

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1502

August 2, 2016

The Honorable Michael J. Missal
Inspector General
Department of Veterans' Affairs
Office of Inspector General
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington DC 20420

Dear Mr. Missal:

I write today to inquire about reports I have received from several constituents about being denied in-patient psychiatric care at the Iowa City Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in my district. When over 20 veterans commit suicide every day, it is disturbing that veterans who reach out for help in their darkest hour might be denied the care they deserve.

We owe those who have served access to high-quality health care, and that must include robust mental health services that meet the unique needs of our veterans. No veteran should ever have to struggle alone with mental health issues after fighting for our country.

Despite this responsibility to provide comprehensive, timely care for those who have served, I have received reports that a number of veterans who expressed signs of mental health crisis and explicitly asked to be admitted to the Iowa City VA Medical Center's psychiatric department were denied the in-patient care they requested. For example, last month, Sgt. Brandon Ketchum reportedly asked to be admitted to the psychiatric department but was turned away, only to take his only life shortly thereafter. It is absolutely unacceptable that veterans asking for help be denied by the very institution tasked with protecting their health and wellbeing.

I therefore urge you to undertake an investigation of the psychiatric department admissions practices at the Iowa City VA Medical Center. Specifically, I request that you examine how often and why veterans in need have allegedly been turned away after asking for in-patient assistance with mental health issues. I have also written the Iowa City VA and Secretary McDonald inquiring about their practices but have yet to receive a response. I look forward to working with you to ensure that no veteran's call for help goes unanswered.

Sincerely,



Dave Loeb sack
Member of Congress