appointments.

Were you able to find your way to your appointment easily?

	Q1 (original)
Yes:	98.7%
No:	1.3%

Out of the 88 surveys completed, 78 veterans responded to this question with 67 veterans stating they did not have a problem finding their way to appointments at the VA medical facilities in the Kansas City region. We view this as a strong sign that the VA has taken the necessary steps to help veterans navigate the VA facilities.

Below is a sample of a comment from a veteran:

- “On my first visit to the VA Hospital in KC I was met by a greeter who escorted me to where I needed to go.”

Recommendation: Continue having greeters meet patients, and making sure staff offers assistance to patients needing directions.

VA Medical Center’s Response:

There are no plans to discontinue use of the greeters. This is a recognized best practice for the medical center and has been a huge patient and visitor satisfier with the assistance in navigating the building.

3. Respect shown to the veteran while at the VA facility

Nearly ninety percent of respondents reported that they are receiving the respect they feel they deserve during their VA medical experience.

Were you treated with respect while at the VA facility?

	Q1 (original)
Yes:	87.3%
No:	12.7%

Out of the 88 surveys completed, 79 veterans responded to this question with 69 veterans stating they were treated with respect while at the VA medical facilities in the Kansas City region. While there were several instances where veterans reported rude treatment by specific VA staff there appears to be an overall healthy culture of respectful behavior at the Kansas City VA Medical Center with some room for improvement.

Below is a sample of comments from veterans:

- “There are times when the answer to your problems were abrupt.”
- “The amount of respect that I received ranks high for me.”

Recommendation: Focus on customer service training among all staff. Develop and implement a guideline of 4-6 principles every VA employee should practice when interacting with veterans on a daily basis.

VA Medical Center’s Response:

Customer service training is an annual mandatory requisite for medical center staff, specifically front line staff. This year the training consisted of an interactive workshop called “Changing the Climate.” Additionally front line staff just recently completed telephone skills training as a patient centered initiative. The medical center director personally met with each group attending the training and outlined his expectations for each staff member to provide excellent customer service to our Veterans.

4. Communication by the VA staff while the veteran was at the facility

One frustration among respondents is the general lack of information and clear communication from the VA staff to the patients. Ten percent of veterans felt there was a gap in the communication of medical and other information during their experience at the VA Medical Center.

Did the VA staff communicate well with you and clearly explain what was going on?

	Q1 (original)
Yes:	90%
No:	10%

Out of the 88 surveys completed, 80 veterans responded to this question with 72 veterans stating the VA staff communicated effectively with them at the VA medical facilities in the Kansas City region.

Several survey respondents commented on the poor communication and service received with the VA pharmacy. Most of the respondents report a general sense of respect at the Kansas City VA.

Below is a sample of some concerns from veterans:

- “not really - there is always a rush atmosphere and rarely enough time as a patient to get everything covered and answered.”
- “Generally yes, especially in the eye clinic. Very professional staff. Downstairs where they arrange to fill prescriptions, they REALLY need changes though staff was courteous.”

Recommendation: Assemble a workgroup which is comprised of veterans, caregivers, and VA staff to fine tune better communication at the VA Medical Center.

VA Medical Center’s Response:

Kansas City VAMC has an established Director’s Veterans Advisory Board that is made up of a group of diverse Veterans that represent our patient population and are from different eras and military conflicts, special needs programs (such as Paralyzed Veterans and Blinded Veterans) and includes a representative for family members. The group meets monthly with the primary purpose to provide input on areas of greater improvement for the veteran. This group also comprises the “mystery shopper” program which identifies a topic a quarter to “shop” and is often times centered on customer service issues.

Secondly the medical center has a “grass roots” Veteran Focus Group that meets bi-monthly with the Medical Center Director. The group prepares a formal agenda and provides feedback to the Director on specifically identified topics.

And the Director meets monthly with the Veterans Service Officers, providing medical center updates and gathering feedback from each service officer.

5. Amount of time to be seen by a provider

Veterans wait times to be seen once they arrive for their appointments or arrive in the emergency room have made improvements since the first VCSP summary report.

Were you able to be seen by your provider in a reasonable amount of time?

	Q1 (original)
Yes:	90.2%
No:	9.8%

Out of the 88 surveys completed, 82 veterans responded to this question with 74 veterans stating they were seen by their VA provider in a reasonable amount of time at the VA medical facilities in the Kansas City region.

Veterans reported they are generally seen within a reasonable amount of time. In some cases veterans reported that they had to wait longer than they thought was necessary. The current survey results suggest that veterans are being seen within a reasonable amount of time.

Below is a sample of some concerns from veterans:

- “Last time I saw provider was in April '11 I will not see provider until August. I feel this is rather extender period, in which to recieve a set of dentures”
- “The KC VA, especially the Orthopedic department, is an ALL day affair. And it's for nothing. The majority of the staff are students and don't know anything anyway.”

Recommendation: Develop a system to monitor wait times at the clinical level and have an action plan ready in case an issue arises at a clinic.

VA Medical Center’s Response:

A systems redesign initiative is underway which includes a review of utilization for every clinic. This review will improve the clinic scheduling matrices, review demand and volume per clinic and increase clinic capacity as needed.

Each clinical department has been asked to conduct a systems redesign initiative for any clinic where access or wait times is an issue. Primary Care has a monitor in place that includes weekly surveys. Patients are asked how long they had to wait to be seen. Back

up plans for absences and delays are in place. Reviews are currently underway for Medicine and Subspecialty clinics.

6. Cleanliness of the facility

Veterans report satisfaction in the cleanliness of the VA facilities in the Kansas City region but some of the concerns continue to be due to the facility’s normal wear and tear that stems from the age of the facility.

Rate the cleanliness of the facility you visited?

	Q1 (original)
Excellent:	49.4%
Above Average (Good):	39.5%
Average/Fair:	7.4%
Below Average:	2.5%
Poor:	1.2%

Out of the 88 surveys completed, 81 veterans responded to this question with 72 veterans stating the cleanliness of VA medical facilities in the Kansas City region was excellent or above average. Three respondents stated the VA medical facility’s cleanliness was “below average” or “poor.”

The veterans’ opinions of the cleanliness of the VA medical facilities in the Kansas City region indicate that, overall, veterans are pleased with Kansas City VA Medical Center over the last several years. A few veterans reported some concerns with cleanliness but nothing that indicates a systemic problem.

Below is a sample of some comments from veterans:

- “I have always admired the attention to detail and cleanliness of this facility. Reminds me of my ship. Thank you.”
- “KC VA always has something in a state of disrepair. They take more care keeping the outside ground manicured than keeping the restrooms and patient treatment rooms spic and span. I had an MRI downstairs one day and it smelled like mold.”

Recommendation: Have housekeeping monitor high-trafficked areas and make telephone numbers visible for veterans to call when areas need attention.

VA Medical Center’s Response:

Environmental Management Service maintains housekeeping staff 24/7, with individuals assigned to the restrooms of the Main Tower and the Valor Pavilion from 07:00am until 3:30pm daily.

EMS will develop appropriate communiqués to place in the waiting rooms that provides contact information for questions or concerns with cleanliness of the medical center.

7. Overall experience at the VA facility

The Kansas City VA Medical Center should focus on respect and communication at the VA medical facilities, to continue the overall satisfaction that veterans stated they have experienced recently at the Kansas City VA medical facilities.

How would you rate your overall experience with the VA Medical Centers?

	Q1 (original)
Excellent:	48.7%
Above Average (Good):	34.2%
Average/Fair:	14.5%
Below Average:	0.0%
Poor:	2.6%

Out of the 88 surveys completed, 76 veterans responded to this question with 63 veterans stating that their experience at the VA medical facilities in the Kansas City region was excellent or above average. Only two respondents stated their experience at the VA medical facility was “either “below average” or “poor.”

These numbers indicate confidence and satisfaction with veterans’ overall experiences at the medical centers.

Recommendation: Since the Veterans’ Customer Satisfaction Program is an ongoing survey, develop a workgroup comprised of area veteran leaders and retired VA administrators to help implement the Veterans’ Customer Satisfaction Program recommendations for the Kansas City VA medical centers.

VA Medical Center’s Response:

Kansas City VAMC has established groups in place that is made up of diverse Veterans that represent our patient population and are from different eras and military conflicts, special needs programs (such as Paralyzed Veterans and Blinded Veterans) and includes a representative for family members. These groups address patient satisfaction at many different levels, with one group as organized mystery shoppers. (See recommendation #4.)

8. Willingness to recommend the VA facility to other veterans

Veterans indicated more of a willingness to recommend other veterans to a VA medical facility in the Kansas City region. Over 93% percent of the respondents indicated they would recommend the VA to other veterans.

Would you recommend this VA facility to other veterans?

Yes:	93.4%
No:	6.6%

Out of the 88 surveys completed, 76 veterans responded to this question with 71 veterans stating they would recommend the VA medical facilities in the Kansas City region to other veterans.

Veterans who would not recommend their VA Medical Center to others, seemed to focus on service mishaps such as telephones not working and not a need for improvements in customer service or quality of care as a reason why they would not to recommend the VA to others.

Below is a sample of some positive responses from veterans:

- “I always recommend this VA to everyone eligible. I have received consistently excellent care at all of the clinics and facilities used. All of my records are in one place, easily accessible to all providers. The online prescription orders process is extremely convenient.”
- “Quality care professionals throughout. I've had cancer surgery, audiology, vision, radiology, pharmacy, and physical medicine care and each and every health care professional was excellent.”
- “I have been treated at the KC VA since 1980 for heart attack, high blood pressure, surgery for 31 years, and I have always been treated with respect and properly.”
- “I feel that KCVA has the best programs for PTSD & other mental health programs.”

For those veterans who had negative comments about the medical centers and would not recommend them, the reasons focus on general services not being up to standard as you would expect at a medical center.

Below is a sample of some concerns from veterans:

- “KCVAMC food service workers act as they are the same old VA employees bored and waiting on quitting time.”

- “I’m concerned that this is the second time they failed to get my perscription correct. I had to return lenses.”
- “K.C. hospital needs telephones that work, 8th floor (ICU) phones didn't work”

Recommendation: Work to improve communication between veterans and the VA Medical Center by working with veterans leaders in the community to develop recommendations to improve the overall experience at the medical center.

VA Medical Center’s Response:

As described in previous recommendations, Kansas City VAMC has several established groups in place that is made up of diverse Veterans that represent our patient population and serve as advisors to the medical center director on issues and concerns to include communication and customer service. Additionally Veteran representation is always included on teams for construction design and in medical center strategic planning sessions.

The medical center recently added a patient-centered care coordinator to our staff and numerous patient centered initiatives have been implemented or are underway to improve the patient experience at the medical center. Examples include adding shuttles for transportation from the far reaching parking lots, adding greeters to the main entrances of the medical center to assist in navigation, improved wayfinding signage, menu select for inpatients, and a brand new initiative --- shining shoes our inpatients shoes before they are discharged.

Improved communication initiatives include an aggressive community outreach campaign, electronic bulletin boards strategically placed throughout the medical center, an updated web page, a newly added Facebook page, a Twitter account, a quarterly patient newsletter.



Veterans' Recommendations

The current review disclosed various issues regarding the customer service received by veterans and other matters as presented below. This section summarizes the recommendations that veterans made to improve the VA facility they visited.

What could be done to improve the VA facility you visited?

Out of the 88 surveys completed, 84 veterans responded to this question with their recommendations to improve the VA medical facilities in the Kansas City region. Most of the recommendations from veterans dealt with the same issues that have been outlined throughout this summary report.

Below are a few of the responses from veterans:

- “If you take a Narcotic medication you have to call it in and then Pharmacy contacts health provider. Some pharmacy techs seem to forget or they must think we are a bunch of drug abusers. I always check to see the status on My Healthy Vet.”
- “For cost effectiveness put travel pay distribution back in the center. Very inconvenient when you have appointments 3 or 4 times a week and need gas money.”
- “Faster appointments when needed. Let patients know test results in a reasonable amount of time. They need to let us see our primary doctor more than twice a year. Also, the walk in clinic needs to be improved a great deal. It's pitiful now.”
- “put out better advertising about the good care available. My brother won't come in because of what the VA once was.”
- “Pay travel at time of visit (debit card) 30-50 days is too long to wait if someone isn't done I will be forced to stop using VA & use my medicare work on urinary clinic very poor service. Prothetis needs help”
- “This is an older, cramped facility. The staff does a wonderful job with the facility they have, but it is simply too small for the number of persons they service.”
- “Too hard getting records. Too hard getting communications between private and VAMC staff.”
- “Parking at the VA needs to be improved for patients.”

- “In patient care should have marking boards for the patient's nurse who is on duty. There should also be marking boards in all ICU rooms.”
- “More medical staff in primary care to reduce rates of primary care providers to patients”
- “The area for filling prescription glasses needs to be expanded. There was only one employee working, long waiting period to be seen.”



Recognition of Professionalism of VA Employees by Veterans

Is there a provider or a department that does an excellent job that you would like Senator McCaskill to know about?

There are many great professionals within the VA medical facilities in the Kansas City region, and we feel strongly that it is important they are acknowledged for their work as well. Out of the 88 surveys completed, 68 veterans responded to this question with acknowledgement of appreciation for a provider or a department at the VA medical facilities in the Kansas City region.

Below is a sample of responses from veterans. At the request of the VA, employees' names were replaced with their initials to protect their privacy. All responses, in full, were provided to the VA Administration to alert them to employees who were singled out for their professionalism and performance:

- “Mental Health clinic is excellent. MGS M.D. Staff Psychiatrist. He is my provider and very smart at tricking people, to see if they have taken their medications. For example I take dextroamphetamine and on some visits he will require you to take a urine test. There are times when I need to take what I call a drug holiday and will not take medication for a few days. When I had a drug screen it was missing the medication. Thats when I told him about the holiday you see if on that medication for long periods,they would have to up the dosage. The medication is very hard on your system. Another time I had to take pain medication which I will not take both at the same time and was only positive for the pain medication. I in return gained his trust over the years and he is more than a doctor but a very good friend. I can share anything with him or I can just say hi and this will allow him to spend more time with others. God bless him he takes care of me and treats others like he would like to be treated. Please let Claire know what a outstanding human being this man is.”
- “Yes, MHC-PTSD- Dr. HT, MD- one of the best doctors of KC-VA hospital.”
- “Dental Clinic/ Dr. S is an Outstanding dentist”
- “Primary Care Blue Team Nurse Practitioner L have been my primary health care provider.Deserve a job well done, She even Work on weekends due to increase of veterans signing up for Veterans Benefits”
- “Dr. S in mental health has been a life line to and for me. He never has let me down and is the reason I can still write this. Over the past 10 years, he is the only one I can truly call me doctor and friend.”

- “Dr. P DDS and assistant BM are great in the Dental Clinic. Dr. H in the eye clinic is above average, as is Dr. S in behavioral health.”
- “RA is an excellent PA and has extended herself in everyway to make you at ease. She is in cardiology department.”
- “Dr. W primary care doc, Dr. T mental health doctor”
- “Primary care- mental health, dermatology, urology, therapy, RC, Dr. T, Dr. P, office employees are nice.”
- “Dr. T.”
- “Yes, MHC-PTSD- Dr. T, MD- one of the best doctors of KC-VA hospital.
- “Chiropractic center”
- “Dr. J, Dr. P, RC”
- “Heart clinic (silver clinic) did excellent when I was having some test on heart very informative”
- “Primary Care Team 8 with Dr. E has provided exceptional care to my wife over the past nine years.”
- “Patient Advocates”
- . Actually I have not had a bad experience at VAMC. The van drivers need to be recognized for their attitude, since they are the first VA personnel I see after I arrive.”
- “Primary Care Vision”
- “Dr. L and Dr. D are real fine people at the VA and need to be talked well about at the VA and what they do.
- “Dr. S. in mental health is an excellent example of good care and respect of the patients”
- “K. H. Director”
- “Respiratory department has been excellent over last 8 or 9 months (with) care and follow up of my respiratory care. Especially the doctor that took care of me in Feb and March 2011 (Dr. D/D)”
- “The eye clinic, speed in which they get you in and the ability to care for your most prized body part, your vision.”

- “Both my primary care, Dr. M and my dentist, Dr. S have been very attentive to my health needs.”
- “Yes, the receptionist at the mental health clinic are always respectful and very helpful. Also, the move clinic doctor, Dr. S, is very helpful and beneficial to my weight loss and is a fantastic asset to this facility.”
- “The Red Clinic (K.) was extremely busy however she took the time to specifically write down my future appointments and locations. I feel she showed a great deal of empathy for the Veterans that she was assisting. The Red Clinic also provided me with excellent training on two monitoring instruments that I received from prosthetics. In audiology, I believe it was Doctor S that gave me an excellent hearing test, and she was extremely professional, considerate and friendly. I do not recall the names of the other persons that I met in X-ray, however I would give an excellent rating for each person and department where I visited on June 3 and June 6.”
- “RC, my primary. Dr. S, Dr. S and many more in the mental health department. I speak very highly of the Director of the KCVA hospital and his staff. They are truly concerned with operation for the hospital.”
- “Both the Blue and Silver clinics have been very nice to deal with, when I gave them my power of attorney papers they made copies of them and told me to carry a copy on me at all times.”

Recommendation: The Kansas City VA Medical Center is fortunate to have so many competent, compassionate professionals. Reward and acknowledge superior employees for their service and job well-done.

VA Medical Center’s Response:

We continue to work on making the Veterans experience excellent at the medical center and are absolutely thrilled to see the positive responses on the customer service survey. Hearing the voice of the Veteran reinforces our efforts in becoming more and more patient-centered in everything we do.

Over the last several years we have implemented many key initiatives that are making a difference --- plus we always solicit Veteran feedback to ensure that we are moving in the right direction. Adding Veterans to strategic planning sessions and establishing Veteran

groups to provide the feedback are excellent examples of listening to the voice of the customer.

The staff at the Kansas City VA has a full and total commitment to the patients. In fact approximately a third of our employee population are Veterans themselves – Veterans serving Veterans.

But – we are not through....our journey for excellence continues.



Claire McCaskill
United States Senator

CONCLUSION

The Veterans Customer Satisfaction Program in the Kansas City region is off to a good start. This summary report provides details of ways the VA can improve veterans' experiences at the VA medical facilities. This is part of a series of steps the VA is taking to continue improving veterans' experience at the VA medical center in the Kansas City region. The veterans who filled out the survey provided honest, constructive information regarding their experiences at the VA medical facilities during their recent visits. With this information, we compiled a summary report that reflected veterans' experiences and concerns at these facilities.

The Survey of Healthcare Experience of Patients report has provided the VA with a general overview of veterans' overall quality of care. The Veterans Customer Satisfaction Program survey will provide the VA with some specific examples of the quality of the veterans' experience at the Kansas City Region VA facilities.

It is clear from the surveys that there is always room to improve veterans' experiences at the Kansas City Region VA Medical Center. The VA has provided responses that indicate that they are taking veterans' concerns seriously and are continuing to implement procedures, policies and training to streamline the scheduling of appointments, address cleanliness and way-finding at the VA facilities, and improve communication with the veterans. The Kansas City VA's veterans' working group comprised of veteran service officers, veterans and VA staff that meet regularly to review and analyze information on actions, progress and results is an asset for the Kansas City VA, and a positive approach for providing veterans the quality customer service they deserve.

In order to maintain this momentum, we need to continue to work together to identify areas of concern at the VA medical centers, to address the issues and to improve the quality of service that we provide to our veterans.

We encourage our veterans to continue to fill out the surveys as their participation in the Veterans Customer Satisfaction Program is essential to the success of the program. The senate office will compile the summary reports and the VA medical center's response on a quarterly basis.

Special thanks to the veterans service organizations members who assisted in the Veterans Customer Satisfaction Program: Ed Slater, Mike Davis, DJ Coyle, Bob Wonnell, Kathy Lee, Randy Barnett and Bob Larkin among others.