

To: Glen Grippin
650 E. Indian School Rd
Phoenix, AZ 85012

From: Jared Kinnaman



Mr. Grippin,

My first year of employment at the Phoenix VAMC Medical Center, has evoked mixed emotions regarding the care and professionalism this hospital provides. I am a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, a Service Connected Marine Corp Combat Veteran and a Whistleblower; in all three of these it pains me to sit back and watch my fellow brothers and sisters suffer under your leadership. I and several other whistleblowers have brought to you and your leadership staff members on numerous occasions, factual and undeniable evidence that you and your staff have not resolved. Instead, we have received countless forms of harassment, defamation, and threats while working and receiving care at this medical facility.

It is painfully obvious that you and the current PVAHCS administrators will openly and knowingly allow retaliation against whistleblowers and veteran employees. The Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2012 was additionally redirected by Secretary Robert "Bob" McDonald that whistleblowers will be protected within the Department of Veterans Affairs; this is clearly not happening nor allowed to happen here at the Phoenix VA; why is that?

Allowing your staff to harass and intimidate whistleblowers is not only an immoral act, it is unethical and an abuse of power. Placing "gag" orders, defamation of character, offices being illegally searched after the whistleblower leaves at the end of their tour of duty, probing through our personal medical records that are supposed to be protected information, to name a few currently occurring in Phoenix. The list of these incidences continues unabated without intervention from you or those under your command which is something that had been promised. The VA cannot retaliate against an employee who exercises his or her rights under any Federal anti-discrimination or whistleblower protection laws. Under existing laws, the VA retains the right to discipline a manager or supervisor who has engaged in discriminatory or retaliatory conduct, up to and including removal.

The impact of all this inaction has caused the Phoenix VA Medical Center to become a very volatile and grossly unsafe environment for veteran patients to receive care. Most recently you and your leadership staff members have been informed of the gross negligence of the Emergency Department and even after the constant media attention, the ER continues to be understaffed and dangerous to our Veterans and their family members' safety. When this was brought to public eye the Phoenix VA's official statement was the Emergency Room has been fully staffed with a Social Worker 24/7 which was untrue. There have been detailed emails coming from Social Work Chief of staff David Jacobson and Michael Leon, just name a few that have proved that there are many gaps in coverage. This has resulted into forced "voluntold" overtime. Additionally, our HR department continues to be understaffed and has a serious lack of retention. This again has impacted our veterans by not providing adequate healthcare as well as possible employment opportunities for Veterans.

Have you heard? In light of the latest Veteran suicide committed by Thomas Murphy in the Regional Office Parking Lot it is quickly becoming a tragic story told over and over at PVAHCS. Again, little response from you or your leadership staff members. What will enough look like?

The Joint Commission issued a Sentinel Event issue 40, July 9th 2008 which discusses behaviors that undermine a culture of safety. Directly quoted from their issue states “Intimidating and disruptive behaviors include overt actions such as verbal outbursts and physical threats, as well as passive activities such as refusing to perform assigned tasks or quietly exhibiting uncooperative attitudes during routine activities. Intimidating and disruptive behaviors are often manifested by health care professionals in positions of power. Such behaviors include reluctance or refusal to answer questions, return phone calls or pages; condescending language or voice intonation; and impatience with questions. Overt and passive behaviors undermine team effectiveness and can compromise the safety of patients. All intimidating and disruptive behaviors are unprofessional and should not be tolerated.” It continues and talks about root causes and contributing factors it states “There is a history of tolerance and indifference to intimidating and disruptive behaviors in health care. Organizations that fail to address unprofessional behavior through formal systems are indirectly promoting it.”

You recently retired from another VA medical center and were apparently taken out of retirement to support us. To sum up my letter, I realize that there are the few that stand before us or in our way when it comes to the administration providing the very best and safest level of healthcare to our nation’s heroes. *Where do you lie?* From my perspective it appears that you chose the latter and therefore are giving me no other option but to include you in the countless lists of leadership failures that have come and gone within these walls. I ask you if you have any respect to our Nation, Veteran Safety, Ethical Standards, or Leadership Principles left that you resign from the position of Director of the Phoenix VA Medical Center. We need strong permanent leadership at the Phoenix VAMC.

Sincerely,

Jared Kinnaman