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VA launches White Ribbon VA campaign to promote healthy relationships during Domestic Violence Awareness Month

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) today launched [White Ribbon VA](#), a month-long national call to action to prevent and eliminate sexual harassment, sexual assault and domestic violence in observance of National Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

VA invites everyone to participate in this campaign by pledging to stop violence against others and to wear a white ribbon as a symbol of commitment throughout the month of October and beyond.

“White Ribbon VA promotes positive cultural change and a respectful, safe and welcoming health care environment for patrons, volunteers and visitors in VA health care settings and surrounding communities,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “It is critically important everyone, including VA employees, feel welcome and physically and emotionally safe at all VA facilities. This means creating an environment that is free from incidents of all types of harassment, including sexual and discriminatory harassment. VA will not tolerate behaviors that create an intimidating, offensive or hostile atmosphere.”

White Ribbon VA was inspired by the White Ribbon organization, a thought-leader in gender-based violence prevention and promoter of gender equity and healthy relationships. VA employees and community partners examine the far-reaching impact and implications of harassment, sexual assault and domestic violence by pledging to never commit, excuse or stay silent about sexual harassment, sexual assault or domestic violence against others.

VA collaborates with community partners to educate and help Veterans, their families, staff and community partners to honor VA health care settings as safe and welcoming environments by:

- Recognizing that touching, comments about appearance or referring to people by condescending derogatory names may make them feel uncomfortable.
- Talking to others in my life about the repercussions of unwanted hugging, touching or flirting.
- Giving everyone extra individual space.
- Understanding some Veterans and others may have invisible wounds and experiences I may not fully understand.
- Leading by example through my thoughts, words and actions.
- Remembering every single person expects courteous treatment or RESPECT.

The campaign also challenges negative, outdated concepts and inspires people to understand and embrace being part of positive change through awareness-raising, capacity-building, partnerships, outreach, technical assistance and other educational opportunities. White Ribbon VA supports the continued implementation of the [Stand Up to Stop Harassment Now! Campaign](#) launched in VA health care facilities nationwide in fall 2019.

VA has been committed to applying the [Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program](#) (IPVAP) since 2014 to promote safe, healthy relationships for Veterans, their intimate partners and VA staff. Currently, more than 90% of VA Medical Centers have a designated IPVAP coordinator and programming designed to raise awareness, provide professional development and education, develop professional standards in clinical practice, use data to inform program operations and identify best practices using evidence-based and trauma-informed practices.

Additional information can be found at about [VA's Intimate Partner Violence Assistance program](#).

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