

Veterans Health Administration Privatization Checklist

By Suzanne Gordon

Political leaders and members of Congress say they are not trying to privatize the Veterans Health Administration. Actions speak louder than words.

Privatization is not just a rapid and total sell off of public sector resources to the highest private sector bidder. It involves a range of actions that create the perception that government can never deliver high-quality services of any kind. Specific policies then make this a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The result, before long is: PRIVATIZATION!

To justify privatization, VA "Reformers":

- Portray VA healthcare as broken – almost beyond repair.
- Portray private healthcare as the solution to any quality or service problems in the VA.
- Ignore evidence of high quality care in the VA.
- Blame every VA problem on its employees or administrators rather than on funding and policy decisions made by politicians in Washington.
- Create a "shame and blame" atmosphere in the workplace that discourages staff recruitment and retention.
- Starve VHA hospitals and clinics of dedicated staff by not filling vacancies.
- Fail to maintain and improve infrastructure or construct facilities necessary to serve expanding needs.
- Shift public funds to the private sector under the guise of "Choice."
- Make deals with for-profit companies to provide medical equipment or services currently available from the VHA itself, at lower cost and with higher quality.
- Produce erosion of services and respond to service users' complaints by arguing for further privatization.

To learn more about how the Veterans Health Administration is being pushed toward privatization, read 'The Battle for Veterans' Healthcare: Dispatches from the Frontlines of Policy Making and Patient Care' by Suzanne Gordon, available on Amazon.