

United States Senate

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6400
(202) 224-5364

September 10, 2019

The Honorable Robert Wilkie
Secretary
United States Department of Veterans Affairs
1722 I Street NW
Washington, DC 20421

Dear Secretary Wilkie:

As the Chairman and the Ranking Member of the Senate Special Committee on Aging, we are working jointly to produce this year's Committee report on reducing the risk of falls and fall-related injuries. Over the past several months, the Committee has examined best practices in falls prevention for the home and community, assisted living facilities, nursing homes, and hospitals.

The Department of Veterans Affairs runs critical programs to support the safety and wellbeing of our nation's veterans, particularly older veterans. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report that falls are the leading cause of injury and death among older Americans. About 47 percent of veterans are 65 years old or older, and the Committee is interested in the agency's work to support falls prevention among older veterans.

We respectfully request written responses to the following questions by September 26, 2019.

- Underreporting of falls by older adults is considered a serious issue for healthcare providers. What steps are the VA taking to improve fall reporting by VA beneficiaries?
- Polypharmacy-related falls are another serious issue for healthcare providers. How is the VA healthcare system responding to the fact that many older-adult VA beneficiaries may be getting prescriptions filled from both VA and non-VA sources, and by VA and non-VA physicians?
- How is the VA's National Center for Patient Safety (NCPS) Patient Safety Reporting System being used to improve falls prevention and falls risk management?
- The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the VA has a pilot program for rehabilitating or modifying the primary residence of low-income disabled veterans. May you provide data on implementation and early findings? What are the best practices and lessons learned, and how do they impact falls prevention and falls risk management?
- The VA has a broad range of services and programs, such as housing for homeless veterans, inpatient and outpatient healthcare, geriatric services, and long-term, homebound, and nursing home care; each has a different primary goal. How does the VA coordinate falls prevention and fall risk management between these programs?

We look forward to receiving your written responses to these questions by September 26, 2019. If your staff have questions, they may contact [REDACTED] from Chairman Collins' Office at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] from Ranking Member Casey's Office at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
Chairman



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
Ranking Member