

PETER A. DEFAZIO
4TH DISTRICT, OREGON

TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
CHAIRMAN



Congress of the United States House of Representatives

August 20, 2020

PLEASE RESPOND TO:

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(541) 268-2609
- 612 SE JACKSON STREET, #9
ROSEBURG, OR 97470
(541) 440-3523
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Keith Allen
Director
Roseburg VA Health Care System
913 NW Garden Valley Blvd
Roseburg, OR 97471

Director Allen:

I urge you to schedule a briefing with your local Veteran Service Organizations (VSO), congressional delegates (CODEL), and relevant community health partners as soon as possible.

In the midst of a global pandemic and the roll-out of two major programs, I am very concerned that you and the Roseburg VA Health Care System (RVAHCS) have not held any VSO-CODEL meetings since March, have routinely cancelled regular check-ins, and do not intend to hold the next meeting until September. There are a number of outstanding issues that require more immediate engagement with your community partners.

These issues include concerns about RVAHCS's response to the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency. In particular, I am troubled that RVAHCS stopped providing COVID-19 data only a few weeks after the health care system started making this information available to the Oregon congressional delegation and your community Veteran Service Officers. There are also ongoing questions around what COVID-19 data is being reported to local public health authorities and the potential consequences of incomplete data for southwest Oregon.

In addition to COVID-19 pandemic issues, our veterans and community partners need information about the roll-out of the Community Care Network and answers to their questions and concerns about worrisome reductions in mental and dental health care services as well as RVAHCS staffing under the expansion of the Caregiver Support Program.

My office is not the only entity concerned with the lack of open and proactive communication. The Douglas County Veterans Forum has let me know directly that they want greater insight into how RVAHCS is managing COVID-19 challenges, the morale of frontline health care providers, recent staff changes, the impact of U.S. Postal Service changes on the delivery of prescription drugs to veterans, and a host of other issues that could easily be addressed during regularly scheduled VSO-CODEL meetings.

While you and your staff have responded efficiently to my office's direct requests for information on some of these issues as well as veteran casework-related issues, RVAHCS must

engage in more proactive and comprehensive communications with community partners. I urge you to schedule a VSO-CODEL briefing later this month in order to communicate facts, answer questions, address concerns, and again collaborate with your partners to better serve our veterans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Peter DeFazio".

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

CC: David Wood
Acting Network Director, VISN 20