

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 13, 2025

The Honorable Doug Collins
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Collins,

I write to express my serious concern regarding the increasing and unacceptable wait times for new patient mental health appointments across Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities in Connecticut. Veterans seeking care for mental health conditions—many of whom are in acute distress—deserve timely access to treatment. The reports of significant delays are deeply troubling and raise urgent questions about the Department’s management of mental health access.

My staff has heard reports from veterans and their families who have been forced to wait weeks or even months for an initial mental health appointment. Such delays are not only inconsistent with VA’s stated access-to-care standards but also pose serious risks to the health and safety of those who served our nation.

The Senate Veterans Affairs Committee Minority staff have been tracking patient wait times once a week since January 2025 from VA’s Access to Care website. I am particularly alarmed by the following findings based on VA’s own wait-time data at the following facilities:

- **Orange VA Clinic**—only 3 weeks since May 2025 had a wait time under 100 days for a new patient mental health appointment.
- **Willimantic VA Clinic**—several weeks in September and October had wait times over 100 days for a new patient mental health appointment
- **McGuirk, Winsted, Stamford, Waterbury and Danbury VA Clinics**—all consistently have wait times well above 50 days for a new patient mental health appointment

These examples in Connecticut are not isolated and are likely indicative of a broader systemic issue that must be addressed immediately. We can see this from the drastic increase in wait times for a new patient mental health appointment since the beginning of the year. Extreme examples include the Orange VA Clinic, which had a wait time of 43 days on January 29, the Willimantic VA Clinic, which had a wait time of 41 days on February 18, the Winsted VA Clinic, which had a wait time of 19 days on March 23, and the Stamford VA Clinic, which had a wait time of 10 days on April 14. These are the earliest recorded wait times the VA website produced for each of these clinics, all under 50 days and well below 100 days. The substantial rise in new patient mental health appointment wait times across Connecticut during the past year raises serious concerns.

Accordingly, I request that the Department provide the following information within **30 days** of receipt of this letter:

1. A detailed explanation of the factors contributing to increased wait times for new mental health appointments, including staffing shortages, resource allocation, or scheduling inefficiencies.
2. The Department's current plan of action to restore timely access, including short-term mitigation steps and long-term solutions to both new and existing patient mental health appointments.
3. Data on current national average wait times for new and existing mental health appointments across all VA medical centers and outpatient clinics.
4. An update on efforts to expand telehealth to ensure that veterans are not left without timely treatment.

The Department's mission is to provide care and support worthy of the sacrifice of America's veterans. Persistent barriers to mental health care are unacceptable and demand swift corrective action. Congress will continue to exercise oversight to ensure that VA fulfills this critical responsibility.

I appreciate your prompt attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs