



**THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON**

December 22, 2023

Dear Veteran or Beneficiary,

On behalf of all Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) staff, I want to thank you for allowing us to serve you. We want you to experience the best care and service possible in a place that is healing, safe, and welcoming. Maintaining the safety and well-being of you, your caregivers, and other visitors and staff is of the utmost importance to us. It is crucial that our medical facilities, staff offices, regional benefits offices, and the sacred grounds of our cemeteries are places where we are all considerate of one another and treat each other with civility and respect. Although most of us recognize how our words and actions affect one another, there is still more we can collectively do to promote a culture of respect and safety.

VA is serious about its long-standing anti-harassment and anti-sexual assault policy. Although legislation, policies, and programs chart the way forward, we need your help to meet the ongoing challenges of ensuring we maintain a safe and welcoming environment for all. Let us continue to unite to treat others with dignity and respect. One way you can help is to take the online Bystander Intervention Training for Veterans at www.veterantraining.va.gov/bystandertraining, which includes practical techniques to enable you to feel confident in your ability to know if harassment or sexual assault is taking place; how to get help; and what to do or say to help prevent the situation from escalating. Also, I ask you to consider joining thousands who have taken the White Ribbon VA pledge. This pledge is your promise to never commit, excuse, or stay silent about sexual harassment, sexual assault, or domestic violence. I encourage you take the pledge today at www.va.gov/health/harassment-free.

If you or someone you know has been harassed or sexually assaulted at a VA facility, I encourage you to report the harassment or sexual assault following the guidance found at www.va.gov/report-harassment. I recognize reporting may feel uncomfortable, but we are trained to help you and to ensure that you, or others who may have been harmed, are offered health care support and resources. We are working continually to improve reporting processes and want you to know there is no wrong door for reporting. Please refer to the enclosed brochure for additional information.

Thank you for choosing VA as the place to receive your benefits and services. Our commitment to you is to ensure that you and everyone entering our facilities are treated with dignity and respect in a safe and welcoming environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Denis McDonough".

Denis McDonough

Enclosure