

Top 10 Outrageous VA Behaviors

In addition to “cooking the books,” botching and covering-up appointment wait time records, and handing out undeserved bonus awards, misconduct within the Department of Veterans Affairs extends to everything from sexual abuse to skipping work to theft to drug distribution. Some examples of the Department’s most egregious employee misconduct are highlighted below:

1. Veteran Patients Suffer Sexual Abuse by VA Doctors

A male neurologist at the Colmery-O’Neil VA Medical Center in Kansas violated at least 5 female patients during his time as a physician there by conducting unnecessary "breast examinations" and at least one unnecessary "pelvic examination." It took the VA more than 2 years to fire him and he is now a registered sex offender.

2. VA Employee Sells Cocaine and Ecstasy to Patients Recovering from Substance Abuse

A VA employee in Massachusetts sold cocaine to patients receiving treatment for substance abuse problems. 28 year-old Patrick McNulty sold cocaine, marijuana and ecstasy to the veterans he was treating on VA property. He was also recorded talking about his drug sales, once stating “I can get coke like it’s nothing. I can get more coke all day.” He was sentenced to three months community confinement in a halfway house, followed by three months of home confinement and three years of probation.

3. VA Employees Skip Work More Than Other Federal Employees

VA employees fail to show up for work unexcused – termed “absent without leave” (AWOL) – at a rate exceeding every other federal department and agency. AWOL can include anything from being late to work to disappearing from the office for months at a time. In one instance, lack of supervision enabled a VA employee to be absent without leave on more than 25 separate occasions. This employee took advantage of the “unlimited freedom” allowed by his supervisors and “admitted that his misconduct negatively affected his performance.”

4. Nurse Aide Steals Gold Crucifix Off the Neck of Dying Veteran

A nurse’s aide at a VA medical facility in Pennsylvania was arrested for stealing a 14-carat gold chain with a crucifix off of the neck of a dying veteran who was in hospice care. He attempted to sell the valuable necklace at a jewelry store; the veteran died the next day.

5. Child Pornography

On more than one occasion, employees at multiple VA medical centers were found to have used their work computers to watch child pornography. Examples include accessing child pornography websites on VA systems while on the job and possessing child pornography on the grounds of VA property.

6. VA Police Force Chief Plots to Kidnap, Rape, and Murder Women and Children

The chief of police of the Bedford VA Medical Center was arrested by the FBI and convicted of conspiring with a member of a cohort of the New York “Cannibal Cop” to kidnap, rape, and murder women and children. He pled guilty in January 2014 and “now stands convicted of serious federal crimes.”

7. VA Rehires Employee After He Drives Drunk and Kills His Co-Worker

During a business trip to Texas, VA employee Jed Fillingim was arrested after a night of heavy drinking. Fillingim admitted to driving a government truck while intoxicated, during which his colleague, Amy Wheat, fell from the moving government vehicle and died. Fillingim eventually resigned from his job but the VA rehired him – to a different position in a different office – just months after his resignation. He has remained at that job ever since, making over \$100,000 a year, despite being the subject of an ongoing criminal investigation into the Texas incident.

8. Lax Security Controls

VA had the most security incidents of any government agency last year, reporting 11,368 in 2013. “Security incidents” include anything from a stolen laptop to a computer virus download to the mishandling of documents. In one instance, a former VA employee was sentenced to six years in federal prison for aggravated identity theft. Former VA employee David Lewis accessed veterans’ personal information “in exchange for crack cocaine,” allowing this identifying information to be used to file fraudulent tax returns and apply for fraudulent lines of credit.

9. VA Employees Bills Department for Excessive Travel Expenses, Uses VA Laptop To Send Personal “Sexts”

A VA employee was placed on paid administrative leave after being caught charging his jet-setting lifestyle to the VA and only showing up for work when and if he pleased. He conducted personal business during his VA workday and took advantage of the lack of supervision. This employee also “downloaded and installed unapproved software to his VA-issued laptop for the purpose of sexting—defined as the sending of sexually explicit photos, images, text messages, or emails using a mobile device.” He downloaded Skype software on his VA work computer, using it to sext his friends, admitting his behavior was “out of control.”

10. VA Whistleblower Employee Suspended *Without Pay* When She Refused to Hide Wait Times

Lisa Lee, a former Navy reservist, was a whistleblower who sparked the Office of Special Counsel’s investigation into “cooking the books” scheduling abuses at the Fort Collins VA clinic in Colorado. The VA suspended Lee without pay for two weeks when she refused to cover up appointment wait times and relocated her to another VA medical center with lower pay. She said her supervisors claimed her “performance had delayed patient care.”