



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Fact Sheet

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Media Relations

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The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has one of the most important missions in Federal government: caring for Veterans and their families, and the Department has strong institutional values to guide employees in that mission –critical ideals that influence day-to-day behavior and performance: [Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence](#) (ICARE).

To better fulfill our mission and to improve our service to those who have 'borne the battle,' their families, and Survivors; VA has taken a series of actions that will enable the Department to rebuild trust with Veterans and the American people by creating an environment of sustainable accountability.

VA has taken the following steps toward building a culture of accountability:

- Each employee across the enterprise has reaffirmed their commitment to the mission and core values of the Department. This will happen annually moving forward.
- Since June 2014, ninety one percent of our medical facilities have new leaders or leadership teams. This percentage is inclusive of both newly placed, permanent leaders and those acting in a detailed role.
- VA implemented the expedited Senior Executive removal authority provided by Section 707 of the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act of 2014, and has thus far used that authority to propose removal of five Senior Executives. Three of those Senior Executives have been removed from Federal service and two have retired.
- Federal employees may be terminated for a variety of reasons ranging from absence without leave and inability to maintain performance standards to serious offenses such as falsification of records, misuse of government property, or sexual harassment. The vast majority of VA's more than 300,000 employees are committed to serving Veterans effectively and well. Where performance or conduct issues warrant removal, however, VA takes appropriate action to terminate employment.
 - In calendar year 2014, VA terminated more than 1100 employees.

- VA has terminated more than 1,000 employees since Secretary McDonald was confirmed on July 29, 2014.
- VA has proposed disciplinary action related to data manipulation or patient care against more than 80 employees nationwide.
- VA received certification from the U.S. Office of Special Counsel (OSC) under OSC's 2302(c) Whistleblower Protection [Certification Program](#), which confirms that Federal agencies meet the statutory obligation to inform their workforce about the rights and remedies available to them under the Whistleblower Protection and Enhancement Act and related civil service laws.
- VA worked closely with OSC to successfully resolve whistleblower retaliation complaints filed by three employees of the VA Phoenix Health Care System.
- VA has established the Office of Accountability Review (OAR) to ensure leadership accountability for improprieties related to patient scheduling and access to care, whistleblower retaliation, and related matters that impact public trust in VA.
- Over 6, 540 Network Director/Medical Center Director site inspections have been completed. (4706 visits were completed in FY14)
- Over 8,309 staff have completed the VA-developed training "Access and Scheduling Core Concepts and Business Practices".
- VA leadership sent a message to all employees regarding the importance of whistleblower protection, emphasizing that managers and supervisors bear a special responsibility for enforcing whistleblower protection laws. Senior executives are required to take annual "Whistleblower Rights and Protection & Prohibited Personnel Practices" training.
- VA has initiated establishment of a Department-wide program office to implement our Anti-Harassment Policy. This new program will ensure that allegations of harassment are promptly investigated and that VA management is alerted to conduct that is not consistent with our ICARE Values.
- VA's goal continues to be strengthening its culture of accountability and putting renewed focus on employee-led, Veteran-centric change. Improvements in workforce culture, with a focus on ICARE values, will allow VA to address issues as they arise, rather than necessitating employee termination following repeated and/or pervasive poor behavior.