

## **Item #1: VA Dental Work and the VA MISSION Act of 2018**

According to VA Regional Houston's Dental Department, a veteran's dental work and/or choice of dentist **DOES NOT** fall under the [VA MISSION Act of 2018](#) signed by President Trump in June of 2018.

In trying to establish a protocol on how to use an "outside dentist", I was informed by Houston's Dental Department that nowhere in the new bill does it discuss or describe dental work and therefore is left up to the Regional Department Head to establish that region's protocol. According to the [Houston Regional Benefits Office](#), these are the guidelines Houston Regional has in place for any dental work:

1. Veteran must have a 100% rating
2. Veteran **MUST** obtain an initial exam from a dentist at Houston VA Regional
3. VA Regional **MUST** ok the veteran to go outside the VA system
4. Veteran's dentist **MUST** be in Regional's "que" of dentists approved by Regional.
5. Veteran must live at least 75 miles from Houston Regional
6. Work needed is not able to be performed at the VA facility

### **To sum it up:**

1. Dental work IS NOT included in the MISSION Act and in the use of Choice
2. Veteran must be 100%
3. Veteran **MUST** see a VA dentist first
4. Veteran's dentist must be approved by VA (in their "que")
5. VA must approve the veteran to go "outside" the system

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## **Item #2: September is Suicide Prevention Month**

Letter From: Robert Wilkie, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs:

I'm blessed with the opportunity to serve our nation's 20 million Veterans. Until recently, I was also honored to serve more than 1.4 million dedicated service members, and their families, at the Department of Defense.

Service members and Veterans who have defended our freedom have earned our enduring gratitude. They should have the opportunity to live meaningful, productive lives, in the same freedom and peace that their service and sacrifices made possible for so many other Americans. Unfortunately, the cost of defending freedom can be tragically high. On average, 20 American Veterans die by suicide each day. Of those, 14 do not seek health care within our VA. VA is committed to delivering the highest quality care to Veterans, providing some with access to specialized innovative care that may be unavailable in the private sector. And more and more, Veterans are receiving care through VA.

Ultimately, whether Veterans choose VA, or get care or support from a peer, or a community agency, there is no wrong door when it comes to saving lives. Preventing Veterans suicide is a top priority for VA, the Department of Defense and this administration. Our goal is to prevent suicide among all Veterans, including those who may not receive care from us.

This September, during Suicide Prevention Month, we're spreading awareness about the risk factors and warning signs for suicide and helping people start the conversation around mental health and support for Veterans in their communities. During Suicide Prevention Month, and all year round, we encourage everyone to be there for Veterans and service members. Starting the conversation may be challenging, but reaching out to a Veteran who's facing a tough time can make all the difference, and it may even save a life.

As part of VA suicide prevention strategy, we deliver targeted support to different populations based on their suicide risk. And we know that service members transitioning to Veteran status face a higher risk of suicide, especially during the first year after separation from the military.

That's why, this past January, President Trump signed an executive order that created a task force to align the mental health and suicide prevention efforts of VA, the Department of Defense and the Department of Homeland Security. We're working together, across departments, to expand mental health programs and other resources for Veterans during that critical first year after departing from uniformed service.

Even one Veteran or service member lost to suicide is too many. VA is working hard to prevent that, through efforts like this critically important executive order, and others. But we can't do it alone.

Visit: [BeThereForVeterans.com](http://BeThereForVeterans.com) for resources to help you be there for Veterans and the service members in your life. Ending service member and Veteran suicide will not be easy, but we can make a positive difference, if we work together to be there, for all those who have served.

Thank you,  
Robert Wilkie