

Baraga County Memorial Hospital
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BCMh To Have An In-house VA Representative

Awarded contract by VA and Michigan Center for Rural Health

In the coming weeks, BCMH will begin a new program designed to better serve veterans in our community. Presently, the hospital will be one of 3 in the country to roll out this program.

On June 8th 2023, Dr. Carolyn Turvey and her team from the Veterans Administration in Iowa visited Baraga County Memorial Hospital to perform a site analysis, meet with hospital leadership, as well as local and regional VA leaders, including Baraga county's VSO Douglas Gray.

Dr. Turvey is an Investigator with the Center for Delivery & Research and Evaluation (CADRE) at the Iowa City VA, the Clinical Director of the Office of Rural Health Veterans Rural Health Resource Center in Iowa City, and Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine. She is interested in establishing population health models that improve care continuity for rural Veterans. Dr. Turvey ran a pilot program with this embedded VA representative model with great success, and is looking to expand the project.

Following this visit, Dr. Turvey informed BCMH that they had been awarded the contract with a grant from Michigan Center for Rural Health, thus becoming the first hospital in the state of Michigan to host an in-house VA coordinator. As part of this program, the hospital and clinic have agreed to initiate screening questions designed to identify people eligible for VA benefits. Persons identified will be referred to the VA coordinator and guided through the benefit onboarding process.

BCMh's very own Lori Karvonen, will be stepping into this role at the hospital. She currently works as an LPN in the BCMH Physician Group. Part of her duties will now include assisting local veterans. Lori comes from a Marine Corps family and previously worked as a nurse for the VA clinic in Hancock for several years before coming to BCMH. When she learned she would be the new VA rep at the hospital, Lori said: "I almost cried because management here is so good and staff is treated so well, and everybody gets along. I love working here but I miss the veterans. It's just become this overwhelming joy in my life to know that someday my son is going to be a veteran and it means the world to me that he (will have) a nurse that cares. So, I figured, I'm going to be that for others."

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