



*(December 4, 2015)*

In order to further improve the lines of communication and to respond to the concerns between the National VA Council and you our members, I have established a National VA Council Briefing. This NVAC Briefing will bring you the latest news and developments within DVA and provide you with the current status of issues this Council is currently addressing. I believe that this NVAC Briefing will greatly enhance the way in which we communicate and the way in which we share new information, keeping you better informed.

**Alma L. Lee**  
National VA Council, President

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**In This Briefing: A MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY SECRETARY**

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The recent tragic events in San Bernardino, California, and in Colorado Springs and Denver, Colorado, remind us of the critical need for violence prevention nationwide. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) police officers are often involved in this critical task as they protect the Veterans we serve and VA employees.

Our employees are the greatest asset the Department has in meeting our mission of caring for the Nation's Veterans. I, and all of VA leadership at VA Central Office and in the field, want you to know that your personal safety matters. We are a team united in our commitment to caring for our Veterans, and we know that we cannot provide the best possible care to Veterans if we are not also taking care of and ensuring the safety of one another.

Yesterday, on December 3, a VA police officer and a nurse practitioner were integral in defusing a potentially serious incident at one of our hospitals. The nurse practitioner was held hostage by a distressed patient with a gun. In under 13 minutes, the situation ended peacefully. These VA employees used their training and knowledge to take quick, decisive action. No one was injured, and the disruption of care for other Veterans was minimal. That is the outcome we want and strive for on every occasion.

VA offers training and resources to equip our employees with knowledge and skills to promote safety, avoid violence, and prevent disruption of services in a wide variety of situations.

Our VA Law Enforcement Training Center (LETC) prepares new and experienced law enforcement professionals to fulfill their responsibilities safely and with great proficiency. The LETC dedicates many hours to honing officers' verbal de-escalation skills so they can prevent or reduce chances of bodily harm in emergency situations. Since the beginning of 2015, VA police have also trained in active shooter response scenarios.

Eighty-six percent of VA police officers are Veterans themselves—facilitating understanding between our officers and the Veterans we serve and promoting safety. They consistently perform with utmost skill and courage, even when faced with great personal danger.

We also offer online and in-person violence-prevention training for employees other than law enforcement officers. Our Prevention and Management of Disruptive Behavior courses focus on customer-service delivery, verbal de-escalation, personal safety skills, and customer-service recovery.

VA's Disruptive Behavior Reporting System is also critical, enabling and encouraging employees to report disruptive behavior and allowing Disruptive Behavior Committees (including VA Police) to assess, manage, and monitor events that may jeopardize workplace safety. Reporting events that cause safety concerns allows interdisciplinary teams to reduce risks in the future and prevent violence from occurring.

All VA employees should be on the lookout for activities at work and at home that seem wrong, abnormal, or unusual. Early identification of suspicious activity can prevent a potential attack, save lives, prevent property damage, and avoid violence that undermines our ability to care for Veterans and their families.

Suspicious behavior or items should be reported to local VA Police, other local law enforcement offices, or the Federal Protective Service. The VA Integrated Operations Center is also available, 24/7, at (202) 461-5510 and [vaiooc@va.gov](mailto:vaiooc@va.gov).

Again, thanks to those officers and employees who helped to prevent a very serious incident. Your swift actions and quick thinking help ensure that we can continue to fulfill our mission of serving Veterans. Thank you.

Sloan D. Gibson

