



OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
1000 DEFENSE PENTAGON  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1000

MAY 26 2025

MEMORANDUM FOR EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS  
AFFAIRS

SUBJECT: Memorandum of Understanding

The Secretary of Defense has signed the now jointly-signed Memorandum of Understanding between the Secretaries of Defense and Veterans Affairs – Strengthening Our Partnership in Service to Those Who Serve. Attached is a copy for your information/action.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Kelly Bulliner Ross", is positioned above the printed name.

Kelly Bulliner Ross  
Executive Secretary

Attachment:  
As stated

cc:  
USD(P&R)

# **MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE SECRETARIES OF DEFENSE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS**

## **Strengthening Our Partnership in Service to Those Who Serve**

As we approach Memorial Day, a time when our Nation solemnly honors the brave men and women who gave their lives in service, we are reminded of the enduring duty we hold to all who wear or have worn the uniform.

The Departments of Defense (DoD) and Veterans Affairs (VA) are united by more than law. We are bound by an enduring commitment to the well-being of Service members, Veterans, their families, and caregivers. Though our core missions differ, our collective purpose is deeply intertwined: supporting those who sacrifice for our Nation.

The relationship between our Departments continues to strengthen as we recognize that our roles are intertwined, starting early in a Service member's journey. From the first time a recruit dons the uniform, they begin a lifelong journey connected to both Departments—through educational benefits, life insurance, home loans, and health care. Our partnership begins early and must remain strong throughout.

In the spirit of collaboration, we are reaffirming our joint commitment to a strengthened partnership between the DoD and VA, with a focus on delivering quality health care and the seamless delivery of benefits and services. Together, we will:

### **Optimize Shared Use of Health Care Resources, Facilities, and Workforce**

DoD and VA, together, manage the two largest health care systems in the Nation serving overlapping populations. Ensuring we provide patient-centered health care that delivers excellent quality, access, satisfaction, and value is a priority of both Departments. By jointly planning and sharing infrastructure and expertise, we will improve care, enhance readiness, and deliver better value for the American people. This collaboration allows for greater flexibility, maximizes taxpayer investment, and ensures that both Departments remain prepared to meet the evolving health care needs of today's Service members and tomorrow's Veterans.

### **Enable Enrollment into VA for Uninterrupted Health Care**


Each year, approximately 200,000 Service members transition to civilian life, a period often marked by uncertainty and stress for them and their families. To ensure no Veteran falls through the cracks, DoD and VA are working to provide Service members the option to elect to enroll in VA health care prior to separation. This approach ensures continuous access to care, reduces administrative burdens, and supports long-term health and well-being during a critical life transition.

## **Provide Comprehensive and Continuous Mental Health Treatment**

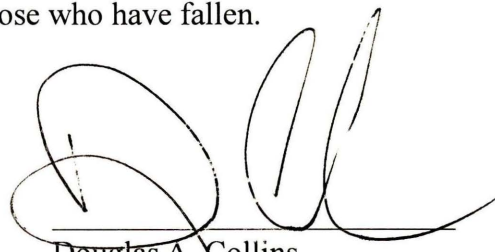
Mental health care must be a continuous thread throughout a Service member's journey. DoD and VA are committed to identifying transitioning Service Members, who may be at higher risk for mental health challenges, and ensuring they are not only referred to care, but warmly handed off to providers at VA. Service members may see this as communication between care teams or pre-scheduled appointments. Providing continuity of care is more than just policy; it will help save lives.

This is only the beginning. From a unified electronic health record and a joint Separation Health Assessment to strengthened suicide prevention initiatives, our Departments will continue breaking down barriers to better serve those who serve. This commitment and our enhanced collaboration will set a new standard of excellence in how we support Service members, Veterans, their families, and caregivers. We pledge to advance this partnership with urgency, unity, and unwavering respect for all who defend our freedom.

God Bless America, our Warriors, and those who have fallen.

  
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Pete Hegseth  
Secretary of Defense

5-23-25  
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Date

  
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Douglas A. Collins  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs

5-23-25  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date