



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-7600
www.va.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 7, 2014

Follows Series of Actions Enhancing Accountability

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today announced that the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) certified VA under OSC's 2302(c) Whistleblower Protection [Certification Program](#) on October 3, 2014. Following through on recent recommendations from the OSC, VA worked to achieve compliance and protect employees who identify or report problems from unlawful retaliation.

"VA takes whistleblower complaints seriously and will not tolerate retaliation against those who raise issues which may enable VA to better serve Veterans," said VA Secretary Robert McDonald. "We depend on VA employees and leaders to put the needs of Veterans first and honor VA's core values of 'Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence.'"

Certification under OSC's 2302(c) Certification Program is just one of several steps VA has taken to enhance accountability within the organization and ensure its employees have a safe channel for disclosing whistleblower information. Most recently, VA worked closely with OSC to successfully resolve whistleblower retaliation complaints filed by three individuals from the VA Phoenix Health Care System. VA leadership sent a message to all VA employees regarding the importance of whistleblower protection emphasizing that managers and supervisors bear a special responsibility for enforcing whistleblower protection laws, and meets with employees at VA facilities across the country to reemphasize that message.

Additionally, 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. Since September 26, VA has announced the proposed removal of four senior executives following investigations by the OAR and the VA Office of Inspector General.

Prior to this OSC certification, VA leadership recognized the importance of whistleblower disclosures. On July 2, then-Acting Secretary Sloan Gibson met with Carolyn Lerner, Special Counsel of the U.S. Office of Special Counsel, to discuss actions underway to better protect whistleblowers, including the commitment to achieve compliance with the OSC 2302 (c) Certification Program.

Under the OSC certification process, VA:

- (1) placed informational posters regarding prohibited personnel practices (PPP), whistleblowing, and whistleblower retaliation in a public setting at VA facilities and VA personnel and equal employment opportunity offices;
- (2) provided and will continue to provide new hires with written materials on PPP, whistleblowing, and whistleblower retaliation;
- (3) developed a website on PPP and whistleblower rights and protections; and
- (4) developed, in cooperation with the OSC, supervisory training on PPP and whistleblower rights and protections. VA executives, managers, and supervisors must complete this training on a biennial basis.

OSC is an independent Federal agency enforcing whistleblower protections, safeguarding the merit system, and providing a secure channel for whistleblower disclosures.

###