# U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Harassment and Sexual Assault Prevention Information

## Letter to Veterans



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS WASHINGTON

November 18, 2021

Dear Veteran,

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) recognizes that Veterans are a diverse group who served and sacrificed on behalf of this great Nation. We all have a responsibility to ensure every Veteran who receives treatment, benefits or services at a VA facility is treated with dignity and respect.

VA is committed to ensuring our community is safe, welcoming and a place that is free of harassment for all Veterans, their caregivers, volunteers, visitors and employees. We thank you for honoring all those you encounter in any VA facility by treating them with dignity and respect, regardless of race; color; religion; sexual orientation; age; physical or mental disability; or language.

VA has a zero-tolerance policy for harassing, disruptive, abusive or violent behavior. Harassment, is inappropriate conduct and will not be tolerated. Reports of inappropriate conduct are taken seriously. VA will investigate and take action, if warmanted, to hold the person engaging in such conduct accountable for their actions. If the offender is a Veteran, such conduct may result in the Veteran being restricted as to the manner and location at which they can receive transment.

Experiencing or exposure to harassment can impact us all. When harassment is observed and not reported, it can embolden the harasser to confinue the inappropriate conduct and make the experiencer feal unarfe, disrespected and unwelcome. VA strongly encourages those who witness harassment to support their fellow Veterans by reporting it.

If you have been harassed, sexually harassed, sexually assaulted or witnessed such behavior at any VA facility contact the VA Police or a VA Management Official. To make a confidential report of sexual assault against any individual or if a non-employee wants to report sexual harassment contact the VA Office of inspector General (OIG) Hotine at 1-800-488-8244.

Enclosed is a brochure with more information on VA's zero-tolerance harassment policy, reporting procedures, resources and training opportunities.

Thank you for your service to our Nation and support for your fellow Veterans



VA's Zero Tolerance Policy VA has a zero-tolerance policy for harassment or sexual assault. Harassment and sexual assault, including

sexual harassment and gender-based harassment, is inappropriate conduct and not tolerated. A comment or behavior that makes another feel uncomfortable could be considered harassment.

VA takes all reports of harassment seriously and will investigate and take appropriate action.



All Veterans, their caregivers,

employees, volunteers, and

visitors should feel welcome

and safe at all VA facilities.

Bocal Law Enforcement
Vet Center Director
Inspector General (0/6) Hot
1=800-488-824
The 0/6 hotline reviews include
The 0/6 hotline reviews include

Report It!

VA Police

» Patient Advocate

» VA Management Official

» VA Management Official
VA National Cemetery
» District Harassment Prev

VA Benefits Office

Harassment Preve Coordinator

» Cemetery Director

» VA Management Official

If you experience or witness harassm sexual assault at a VA facility contact VA Medical Center or Clinic

\* The OIG hotline reviews incident sexual assault against any individu non-employee reports of sexual h





and respect. /A will not tolerate or accept harassment of any kind, in any facility.





A letter from VA Secretary Denis McDonough was sent to Veterans, underscoring VA's stand against harassment, including gender-based sexual harassment, sexual assault, abusive and disruptive behavior. https://www.va.gov/stop-

harassment/docs/originalsecvaannualdistributionantiharassmentandsexualassaultletter.pdf

A brochure accompanied Secretary Denis McDonough's letter to Veterans. It includes information about harassment and sexual assault, how to report an incident of harassment or sexual assault, bystander information training, and other VA resources.

https://www.va.gov/STOP-

HARASSMENT/docs/HarassmentPreventionandRec ourseBrochureFINAL11152021.pdf

#### **Bystander Intervention Training**



Help to keep VA environments safe and welcoming. Learn how to recognize and respond to harassment and sexual assault. Get information and practical techniques you can use if you see or hear harassment or sexual assault. Go to

<u>www.veterantraining.va.gov/bystandertraining</u> or scan the QR code. (Be sure to get your certificate of completion.)

### White Ribbon VA





White Ribbon VA is a national call to action to eliminate sexual harassment, sexual assault, and domestic violence by promoting a positive change in culture. White Ribbon VA was inspired by the White Ribbon organization, which is the world's largest movement to end violence against women and girls. White Ribbon VA is a genderless movement where all—regardless of their gender—can participate.

#### The White Ribbon VA Pledge

I, [your name], pledge to never commit, excuse, or stay silent about sexual harassment, sexual assault, or domestic violence against others.

After taking the pledge, individuals are asked to document their commitment on a pledge page that was created for VA on the White Ribbon USA site:

https://www.whiteribbonusa.org/whiteribbon-vapledge.

Individuals will receive a virtual white ribbon after documenting their commitment on the site.

For information about these resources and what VA is doing to prevent sexual assault and sexual harassment, go to the VHA Assault and Harassment Prevention Office's website:

https://www.va.gov/stop-harassment/



The VA is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and welcoming environment at every VA facility. We thank all Veterans for their service to our nation and for their commitment to a safe and welcoming VA.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs