

**Congressional Notification
OIG Reports on Wait Time
VISN 16/Texas Facilities – Temple
March 9, 2016**

During the first week of March, 2016, VA's Office of the Inspector General (OIG) began releasing several administrative report summaries related to a subset of 77 already completed and publicly known investigations into wait times at specified VA facilities to include the following Texas facilities: Amarillo, Dallas, El Paso, Fort Worth, Harlingen, Houston, San Antonio, and Temple.

Although the OIG report summaries do present new information to many Veterans and stakeholders, these investigations that have looked into potential scheduling irregularities only examined a point in time going back to when the Department requested that OIG review the Access Audit findings from early 2014, almost two years ago.

It is important to note that OIG has not substantiated any case in which a VA senior executive or other senior leader intentionally manipulated scheduling data.

We appreciate that while the OIG found no intentional wrongdoing, these reports demonstrated the need for standardized training on scheduling. As part of "MyVA" transformation, VA has worked to improve our employee experience by working to modernize and enhance our scheduling processes in Vista, and leveraging industry to explore other potential commercial solutions. We have also strengthened leader and management training through a focused "Leaders Developing Leaders" program, and adopted "Lean" as the centerpiece methodology for our process improvement effort. We have also ensured that all employees involved in scheduling are retrained, while improving our processes as we update scheduling software.

INCREASING ACCESS TO CARE

We are making lasting improvements in access to VA care by expanding capacity, focusing on staffing, space, productivity and VA Community Care. These improvements include:

- Staffing at our facility is up— CTVHCS now has approximately 280 dentists and physicians plus approximately 1,100 nursing staff.
- CTVHCS is in the process of renovating or adding new space related to patient access, staffing and expanding CTVHCS capacity for our patient population:
 - A new Emergency Department at the Temple VAMC is targeted for opening in June/July 2016. The space vacated will be used to improve access for Primary Care.
 - The Cedar Park CBOC is slated to move into a new building in June 2016 which will allow for additional capacity at the clinic – eventually resulting in an additional 1,200 new patients once a new PACT is brought on board.
- With the opening of the new Austin OPC in August 2013, additional services are now being provided to Veterans in the Austin metropolitan

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area, such as, Nuclear Medicine, MRI, colonoscopies, chemotherapy, and other services.

- We've almost doubled the referrals in the community for non-VA/Choice/etc. care since 2013.
- A Specialty Clinic Review Team has been in practice for over 15 months. Some of the accomplishments related to these focused Clinic level reviews include: significant increases in the number of clinic appointments slots for nearly all Specialties, increase in expanded hour patient appointment slots, and improved labor mapping overall.

On February 27, VA facilities across the nation completed a second Access Stand Down to connect with Veterans that have urgent health care needs, address their needs and reduce the number of Veterans waiting greater than 30-days for urgent care. This event also aimed to improve our employee experience by streamlining access to care processes.

CTVHCS appreciates the work of the independent OIG to provide VA with necessary feedback to help us improve. OIG's investigations give us the opportunity to make necessary changes and better serve Veterans.