



## U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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Veterans Health Administration  
VISN 19 - VA Rocky Mountain Network

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Sunaina Kumar-Giebel, Interim Director of VA Rocky Mountain Network, Received Two National Awards for Service to Veterans

Interim CEO earns prestigious awards in Veteran healthcare

**GLENDALE, COLO.** – The [Veterans Affairs \(VA\) Rocky Mountain Network](#) (Veterans Integrated Service Network [VISN] 19) announced today that Mrs. Sunaina Kumar-Giebel, Interim Network Director, recently received two distinct awards for excellence in healthcare service to Veterans.

Mrs. Kumar-Giebel received the Early Career Healthcare Executive Award and the District Six Diversity and Inclusion Early Careerist Award from [Dr. Shereef Elnahal](#), VA Under Secretary for Health, during the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) Congress in Chicago last month.

The [Early Career Healthcare Executive Award](#) honors emerging Veterans Health Administration (VHA) leaders for innovative and creative management, as well as executive capability in developing organizational growth and stature in the community. Kumar-Giebel led VISN 19 in one of the most significant, organization-wide transformations of their human resources modernization. She oversaw creation of an HR call center, which serves as a model throughout the country, and gained staff while decreasing turnover among clinical and non-clinical employees. She also served as the VISN 19 Incident Commander during VA's response to COVID-19, deliberately managing temporary and mobile medical shelters throughout five states (Colorado, Montana, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wyoming), piloted a program to [fly COVID-19 vaccine to rural areas of Montana](#), and provided personal protective equipment (PPE) support to local private sector hospitals. Lastly, she led the effort to pilot the first-ever Communities Helping Invest through Property and Improvements Needed (CHIP IN) Act of 2016, laying the groundwork for a new, 58-bed hospital in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

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*For a summary of all VA Rocky Mountain Network efforts during COVID-19, watch this mini-documentary: [“Learning from the Past...Positioning for the Future.”](#)*

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The [District Six Diversity and Inclusion Early Careerist Award](#) honors VHA leaders for leadership in promoting diversity and a culture of inclusion in healthcare management. Kumar-Giebel hosted the VISN 19 Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Managers and Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) celebration, progressing the network towards cultural transformation. She brought awareness to groundbreaking research illuminating reasons for the gap in executive positions, revealing a key distinction between the individuals that rise to the top and those who don't. Finally, she oversaw an active alternate

dispute resolution (ADR)/mediation program, conversing with management and staff about conflict resolution at the lowest level, saving the organization an estimated \$930,000 in cost avoidance.

Mrs. Kumar-Giebel serves as the Chair of the VHA Graduate Healthcare Administrative Training Program (GHATP), a critical member of the Women Executive Community of Practice (WeCOP), and has been a member of ACHE since 2006. On December 31, 2022, [VA announced Mrs. Kumar-Giebel as Interim Director, VA Rocky Mountain Network](#), where she oversees health care services to more than 1,000,000 eligible Veterans, an operating budget of more than \$5 billion, and leads 20,000 employees.

**About VA Rocky Mountain Network:**

The VA Rocky Mountain Network (VISN 19) is located in Glendale, Colo., and was established in March 1996 as one of 21 Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs) in VHA. VISN 19 functions as the responsible structure for the planning, budgeting, and service delivery in the provision of health care to Veterans in the region.

VISN 19 spans a geographic area of 540,000 square miles across 10 states and is the largest VISN in terms of geographic area in the 48 contiguous states. VISN 19 serves an area covering the states of Colorado, Montana, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wyoming, and portions of Idaho, Kansas, Nebraska, Nevada and Texas. Over 1,000,000 eligible Veterans live within VISN 19's geographic boundaries..

For more information, please contact Jason Strickland, VISN 19 chief communications officer ([VHAV19CCO@va.gov](mailto:VHAV19CCO@va.gov), or 303-619-1145), or Kayla Giuliano, VISN 19 deputy public affairs officer ([kayla.giuliano@va.gov](mailto:kayla.giuliano@va.gov)).

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