



**Department of
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News Release

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VA to Create Three Mental Health Centers of Excellence Secretary Nicholson: Locations Will Enhance World-Class Care for Veterans

WASHINGTON – Citing the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) continued commitment to providing veterans with world-class health care, Secretary R. James Nicholson today announced that three locations – Waco, Texas; San Diego and Canandaigua, NY – have been designated special centers of excellence devoted to advancing research and enhancing care for mental health issues that affect some American veterans.

The new centers, established under legislation introduced by Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-Texas) and passed by Congress during the recent budget-making process, will provide a concentration of expertise on mental health issues.

“The designation of these new ‘Centers of Excellence’ builds upon VA’s long history of accomplishment in medical care and research to improve the lives of veterans,” said Nicholson. “VA is committed to treating the ‘whole’ veteran, and an important part of the care we provide our heroes is to ensure that they get the best treatment available to help them recover from any mental health issues – in addition to any physical medical treatment they may require.”

VA currently operates other centers of excellence that study a variety of issues affecting veterans, ranging from aging and Parkinson's disease, to spinal cord injury, brain rehabilitation, and vision and hearing loss.

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Centers of Excellence 2/2/2/2

“VA has demonstrated that by concentrating research efforts for certain health conditions, we can accelerate our understanding of these health issues and provide better care to our veterans,” said VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. Jonathan B. Perlin. “I look forward to working with our professional staff at VA to ensure that these newly-designated centers improve our understanding of the mental health issues many veterans face.”

VA is a world leader in the research and treatment of mental health issues affecting veterans. Veterans and family members make nearly a million visits annually to the Department’s network of 206 Vet Centers, which offer mental health services and readjustment counseling. These community-based centers serve as an important resource for veterans who, once home, often seek out fellow veterans for advice or help with transitioning back to civilian life.

More than 10,000 research projects benefiting all Americans are being performed at VA medical centers. VA provides about \$800 million year in research support, and VA scientists receive another \$800 million from other federal agencies and non-VA sources.

While a detailed timeline for having the centers of excellence operational is still being developed, VA intends to submit a report within six months to committees in both houses of Congress outlining the progress being made in establishing the new mental health centers.

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