

# Improving Communication with the VA. Tips for Facilitating Shared Care.

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DEPARTMENT OF  
VETERANS AFFAIRS

TO CARE FOR HIM WHO SHALL  
HAVE BORNE THE BATTLE AND  
FOR HIS WIDOW, AND HIS ORPHAN  
A. LINCOLN





# Objectives

- 1. To provide a better understanding of the structure of primary care at the VA
- 2. To improve communication between VA and non-VA healthcare by providing resources to help facilitate contact with various VA entities
- 3. To provide tips and recommendations to improve patient service when balancing care between VA and non-VA resources.

# VA Structure and Organization

# VA STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION

- The country is divided into VISNs
- VISN = Veterans Integrated Services Network



## VHA Organization Chart – VISN Map





# VISN 10

## The VISN facilities include:

Ann Arbor VAMC, MI (Toledo is part of Ann Arbor)

Battle Creek VAMC, MI

Chillicothe VAMC, OH

Cincinnati VAMC (Ft. Thomas division)

Louis Stokes Cleveland VAMC (Sandusky is part of Cleveland)

Chalmers P. Wylie VA ACC, OH (Columbus, OH)

Dayton VAMC

Detroit VAMC, MI

Northern Indiana (Fort Wayne & Marion), IN

Richard L. Roudebush VAMC, IN (Indianapolis)

Aleda E. Lutz, Saginaw, MI

# Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC)



- Each VISN has satellite clinics known as Community Based Outpatient Clinics or CBOCs.
- These outpatient clinics provide primary care services and some specialty services to help provide access to routine care closer to home.



So what number do I  
call and who do I ask  
for?



# How To Find Information About VA Facilities

[www.va.gov/find-locations/](https://www.va.gov/find-locations/)

Ask the patient if they have contact information for their team. They may have a business card with the information you need.

**VA**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**Team #4 Dr. Kelly Ramey**

Scheduling / Lisa Ext: 49460

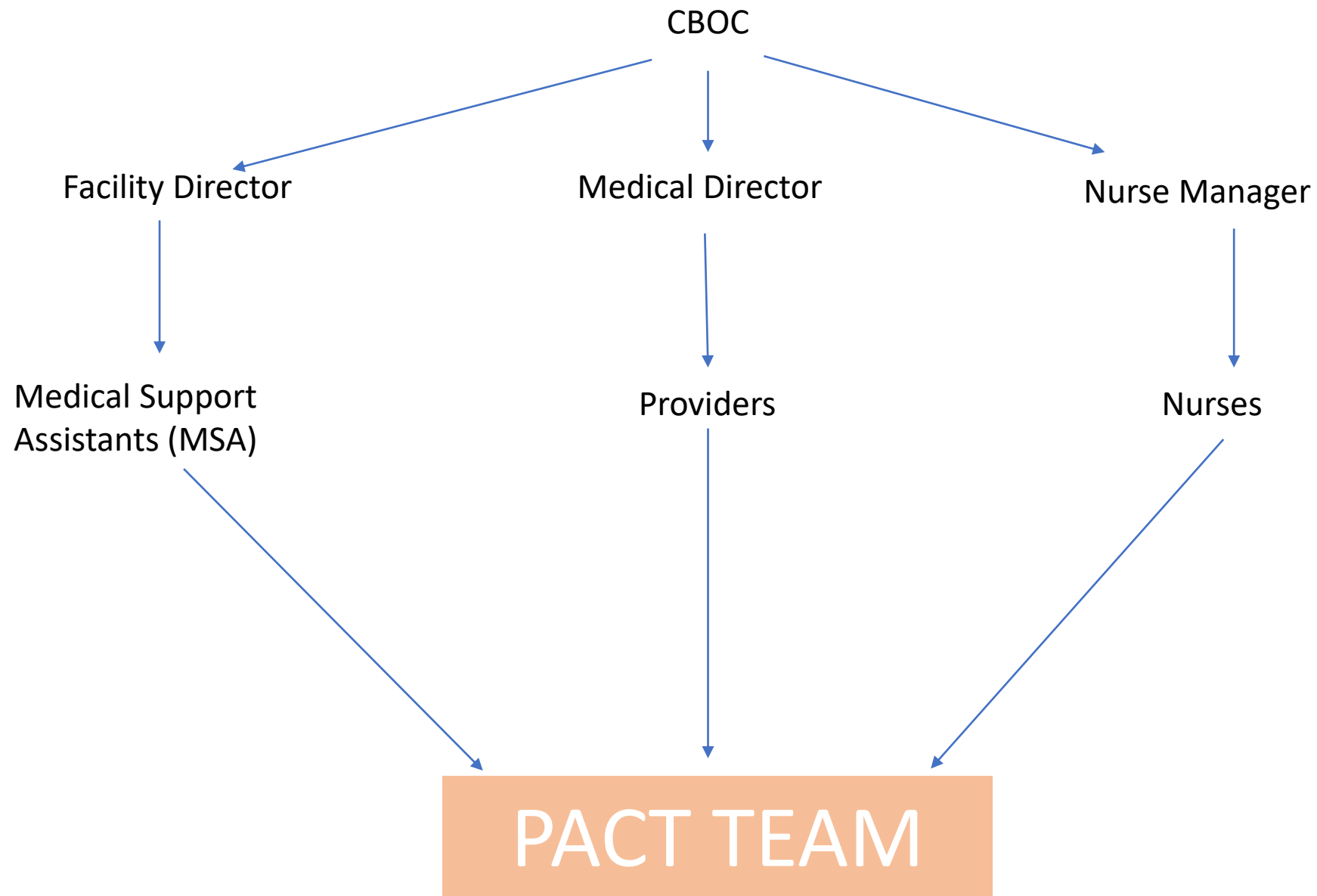
LPN / Colleen Ext: 49459

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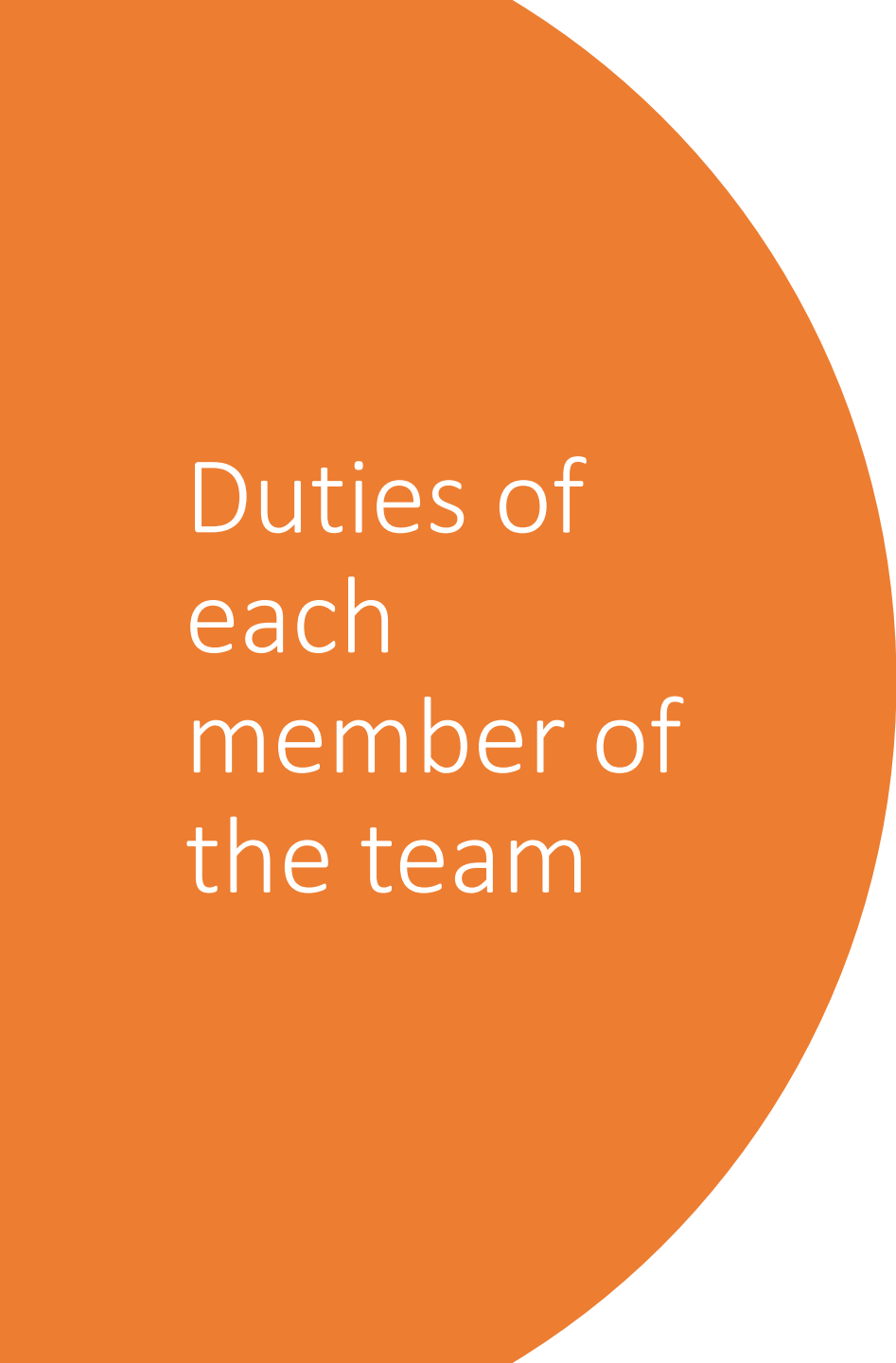
Phone: 419-609-1460  
Fax: 216-229-2992





# Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT)

- Each primary care provider (PCP) should be associated with a PACT Team.
- Each PACT Team includes:
  - PCP
  - PACT RN
  - PACT LPN
  - MSA (Medical Support Assistant)

A large orange circle is positioned on the left side of the slide, partially cut off by the edge. It contains the text 'Duties of each member of the team' in white.

## Duties of each member of the team

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Scheduling - MSA (clerk)- KEY CONTACT PERSON

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Clinical Issues – PACT RN or LPN

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You can ask for team members by name or ask the MSA for assistance. The MSA is your best resource for communicating successfully with the team.



## Other possible staff

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There will usually be a MH team at the outpatient clinics. They are not associated with specific PACT teams. You can ask for them by name, or talk to the MSA if you do not know who your patient sees.

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Some CBOCs will have Clinical Pharmacists (PharmD's) who can be very helpful. These Doctors of Pharmacy can assist with medication and/or formulary questions and can be quite helpful with medication reconciliation and assistance when a patient is being discharged from an outside hospital.



# Things People Ask About Most

Medications

Durable Medical Equipment

Community Care

# MEDICATIONS

Many VA patients request that outside prescriptions be filled through VA.





# WE ARE NOT A PHARMACY. WE ARE A HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

- Most facilities DO NOT have a pharmacy on site. In fact, most VA medications are distributed from a centralized pharmacy elsewhere in the country.
- In the Cleveland VA system, there are limited meds available at the CBOCs for more acute care purposes. These include things like NSAIDs, muscle relaxers, oral steroids, cough and cold meds, starter packs of DOACs, antibiotics. They are for short supplies and are meant to get the meds to the patient when they need the medication right away.
- Essential meds can be “overnighted” to a patient if the medication order is placed prior to 3 pm and pharmacy is notified. Otherwise it takes 7-10 days for meds to be delivered to the patient.

# WE ARE NOT A PHARMACY. WE ARE A HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

- Please do not simply fax a prescription to us.
- When a patient wants a medication through the VA, the prescription must be written by a VA prescriber/provider. Most often, outside records (not just the prescription) will be needed before the provider will agree to write for the medication. In Cleveland's system the outside records are REQUIRED before meds will be considered. It is possible that the VA provider will not agree to write the prescription. Remember, the VA provider is writing for the medication under their medical license and is completely within their rights to refuse to prescribe any medication.

# WE ARE NOT A PHARMACY. WE ARE A HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

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- We Have a STRICT Medication Formulary
  - Any N/F meds must be reviewed and approved by pharmacy supervisors before they can be provided to the veteran.





# DURABLE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

- If you have a patient discharging from a hospital or nursing home and there is equipment that they need, please contact us ASAP, preferably several days prior to discharge, so that we can try to have equipment available when they go home. If you are going to be doing elective surgery and you know the patient will need equipment post-op, please contact us prior to the surgery so we can help get everything in place.

## Presurgical “Clearance”


- If your patient needs presurgical evaluation and optimization, please give us time before the surgery date to get the patient scheduled and seen. Ideally, we can get a patient scheduled within a week, but a two-week window would be preferred in case there is other testing or evaluation that is indicated.

# COMMUNITY CARE

- When the Mission Act was introduced, it was widely touted as the program that would allow veterans to seek care anywhere they choose – at VA expense.
- Community Care has been expanded greatly over the past several years. HOWEVER:
- VA IS NOT AN INSURANCE COMPANY. WE ARE A HEALTHCARE SYSTEM. There are processes in place to allow patients to receive care outside the formal confines of the VA under very well-defined circumstances. For urgent situations, we may be able to make it happen quickly, but in general, this takes time.
- THERE ARE MANY RULES REGARDING ELIGIBILITY FOR COMMUNITY CARE.
- Although the staff at the CBOCs are responsible for placing consults for much of the community care requested, the staff in the CBOC are NOT involved with the approval process. PLEASE DON'T SHOOT THE MESSENGER!



# The General Take Away Message

- If you have questions about a VA process or policy, please call us. We will do our best to answer your questions and help however we can with the care of our mutual patients.
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# CONTACT INFORMATION

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QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU

