

Avera Health: Linking Providers to Patients

Avera Health is a regional healthcare system headquartered in Sioux Falls, serving South Dakota and surrounding areas of Minnesota, Iowa, Nebraska, and North Dakota—a geographical footprint of more than 72,000 square miles and 86 counties with a population of nearly 1 million.

Avera serves this large area through six regional centers in Aberdeen, Mitchell, Pierre, Sioux Falls and Yankton, South Dakota, and Marshall, Minnesota. Avera has 33 hospitals, 208 primary and specialty care clinics, 40 senior living facilities in addition to home care and hospice, sports and wellness facilities. Throughout the region, Avera Health offers care in 60 distinct specialties, including behavioral health, cardiology, oncology, orthopedics, brain and spine, neurosurgery, digestive disease, bariatrics, dermatology, endocrinology and diabetes, ophthalmology, pulmonology and sleep medicine, pain management, neonatology, pediatrics, rheumatology, and women's specialties.

In a large, very rural region, *geographic distance is a significant factor*. It is vital to have a network of community-based providers, across all specialties to ensure that Veterans can get the appointments they need, within VA standards for driving time and time to service. Where the current numbers of registered providers are insufficient, it requires recruiting providers currently practicing in that area to participate in the community care network.

In 2014, The JMG Group LLC was contracted by Avera Health to help them better serve their Veteran population. The JMG Group LLC analyzed the need in their service area, identifying a population of more than 39,000 veterans. JMG worked with Avera, Health Net, and the Sioux Falls VA to improve collaboration and communication, *providing a significant increase in available providers in all required specialties*. The result is increased access and reduced wait times for Veterans seeking care through the Choice program.



Flandreau Community Hospital, one of Avera's facilities serving Veterans in rural areas like Moody County, South Dakota.

