

COMMISSION ON CARE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Commission on Care Releases Final Report July 5, 2016

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Commission on Care is submitting its *Final Report* to the President, through the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The report offers sweeping recommendations for transforming veterans' health care.

Chairperson Nancy Schlichting, CEO of the Henry Ford Health System, described the report as providing “bold recommendations that set a foundation for ensuring our nation’s veterans receive the care they need and deserve, both now and in the future.”

During a ten-month examination of access to health care and how to best deliver it over the next two decades, the Commission reviewed the 4,000-page *Independent Assessment Report* chartered by Congress; met with a broad range of stakeholders, including veterans and leaders of Veterans Service Organizations; made site visits to Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities; and exchanged ideas with VA leaders and employees, Members of Congress, and other health care experts.

At the outset, the Commissioners agreed that the final recommendations would be decided by consensus and be data driven. These concepts are reflected in the Guiding Principles included in the *Interim Report*, published in late 2015.

To ensure transparency and comply with law, the Commission developed recommendations, discussed stated disagreements, then made final determinations on recommendations in a series of public meetings.

Schlichting said that systemic problems in staffing, information technology, procurement and other core functions threaten the long term viability of VA’s health care system and that key VA systems do not adequately support the needs of 21st century health care. The Commission found that no single factor can explain the multiple systemic problems that have frustrated VA efforts to provide veterans consistent timely access to care. Governance challenges, failures of leadership, and statutory and funding constraints all have played a role. As the *Final Report* states, however, “VHA has begun to make some of the most urgently needed changes outlined in the *Independent Assessment Report*, and we support this important work.”

The Commission's call for change means not only re-engineering and streamlining basic VA business processes but, more importantly, redesigning veterans' health care delivery. "Our proposed redesign takes a veteran-centric approach calling for systemic changes to improve veterans' access to health care, expand their choice of providers, and assure high quality care," Schlichting said.

Under the Commission's proposal, VA would continue as the exclusive veterans' provider of such distinct services as specialized behavioral health care, spinal cord injury care, prosthetics, and rehabilitative services. To assure veterans receive better access to care, the Commission proposes VA establish high-performing, integrated health networks that include both VA and community-based providers who meet stringent VA credentialing requirements.

"The Commission recognized that the reforms we're proposing cannot be sustained without fundamentally bolstering governance and strengthening leadership," Schlichting emphasized. "With able leadership and congressional support for these recommendations, VA will be positioned to provide veterans with the quality health care they have earned."

To download the full Final Report or for more information about the Commission on Care visit: <https://commissiononcare.sites.usa.gov/>.

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