

## **CHAPTER 218: VETERANS ASSISTANCE UNIT**

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## 1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This document outlines Space Planning Criteria for Chapter 218: Veterans Assistance Unit. It applies to all medical facilities at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

The Veterans Assistance Unit includes offices within the medical center for veterans' benefits counselors to serve veteran patients, their relatives and non-patient veterans. Veteran's benefits counselors, under the jurisdiction of the Veterans Benefits Administration, provide information, advice and assistance related to benefits under laws administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other agencies; they also assist in the preparation of claims for these benefits.

## 2 DEFINITIONS

### **Space Planning / SEPS**

Building Gross (BG) Factor: A Factor applied to the sum of all the Departmental Gross Square Footage (DGSF) in a project to determine the Building Gross Square Footage. This factor accounts for square footage used by the building envelope, structural systems, horizontal and vertical circulation including main corridors, elevators, stairs and escalators, shafts, and mechanical spaces. The Department of Veterans Affairs has set this factor at 1.35 and included guidance in case of variance when developing a Program for Design (PFD) in SEPS.

Department Net to Gross (DNTG) Factor: A parameter, determined by the VA for each clinical and non-clinical department PG-18-9 space planning criteria chapter, used to convert the programmed Net Square Feet (NSF) area to the Department Gross Square Feet (DGSF) area.

Full-Time Equivalent (FTE): A staffing parameter equal to the amount of time assigned to one full time employee. It may be composed of several part-time employees whose combined time commitment equals that of one full-time employee (i.e., 40 hours per week).

Functional Area (FA): The grouping of rooms and spaces based on their function within a clinical service or department.

Functional Area Criteria Statement (FACS): A verbalized mathematical / logical formulation assigned to a FA incorporating answers to Input Data Statements (IDSs) to determine the condition for providing the rooms / spaces listed in the FA in the baseline space program or Program for Design (PFD) for a project. Certain rooms / spaces may or may not have additional conditions.

Input Data Statement(s): A question or set of questions designed to elicit information about the healthcare project to generate a Program for Design (PFD) based on the parameters set forth in this set of documents. This information is processed through mathematical and logical operations in the VA Space and Equipment Planning system (SEPS).



JSN (Joint Schedule Number): A unique five alpha-numeric code assigned to each content item in the PG-18-5 Standard. JSNs are defined in DoD’s Military Standard 1691 and included in SEPS Content Table.

Net Square Feet / Net Square Meters (NSF/NSM): The area of a room or space derived from that within the interior surface of the bounding walls or boundaries.

Program for Design (PFD): A project specific itemized listing of the spaces, rooms, and square foot area required for the proper operation of a specific service / department, and the corresponding area for each. PFDs are generated by SEPS based on the PG-18-9 Standard.

PG-18-5: A Department of Veterans Affairs’ Equipment Guidelist Standard for planning, design, and construction of VA healthcare facilities; a Program Guide (PG) that lists assigned room contents (medical equipment, furniture, and fixtures) to each room in PG-18-9. PG-18-5 follows PG-18-9’s chapter organization and nomenclature.

PG-18-9: A Department of Veterans Affairs’ Program Guide for the Space Planning Criteria Standard use to develop space planning guidance for the planning, design, and construction of VA healthcare facilities; a Program Guide (PG) that provides space planning guidance for VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) and Community Bases Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). PG-18-9 is organized by chapters, as of September 2021 there are 56 clinical and non-clinical PG-18-9 chapters; they are implemented and deployed in SEPS so that space planners working on VA healthcare projects can develop baseline space programs.

PG-18-12: A Department of Veterans Affairs’ Design Guide Standard for planning, design and construction of VA healthcare facilities, a Program Guide (PG) that provides design guidance for VA Medical Centers (VAMCs) and Community Bases Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). The narrative section details functional requirements and the Room Template section details the planning and design of key rooms in PG-18-9. Not all PG-18-9 chapters have a corresponding PG-18-12 Design Guide; one Design Guide can cover more than one PG-18-9 chapter.

Room Area: The square footage required for a clinical or non-clinical function to take place in a room / space. It takes into account the floor area required by equipment (medical and non-medical), furniture, circulation, and appropriate function / code-mandated clearances. Room area is measured in Net Square Feet (NSF).

Room Code (RC): A unique five alpha-numeric code assigned to each room in the PG-18-9 Standard. Room Codes in PG-18-9 are unique to VA and are the basis for SEPS’s Space Table for VA projects.

Room Criteria Statement (RCS): A mathematical / logical formulation assigned to each room / space included in PG-18-9 incorporating answers to Input Data Statements (IDSs) to determine the provision of the room / space in the baseline space program or Program for Design (PFD) for a project.



SEPS: Acronym for Space and Equipment Planning System which produces equipment lists and Program for Design for a healthcare project based on specific information entered in response to Input Data Questions.

SEPS Importer: A style-based format developed to allow upload of RCSs and IDSs to SEPS to implement and operationalize space planning criteria in PG-18-9 in the SEPS digital tool. This format establishes the syntax used in the RCSs and allows the use of Shortcuts. Shortcuts allow developers of space planning criteria statements to simplify RCSs making full use of their logical and mathematical functionality. A shortcut can refer to an RCS, a room in any FA or a formula. Shortcuts are [bracketed] when used in FAs and RCSs and are listed along with their equivalences at the end of the Space Planning Criteria section.

Space Planning Concept Matrix (SPCM): A working document developed during the chapter update process. It lists all the rooms organized by Functional Area and establishes ratios between the directly and the indirectly workload driven rooms for the planning range defined in this document. The matrix is organized in ascending workload values in ranges reflecting existing facilities and potential future increase. Section 5 of this document Space Planning Criteria reflects the values in the SPCM.

VA Room Family (VA RF): An organizational system of rooms / spaces grouped by function, a 'Room Family'. There are two "Orders" in the VA RF: Patient Care and Patient Care Support; Patient Care features four sub-orders: Clinical, Inpatient, Outpatient and Residential Clinical. There are also four sub-orders in the Patient Care Support order: Building Support, Clinical Support, Staff Support and Veteran Support. Each room in a Family has a unique Room Code and NSF assigned based on its Room Contents and function which correspond to the specific use of the room. The same RC can be assigned to different Room Names with the same function in this document and can be assigned an NSF that varies based on the PG-18-5 Room Contents assigned to the room.

VA Technical Information Library (TIL): A resource website maintained by the Facilities Standards Service (FSS) Office of Construction and Facilities Management (CFM) containing a broad range of technical publications related to the planning, design, leasing, and construction of VA facilities. VA-TIL can be accessed at: <https://www.cfm.va.gov/TIL/>

Workload: Workload is the anticipated number of procedures, clinic stops, clinic encounters etc. that is processed through a department/service area. The total workload applied to departmental operational assumptions will determine overall room requirements by modality.



### 3 OPERATING RATIONALE AND BASIS OF CRITERIA

- A. Space Planning parameters and metrics in this document are based on the Veterans Assistance Unit Space Planning Criteria Matrix (SPCM) developed as a basis for this chapter. The SPCM lists all the spaces a VA site would require; the quantity and NSF for each room is calculated based on the projected number Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE positions. The Veterans Assistance Unit is organized in 10 ranges, each range represents one Benefits Counselor the driver for this chapter. The ranges cover between 1 and 10 Counselors with the intent to cover all current and future Veterans Assistance Unit sites.
- B. The Quantity (Q) and area (NSF) values developed in the SPCM are reflected in the Room Criteria Statements, placed immediately below each room name, room code and NSF/NSM, for each room in Section 5 of this document. The number of Benefits Counselors FTE positions authorized is included in the Input Data Statement in Section 4. Both Sections are implemented in the Space Planning and Equipment System (SEPS) software accessible through the MAX.gov website. Planners programming a VA Veterans Assistance Unit project shall develop a baseline Program for Design (PFD) in SEPS.
- C. SEPS incorporates a Net-to-Department Gross factor (NTDG) factor of **1.20** for Veterans Assistance Unit projects and a Building Gross (BGS) factor of 1.35 to the aggregate Department Gross Square Feet (DGSF) of all the departments included in the project to generate the Building Gross Square Feet (BGSF). Planners can adjust the BGSF factor in SEPS; the NTDG factor is fixed.
- D. The space planning and design Program Guides: PG-18-9, PG-18-5, and PG-18-12 are available at the [Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Construction and Facilities Management \(CFM\) Technical Information Library \(TIL\)](#) website.

### 4 INPUT DATA STATEMENTS (IDS)

- A. How many Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE positions are authorized? (S) (Values: 1 to 10)

### 5 SPACE PLANNING CRITERIA

#### A. FA 1: STAFF AND ADMINISTRATIVE AREA

- 1. **Vtrns Asstnce Chief Office, Stff Sprt (SS204) ..... 100 NSF (9.3 NSM)**
  - a. *Provide one if [Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE position authorized] is between 1 and 10*



- 2. Vtrns Asstnce Waiting, Bldg Sprt (SB003) ..... 80 NSF (7.5 NSM)**
  - a. Provide one if [Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE position authorized] is between 1 and 10*

Allocated space accommodates one standard chair @ 9 NSF, one bariatric chair @ 14 NSF, one accessible space @ 10 NSF, and circulation; total three people.
- 3. Vtrns Asstnce Administration Support Workstation, Stff Sprt (SS218) ..... 56 NSF (5.3 NSM)**
  - a. Provide one if [Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE position authorized] is between 1 and 10*
- 4. Vtrns Asstnce Veterans Benefits Counselor Office, Stff Sprt (SS204) ..... 100 NSF (9.3 NSM)**
  - a. Provide one per each [Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE position authorized] (Maximum 10)*
- 5. Vtrns Asstnce Clerical Workstation, Stff Sprt (SS218) ..... 56 NSF (5.3 NSM)**
  - a. Provide one if [Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE position authorized] is between 1 and 2*
  - b. Provide two if [Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE position authorized] is between 3 and 4*
  - c. Provide three if [Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE position authorized] is between 5 and 6*
  - d. Provide four if [Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE position authorized] is between 7 and 8*
  - e. Provide five if [Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE position authorized] is between 9 and 10*

**B. FA 2: SUPPORT AREA**

- 1. Vtrns Asstnce Storage Room, Lgstcs Svc (SB773)..... 80 NSF (7.5 NSM)**
  - a. Provide one if [Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE position authorized] is between 1 and 3*
  - b. Provide one at 100 NSF if [Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE position authorized] is between 4 and 7*
  - c. Provide one at 120 NSF if [Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE position authorized] is between 8 and 10*



**C. SEPS IMPORTER SHORTCUTS**

The following shortcuts are used in the Room Criteria Statements in the Veterans Assistance Unit Functional Areas. These shortcuts are used during upload of this document into the Space and Equipment Planning System (SEPS) software during implementation of the space planning parameters contained herewith to allow for mathematical or logical calculations to be performed. Input Data Statements (IDSs), Rooms or a partial calculation formula can have a shortcut.

1. *Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE position authorized:* [How many Veterans Assistance Unit Benefits Counselor FTE positions are authorized?]

**6 PLANNING AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS**

- A. Provide private offices for Counselors. All other areas will utilize the open office planning concept.
- B. Refer to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Construction and Facilities Management Technical Information Library ([www.cfm.va.gov/til/](http://www.cfm.va.gov/til/)) for additional technical criteria.



**7 FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS**

Relationship of Veterans Assistance Unit to services listed below:

**TABLE 1: FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP MATRIX**

SERVICES	FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP
VET SPRT: Social Work	2
BLDG SPRT: Lobby	2
CLNCL: Emergency	2
CLNCL: Urgent Care	2
VET SPRT: Chaplain Svc: Worship	2
VET SPRT: Service Organizations	2
IP: ICU PCUs	3
IP: MS PCUs	3
IP: MH PCUs	3
IP: PRC: PCU	3
IP: SCI: AC PCU	3
VET SPRT: Voluntary Svc	3
RSDNTL: PRC: RCUs	3
RSDNTL: MH: RCUs	3
RSDNTL: SH: Resident	3
RSDNTL: SCI: LTC RCU	3
OP: CBMH: Specialty: PTSD	3
OP: CBMH: Specialty: IOP / SUD	3
OP: CBMH: Specialty: SI	3
OP: CBOP: Patient Care	3
BLDG SPRT: Police & Security	3
OP: CBMH: Specialty: PRRC	3
OP: CBMH: Specialty: ICMHR / TSES	3
OP: CBMH: Specialty: CRRC	3

**Legend:**

1. High
2. Moderate
3. Minimal





**8 FUNCTIONAL DIAGRAM**

