

**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date: **MAY 16 2019**

From: Executive In Charge, Office of the Under Secretary for Health (10)

Subj: High Reliability Organization – Lean Improvement Methodology

To: VHA Senior Leadership
VHA Network and Medical Center Directors

1. In March 2018, the National Leadership Council's (NLC) Employee Engagement Committee conducted a survey of process improvement methods utilized by staff at Network and Medical Center levels. The results of this survey indicated that despite at least eight different methodologies in use across Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Lean improvement activities were most prevalent across the enterprise.

2. As leaders, we all have a duty to be aware of critical processes, and constantly seek to improve and standardize those processes to produce more reliable results and improved outcomes. As we move along the journey to transform our culture to become a high reliability organization, the use of multiple continuous process improvement methodologies across the enterprise has the potential to result in fragmentation, significant variability, and lack of understanding and collaboration across VHA.

3. As such, I am designating the Lean methodology as the common process improvement methodology for VHA. By embracing a standardized methodology, we establish a baseline from which we can ensure consistent training, enhance and sustain a culture of continuous performance improvement, achieve reliable results, and share successful outcomes in a standardized format enterprise-wide. Integration of effective Lean improvement methods and tools supports an empowered frontline workforce in using a common language for daily problem solving and sharing of strong practices.

4. Please be assured that the tools supporting other existing improvement methodologies will continue to have a place as part of your improvement toolboxes, however, Lean will serve as the primary improvement methodology expected to be practiced and supported by leadership across the enterprise.

5. If you have questions regarding this memorandum, please contact the VHA High Reliability Support Team (VHAHighReliabilitySupportTeam@va.gov).



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Executive in Charge