



Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of Inspector General

July 15, 2015

A Statement from the VA Deputy Inspector General

I am initiating the following steps to further strengthen the Whistleblower Protection Ombudsman program in the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG).

- *Improved Hotline submission process.* The OIG Hotline is the front door for complainants to contact the OIG. In order to better serve complainants and review whistleblower concerns in an informed manner, we have created additional web forms designed to ensure anonymity, confidentiality, or allow for full identity disclosure. Providing these different classifications will allow complainants a greater degree of confidence that their personal information is appropriately protected. We also rewrote in plain English the notice Hotline sends to individuals who contact us so that there is a clear understanding of what to expect when making a complaint.
- *Reinvigorated the OIG Rewards Program.* To promote greater utilization of the OIG's cash reward program to individuals who disclose information leading to felony charges, monetary recovery, or significant improvements to VA operations or programs, each OIG Directorate and the OIG Whistleblower Ombudsman will proactively conduct a semiannual review of disclosures made to the OIG to identify potential recipients for cash rewards. Rewards will be based on such factors as the significance of the information, risks to the individual making the disclosure, time spent and expenses incurred by the individual making the disclosure, and cost savings to VA. Recipients will be recognized at either a public or private presentation according to their preference.
- *Enhanced crime awareness education briefings.* These briefings, provided by our criminal investigators as part of cyclical inspection reviews of Veterans Health Administration and Veterans Benefits Administration facilities, will be expanded to better define how VA employees can make disclosures of protected health information, the roles and responsibilities of the Whistleblower Protection Ombudsman, and the avenues of relief available to VA employees. For the period FY 2014 to present, a total of more than 300 briefings were attended by approximately 20,000 VA employees nationwide.

For additional information on the VA OIG's Whistleblower Protection Ombudsman program and contact information, please visit our website at

<http://www.va.gov/oig/hotline/whistleblower-protection.asp>

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda A. Halliday". The signature is written in a cursive style.

LINDA A. HALLIDAY

Deputy Inspector General