

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-4324

June 11, 2014

The Honorable Sloan Gibson  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Acting Secretary Gibson:

The recent system-wide audit of VA facilities found four Texas VA facilities are among the top ten in the nation for the longest waiting time for new mental health patients. Of particular concern is the fifty day average waiting time for new mental health patients to begin their treatments at the Dallas, Texas VA facility. As the audit states, the fifty days to start mental health treatment is an average wait time for veterans. This means that many of our veterans are experiencing wait times in excess of fifty days to be admitted for mental health treatment at the Dallas VA. I am writing to request your immediate review and improvement of mental health treatment services at the Dallas VA.

I would appreciate your prompt response to the following questions regarding mental health treatment services at the Dallas VA:

1. Does the VA have an immediate action plan to reduce the average waiting period for new mental health patients at the Dallas VA? Is the VA establishing any timeline benchmarks for measuring improvement, and if so, what are these benchmarks?
2. Can you assure my constituents that there were not any secret waiting lists at the Dallas VA similar to ones reported at other VA facilities?
3. Is the Dallas VA lacking certain types of mental health specialists that have led to the very high average waiting list time for new patients?
4. Has the Dallas VA started to work with other health care providers in North Texas to assist them with the backlog while still ensuring quality care is provided to our veterans?
5. What measures is the Dallas VA able to implement that would promote greater efficiency and easier access to care for both mental health patients and patients seeking other types of care?

6. The VA audit found that wait times were prolonged due to staff having problems using the electronic scheduling systems. In some instances, staff may have used handwritten paper to schedule appointments. Were any of these problems experienced at the Dallas VA and if so, what corrective actions have been taken to ensure no future administrative delays for veterans seeking care?
7. Within the last two years, what is the longest wait time experienced by a mental health patient, and a non-mental health patient at the Dallas VA? Is the leadership of the Dallas VA ever notified of extreme wait times for veterans seeking care?

Thank you for your attention to this letter and I look forward to receiving your prompt reply. In addition to receiving answers to the aforementioned questions, I will appreciate further updates from you regarding improvements to the Dallas VA. Reforming the many problems experienced at the Dallas VA and at other facilities nation-wide will require constant vigilance by the VA and Congressional oversight. Should you have any questions regarding this correspondence, please feel free to contact me, or my Legislative Director, Scott Cunningham, at 202.225.6605 or [scott.cunningham@mail.house.gov](mailto:scott.cunningham@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,



Kenny Marchant  
Member of Congress