

# NEWS

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## Division of State and Veterans Nursing Homes recaps recent accomplishments

By Viki Manley, Director, Division of State and Veterans Nursing Homes

As director of the Colorado Department of Human Services' Division of State and Veterans Nursing Homes, I have one of the best jobs in the state. The past four years have been a culture shift for the Homes and the Division. Every employee in the Department of Human Services who walks into a Veterans Home is honored that our residents allow us to serve them. I am proud to report accomplishments in financial stability, facility renovation, quality of care, family satisfaction, culture change and marketing.



**Viki Manley**

A crucial achievement has been in our finances, with all of our Homes reporting net operating profits over the past fiscal year. The last time all of our Homes were financially successful at the same time was in 2000. Both efficiencies and growth have contributed to the overall financial picture.

An April 2007 *Denver Post* article was headlined *VA nursing homes in sorry shape*, referencing the poor state of our buildings. Four years and a whole lot of work later the Homelake domiciliary cottages mentioned in the article have been renovated and are Platinum certified under LEED for Homes (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design). Along with other campus-wide improvements, the renovation is projected to save more than \$100,000 per year in energy costs.

It truly takes a village to have accomplished renovations like this. Over the past eight years, the U.S. Department

of Veterans Affairs has granted us a total of nearly \$12 million for construction and renovation at our State Veterans Nursing Homes at Homelake, Florence and Walsenburg. The Legislature's Capital Development Committee, Colorado Historical Society and Colorado Board of Veterans Affairs also contributed funding for these projects.

At the Bruce McCandless State Veterans Nursing Home at Florence, the funds paid for upgrades and an expansion of the new nurses' stations; fire alarm and nurse call systems; and improvements to heating/air conditioning, lighting and windows. Similar expansions and upgrades were made in Walsenburg.

*(Recap continues on page 2)*



**Renovation of the 48 cottages at the Colorado State Veterans Center at Homelake has improved residents' quality of life and is expected to save \$100,000 per year in energy costs.**

(Recap continued from page 1)

**In other accomplishments:**

- ★ The State Veterans Nursing Home at Fitzsimons has been added to the registry of The Eden Alternative, an international organization working to change the culture of long-term care. Fitzsimons is the second state veterans home in Colorado and the fourth in the country to be accepted into the Eden registry. Colorado now provides half of all Eden-registered State Veterans Homes in the United States, and we are set to add one more Home next year.
- ★ In 2011, the McCandless Home received a ranking of five stars from the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, which was reported in U.S. News & World Report.
- ★ The Colorado State Veterans Nursing Home in Rifle was one of only 10 nursing homes in Colorado to receive a national “Excellence in Action” award for achieving family and resident satisfaction levels within the top 10 percent of all surveys conducted by an independent research firm.
- ★ Satisfaction levels of our residents’ family members have remained well above both state and national averages for all five years the Homes have participated in these surveys.
- ★ The United Veterans Committee presented Meritorious Service Awards to two of our nursing home administrators: Brad Honl, from Fitzsimons, and Barbara Moore, from Florence.
- ★ All marketing publications and a new Web site have been professionally written and designed to



**New marketing publications showcase State Veterans Nursing Homes’ mission, activities, services and accomplishments.**

- present a consistent look and message to potential referral sources and other interested audiences.
- ★ The Division has implemented far-reaching policies in emergency planning, medication issues, resident safety, staff background checks and readmission after short-term absences.
- ★ In surveys conducted by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in 2010, out of 158 potential deficiencies, two of our State Veterans Nursing Homes had no deficiencies whatsoever. One Home had just one deficiency, and another had one only deficiency and two “provisionally met” deficiencies. Collectively, these are the best scores the Homes have achieved in five or more years.
- ★ In addition, the State Veterans Nursing Homes’ overall average score on annual surveys completed by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment improved by 39 percent between 2009 and 2010. Also, in 2010, two of our Homes were scored 27 to 40 percent above the state average on a new type of quality

improvement-oriented survey being used by the state.

- ★ Our Homes are now using a new computer software program to monitor the same quality of care measures reviewed annually by state surveyors.
- As this impressive list of accomplishments illustrates, the state employees who manage and work in our Homes have much to be proud of. As we look back at these achievements, we also look forward to our goals. I feel confident that, by the same time next year, we will have taken our finances, quality of care, marketing and culture change to even higher levels in our quest to provide residents with caring communities that honor America’s heroes.

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*Viki Manley has a bachelor of arts in accounting from Fort Lewis College in Durango and a master’s degree in health care policy from the University of Denver. Prior to her current position, she directed the Long Term Care Division at the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, where she oversaw a \$1 billion dollar budget that encompassed all areas of long term care including 219 nursing homes.*

## Two State Veterans Nursing Home administrators honored by United Veterans Committee

The United Veterans Committee presented Meritorious Service Awards at its annual banquet to two Colorado State Veterans Nursing Homes administrators: Barbara Moore, from the Bruce McCandless State Veterans Nursing Home at Florence; and Brad Honl, from the Colorado State Veterans Nursing Home at Fitzsimons.

“We wanted to recognize Barbi and Brad for their outstanding service to veterans over the last year,” United Veterans Committee President George Thomas explained.



From left are: Gov. John Hickenlooper, Bruce McCandless State Veterans Nursing Home at Florence Administrator Barbara Moore, Colorado State Veterans Nursing Home at Fitzsimons Administrator Brad Honl and United Veterans Committee President George Thomas.

### DIVISION OF STATE AND VETERANS NURSING HOMES

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#### Our Mission

Under the direction of the Colorado Department of Human Services, the mission of the Division of State Veterans Nursing Homes is to honor and serve our nation's veterans, their spouses and Gold Star Parents by creating opportunities for meaningful activity, continued growth and feelings of self-worth in resident-centered long-term care and supportive living environments.

#### Our Vision

Our vision is that residents experience compassion, dignity and companionship in communities filled with life, love and laughter.

#### Key Staff

Reggie Bicha, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Human Services  
Joscelyn Gay, Director, Office of Long Term Care  
Viki Manley, Division Director  
Shannon Onken, Business Manager  
Janet Dauman, Director of Quality Management  
Connie Young, Marketing Manager  
Carolyn Cooper, Program Assistant

## State-run nursing homes save \$1 million-plus in Medicaid provider fees

By Shannon Onken, Business Manager

For the past three years, Colorado's State Veterans Nursing Homes have saved \$1.44 million annually as a result of a bill passed by the



Shannon Onken

Colorado State Legislature that exempted the state-run homes from paying certain nursing facility “provider fees.” Passed in fiscal year 2007–2008, House Bill 08-1114 requires most long-term care facilities to pay these fees to the state Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, which administers Medicaid in Colorado.

This same bill, however, made state-run nursing homes such as the Colorado State Veterans Nursing Homes exempt from having to pay the fee, along with continuing care retirement communities, nursing facilities connected to a general acute care hospital and facilities with 45 or fewer licensed beds.

Based on information from the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, if the State Veterans Nursing Homes were privately run, they would be required to pay the provider fees, significantly increasing annual operating funds.

The fees, which are assessed on direct and indirect health care services provided by the facilities, contribute to

matching funds required to obtain federal financial participation in Colorado's Medical Assistance program. These saved dollars allow our Homes to direct more programming toward making residents' lives more fulfilling.

*Shannon Onken has a bachelor of science in accounting and has been with the Division of State Veterans Nursing Homes for the past seven months. Previously, she worked with the Department of Human Services executive director for four years and as an accounting technician for Broomfield City and County for nine years. Shannon came to work for the Division because she has been impressed with the quality of care provided to our residents and the dedicated and compassionate team of employees.*

## Steps to improve quality bring recognition for Veterans Home at Florence

By Barbara Moore, Administrator, Bruce McCandless State Veterans Nursing Home at Florence

At the Bruce McCandless State Veterans Home at Florence, we were thrilled to learn we received a five-star rating from the Centers for Medicare &



**Barbara Moore**

Medicaid Services this past year. We were perhaps even more thrilled our Home was then listed in the U.S. News & World Report's list of the top 100 nursing homes in the nation!

We believe these honors were the result of our varied efforts to improve and maintain quality of care at our Home.

For starters, the elders residing at the Bruce McCandless State Veterans Nursing Home at Florence deserve the best care possible, including staff who really listen to—and act upon—their requests.

One way we seek to provide this level of care is by increasing elders' participation in their daily living choices, which in turn helps improve our quality of services and residents' quality of life. At our Home, one resident-centered accomplishment is the addition of the "Huskies Grille," a fun, relaxing area where residents, family and staff watch sporting events on multiple screens, host tailgate parties, play Wii games and gather for social events. Funded by a Veterans' Trust grant and designed with resident input, the Huskies Grille offers continental breakfast, "happy hours" and group meetings.

Residents also helped select the artist and artwork for an outdoor sculpture of a bronze American bald eagle with flying over a large granite rock.

In addition, a family group provides emotional support and education. Its members often coordinate cards of thanks, condolences and get-well for residents, family and staff.

Our community advisory group has impacted quality of care by reviewing our financial and clinical care performance and by volunteering at special events. At a recent volunteer appreciation event, a local police officer and military veteran referred to the residents as his brother veterans and was moved to tears by his award.

In part because of our resident-centered care, the McCandless Home was added to the registry of The Eden Alternative in 2008, making us the first State Veterans Home in the nation to achieve this distinction. The Eden Alternative is an international organization that helps nursing homes move from institutional models to home-like places, while also working to eliminate feelings of loneliness, helplessness and boredom. As we have demonstrated, institutional care need not go hand in hand with government-run nursing homes. The Colo-

rado State Veterans Nursing Home at Fitzsimons became an Eden-registered home in 2011, and all other Colorado State Veterans Nursing Homes are implementing Eden principles.

Staff training in culture change and veterans' needs also is important.

In addition, through Colorado Medicaid's pay-for-performance program (P4P), our Home received an additional \$3 per Medicaid resident per day in 2010 and 2011 initiatives.

Measuring an organization's success through quality is not as simple as reviewing the latest health survey. It begins with having conversations with our residents, family members and staff and continues through generating new ideas, taking risks, evaluating results and looking toward the future.

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*Barbara Moore has been with the Bruce McCandless State Veterans Nursing Home at Florence for 12 years—six years as the administrator and six years as the admissions and marketing director. She has a bachelor's degree in marketing/mass communication and a master's in business administration, both from the University of Southern Colorado.*



**The McCandless Home created its "Huskies Grille" based on residents' input. Residents now use the area to socialize, enjoy snacks and soft drinks, including non-alcoholic beer, watch sports and other activities.**

# State Veterans Nursing Homes tap technology to benefit resident care

By Janet Dauman, BSN, Director of Quality Management

With the use of technology, the Division of State Veterans Nursing Homes has made great strides in quality improvement.



Janet Dauman, RN

The most recent advancement has come from our implementation of a software program called Abaqis.

Designed to mirror a new type of quality improvement survey implemented nation wide in 2010 by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, the Abaqis program solicits residents' perspectives about their care while seeking to improve compliance with nursing home regulations.

Using the software, staff members collect information from document reviews and from resident, family member and employee interviews. Based on the results, the software flags risk areas that staff can investigate, correct and monitor. With this program, the Homes will be better prepared for the new surveys, but the expected improvements in resident quality of care and quality of life are even more exciting.

Another of our quality indicator monitoring programs is My InnerView, a Web-based database that reports the results of resident, family and staff satisfaction surveys as well as statistics on clinical measures such as resident falls, resident weight changes and staff stability. All of our results can be compared to state and national data from other participating nursing homes.

Also, our financial billing and management program, MDI Achieve's Matrix system, includes "face sheet" demographic information, payment sources, residents' preferences about their care, physicians' orders, the minimum data set (MDS 3.0) required by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, electronically generated medication administration records and care plans.

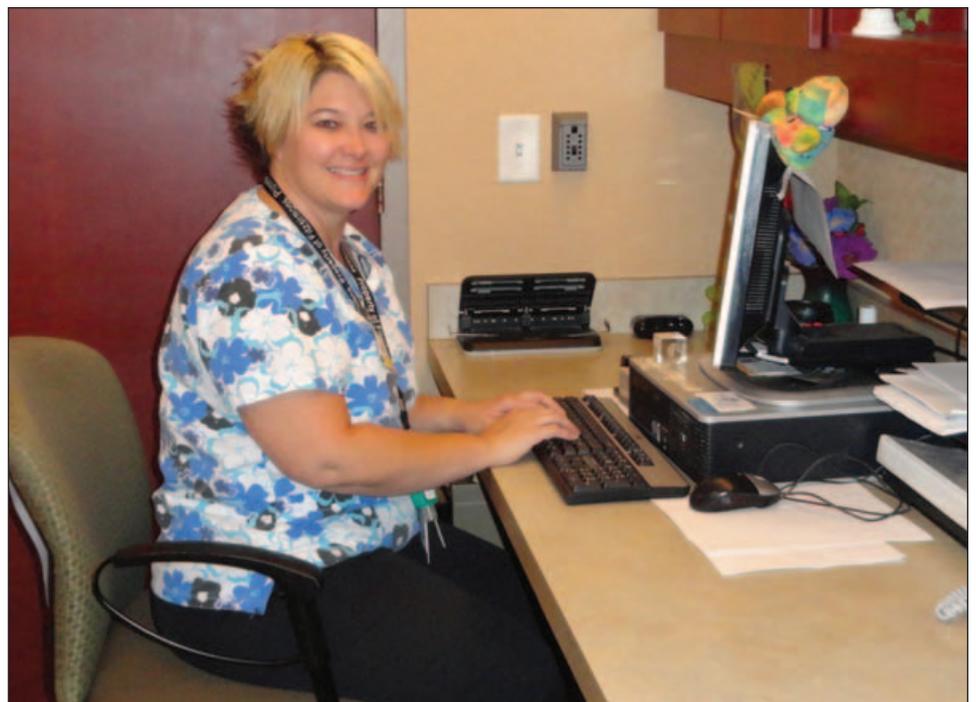
The next step in our technology journey will be to implement electronic health record systems for our Homes. Electronic records will allow caregivers to add information at or near residents' bedsides through point-of-care systems such as handheld devices, hallway kiosks and laptop or notebook computers. The systems provide coordination of care with physicians' offices, specialists, hospitals, laboratories, pharmacies

and other referral sources, providing a more complete picture of residents' medical histories.

Here are just some of the radical changes we expect to see in resident care, staff efficiencies and quality improvement:

- Reductions in time spent on documentation, enabling caregivers to spend more time with residents;
- Improvements in patient safety, including reductions in medication errors;
- Automatic alerts requiring staff to add pertinent information;
- Use of reports to monitor outcomes and enhance performance improvement;
- Improvements in coordination of care and faster access to medical information, including test results and physician orders;

*(Technology continues on page 6)*



Point-of-care systems will be an important characteristic of electronic health records.

(Technology continued from page 5)

- Reductions in paper-based storage systems and costs; and
- More timely, effective and efficient care.

The electronic record system must allow interconnections between resident care, physicians and pharmacy, physician, laboratory, X-ray, nursing, social work, activities, dietary, restorative, rehabilitation and financial departments. Also essential will be communication with other elec-

tronic health systems used in Colorado and nation wide, including area Health Information Networks or Health Information Exchange systems. While we promote the exchange of information, we also must ensure the security of protected health information.

Technology continues to move forward. The Division of State and Veterans Nursing Homes also will be moving forward, envisioning how the healthcare environment will

change in the next five to 10 years and making the most of technology to enhance resident care.

*Janet Dauman is a registered nurse who started in health care more than 20 years ago as a certified nursing assistant. She became a licensed practical nurse and then completed her bachelor of science in nursing. She has experience in long-term care, hospice care, home health, private duty, general medical, surgical, orthopedic, oncology and psychology, with special interest in quality, compliance, training and safety.*

## Family satisfaction exceeds U.S. averages at State Veterans Homes

By Connie Young, Marketing Manager

In surveys administered by a national research firm, one finding remains clear: Colorado’s State Veterans Nursing Homes family members report being very pleased with the care staff give their loved ones.

In 2010, the average scores on overall satisfaction, facility recommendation and overall survey average were 7–19 percent above the average scores of other nursing homes participating in the survey (see bar graph).

Here are just a few of the ways various family members answered the survey question “Tell us what we do best”

*“You care about your residents — their needs come first!”*

*“Your therapy seems to be outstanding.”*

*“He considers this facility his home and the staff his family.”*

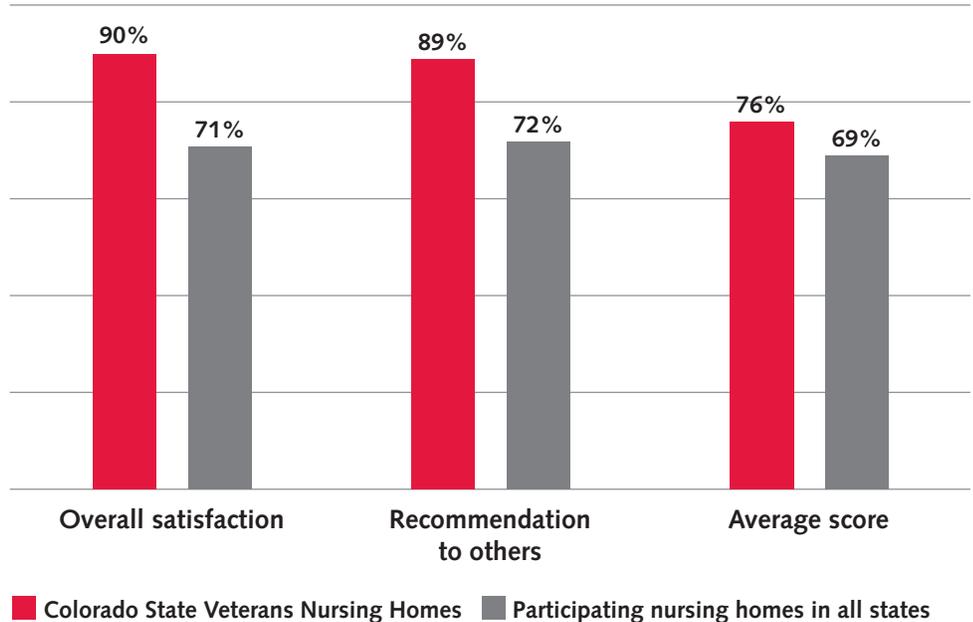
*“The friendliness and competency of all staff is in my opinion a step above what could be expected.”*

Family satisfaction scores have been above average for all five years the State Veterans Nursing Homes have participated in the survey.



In satisfaction surveys, family members often comment about how friendly and caring State Veterans Nursing Home staff members are with residents.

### Colorado State Veterans Nursing Homes Family satisfaction survey results — 2010



# State Veterans Nursing Home employee stability creates sense of ‘family’

By Carolyn Cooper, Program Assistant

One source of comfort for Colorado State Veterans Nursing Homes residents may be the low rate of state employee turnover in the



**Carolyn Cooper**

Homes. According to independent research firm My InnerView, there has been no turnover among 98.5 percent of our Homes’ registered nurses and 97.6 percent of the certified nursing assistants over the past 12 months. Both figures exceed national averages among other nursing homes participating in the research.

What does this mean when family members are looking for the best place for a loved one? It means each day, residents will see some of the same faces, hear the same silly jokes and receive care from many of the same people. These state employee caregivers become like a second family for residents, providing a sense of familiarity and stability.

“Each resident has their own unique needs,” State Veterans Nursing Home at Rifle Administrator Paul Crook said. “We provide care based on healthcare guidelines, but residents sometimes require different approaches. Experienced employees know more about each resident, so they are more knowledgeable about their preferences and needs. In turn, residents gain a sense of security, familiarity and trust.”

The State Veterans Nursing Homes reported the following statistics about staff longevity:

- At the Colorado State Veterans Center at Homelake (near Monte Vista), the current average length of employment is 3 years for registered nurses (RNs), 13½ years for licensed practical nurses (LPNs) and 3 to 5 years for certified nursing assistants (CNAs). In addition, five employees have been at Homelake for more than 10 years. Another four have been on the job more than 20 years.
- At the Bruce McCandless State Veterans Nursing Home at Florence, the average nursing employee has worked there for almost 6½ years.
- Among all staff at the Colorado State Veterans Nursing Home at Rifle, the average length of employment is 4½ years, though 11 staff have been on the job for

more than 10 years, and four of those have worked at the Home for more than 20 years.

- Many Colorado State Veterans Nursing Home at Fitzsimons staff have worked there since it opened 8 years ago, including five of the original RNs, four of the LPNs and 18 of the CNAs.

These statistics represent the love and care our staff give to residents, improving the lives of residents and employees alike.

At a time when switching nursing jobs is easy, Colorado State Veterans Nursing Homes staff tend to stay on the job, creating a sense of community and making the environment more like “home.”

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*Carolyn Cooper completed a bachelor of science in business administration in 2008. She has worked for the Colorado Department of Human Services for 11 years and has been part of the State Veterans Nursing Homes for the past year.*



**Above are just some of the long-time staff who give residents a sense of family: Colorado’s State Veterans Homes (top left: Colorado State Veterans Center at Homelake; top right: Colorado State Veterans Nursing Home at Fitzsimons; bottom left: Colorado State Veterans Nursing Home at Rifle; bottom right: Bruce McCandless State Veterans Nursing Home at Florence).**

# Bond between man and dog changes resident's outlook

By *Connie Young, Marketing Manager*

Initially, adjusting to life at the Colorado State Veterans Nursing Home at Fitzsimons was stressful for Mike Leonard.



**Connie Young**

But the staff was determined to help Mike feel at home.

That home-like touch came in the form of a friendly, 78-pound rottweiler-mix pooch named Lucci.

When Assistant Administrator Mindy Moskowitz began bringing Lucci to the Home for visits, he quickly started seeking out the company of one particular resident: Mike Leonard.

The two bonded quickly.

“When I got Lucci, everything calmed down for me,” Mike said. “He was the most gentle dog. He loved having children pet him, too.”

Staff also noticed the difference.

“Mike became happy,” Mindy said. “He told us he had been miserable and he didn’t want to be that way anymore.”

Lucci gave him the incentive to work on his rehabilitation through long walks.



**A connection with a friendly canine at the State Veterans Home at Fitzsimons boosts resident's quality of life.**

Over time, Mindy began allowing Lucci to stay overnight with Mike. Ultimately, Mindy worked out a “custody” deal where Lucci stayed with Mike full time.

But Mike had always known he eventually wanted to be closer to family members in Texas. In April, Mike was well enough to relocate to the Lone Star State. At that point, Mindy took Lucci back to live with her.

Creating opportunities for residents to have meaning in their lives is just one way staff at Colorado’s State Veterans Nursing Homes are changing the culture of long-term care.

“Lucci also gave Mike an opportunity to give back, which is an important part of culture change,” Mindy said.

Mike now enjoys the companionship of his son, one of his daughters and his five grandchildren in Bonham, Texas. But part of his heart has remained with a friendly rottweiler in Aurora, Colo.

“That dog changed me, and I loved him very much,” Mike said.

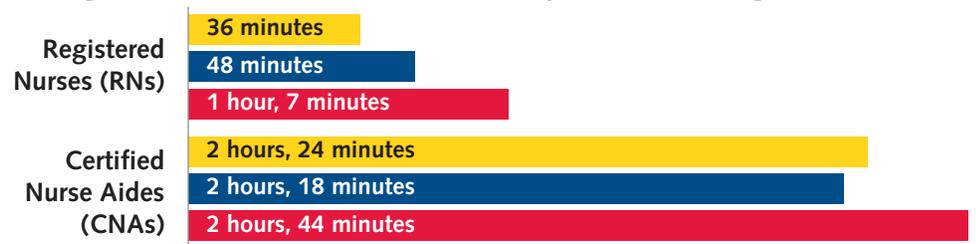
*Connie Young has a master’s degree in journalism/mass communication from the University of Colorado and nearly 25 years experience in public relations, marketing, editing and freelance writing. She also has a master’s in counseling psychology and experience working in health care and mental health settings. She enjoys working with Colorado State Veterans Nursing Homes because of staff’s efforts to help residents find comfort, meaning, enjoyment and connections during one of the most important stages of their lives.*

## Nursing hours devoted to Colorado State Veterans Nursing Home residents exceed state, national averages, according to Medicare data

According to the federal Web site Medicare.gov, the average number of hours devoted to residents by registered nurses and certified nurse aides at Colorado’s State Veterans Nursing Homes exceeds both state and national averages, as shown at right.

### Nursing attention given to residents

Average number of hours devoted each day to each nursing home resident



■ All U.S. nursing homes ■ All Colo. nursing homes ■ Colo. State Veterans Nursing Homes