



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

News Release

Office of Public Affairs
Media Relations

Washington, DC 20420
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www.va.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sep. 9, 2021

VA assembles Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevention Workgroup

WASHINGTON — The Department of Veterans Affairs names members to the Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevention Workgroup who will begin serving their one-year appointment this September.

The appointees are experienced subject matter experts and will advise the secretary on department policies and procedures to eliminate sexual assault and harassment in VA facilities.

"Veterans, service members, VA patients, their families and caregivers, as well as sexual assault survivors, staff, visitors and advocates should feel safe in all VA facilities," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "The Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Workgroup is a critical step in making sure that happens."

Sexual Assault and Harassment Prevention members include:

Zaneta Adams, Muskegon, Mich. Director of the Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency. Attorney and former president and founder of Women Injured in Combat and instrumental in forming the Veterans Legal Assistance Project. Retired U.S. Army.

Lucy Del Gaudio, Belleville, N.J. Liaison with national, community and nonprofit partners. Leader in several community groups and initiatives focused on Veterans and minority communities. Served in the U.S. Army.

Tracy Farrell, Colorado Springs, Colo. Vice President for the Wounded Warrior Project®, focused on engagement and physical health and wellness for post 9/11 Veterans and family members nationally and in Landstuhl, Germany. Former Military Police officer, Battalion Commander and chief of operations at the Army's legislative liaison office. Retired U.S. Army.

Stephanie Gattas, Boerne, Texas. Executive Director and founder of The Pink Berets and primary spokesperson to the organization. A Navy Veteran with experience in developing strategic partnerships affecting the community's impact on invisible injuries such as Military Sexual Trauma and PTSD.

Octavia Harris, San Antonio, Texas. Former Program Manager for the Naval Medical Center, San Diego Comprehensive Advanced Restorative Effort Initiative. Led the Interagency Care Coordination Committee and Community of Practice, specifically collaborating programs assisting men and women sustaining the most traumatic injuries mentally, emotionally, and physically. Former Chair of the VA Secretary's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans advising on healthcare and benefits for over 2.2 million women veterans. Retired U.S. Navy Command Master Chief Petty Officer.

Patricia Jackson-Kelley, Los Angeles, Calif. President for National Association of Black Military Women. Serves on the board of directors for the foundation of Women Warriors and a former member of the VA Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans.

Kitara Johnson, Spokane, Wash. Chief Development officer for Excelsior. Serves on the Washington State Supreme Court's Minority and Justice Commission. A Certified Department of Behavioral Health and Recovery Peer Counselor and a contract trainer and curriculum developer for the Washington State Department of Early Learning and other state agencies.

Mary Kolar, Madison, Wis. Leads the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs delivering services for a population of 350,000 Veterans and family members, including skilled nursing care, claims processing, education, employment and memorial benefits, and a host of specialty programs. A retired U.S. Navy Captain with expertise in education, training, recruitment, and administration.

Carmen McGinnis, Lakewood, Colo. National Area Supervisor for Disabled American Veterans' Denver National Service Office supervising and coordinating national office activities. A service-connected Marine Corps Veteran serving with the Air Control Squadron-2 and Marine Corps Embassy Security Group.

Song Hui Miller, LCSW, Palo Alto, Calif. Program Manager for Prevention and Management of Disruptive Behavior at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System provides oversight and coordination of all aspects of the Workplace Violence Prevention Program.

Eli PaintedCrow, Merced, Calif. One of the original founders of the Service Women's Action Network and former associate director of a domestic violence community agency counseling in the field of alcohol drug education and recovery, and dual diagnosis (mentally ill and substance abuse counseling). Served in the U.S. Army.

Allred Pike, Jr., San Carlos, Ariz. Member of the San Carlos Council, the governing body of the San Carlos Apache Tribe chairing the Council's Law and Order Committee. Previous investigator for the Tribe's Public Defender interfacing with domestic violence victims, working policies and procedures for the Tribe's Sexual Assault Response Team.

Katie Purswell, Washington, D.C. American Legion Deputy Director for Health Policy under Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, managing health related matters including women Veterans' health and military sexual trauma. An advocate for reinforcement and oversight of specialized training in handling incident reporting and military sexual trauma related claims.

Nicole Sciarrino, Psy.D., Charleston, S.C. Licensed clinical psychologist on the PTSD Clinical Team and the Military Sexual Trauma Coordinator at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center. Extensive clinical experience with MST, PTSD, trauma, and anxiety disorders, working in various roles focused on the long-term effects of sexual assault in adult survivors.

Jeff Sigler, New York, N.Y. A Veteran leader with Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, participant in multiple in-person campaigns educating Congressional members on issues affecting military Veterans and proposed legislative solutions. U.S. Navy Lieutenant.

Shane Whitecloud, Reno, Nev. Public Affairs Officer at the VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System and previous counselor at the Veterans Resource Center. A U.S. Navy Veteran and an active Veterans advocate who has worked and volunteered at federal, state and local levels. Serves on the Truckee Meadows Mayors Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families.

For information about VA's benefits and services for Veterans, visit [VA.gov](https://www.va.gov) or call 1-800-827-1000.

Representatives are available to address concerns of Veterans, their families and caregivers.

If you are in need of immediate care, contact [VA Mental Health Services](#) or the [Veterans Crisis Line: Suicide Prevention Hotline](#) at 1-800-273-8255 press 1 or text 838255.

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