

# DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

## MISSION

*“To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and  
for his widow, and his orphan.”*

*- Abraham Lincoln*

This handbook provides an introduction to VA and its human resources policies, regulations, and benefits. It is to be used only as a source of general information and should not be considered definitive guidance since the policies, regulations, and benefits it describes may occasionally be revised or superseded. This handbook does not create any rights or obligations on the part of VA or any employee. Information concerning changes in Department or facility policies may be found at VA's Internet home page, located at <http://www.va.gov>, and at VA's Office of Human Resources Management Intranet Web page, <http://vaww.va.gov/Ohrm/>. If you have specific questions about how these policies affect you, see your supervisor or your local Human Resources Management representatives. Employees covered by a collective bargaining unit are also advised to refer to their respective labor-management agreements for additional information on subjects contained in this handbook. In all cases involving matters covered by this handbook, the relevant statutes, regulations, and statements of official VA policy shall prevail.

## DID YOU KNOW THAT VA.....

- Is the second largest of the 14 Cabinet departments?
- Pays out most of its budget in checks directly to veterans and their dependents?
- Serves as a backup to the Department of Defense medical system during national security contingencies and as a Federal support organization for the Federal Response Plan during catastrophic disasters?
- Has facilities in all 50 states; Washington, DC; Puerto Rico; U.S. Virgin Islands; Guam; and the Philippines?
- Has a workforce of approximately 225,000\* employees, making it the Government's second largest civilian employer?
- Has guaranteed more than 16 million home loans?
- Operates one of the world's largest life insurance programs?
- Still pays benefits to approximately 695 dependents and beneficiaries of Spanish-American War veterans?
- Developed and implanted the first cardiac pacemaker?
- Has received frequent international recognition including Nobel Prize awards to VA employees for work in hypertension, organ transplants, mental illness, spinal cord injury, and alcoholism?
- Has administered GI Bill programs providing assistance to more than 20 million veterans and service members?

\*as of September 2001

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# I. The Department of Veterans Affairs

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## Background

In early America, the Colonies gave benefits to those injured in military service. In fact, the first Colonial law, which was enacted in 1636 by the Pilgrims of Plymouth, provided that "if any man shall be sent forth as a souldier and shall return maimed, hee shall be maintained competently by the collonie during his life."

The Continental Congress in 1776 sought to encourage enlistments during the Revolution by providing pensions for those who became disabled. The U.S. Government paid benefits to veterans of the American Revolution and their dependents until 1911.

During the Civil War, in his second inaugural address in 1865, President Abraham Lincoln called upon Congress and the American people "to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan." This is VA's mission.

When America entered World War I in 1917, Congress established a new system of veteran's benefits. This system included programs of disability compensation, insurance, a family allotment program for servicemen, and vocational rehabilitation.

The establishment of the Veterans Administration came in 1930 when Congress authorized the President to "consolidate and coordinate government activities affecting war veterans." Three separate Federal agencies administering veteran's benefits at that time then became component bureaus within VA. More than 4.7 million veterans were served by the newly created agency with its comparatively small staff of 31,500 employees and 54 hospitals.

During World War II, a gigantic expansion of VA facilities quickly became necessary not only because of the vast increase in the veteran population, but also because of the large number of new benefits enacted by the Congress. The World War II "GI Bill" for educational benefits, signed into law June 22, 1944, is said to have had more impact on the American way of life than any law since passage of the Homestead Act almost a century before.

The Korean conflict, Vietnam era service, and the Persian Gulf war added more veterans to the veteran population and new benefits and services. In 1999, the number of estimated veterans was 24.8 million. The number of hospitals devoted to caring for America's veterans grew enormously, from VA's original 54 to 176, plus nearly 1,000 clinics, nursing homes, domiciliaries, and vet centers by more than 183,000 employees. Today, VA also has programs for pension, housing, and burial. Nearly 12,000 employees serve across 57 regional benefit offices and over 1,200 employees provide services at 119 national cemeteries.

In addition to its vast network of health care facilities, VA operates an outstanding medical research program that has made significant progress in improving rehabilitation for veterans and in the treatment of numerous health problems for the entire population. VA is a world leader in such areas as research on aging, women veterans' health issues, AIDS, and post-traumatic stress disorder. VA researchers have played key roles in eradicating tuberculosis; improving artificial limbs; and developing the CT scan and magnetic resonance imaging, which facilitates safe removal of brain tumors. VA contributions to medical knowledge have won VA scientists many prestigious awards, including two Nobel Prizes.

In 1989, the Department of Veterans Affairs was established as the successor to the Veterans Administration. Headed by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, VA provides the world's most comprehensive and diverse programs of benefits for veterans and dependents. Also in 1989, the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims began operation as an independent federal court to which veterans can appeal decisions about benefits claims and entitlements.

VA is also taking a leading role in the development of services and programs to provide assistance to the special needs of women, minority, and homeless veterans.

## **Vision**

“As the Department of Veterans Affairs heads into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we will strive to meet the needs of the Nation’s veterans and their families today and tomorrow. We will become an even more veteran-focused organization, functioning as a single, comprehensive provider of seamless services to the men and women who have served our Nation. We will continuously benchmark the quality and delivery of our service with the best in business and use innovative means and high technology to deliver world-class service. We will foster partnerships with veterans organizations and other stakeholders making them part of the decision making process. We will cultivate a dedicated VA workforce of highly skilled employees who understand, believe in, and take pride in our vitally important mission.”

## **Core Values**

### **Respect and Commitment**

- Veterans have earned our respect and commitment. We direct our efforts toward meeting their needs.
- We believe that integrity, fairness, and respect must be the hallmarks of our interactions.

### **Open Communication**

- We are committed to open, accurate, and timely communication with veterans, employees and external stakeholders.
- We listen to the concerns and views of veterans, employees, and external stakeholders to bring about improvements in the programs and services we provide.

### **Excellence in Services, Programs, and People**

- We continually strive to meet or exceed service delivery expectations of veterans and their families by delivering accurate, timely, and courteous service and benefits in an effective and efficient manner.
- We are committed to improved access for veterans and their families through facility location and design, and innovative uses of information technology.
- We perform at the highest level of competence and take pride in our accomplishments.
- We are open to change and value a culture where everyone is involved, accountable, respected, and appreciated.
- We value teamwork and cooperation – operating as *One VA* to deliver world-class, seamless services to veterans and their families.

## Strategic Goals

### **RESTORE**

**Restore** the capability of disabled veterans to the greatest extent possible and improve the quality of their lives and that of their families

### **TRANSITION**

Ensure a smooth **transition** for veterans from active military service to civilian life

### **HONOR AND SERVE**

**Honor and serve** veterans in life and memorialize them in death for their sacrifices on behalf of the Nation

### **CONTRIBUTE**

**Contribute** to the public health, socioeconomic well being, and history of the Nation

### **CREATE**

**Create** an environment that fosters the delivery of *One VA* world-class service to veterans and their families through effective communication and management of people, technology, business processes, and financial resources

## One VA Transformation

VA recognizes that high quality, seamless service to the Nation's veterans is dependent upon VA operating as "one" unified organization. While in reality only one Department exists, VA primarily is organizationally structured and budgeted into three Administrations –health care, nonmedical entitlement benefits, and memorial affairs. Ninety-eight percent of VA's 220,000+ employees are assigned within one of these areas to provide direct services to veterans and their families at field facilities dispersed throughout all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands, Philippines, and Guam. The vision of *One VA* depends on dedicated VA employees across the Department, committed to working in a cooperative manner together and with Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), State Departments of Veterans Affairs, U. S. Congress, General Accounting Office, Office of Management and Budget, and other agencies with programs affecting veterans.

The theme behind the vision is *One VA* – One Mission, One Vision, One Voice. The focus is on educating all employees on VA's singular mission and its benefits and services, in addition to providing the tools to direct veterans to the appropriate source to reduce numerous hand-offs and eliminate organizational stovepipes. It is important to remember veterans do not see VA as a health care system separated from a benefits system and independent of a national cemetery system.

VA is implementing a series of strategies and actions that continue this cultural transformation so every employee will think and act as *One VA*. This implementation supports the Department's strategic goal to "provide *One VA* world-class service to veterans and their families through the effective management of people, technology, processes, and financial resources." VA is most successful in meeting its organizational goals when it creates effective internal and external partnerships that promote shared accountability for all results as *One VA*.

## Administrations

VA's numerous non-medical benefit programs are administered by the **Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)**, headed by the Under Secretary for Benefits. These benefit programs include education, compensation and pension, vocational rehabilitation, insurance, and loan guaranty. VBA's field system consists primarily of a nationwide network of regional offices whose activities are administered by nine virtual Service Delivery Networks (SDN).

Health care is the primary responsibility of the **Veterans Health Administration (VHA)**, headed by the Under Secretary for Health. VA administers a nationwide system of hospitals, clinics, domiciliaries, and nursing care units through 22 Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) offices. It also monitors and supports an ongoing medical research program dedicated to seeking cures and improved treatments for conditions affecting veterans, but which are often pertinent to the general population as well.

The **National Cemetery Administration (NCA)**, headed by the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, is responsible for the operation of all national cemeteries and miscellaneous burial plots administered by VA through five Memorial Service Network (MSN) offices. VA also procures and distributes headstones and markers for eligible decedents who are buried in national and private cemeteries and administers the Presidential Memorial Certificate Program.

### **VA Central Office**

The offices of the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and the three Administration Under Secretaries are located in VA Central Office (VACO) in Washington, DC. The responsibilities and programs of these offices, in turn, are supported by the offices of six Assistant Secretaries overseeing Departmental public and intergovernmental affairs, management, information and technology, human resources and administration, policy and planning, and congressional and legislative affairs. In addition, advice is provided through the offices of the General Counsel and Inspector General and resolution of appeals is furnished by the Board of Veterans' Appeals and the Board of Contract Appeals in their respective areas.

### **Shared Service Center**

The **Shared Service Center**, or SSC, located in Topeka, KS, is the operational component of HR LINK\$ - VA's automated human resources system specially designed to handle your personal human resources activities through desktop computer access or by dialing **1-800-414-5272** from any touch-tone phone. You will be issued a Personal Identification Number (PIN) at the beginning of your VA career which you must use in conjunction with your social security number when accessing HR LINK\$ Employee Self Service technology.

Currently, you can perform more than 20 personal and benefits transactions under HR LINK\$ Employee Self Service option, including enrolling in health/life insurance; making name and address changes; buying savings bonds; enrolling in the Thrift Savings Plan; initiating payroll allotments and direct deposit; contributing to the Combined Federal Campaign; obtaining salary and employment verification; changing your tax exemptions; ordering special forms, brochures, and Life Event packages; and updating your emergency contact information.

## II. Your Appointment

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### Types of Appointments

An individual's appointment to a position in VA may be one of several kinds and may be full time, part time, or intermittent. The kind of appointment has a bearing on the employee's "status" and job tenure. The principal types of appointments under Civil Service include career conditional, career, temporary, Senior Executive Service, and excepted. VA has the authority to appoint physicians, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, nurses, and other health care personnel to positions under separate Federal laws found in Title 38 of the U.S. Code. Each of these appointment authorities is described briefly below.

#### Civil Service

A **career-conditional appointment** is the first step toward a career in the Federal service. If you hold this kind of appointment, the first year of your service is a probationary period and essentially an extension of the examination process under which you were appointed. During the probationary period, your appointment can be terminated without formal removal procedures for skill deficiencies, poor work habits or attitude, or unsuitability.

After you have completed 3 years of substantially continuous, creditable service as a career-conditional employee, your appointment automatically converts to a **career appointment**. This confers on you greater retention rights in the event of a reduction-in-force, priority placement if separated because of such a reduction, and reinstatement eligibility following a break in service.

Career-conditional and career employees can be promoted, reassigned, or transferred to any vacant position for which they are eligible and qualified within VA or in any other Federal agency.

**Temporary appointments** are made to cover particular work situations and usually have a time limitation of one year or less. Temporary appointees are not eligible for promotion, reassignment, or transfer and may be separated at any time during their appointment.

**Senior Executive Service (SES) appointments** are made to top level executive positions in the Department. These appointments may be made on a career, noncareer, limited term, or limited emergency basis. Positions are primarily managerial and supervisory. The SES is a gradeless system in which salary is linked to individual performance, not the position.

**Excepted appointments** are made to positions that have been specifically excluded from competitive requirements by a statute, Executive Order, or by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Candidates for excepted positions must meet appropriate qualification standards, but do not compete in civil service examinations, do not have competitive status, and serve initial trial periods.

#### Title 38

VA has a separate employment system under Title 38 U.S.C. for **appointment of Physicians, Dentists, Podiatrists, Optometrists, Nurses, Nurse Anesthetists, Physician Assistants, and Expanded-Function Dental Auxiliaries (EFDAs)**. These appointments are made on the basis of an individual's qualifications and professional attainments in accordance with standards that have been established by the Secretary. Title 38 employees are paid under specific pay schedules. Appointments may be either full-time permanent, temporary full time, part time, or intermittent. Most full-time appointments under Title 38 are subject to a 2-year probationary period. A functional statement is provided that spells out the duties and responsibilities of the employee. The functional statement is updated when a change in duties occurs.

## Hybrid

Title 38 hybrid employees are employed under a combination of both Title 5 and Title 38 personnel systems. Currently, Title 38 hybrid positions include Certified/Registered Respiratory Therapist, Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Pharmacist, and Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurse. Hybrids are covered by Title 38 for appointment, advancement, and certain pay matters, and Title 5 for performance appraisal, leave, hours of duty, adverse actions, probationary period, reemployment rights, reduction-in-force, and retirement rules (except part-time service is calculated under Title 38 retirement rules). A functional statement is provided that spells out the duties and responsibilities. The functional statement is updated when a change in duties occurs.

## Positions in the General Schedule

As a **General Schedule (GS) employee**, your grade, official position title, and occupational series are determined by a process called position classification. The process starts with the development of a position description, describing the major functions of your position. Your supervisor is responsible for assigning your duties and responsibilities, writing your position description, and periodically reviewing it to ensure that it is still complete and accurate. You can assist by calling attention to any significant changes in duties or responsibilities that may have occurred since the last review. You should have a copy of your position description. If you do not have one, ask your supervisor for a copy.

Your local Human Resources Management (HRM) Office and/or the Shared Service Center is responsible for evaluating the duties and responsibilities of your position according to a set of classification standards which are written, published, and periodically updated by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). The classification process may also, but does not have to, involve an audit at your work site and discussion with your supervisor.

If you feel your position has been improperly classified, you have the right to appeal. This is a right given by law and may be exercised at any time. Before filing an appeal, you should discuss the classification of your position with your supervisor and HRM Office. They will explain how the classification was determined. If you still feel that there is an inequity and want to appeal, they will explain the procedures to be followed. The Shared Service Center classification staff is also available at **1-800-414-5272** to discuss how positions are classified. If you still feel there is an inequity and want to appeal, contact your local HRM Office or call the Shared Service Center to request a classification appeal work event package which explains the procedures to be followed.

Although certified respiratory therapy technicians, registered respiratory therapists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, pharmacists, and licensed practical/vocational nurses are under the General Schedule for some pay purposes, their assignments are not subject to the classification system described above. Their grades are based on personal qualifications and complexity of assignment in accordance with standards established by the Secretary.

## Positions in the Federal Wage System

Positions in the **Federal Wage System (FWS)** are often referred to as blue collar positions and represent the manual trades and crafts. As a FWS employee, your grade, your official title, and your occupational series are determined by a process called job grading. As with the General Schedule, the process of job grading begins with the development of a job description. Most job descriptions describe the work in terms of four factors: skill and knowledge required, level of responsibility of the job, physical effort required, and working conditions encountered. Your supervisor is responsible for assigning your work, writing your job description, and periodically reviewing it to ensure that it is still complete and accurate. You can assist by calling attention to any significant changes in your job that may have occurred since the last review. You should have a copy of your job description. If you do not have one, ask your supervisor for a copy.

After your job description is developed, it is sent to your local HRM Office. Your local HRM Office and/or the Shared Service Center evaluates your job in relation to a set of Job Grading Standards which are published and periodically updated by OPM. As with General Schedule positions, the grading of a blue collar job may, but does not have to, involve a work site audit and discussion with your supervisor.

If you feel that your job has been improperly graded, you have the right to appeal. This right is given by law and may be exercised at any time. Before filing an appeal, you should discuss the grading of your job with your supervisor and local HRM Office. They will explain how the grade was determined. If you still feel that there is an inequity and want to appeal, they will explain the procedures to be followed. The Shared Service Center classification staff is also available at **1-800-414-5272** to discuss how positions are graded. If you still feel there is an inequity and want to appeal, contact your local HRM Office or call the Shared Service Center to request a classification appeal work event package which explains the procedures to be followed.

## III. Your Job

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### Personnel Folder

Your personnel folder contains the official papers pertaining to your employment and is the permanent record of your service in the Federal Government. It is maintained for official use only and is not open to inspection by unauthorized persons.

You, or your representative designated in writing, may see your personnel records by contacting your local Human Resources Management representatives. If you believe the content of a record pertaining to you to be inaccurate, irrelevant, or incomplete, you may request that the record be changed or corrected. The request will be reviewed by the official responsible for the record. If the desired changes are not made, you will be told why. If you are not satisfied with the decision, appeal procedures are available to you. Your local Human Resources Management representatives can give you complete details.

### Life Insurance

Almost all VA employees are eligible to participate voluntarily in the **Federal Employees Group Life Insurance Program (FEGLI)**, for which no physical examination is required. You share the cost of this insurance with the Government. As a new employee, you will automatically be covered under Basic Life insurance coverage unless you waive that coverage. If you have Basic Life insurance, you have up to 31 days from your initial appointment date (and up to 60 days following a Qualifying Life Event, e.g., marriage, birth of a child, death of spouse) to elect optional life insurance. You may contact the Shared Service Center by calling **1-800-414-5272** for further information, to order a booklet that explains your rights and benefits under FEGLI, and to sign up for or make changes to your life insurance election.

### Health

The **Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program** helps protect you and family members against the costs of illnesses, accidents, and hospitalization. The Government shares the cost of this insurance if you elect to participate. As a new employee, you may be eligible for FEHB. You may also choose to participate in Premium Conversion. Participation in Premium Conversion is automatic if you elect FEHB and means you will pay for your FEHB premium PRIOR to being taxed on your earnings. For most employees, this will result in more take-home pay. However, you may elect not to participate in Premium Conversion. You have up to 60 days from your initial appointment date or a Qualifying Life Event, e.g., marriage, birth of a child, etc., to make these elections. You may contact the Shared Service Center by calling **1-800-414-5272** to obtain general information on FEHB and/or Premium Conversion. You may obtain individual brochures on health plans available in your geographic area from your local Human Resources Management representatives.

VA also provides a limited health service program for employees that includes emergency treatment, protection of employees from communicable disease, maintenance of a healthy working environment, and preventive health measures. Pre-employment and periodic examinations are also provided for employees in certain occupations.

Information about the health services that are specifically available to you will be provided by your local Human Resources Management Office when you report for duty.

## **Work Injuries**

VA will provide you with a safe and healthy place to work and with approved protective and safety equipment as necessary to protect you from hazardous working conditions. You are required to observe established safe practices and to report unsafe conditions to your supervisor. (See section titled "Occupational Safety and Health.")

If you are injured at work, notify your supervisor immediately. You will need information about your benefits under the **Federal Workers' Compensation Program**. You will also need to complete the appropriate claim forms.

Information and forms are available from your Workers' Compensation representative. Benefits for job-related injuries and illnesses may include medical care and compensation. Some of this care may be offered in your local VA Health Unit. You should review the pamphlet CA-11, "When Injured At Work," for more information on this subject.

## **Employee Assistance Program**

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is designed to assist employees with a variety of personal, emotional, mental, legal, or family concerns they may be experiencing.

In addition, EAP offers help to employees with problems related to alcohol and drug abuse. It is the policy of VA to see that employees who have problems relating to the use or abuse of alcohol or drugs receive the same careful consideration and offer of assistance that is presently extended to employees having any other illness or health problems. If you are having a problem with alcohol or drugs, you are encouraged to seek counseling and information from an Employee Assistance Counselor or Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program Coordinator. Neither your job security nor your promotion opportunities will be jeopardized by a request for assistance, and all records will be maintained in a strictly confidential manner.

Because we recognize that job performance may be negatively affected by stressful personal, emotional, mental, financial, legal or family concerns, many VA facilities have expanded their counseling programs to assist employees with these problems. Your local Human Resources Management representatives can tell you what services are available at your facility and provide additional information about EAP.

## **Miscellaneous**

Some additional benefits and services include moving expenses and allowances if transferred for the benefit of the Government, reimbursement for damaged or lost personal property, and unemployment compensation. You should ask about these matters whenever you have an interest.

## IV. Your Pay

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### Salary

The pay you receive depends on the pay system that applies to you: General Schedule (GS); Federal Wage System (FWS); Senior Executive Service (SES); Senior-Level Pay System; Title 38; Locality Pay System; or Veterans Canteen Service (VCS).

The **General Schedule** is a nationwide schedule of annual rates of pay that applies to you if you are an administrative, technical or professional employee in the civil service. The schedule consists of 15 grades ranging from GS-1 (least difficult) to GS-15 (most difficult). There are 10 steps within each grade. Your grade is determined by the classification process. The rates for the General Schedule are based on comparability with private enterprise pay for work levels of similar difficulty. To maintain comparability, annual adjustments to the General Schedule may be made on a nationwide basis. Adjustments made on a nationwide basis are commonly referred to as general comparability increases and affect many GS employees.

Adjustments made on a locality basis are referred to as **locality comparability payments**. These adjustments are based on a comparison of Federal pay with local non-Federal pay rates. The amount of locality pay an employee receives depends on the geographic area where he or she works. As a result, the amount of locality pay may change if the employee changes duty stations.

The **Federal Wage System** applies to you if you are in a trade, craft, or labor occupation. FWS pay rates are based on comparability with private enterprise and the range of rates that applies to you is based on the grade level assigned to your job. The rates of pay for FWS employees are established on an area-by-area basis. Each wage area has a 15-grade schedule for nonsupervisory employees and leaders and a 19-grade schedule for supervisors.

Ranging from ES-1 to ES-6, pay rates for **Senior Executive Service** employees are typically based on the level of responsibilities of the assignment and the individual's qualifications and performance. Generally, ES-5 and ES-6 rates are reserved for senior executives assigned to the agency's most complex SES positions.

The **Senior-Level Pay System** includes senior-level (SL) positions classifiable above GS-15 and scientific or professional (ST) positions. Employees who meet the criteria for these positions may be paid at rates of not less than 120 percent of GS-15, step 1, or more than the rate of basic pay for Level IV of the Executive Schedule. Initial pay for these highly technical positions is set at any rate between these limits based on review of the employee's qualifications, the responsibility level of the assignment, and the impact of the position on VA, the Government, or the public.

If you are a physician, dentist, podiatrist, optometrist, physician assistant or expanded-function dental auxiliary in a health care facility, you are paid under the provisions of **Title 38, U.S. Code**. Your grade level is not based on a position description, but rather on your personal qualifications. Your pay schedule, however, is linked to the General Schedule by a comparison of duties and responsibilities at certain grade levels, and is adjusted at the same time as the General Schedule. If, however, you are at certain levels of administration (e.g., facility Director), your pay is based on the complexity and responsibility of the assignment, as well as on your performance and qualifications.

If you are a nurse or nurse anesthetist, you are paid under VA's **Locality Pay System (LPS)**. This means that your salary rate is based on a survey of non-VA health care establishments in your local labor market area. The salary surveys determine the competitiveness of a facility's locality pay rates. They are conducted at least once a year for each facility, but they may be conducted more often if the facility Director determines it is necessary. There are five grade

levels in LPS. Assignments to grade levels I, II, and III are based on personal qualifications, while assignments to grades IV and V are based on the complexity of the assignment as well as personal qualifications.

If you are a physical therapist, certified respiratory therapy technician, registered respiratory therapist, occupational therapist, pharmacist, or licensed practical or vocational nurse, you will be compensated under the General Schedule, but your grade will be based on personal qualifications, and at certain levels, it will also be based on the complexity of your assignment.

If you are employed in the **Veterans Canteen Service**, your salary depends on the duties and responsibilities of your position. Canteen officers and canteen officer trainees are paid annual salaries that are related to the General Schedule. Otherwise, your pay is based on salaries paid by firms that serve the general public in your geographic area.

### **Pay Periods, Pay Days, and Direct Deposit of Salary Payments**

Pay periods are 2 weeks long; they begin on Sunday and end on Saturday. You are paid every other Tuesday, and the payment you receive is for the previous pay period, which ended 10 days before. Salary payments must be by direct deposit to your financial institution and usually are in your account on the Friday before pay day.

### **Deductions**

Along with your salary, you will receive an earnings and leave statement each pay period that will show your annual and sick leave balances and the amount of each kind of deduction from your gross pay. Some of these deductions are required, while others are optional. The amount withheld for Federal and applicable state income taxes depends on your gross earnings and the number of exemptions you claim.

Deductions are also made if you elect coverage under the Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) program or one of the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) plans.

You may also authorize deductions from your salary for the purchase of U.S. Savings Bonds, for your pledge to combined charity drives, for the payment of dues to recognized labor organizations, for deposit to such financial institutions as banks, savings and loan associations, and credit unions, and for other purposes. If there is a significant, unexplained change in the amount of your salary payment, you should contact the payroll office.

### **Periodic Step or Within-Grade Increases**

If you are in one of the following pay systems and remain in the same grade, you will receive periodic pay raises as long as your performance meets the appropriate criteria, you meet the required service, and you have not reached the maximum rate of the grade.

**General Schedule (GS)** (includes licensed physical therapists, certified respiratory therapy technicians, registered respiratory therapists, occupational therapists, pharmacists, licensed practical/vocational nurses and upper level management positions)

- After 52 calendar weeks of creditable service in steps 1, 2, and 3; and
- After 104 calendar weeks of creditable service in steps 4, 5, and 6; and
- After 156 calendar weeks of creditable service in steps 7, 8, and 9.

**Federal Wage System (FWS)**

- After 26 calendar weeks of creditable service in step 1;
- After 78 calendar weeks of creditable service in step 2; and
- After 104 calendar weeks of creditable service in steps 3 and 4.

### Title 38

- 104 calendar week waiting period, except as noted below.
- 52 calendar week waiting period for expanded-function dental auxiliaries and associate grade physician assistants in steps 1 and 2 of the regular rate range.

Periodic step and within-grade increases begin on the first day of the first pay period after you meet all of the above requirements.

### Locality Pay System (nurses and nurse anesthetists)

- 104 calendar weeks of creditable service, except for Nurse I employees as noted below.
- 52 calendar weeks of creditable service for Nurse I, Level I employees to advance to steps 2, 3, and 4 of the level.
- 52 calendar weeks of creditable service for Nurse I, Level II employees to advance to steps 2, 3, and 4 of the level.
- 52 calendar week waiting period for Nurse I, Level III employees to advance to steps 2, 3, and 4 of the level. (Level III does not apply to nurse anesthetists.)

## Hours of Duty

If you are a full-time employee, your tour of duty is generally 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, Monday through Friday. If you are involved in patient care or have some other job that requires extended coverage, you may be required to work other than a standard Monday through Friday tour of duty (e.g., at night or weekends). Other non-standard tours of duty, called **alternative work schedules (AWS)**, may be approved in some work units in order to provide employees more flexibility in scheduling work. An AWS consists of either a flexible or compressed work schedule. A flexible work schedule (or flexitime) means a system of work scheduling that splits the workday into two distinct kinds of time: a core time band and a flexible time band. A compressed schedule means (1) in the case of a full-time employee, an 80-hour biweekly basic work requirement that is scheduled for less than 10 workdays; and (2) in the case of a part-time employee, a biweekly basic work requirement of less than 80 hours that is scheduled for less than 10 workdays and that may require the employee to work more than 8 hours in a day.

All employees are required to be on duty during the full period of their tour of duty unless absent on approved leave; to observe the opening and closing hours established for the tour of duty; and to adhere to the established luncheon periods.

## Overtime and Compensatory Time Off

If you are a GS or FWS employee, a Title 38 nurse, nurse anesthetist, physician assistant, or expanded-function dental auxiliary, you are entitled to overtime pay when you are required to work more than your daily/weekly scheduled tour. Your overtime rate is generally 1-1/2 times your regular rate of pay. Higher graded GS employees, however, may be limited to the overtime rate for GS-10, step 1. There is no limit on the overtime rate for Title 38 nurses, nurse anesthetists, physician assistants, expanded-function dental auxiliaries, and FWS employees. In lieu of payment for overtime work, compensatory time off is occasionally appropriate. If you are a GS employee with a basic rate of pay of more than GS-10, step 10, you will be granted compensatory time off unless the appropriate authority has approved your request for overtime pay. On the other hand, if you are a GS employee with a rate of pay equal to or lower than GS-10, or an employee eligible for overtime pay under Title 38, you will be paid for the overtime work unless you request compensatory time off in writing and your request is approved.

FWS employees receive compensatory time off only in limited circumstances (e.g., compensatory time off for religious observances or when participating in a flexible or compressed work schedule). Thus, as an FWS employee, you are typically paid for required overtime work.

GS and FWS employees covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) are entitled to overtime pay under FLSA. Your position description indicates whether you are covered (nonexempt) by FLSA or not covered (exempt).

You may elect to work compensatory overtime for the purpose of taking time off without charge to leave when your personal religious beliefs require you to be absent from work during certain periods of the workday or workweek. Such a request will be approved unless your services are necessary to carry out the mission of your organization.

If you are in SES or a Title 38 physician, dentist, podiatrist or optometrist, you are not entitled to overtime.

## V. Your Leave Benefits

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### Leave Systems - General Schedule, Federal Wage System, Senior Executive Service, and Veterans Canteen Service

#### Annual Leave

As a Federal employee, you earn **annual leave** for vacations and other personal uses. The amount of annual leave you earn each year depends on your length of service (Federal employment and military service). If you are a full-time employee and have less than 3 years of service, you earn 4 hours of leave a pay period, or 13 days per year. If you have between 3 and 14 years of service, you earn 6 hours per pay period, or 20 days per year. At 15 years of service, you earn 8 hours per pay period, or 26 days per year. Annual leave is charged in quarter-hour increments. Part-time employees on regularly scheduled tours of duty earn leave on a prorated basis according to the number of hours they work. Unused annual leave at the end of the year may be accumulated for use in succeeding years, up to a maximum of 240 hours. (Part-time employees' maximum leave accumulation limit is prorated in accordance with their work schedule. SES employees may accumulate up to 720 hours.) If you leave the Federal service, you will be paid for annual leave to your credit.

#### Sick Leave

You receive 4 hours of **sick leave** each full pay period or 13 days of leave per year. Unlike annual leave, it accumulates year after year without limit. Unused sick leave may be used to extend your creditable service when you retire, if you have creditable service under the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) during your Federal career. Part-time employees with regularly scheduled tours of duty earn sick leave that is prorated according to the number of hours they work. Sick leave is also charged in quarter-hour increments and is used when you are ill, for medical, dental, or optical examinations and treatments, and the adoption of a child. Sick leave should be considered as insurance against loss of income during periods of extended illness, so it should be used responsibly. Employees may also use up to 40 hours, and based upon eligibility requirements, up to 104 hours of sick leave to provide medical care and assistance to family members, including arranging for and attending funeral services. An employee may use a total of up to 12 administrative workweeks of sick leave each year to care for a family member with a serious health condition, subject to certain limitations.

If the need arises and you have exhausted your leave, you may request to become a leave recipient through the Voluntary Leave Transfer Program. The leave transfer program allows you to receive annual leave donated by another employee if you have a medical emergency. Additional employee leave entitlements include 12 administrative workweeks of unpaid leave during any 12-month period after the birth of a child, to adopt a child, to care for a spouse, son, daughter, or parent who has a serious health condition, or to personally recover from a serious illness. Employees who serve as bone-marrow donors are granted up to 7 days of paid leave in a calendar year. Employees who serve as organ donors are granted up to 30 days of paid leave in a calendar year. Your local Human Resources Management representatives can provide more information about your leave entitlements.

## Title 38 Leave Systems

### Annual Leave

Physicians, dentists, podiatrists, and optometrists receive 30 days annual leave each year with a maximum accumulation of 120 days. Annual leave is charged in whole days and on the basis of a calendar week (i.e., if you perform no service during a calendar week, you are charged 7 days of annual leave). Full-time nurses, nurse anesthetists, physician assistants, and expanded-function dental auxiliaries earn 8 hours of annual leave per pay period or 26 days per year. Unused annual leave at the end of a year may be accumulated for use in succeeding years up to a maximum of 685 hours. Part-time employees accrue 1 hour of annual leave for each 10 hours in pay status. Part-time employees may not carry forward more than 240 hours of accumulated annual leave to succeeding years. Annual leave is charged in quarter-hour increments.

### Sick Leave

Physicians, dentists, podiatrists, and optometrists receive 15 calendar days sick leave per year. Full-time nurses, nurse anesthetists, physician assistants, and expanded-function dental auxiliaries receive 4 hours of sick leave each full biweekly pay period or 13 days per year. There is no limitation on the amount of sick leave that an employee may carry forward at the end of the leave year. Part-time employees accrue 1 hour of sick leave for each 30 hours in pay status. Sick leave is charged in the same manner as annual leave.

## Holidays

The following are legal holidays for Federal employees.

- New Year's Day..... January 1
- Inauguration Day..... January 20 every 4 years  
(Washington, DC, metropolitan area only)
- Birthday of Martin Luther King Jr. 3rd Monday in January
- Washington's Birthday ..... 3rd Monday in February
- Memorial Day..... Last Monday in May
- Independence Day..... July 4
- Labor Day..... 1st Monday in September
- Columbus Day..... 2nd Monday in October
- Veterans Day..... November 11
- Thanksgiving Day..... 4th Thursday in November
- Christmas Day..... December 25

If you are a full-time employee and a holiday falls on your day off, another day is designated as your day off in lieu of the holiday. If you are required to work on the holiday or the "in lieu" day, you will receive additional compensation or, in the case of Title 38 physicians, dentists, podiatrists and optometrists, alternative time off.

## Other Leave Matters

You can get additional information from your local Human Resources Management representatives about military leave, court leave, time off for voting, authorized absence without charge to leave, leave for family reasons, and leave without pay.

## VI. Your Career

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In order to become a more customer-focused organization, functioning as *One VA* and delivering seamless service to our customers, we must cultivate a dedicated workforce of highly skilled employees who understand, believe in, and take pride in VA's vitally important mission. This vision supports the Department's commitment to investing in human capital and building a culture of continuous learning within the organization. That means recruiting, developing and retaining a competent, committed, diverse workforce recognized for providing high-quality care and service to our veterans.

### Training

The training you receive in VA is an important part of making sure VA has a highly qualified and highly motivated workforce. Training is necessary to maintain, enhance and expand skills and capabilities, to continue to meet the needs of America's veterans and their dependents, and to provide employees a chance to grow and develop.

The **VA Learning University (VALU)** provides leadership for learning initiatives spanning the three VA administrations, and all VA staff offices. VALU coordinates the various educational entities within VA to maximize educational resources through collaborative efforts, and facilitates internal and external learning partnerships.

VALU operates on the premise that learning is a strategic force within an organization, and that it should be the business of every employee to seize learning opportunities to enhance job skills and realize personal potential. A variety of learning modalities are offered to you by VALU (correspondence, CD-ROM, classroom, or satellites), so you can select one that best suits your learning style and needs.

Training in VA has two main goals. First of all, you will get the training you need to help you do your present job in an effective, productive way. Most of this training will be given on the job by your supervisor, who has the primary responsibility for deciding what training you need. However, he or she can use your help to make these decisions. Therefore, you should discuss your training needs and any goals you have with your supervisor. Occasionally, you may be sent to a class to learn additional skills.

In addition, you may be given training to help prepare you for future duties and responsibilities. This will depend on what skills VA needs in the future, available resources, and your own goals and initiative.

Your training and development are important to VA. Meeting VA's strategic objectives requires training geared to both VA's needs and your goals. As your employer, VA can give you help with your development, but the Department cannot do it all for you. VA can encourage you and provide developmental opportunities, but your development depends on your own desire to learn and advance.

VA also has an **Upward Mobility Program** whereby employees in lower level jobs with little chance of advancement can be competitively selected for development. This program usually involves a combination of on-the-job training and classroom training.

Your supervisor or local Human Resources Management representatives should be able to answer your questions about training. There are many leadership training programs active within VA such as Leadership VA (LVA), New Leaders, Aspiring Leaders, and Women Executive Leadership (WEL). Your local Human Resources Management representatives have additional information (detailed description and eligibility requirements) about formal VA training programs, Upward Mobility, leadership, and non-VA training.

## Educational Opportunities in VHA

VHA sponsors a wide variety of educational opportunities to ensure an adequate supply of health professionals for VA and the Nation. VHA employees receive training and education to improve effectiveness and productivity. It is VHA's goal that 50 percent of full-time employees receive 40 hours of continuing education or training each year; and that all frontline providers have, as part of the 40 hours, 20 hours directly related to patient safety.

Similar to VA's Upward Mobility Program, VHA has its **Succession Planning Committee**, which is charged with developing a well-defined, comprehensive succession plan for VHA. This group links the succession plan to the High Performance Development Model and ensures that the plan addresses workforce assessment, defines career tracks, and identifies required skill sets, recruitment and retention strategies, and comprehensive leadership and staff development training.

The **Employee Education System (EES)**, VHA's education and training organization, specializes in providing quality products and services for continuous learning and performance improvement. EES programs keep pace with the profound changes affecting VA and those who care for our Nation's veterans.

EES has expanded its role from serving primarily as a provider of education to providing leadership in partnering with its customers to meet the educational needs of all employees through collaborative efforts. Its mission is to provide educational services which are customer-focused, accessible, performance-based, cost-effective, and which lead to the accomplishment of VHA's organizational goals and objectives of providing quality health care and services to our Nation's veterans. EES's vision is to be the partner of choice for learning.

The Employee Education Resource Centers across the country develop partnerships with employees to provide the education and training they need based on the National Training Priority Areas established by the VHA Integration Council.

To find out more about the products and services provided by EES, visit the Web site at [vaww.ees.lrn.va.gov](http://vaww.ees.lrn.va.gov), or contact your local Education Service Representatives.

VHA also offers scholarships administered by VHA's Health Care Staff Development and Retention Office, and reimbursement for tuition. The following list identifies some of the programs you might want to learn more about:

**Employee Incentive Scholarship Program:** Provides awards for VA employees enrolled in academic degree programs for selected health care professions, such as registered nurse, physician assistant, nurse practitioner, certified respiratory therapy technician, registered respiratory therapist, occupational therapist, physical therapist, nurse anesthetist, clinical pharmacist, and clinical nurse specialist.

**Tuition Reimbursement Program:** Supports employees in nursing degree programs and those taking courses required for acceptance in degree programs.

**Affiliated Education Programs:** Each year, VA provides funding support for more than 2,300 affiliated trainees (i.e., individuals training in an academic institution affiliated with VA) in such disciplines as audiology/speech pathology, dietetics, nursing, occupational and physical therapy, pharmacy, psychology, blind rehabilitation, and social work.

If you are interested in any of these programs, you should contact your supervisor to obtain additional information.

## Educational Opportunities in VBA

Today's dynamic, rapidly changing work environment continuously challenges employees, managers, and leaders to adapt and grow. VBA is ensuring that all employees have the support necessary to learn and develop the knowledge and skills needed for their current responsibilities and to enhance their ability to anticipate and meet the needs of the veteran of the future.

To meet these challenges, VBA's Office of Employee Development and Training is developing a comprehensive, state-of-the-art employee development and training system that is learning, skill, and performance based. It encompasses a very broad spectrum of initiatives using the latest technology and includes corporate-sponsored management and leadership development, mentoring, competency development, support service, end-user, and external partner training and performance-based technical training for employees. These initiatives are part of VBA's efforts to become a premier learning organization and its commitment to developing a high-performing workforce.

To be successful, the learning process must be consistent and properly coordinated across the organization. In November 1999, VBA issued a policy statement on learning within the organization. This directive, VBA Circular 20-99-3, defines VBA's methods used to educate, train, and develop employees. It also assigns responsibilities for learning management, administration, development, and budgeting.

VBA has enhanced its recruitment procedures and significantly expanded and systematized efforts to properly **orient new employees** to the organization. New employees participate in performance-based interviews and competency assessments and acquire insights into the competencies and skills they possess and will need to acquire in the future. Once on-board, new Veterans Service Representatives (VSR) and Rating Veteran Service Representatives (RVSR) participate in the nationally sponsored "Challenge" training program. The training is hosted for part of its time at seven regional locations. The rest of it is conducted at the new employees' home stations. The program provides an in-depth learning experience about the technical skills, mission, vision, values, structures, partners, and context of work in VBA. It provides the employees with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in carrying out that mission. The training program provides an excellent opportunity for new employees to develop a network of peers they can draw upon as they progress in their careers.

Four programs have been developed to meet VBA's **leadership development** and training needs from initial high potential management candidates to senior executive development. The programs are Leadership Enhancement and Development (LEAD), Introduction to Leadership (including Human Resources and Labor Management Relations), Division Leadership and Management Training (DLMT), and an SES Candidate Development Program. A fifth program to train Assistant Directors is under development by a team of Central Office and field staff. These programs are designed to identify leadership potential early in an individual's career and then provide the individual with progressively more challenging leadership development opportunities. Mid-level employees have the opportunity to participate in the Introduction to Leadership and Division Level Management Training program. High potential employees have an opportunity to pursue the LEAD program. This program provides the employee exposure to the major issues facing the organization and the opportunity to work on a team that studies and reports on a specific issue. Participants are matched with mentors from various parts of the organization to further broaden their experiences and establish effective networks.

VBA has developed a number of **learning delivery** mechanisms to meet the differing logistical needs of the organization and the varied styles of adult learners to include the Veterans Benefits Network Satellite Broadcasting

System; the VBA Video-teleconferencing System; the Training Performance and Support System computer-based training modules for business line technical skills; as well as a traditional capability of classroom-based seminar and workshop training through the Veterans Benefits Academy and six other modest training classrooms across the country.

The computer-based Training Performance and Support System (TPSS) is effective in preparing new employees to meet the challenges of working in the Compensation and Pension business line. The TPSS currently contains learning modules to assist employees involved with rating compensation cases. The next step is to develop learning modules to assist Veteran Service Representatives who work directly with veterans in resolving their concerns and assuring they receive the benefits to which they are entitled. This computer-based training system will be expanded to all business lines in the future.

You can obtain additional information about learning in VBA by calling the VBA Office of Employee Development and Training at (202) 273-5446.

## Educational Opportunities in NCA

NCA offers a wide variety of educational and training opportunities to ensure that all employees are able to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the needs of veterans now and in the future.

To meet these challenges, NCA's **High Performance Development Model (HPDM)** team has developed a training system that addresses each of the eight core competencies crucial to successful staff and leadership training. The HPDM helps define career paths, identify skill sets, and aid in the recruitment and retention of a highly qualified workforce.

In relation to HPDM, NCA has commenced a nationwide effort to establish an Individual Development Plan (IDP) for each employee. This effort began in Memorial Service Network (MSN) III, where management officials at all MSN III facilities within the MSN are receiving guidance in IDP development.

In addition, NCA has developed an intensive **Cemetery Director Intern Program** in which qualified candidates receive leadership and specialized training in diverse areas such as Field Operations, Leadership Development, Public Affairs, Contract Administration, Employee/Labor Relations, Recruitment and Staffing, and EEO/Diversity. This program is designed to identify leadership potential and provide the employee with progressively more challenging developmental opportunities. It plays a principal role in succession planning for NCA.

In accordance with current regulations and laws, NCA also strongly supports **Tuition Reimbursement**, where employees are encouraged to pursue college level classes that either enhance employees' existing skills, or develop new skills to increase their value to the agency.

Because of NCA's strong belief in the education and development of employees at all levels, educational specialists are being added to the staff of the Human Resources Division at the national level. This staff will focus on the development of educational opportunities for NCA employees nationwide.

## Merit Promotion

When VA positions become vacant, persons already working for VA are often selected to fill them through promotion or reassignment. Normally, candidates from other sources may also apply and be considered.

Your station has a **Merit Promotion Plan** that outlines the procedures you should follow to receive promotion consideration. The plan does not assure you a promotion, but it provides for fair consideration for promotion opportunities for which you apply and are qualified. Your local Human

Resources Management representatives will be pleased to discuss these procedures with you.

To apply for certain high-level positions, or positions at other VA facilities, contact any VA Human Resources Management office for information on vacancy announcements and application procedures.

To be eligible for promotion, you must meet all qualification requirements. When you meet these requirements, your knowledge, skills, and abilities are compared to those needed for successful performance in the job. The group of employees who best match the requirements of the position is then referred for consideration.

All actions under VA's merit promotion policy will be taken without discrimination for such reasons as race, color, religion, national origin, sex, lawful political affiliation, marital status, nondisqualifying physical or mental handicap, age, or membership or nonmembership in a labor organization.

Title 38 employees are not covered by the merit promotion plan. Instead, they are considered for promotion on a regular basis by a **Professional Standards Board** that carefully evaluates their performance, experience, and professional attainment. Promotion recommendations are based on the qualifications of the individual employee.

## **Career Transition Assistance Program**

A variety of services may be offered to employees displaced by reorganization or downsizing to assist them in transitioning to other careers in VA, in other Federal or state organizations, in the private sector, or in self-employment. Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) assistance typically includes training in job search skills, use of the internet to seek job vacancy information, resume writing, interviewing skills, stress management, and similar related topics. Special programs may be locally available to assist employees displaced due to downsizing. For additional information or assistance, contact your local Human Resources Management representatives.

The local Human Resources Management representative may provide or refer you for retirement counseling services and guidance on personnel flexibilities such as leave sharing, leave for medical conditions, family responsibilities, and care of a sick relative; part-time employment; and flexible work schedules.

## VII. Your Awards Program

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### Performance Evaluation

All of us like to know what tasks we are expected to perform, how well we are expected to do them, and whether our work is measuring up to expectations. As an employee, you need to know these things for your own satisfaction and to help you progress in your job. Your supervisor needs to know them too, for the manner in which you do your work has a direct bearing on the quality of service VA gives to veterans and their families.

To meet these needs, VA has a **Performance Appraisal System**. The key elements of this system are (1) written performance standards that principally describe the quality, quantity, and timeliness of work and which will be given to you by your supervisor; (2) discussions, as necessary, between you and your supervisor about your job performance; and (3) a formal written performance rating once a year, which is maintained in a separate folder by your Human Resources Management representatives.

Your performance rating is used in making determinations on promotions, reductions-in-force, within-grade increases for GS, FWS and hybrid employees, training, and adverse actions based on poor performance. Should you disagree with the performance rating assigned to you, there are procedures available to have the rating reviewed.

Most Title 38 employees in VHA are evaluated annually under a **Proficiency Rating System** that addresses their effectiveness in their current assignments and during the previous year of service. The Proficiency Report provides a basis for strengthening employee-supervisor relationships and is a factor in considering employees for advancements within the grade or promotion to a higher grade. It may also serve as a basis for action in cases where an employee's service is unsatisfactory. An employee who disagrees with a proficiency rating may submit comments concerning the rating in writing to the supervisor for filing in the Official Personnel Folder.

SES and some Title 38 employees are evaluated annually by supervisors and decisions on performance ratings and related pay matters are made to the Secretary or Administration head, as appropriate.

You should talk to your supervisor or see your local Human Resources Management representatives for further details regarding how the Department's performance appraisal systems work. Further information is also available in VA Handbook 5430.1 and the Question & Answer (Q&A) Guide located at <http://vawww.va.gov/ohrm>.

### Employee Recognition and Awards

You may receive an increase in pay, cash award, time-off award, honor, or non-monetary award in recognition of a contribution, act, service or achievement that benefits VA or beyond, or for overall sustained performance beyond normal requirements. Overall exceptional performance during the appraisal period (typically 12 months) can earn you a quality step increase (QSI).

VA employees have a number of opportunities to be recognized for their extra efforts on behalf of the Government. **Honor or non-monetary awards** such as certificates, plaques, and desk items (including paperweights, clocks, and calculators) are used to recognize employee contributions that improve the economy, efficiency, or effectiveness of VA operations and services.

Title 38 employees may be awarded additional steps in their grade as Special Advancement for Performance or Achievement in recognition of exceptional and recognized achievements within their profession. Nurses and nurse anesthetists may also be eligible for cash awards of up to \$2,000 when they have demonstrated both exemplary job performance and exemplary job achievement. Nurses and nurse anesthetists are also entitled to cash awards

of up to \$2,000 for becoming certified in specialties related to the accomplishment of VA's health care mission.

In addition to awards for performance contributions, your ideas that benefit VA may earn you cash awards. Through the **VA Employee Suggestion Program**, VA welcomes your suggestions on how to save time, money, materials, reduce paperwork, simplify procedures, or improve services to veterans. Ideas are submitted on VA Form 3951, Employee Suggestion.

You are encouraged to talk to your supervisor or others who know the subject matter of your suggestion in order to improve your chances of having your idea adopted. Each suggestion is evaluated by a qualified subject-matter expert, and if your suggestion is adopted, you will be eligible for recognition commensurate with the benefits derived from implementation of the suggestion.

## VIII. Your Rights

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### **Labor Management Relations**

You have the right, freely and without fear of penalty or reprisal, to form, join, or assist a union or not to do so, and you will be protected in exercising this right. However, your right to hold an office in a union, to act as a union representative, or to participate in its management may be affected by the job you hold. An employee cannot represent management in dealing with a union while at the same time representing that union. For this reason, employees who are supervisors or management officials, or who are engaged in human resources work other than clerical duties, cannot hold office in a union, serve as its representative, or participate in its management. These restrictions, however, do not deny the right of any Federal employee to join a union.

If you are in a unit of recognition, you may voluntarily have your union dues deducted from your paycheck. Your local union representative can provide you with further information concerning dues deductions.

If you are in a unit of recognition, an agreement between the union and management will normally have been negotiated to cover some aspects of human resources policies and practices. You should obtain a copy of this agreement and become familiar with its provisions.

### **Investigations**

In situations involving a potential disciplinary or adverse action, an investigation could be made into the incident as soon as possible to obtain the facts and determine what action, if any, is warranted. A bargaining unit employee being examined in an investigation (an investigatory examination or interview) is entitled to union representation if the examination is conducted by a representative of the agency, the employee reasonably believes that the examination may result in disciplinary action, and the employee asks for representation. Such examinations are Weingarten examinations because Congress, in establishing this right, specially referred to the private sector case establishing such a right. Your local HRM representative can provide you with further information about Weingarten rights.

### **Alternative Dispute Resolution**

VA employees are encouraged to use mediation to help resolve workplace conflicts as early as feasible, to the maximum extent practicable, and in an appropriate and cost-effective manner. Mediation is a process in which an impartial person, the mediator, helps people having a dispute to talk with each other and resolve their differences. The mediator does not decide who is right or wrong but rather assists the persons involved create their own unique solution to their problem. Mediation can be elected early in a dispute when individuals are having problems that they cannot seem to work out on their own. It can be used before putting the problem into a formal dispute process like EEO or the grievance procedure. It can be used after a problem or dispute has gone into the formal process, even while the matter is being investigated, being processed by the Office of Resolution Management, going through the various steps of a grievance, or at a hearing before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, arbitrator, or administrative judge. VA mediators are fellow VA employees who have voluntarily agreed to mediate workplace disputes. They are specially trained and skilled in mediation techniques and conflict resolution. In electing to use mediation, an employee does not give up any other rights. If the mediation does not result in a satisfactory solution, the employee can still go back to the EEO complaint, grievance, or other administrative processes for resolution. For more information about how the mediation program works at your facility, contact your local facility Alternative Dispute Resolution coordinator, EEO Counselor, or a Union Representative. For more information about VA's mediation program generally, visit the VA's Alternative Dispute Resolution Internet site at <http://www.va.gov/adr/index.htm>.

## **Discipline and Adverse Actions**

Although few employees have to face disciplinary or adverse actions, you should realize that situations involving job-related misconduct or poor performance can occur. Managers and supervisors who encounter these situations are authorized to take disciplinary or adverse actions to correct the behavior. Such actions may be in the form of admonishment, reprimand, suspension, demotion, reassignment, or removal. Employees have the right to file grievances or appeals when faced with such actions. In addition, employees have a right to representation at any stage in the appeal process. Your local HRM representative can provide you with further information about adverse actions and appeals.

## **Grievance Procedures**

The fair resolution of employee grievances is of interest to VA and you as an employee. "Grievance" is a feeling of concern or dissatisfaction with some aspect of your employment or with a management decision affecting you. It is VA policy to take "on-the-job" action to identify, prevent, and make reasonable and proper efforts to correct the causes of employee dissatisfaction. When this method fails, it is necessary that both employees and management have a final means of settling the issues. A grievance procedure provides this means.

There are different procedures for different kinds of grievances. The particular grievance procedure used is determined by your type of appointment, the subject matter being grieved, and your coverage or non-coverage under the terms of a negotiated agreement if your position is in the bargaining unit. The different grievance procedures have the same objectives and are similar in many respects, but vary in how the grievance is processed and settled. You should contact your local HRM representatives for details about the grievance procedures at your facility. Employees at facilities where there is exclusive recognition of a labor organization should refer to the negotiated agreement, since it will provide details about the negotiated procedure and explain the steps to be followed. Some employees, such as part-time Title 38 professionals, are not covered by a grievance procedure.

Although grievance procedures are appropriate for many circumstances and employment matters, there are some situations for which they cannot be used. This is primarily because of the legal nature of the circumstances or the fact that different appeal methods are provided. Specific details regarding coverage are contained in official publications that are available from your local HRM representatives.

If you are covered by a grievance procedure, the use of the procedure is your right as an employee. This right may not be interfered with, nor may you be treated in any prejudicial way for using it. On the other hand, you are expected to use it reasonably and in good faith. At any stage of the VA grievance procedure, you may have a representative of your choosing. Your local HRM representatives can provide you details about the informal and formal aspects of the grievance procedure.

## **Equal Opportunity**

VA is committed to an aggressive, affirmative policy to ensure equal employment opportunity and advancement to all qualified persons. Federal antidiscrimination laws are followed and enforced. Both the letter and the spirit of equal opportunity are observed in employment, assignment, and training opportunities.

Federal laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 and over), or mental or physical disability. Retaliation against persons who file complaints or oppose discrimination is also prohibited. If you believe that you have been discriminated against for any of these reasons, you have a right to complain to an EEO Counselor within 45 days of the incident giving rise to the complaint.

Contacting the Office of Resolution Management (ORM) for counseling is the first step in the pre-complaint process. An EEO counselor will look into your allegation(s) and attempt to resolve your concerns informally. If you are dissatisfied with the results of this process, ORM will instruct you on how to file a formal complaint. Remember that the EEO counselor serves as a neutral party in this process. The EEO counselor does not represent you or the agency. However, you have a right to have a representative of your choosing at any stage in the complaint process.

### **Employment of Disabled Veterans & Other Individuals with Disabilities**

VA firmly supports full employment and advancement opportunities for disabled veterans and other people with disabilities. Its continued commitment to this goal is demonstrated through concerted affirmative actions. Selections are based on the abilities a candidate offers, not on the disability, or disabilities, he or she may incidentally have. This policy applies to all opportunities such as appointment, promotion, training and development, and retention.

Whether you are a recent appointee or a seasoned employee, you are encouraged to keep your local Human Resources Management representatives informed of any disability you may have or acquire, and in the case of disabled veterans, of your 10-point veteran preference. This information will help VA determine whether its efforts to provide disabled persons with full job opportunities are actually working. Such information is treated confidentially to ensure your privacy.

The Human Resources Management representative at each VA facility is designated as the Selective Placement Coordinator and should be consulted by any disabled employee who needs assistance in employment matters. The local Human Resources Management representative is also designated as Coordinator for Employment of Veterans and has responsibility for the development and coordination of activities that facilitate the employment of veterans.

### **Reductions-in-Force or Staff Adjustments**

Circumstances such as program changes, reorganizations, lack of funds, or a decrease in workload may require an agency to displace, demote, transfer, or separate employees using reduction-in-force (RIF) or staff adjustment procedures. These procedures, established by law and regulations of OPM and VA, set forth a fair and orderly way of identifying employees who will be affected by staffing changes.

Employees covered by Title 5 RIF procedures, who are demoted as a result of a RIF, may be entitled to grade retention for 2 years and to pay retention for an indefinite period, and may also enroll in an agency Priority Placement Program that entitles them to priority consideration for repromotion.

Most permanent employees who are separated as a result of a RIF are entitled to either severance pay or an immediate retirement annuity. Title 5 employees may also be eligible for an agency reemployment priority list and career transition assistance plan (CTAP) as well as the Interagency Career Transition Assistance Plan (ICTAP). Should you become eligible for these programs, you will be provided with more specific information from your local Human Resources Management representatives and/or Career Transition Center.

Full-time permanent individuals employed under Title 38 are covered by Department staffing adjustment procedures. Under these procedures, a Title 38 employee who is determined to be in excess of program needs at his or her facility may be reassigned to another position at the facility or to another VA facility. If there are no positions available to which the employee may be reassigned, or if a reassignment is not accepted, the employee may be separated.

Career members of the Senior Executive Service are covered under RIF procedures specific to SES appointees.

When decreases in employment levels become necessary, VA, to the extent possible, tries to use attrition, long-range planning, temporary appointments, and the abolishment of vacant rather than occupied positions. Most VA employees go through their entire career without being touched by a RIF or staff adjustment. However, should there be an occasion in which you are involved in a RIF or staff adjustment, you will be provided with more specific information from your local Human Resources Management representatives and/or Career Transition Center.

# **IX. Your Responsibilities**

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## **Standards of Conduct**

### **General**

As a VA employee, you have certain rights and responsibilities. You have the right to expect fair and considerate treatment, decent working conditions, and a sincere concern on the part of VA for you as an individual. In return, VA expects that you will serve diligently, loyally, and cooperatively. You must avoid misconduct and other activities that conflict with your employment; exercise courtesy and dignity; and otherwise conduct yourself, both on and off duty, in a manner that reflects positively upon yourself and VA. Below is a partial list of your responsibilities as a VA employee. For more information, ask your supervisor, your local Human Resources Management representatives, or Regional Counsel.

You are required to be at work every day as scheduled unless on approved leave or excused absence. Failure to notify your supervisor and to request appropriate leave for an absence may be considered absence without leave (AWOL) and cause for disciplinary action.

You must be impartial in carrying out your official duties. You must avoid any action that might result in or look as though you are giving preferential treatment to any person, group or organization. You must not discriminate on the basis of race, age, color, sex, religion, national origin, politics, marital status, or disability in any employment matter or in providing benefits under any law administered by VA. You may not make a governmental decision outside of official channels. You may not take any action that impedes Government efficiency and economy, affects your impartiality, or otherwise lowers public confidence in the Federal Government. With certain exceptions, you are prohibited from asking for or accepting any gift, tip, entertainment, loan, favor, or anything of monetary value for yourself or any member of your family from any person or organization that is seeking or has a business or financial relationship with VA. This restriction is necessary to avoid the appearance that your official actions might be influenced by such gifts.

### **Conflict of Interest**

You must avoid any action that might result in or look as though you are using public office for private gain or might conflict, or appear to conflict, with the interest of VA or the Federal Government. You may not attempt to accomplish indirectly, through your immediate family or otherwise, any action that is prohibited. If you have any doubt as to whether planned actions may result in a conflict of interest with your VA responsibilities, first seek advice from your Regional Counsel Office.

### **Outside Employment**

You may not engage in outside employment or activity that is not compatible with the full and proper discharge of your VA duties and responsibilities. Outside employment activities by certain Title 38 health care professionals are governed by specific VA regulations. To be sure there is no conflict with your VA responsibilities, check with your Regional Counsel Office before you begin any outside employment activity.

### **Government Property**

You have a positive responsibility to protect and conserve, and not willfully damage any Federal property, including equipment, supplies, and other property entrusted or issued to you. You may not directly or indirectly use Government property of any kind, including vehicles, tools, instruments, or property leased to the Government for other than officially approved activities. You are responsible for all Government property entrusted to you, and you may be held financially liable if it is not treated and used properly.

## Debts

You are expected to pay your acknowledged debts and those reduced to a court judgment in a proper and timely manner. Your wages may be garnished for non-payment of alimony, child support, or other legal debts. Deductions from your pay may also be made for debts owed to the Federal Government. To protect your interest, VA will not furnish information on your credit status, enter disputes over the validation or amount of your bills, or collect for your creditors, except as mentioned above.

## Financial Statements

If you are in the SES or other high level position, you must file a public financial disclosure statement each year. If your position is one that requires you to contract, make purchases, or conduct audits for VA, or has otherwise been designated by the Secretary, you are required to file a confidential financial disclosure statement. You will be told if you have to file a financial disclosure statement. Your financial disclosure report will be reviewed by a VA official to ensure that any conflict of interest is avoided.

## Political Activity

The **Hatch Act** permits some political activities by Federal employees and prohibits others. In 1993, Congress amended the Hatch Act to permit most Federal employees to take an active part in partisan political activities and partisan political campaigns. These Reform Amendments protect your right to register and vote; to be free from official interference or persuasion; and to express your views on political subjects or candidates for political office. The Hatch Act also protects you from being pressured to make political contributions. You may participate freely in most nonpartisan political activities, such as voter referendums. You may also volunteer or serve as a member or officer of a political organization; campaign for a partisan political candidate or a candidate for political party office; and run for nonpartisan public office. You may not, however, engage in such activities while on duty, in uniform, in any room or building occupied in the discharge of official duties, or using a Federal vehicle.

Under the Hatch Act Reform Amendments, political appointees who are Senate confirmed may engage in political activities while on duty, in any Government room or building, while in uniform or official insignia, and while using a Government vehicle, if the costs associated with the political activity are not paid for by money derived from the U.S. Treasury. Current White House policy, however, discourages the use of Government vehicles by such appointees for political activities.

In addition, the Reform Amendments make it a crime to intimidate, threaten, command, or coerce a Federal employee to engage in or not to engage in any political activity.

Any Federal employee may write to or otherwise communicate with his or her elected representatives regarding employment-related concerns. However, individuals who examine or appoint applicants in the competitive service are prohibited from receiving or considering a recommendation of the applicant by a Senator or Representative, except as to the character or residence of the applicant.

There are some exceptions to this prohibition. For example, you may solicit a recommendation for a Federal position from an elected representative if the position is a political appointment. Or you may solicit a statement if you previously worked for the elected representative and the agency needs an evaluation of your work performance for the period of your employment with the representative.

There may be other exceptions or restrictions based on the nature of the political activity and your VA responsibilities. For further information on permissible Hatch Act activities, contact your local Human Resources Management representative or your Regional Counsel Office.

## **Solicitations and Sales**

You may not solicit contributions on VA premises for any national or local welfare or other kind of campaign unless the activity is endorsed by VA. Further, you may not sell tickets or other articles or services except during an officially endorsed activity of an employee organization, association, or group.

## **Intoxicating Beverages**

You may not use intoxicants in such a manner that your work performance is adversely affected or your conduct becomes embarrassing to VA. You may not report for duty under the influence of intoxicants or become intoxicated or drink intoxicating beverages while on duty. And you may not sell or attempt to sell intoxicants on VA premises.

## **Drug-Free Workplace**

VA, along with other Federal agencies, is a participant in the Drug-Free Federal Workplace Program. Testing for illegal drugs is part of VA's comprehensive drug prevention program. Testing may occur randomly in designated positions, or based on reasonable suspicion or in connection with an investigation into injury, illness, unsafe or unhealthful practice. Employees may also volunteer for unannounced random testing. Counseling and rehabilitative assistance is available to all employees through existing Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs). Employees found to be using illegal drugs will be referred to the EAP for assessment, and for counseling and referral to treatment or rehabilitation, as appropriate. Employees who wish to seek assistance voluntarily may do so through existing program arrangements at their facility or through their local Human Resources Management representatives. Further information on VA's Drug-Free Workplace Program, as well as a listing of testing designated positions, is available from your local Human Resources Management representatives.

## **Other Conduct**

Other conduct matters include prohibitions on the promotion of gambling, betting and lotteries on VA (or any Federal) premises and regulations regarding disclosure or misuse of information; relations with firms or persons seeking or doing business with VA; furnishing testimony freely and honestly in cases dealing with employment and disciplinary matters; and safety.

You should keep yourself informed of conduct requirements since your failure to observe them may result in disciplinary action.

It is your responsibility as a VA employee to know and comply with the *Standards of Ethical Conduct for Employees of the Executive Branch*. The Code of Ethics, which summarizes some of the most significant points of the standards of ethical conduct for employees of the executive branch, can be found on the inside back cover of this document. A copy of the complete publication is available for you to review from your local Human Resources Management representatives. For general information concerning Federal employee standards of conduct, consult your supervisor or your local Human Resources Management representatives. Within 90 days of reporting to work, all new employees are required to receive an ethics orientation on the standards of conduct. The human resources office within your local facility will explain specific requirements for ethics orientation at the time of in-processing. If you have additional questions about whether an action violates the standards of conduct or Hatch Act restrictions, you should contact your Regional Counsel Office for guidance, or in Central Office, Professional Staff Group III.

## Reporting Serious Irregularities and Criminal Acts

You, as a VA employee, are responsible for reporting any evidence or information that gives reasonable cause to suspect that a serious irregularity or other criminal violation may have occurred in any activity of VA. The Inspector General Act of 1978 (Public Law 95-452, Section 7a) authorizes the Inspector General to receive and investigate complaints or other information from any employee concerning the possible existence of an activity constituting a violation of law, rules, or regulations; fraud; mismanagement; gross waste of funds; abuse of authority; or a substantial and specific danger to public health and safety. It is a prohibited personnel practice to subject an employee to a personnel action if it is in reprisal for cooperating with or making any lawful disclosure to the Inspector General.

## Whistleblower Protection

It is also a prohibited personnel practice for an agency to subject you to a personnel action if the action is threatened, proposed, taken, or not taken because of whistleblowing activities. Whistleblowing means disclosing information that you reasonably believe is evidence of a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety. You are protected if you make such a disclosure to the Special Counsel or the Inspector General. You are also protected if you make such a disclosure to any other individual or organization (e.g., a congressional committee or the media), provided that the disclosure is not specifically prohibited by law.

More information on whistleblower protection may be obtained from your servicing Human Resources Management representatives; VA's OHRM Web site at <http://vaww.va.gov/ohrm>; VA Office of the Inspector General (OIG); or Office of Special Counsel (OSC) in Washington, DC, at 1-800-872-9855. OSC was established to investigate allegations of prohibited personnel practices, including reprisal for whistleblowing.

## How to Contact the Office of the Inspector General

The **Inspector General's Hotline** is located in the OIG in VA Central Office, Washington, DC, and can accept toll-free calls between 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. Eastern Time. Contact may also be made by mail, fax, or e-mail. The Hotline may be contacted as follows:

- Toll-free phone: 1-800-488-8244
- Fax: (202) 565-7936
- E-mail: [VAOIG.HOTLINE@forum.va.gov](mailto:VAOIG.HOTLINE@forum.va.gov)
- Mailing address:  
Office of the Inspector General Hotline (53E)  
P.O. Box 50410  
Washington, DC 20091-0410

You are urged, but not required, to first discuss your complaints or suspicions with your immediate supervisor or the facility's management, unless you have reason to believe that your own position may be jeopardized.

You are requested not to use the OIG Hotline to report matters involving employee grievances, discrimination complaints, or personnel matters. Most job-related complaints can be resolved at the facility level either through informal discussion with your supervisor or through established grievance procedures. Certain matters may also be resolved under an appeals procedure where an appeal right is granted by law or regulation. You are encouraged to use these channels.

The OIG is prohibited from disclosing the identity of an employee who has made a complaint or allegation without the employee's consent, unless it has

been determined that such disclosure is unavoidable during the course of the investigation.

Definitions of some of the terms used are provided to assist you in making a decision as to whether you feel an act may be a serious irregularity or a potential criminal violation and should be reported to the OIG:

a. **Abuse.** Knowingly furnishing services to ineligible beneficiaries; providing excessive services; violating program regulations; and performing seriously improper practices, none of which involve prosecutable fraud.

b. **Fraud.** Theft by deception that results in damage or loss to another.

c. **Mismanagement.** Failure to accomplish the goals and objectives of the activity or organization through the personal fault of those entrusted with managing the activity or organization, including its resources.

d. **Waste.** To spend moneys or use resources inappropriately or inefficiently without gaining proper, reasonable, or normal return.

## **X. Your Safety**

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### **Occupational Safety and Health**

VA is committed to providing a safe and healthful workplace for all VA employees and volunteers. Each VA facility is required to develop and implement an occupational safety and health program to eliminate work-related injuries and illnesses. In support of this program, each VA employee and volunteer must:

- Follow safe work procedures at all times (e.g., wear required personal protective equipment);
- Learn to recognize unsafe conditions or practices;
- Upon identifying an unsafe condition or practice:
  - Immediately correct those which are under your control; or
  - Report them to supervisory personnel;
- Report work-related injuries/illnesses to supervisory personnel;
- Learn about the safety and health requirements that apply to your work;
- Attend safety and health training when scheduled;
- Wear a seat belt and shoulder harness, when available, while traveling on official business; and
- While on travel or assigned to non-VA facilities, learn about local and health requirements and take appropriate precautions to ensure safety and health.

If you have any concerns regarding safety or health issues, you may talk with your supervisor or with your local safety and health officer.

# **XI. Your Retirement**

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## **Retirement**

Retirement coverage is based on your date and type of appointment. Generally, career employees hired after December 31, 1983, are covered by the **Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS)** and Social Security. Most career employees appointed before January 1, 1984, are covered by the **Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS)** along with the Medicare portion of Social Security. Temporary employees are covered by Social Security. In addition to retirement benefits, these systems provide disability and survivors' benefits.

Both retirement systems allow employee participation in a tax-deferred savings plan called the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP). All participants in the TSP receive tax deferral on contributions, choice of investment funds, a loan program and a choice of withdrawal options. CSRS-covered employees may contribute up to 6 percent of basic salary and FERS-covered employees may contribute up to 11 percent of basic salary. FERS-covered employees also receive an agency automatic 1 percent contribution to their account whether or not they contribute their own money and an agency matching contribution on their own contributions up to 5 percent of their basic pay each pay period.

Beginning in January 2002, a FERS employee can elect to contribute up to 12% and a CSRS employee can elect up to 7% of basic pay each pay period, up to the Internal Revenue Service limit which is \$11,000 for 2002. This limit will increase each year by \$1,000 until 2006, when it reaches \$15,000. After 2006, the increase will be indexed to the annual cost-of-living adjustment referred to in the Tax Code.

TSP employee contribution limits for FERS and CSRS employees will continue to increase by 1% each year through 2005. In 2006, these contribution limits will be lifted entirely.

You may contact the Shared Service Center by calling **1-800-414-5272** for further information on the TSP and to sign up for or make changes to your TSP elections.

CSRS-covered employees are also eligible to participate in the **Voluntary Contribution Program** (earnings are tax deferred); however, this program is not available to FERS-covered employees. You should contact your local Human Resources Management representative for more detailed information regarding the program.

You should contact your local Human Resources Management representative for retirement information such as preparation of annuity estimates unless you are currently stationed at an HR Link\$ prototype site. If you are stationed at a prototype site, you may contact the Shared Service Center by calling **1-800-414-5272** to request detailed information about retirement eligibility requirements, to request computation of annuity estimates, and to make an application for retirement.

You may also be able to carry your Federal Employees Group Life Insurance policy and Federal Employees Health Benefits into retirement. You may contact the Shared Service Center by calling **1-800-414-5272** to obtain further information about continuing life and health insurance into your retirement.

## VA Locations

### ALABAMA

Birmingham (MC) 35233  
Fort Mitchell (NC) 36856  
Mobile (NC) 36604  
Montgomery (MC) 36109  
Montgomery (RO) 36104  
Tuscaloosa (MC) 35404  
Tuskegee (MC) 36083  
Seale (NC) 36875

### ALASKA

Anchorage (M&ROC) 99508  
Fort Richardson (NC) 99505  
Sitka (NC) 99835

### ARIZONA

Phoenix (NC) 85024  
Phoenix (MC) 85012  
Phoenix (RO) 85102  
Prescott (MC) 86313  
Prescott (NC) 86301  
Tucson (MC) 85723

### ARKANSAS

Fayetteville (MC) 72701  
Fort Smith (NC) 72901  
Little Rock (NC) 72206  
Little Rock (MC) 72205  
N. Little Rock (RO) 72115

### CALIFORNIA

Fresno (MC) 93703  
Gustine (NC) 95322  
Livermore (MC) 94550  
Loma Linda (MC) 92357  
Long Beach (MC) 90822  
Los Angeles (NC) 90049  
Los Angeles (OC) 90012  
Los Angeles (RO) 90024  
Oakland (RO) 94612  
Oakland (MSN) 94612-5209  
Palo Alto (MC) 94304  
Pleasant Hill (NCSC) 94523  
Riverside (NC) 92518  
San Bruno (NC) 94066  
San Diego (NC) 92106  
San Diego (MC) 92161  
San Diego (RO) 92108  
San Francisco (MC) 94121  
San Francisco (NC) 94129  
Sepulveda (MC) 91343  
W. Los Angeles (MC) 90073

### COLORADO

Denver (NC) 80235  
Denver (MC) 80220  
Denver (RO) 80225  
Denver (MSN) 80225  
Denver (DDC) 80225  
Fort Lyon (MC) 81038  
Fort Lyon (NC) 81038  
Grand Junction (MC) 81501

### CONNECTICUT

Hartford (RO) 06103  
Newington (MC) 06111  
West Haven (MC) 06516

### DELAWARE

Wilmington (M&ROC) 19805

### DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Washington (CO) 20420  
Washington (MC) 20422  
Washington (RO) 20421  
Washington (NC) 20011  
Washington (NC) 2008

### FLORIDA

Bay Pines (MC) 33504  
Bay Pines (NC) 33504-0477  
Bushnell (NC) 33513  
Gainesville (MC) 32602  
Lake City (MC) 32025  
Miami (MC) 33125  
Pensacola (NC) 32508-1099  
St. Augustine (NC) 32084  
St. Petersburg (RO) 33731  
Tampa (MC) 33612  
W. Palm Beach (MC) 33420

### GEORGIA

Atlanta (RO) 30365  
Augusta (MC) 30904  
Decatur (MC) 30033  
Decatur (MSN) 30033-4032  
Dublin (MC) 31021  
Marietta (NC) 30060

### HAWAII

Honolulu (M&ROC) 96850  
Honolulu (NC) 96813-1729

### IDAHO

Boise (MC) 83702  
Boise (RO) 83702

### ILLINOIS

Alton (NC) 62003  
Chicago (Lakeside) (MC) 60611  
Chicago (West Side) (MC) 60680  
Chicago (RO) 60680  
Danville (NC) 61832  
Danville (MC) 61832  
Elwood (NC) 60421  
Hines (MC) 60141  
Hines (NAC) 60141  
Hines (BDC) 60666  
Marion (MC) 62959  
Mound City (NC) 62963  
Moline (NC) 61265  
North Chicago (MC) 60064  
Quincy (NC) 62301  
Springfield (NC) 62707

### INDIANA

Fort Wayne (MC) 46805  
Indianapolis (NC) 46208  
Indianapolis (MC) 46202  
Indianapolis (MSN) 46204  
Indianapolis (RO) 46204  
Marion (MC) 46952  
Marion (NC) 46952  
New Albany (NC) 47150

### IOWA

Des Moines (MC) 50310  
Des Moines (RO) 50309  
Iowa City (MC) 52240  
Keokuk (NC) 52632  
Knoxville (MC) 50138

### KANSAS

**Ft. Leavenworth (NC) 66027**  
Ft. Leavenworth (MC) 66048  
Leavenworth (NC) 66048  
Ft. Scott (NC) 66701  
Topeka (MC) 66622  
Wichita (M&ROC) 67218

### KENTUCKY

Danville (NC) 40442  
Lebanon (NC) 40033  
Lexington (NC) 40508  
Lexington (MC) 40511  
Louisville (MC) 40206  
Louisville (RO) 40202  
Nancy (NC) 42544  
Nicholasville (NC) 40356  
Louisville (NC) 40204  
Louisville (NC) 40207

## VA Locations

### LOUISIANA

Alexandria (MC) 71301  
Baton Rouge (NC) 70806  
New Orleans (NC) 70130  
New Orleans (MC) 70146  
New Orleans (RO) 70113  
Pineville (NC) 71360  
Shreveport (MC) 71101  
Zachary (NC) 70791

### MAINE

Togus (NC) 04330  
Togus (M&ROC) 04330

### MARYLAND

Annapolis (NC) 21401  
Baltimore (MC) 21201  
Baltimore (NC) 21228  
Baltimore (RO) 21201  
Baltimore (PRDC) 21202  
Fort Howard (MC) 21052  
Perry Point (MC) 21902  
Sharpsburg (NC) 21782

### MASSACHUSETTS

Bedford (MC) 01730  
Boston (MC) 02130  
Boston (RO) 02203  
Bourne (NC) 02532  
Brockton/W. Roxbury (MC)  
02401  
Northampton (MC) 01060

### MICHIGAN

Allen Park (MC) 48101  
Ann Arbor (MC) 48105  
Augusta (NC) 49012  
Battle Creek (MC) 49016  
Detroit (RO) 48226  
Iron Mountain (MC) 49801  
Saginaw (MC) 48602

### MINNESOTA

Minneapolis (MC) 55417  
Minneapolis (NC) 55450-1199  
St. Cloud (MC) 56303  
St. Paul (RO&IC) 55111

### MISSISSIPPI

Biloxi (NC) 39535-4968  
Biloxi (MC) 39531  
Corinth (NC) 38834  
Jackson (MC) 39216  
Jackson (RO) 39269  
Natchez (NC) 39120

### MISSOURI

Columbia (MC) 65201  
Jefferson City (NC) 65101  
Kansas City (MC) 64128  
Poplar Bluff (MC) 63901  
St. Louis (MC) 63125  
St. Louis (NC) 63125  
St. Louis (RO) 63103  
St. Louis (RPC) 63115  
St. Louis (VCSCO&FC) 63125  
Springfield (NC) 65804

### MONTANA

Crow Agency (NC) 59022  
Fort Harrison (M&ROC)  
59636  
Miles City (MC) 59301

### NEBRASKA

Grand Island (MC) 68801  
Lincoln (MC) 68510  
Lincoln (RO) 68516  
Maxwell (NC) 69151-1031  
Omaha (MC) 68105

### NEVADA

Las Vegas (OC) 89102  
Reno (MC) 89520  
Reno (RO) 89520

### NEW HAMPSHIRE

Manchester (MC) 03104  
Manchester (RO) 03103

### NEW JERSEY

Beverly (NC) 08010  
East Orange (MC) 07019  
Lyons (MC) 07939  
Newark (RO) 07102  
Salem (NC) 08079

### NEW MEXICO

Albuquerque (MC) 87108  
Albuquerque (RO) 87102  
Ft. Bayard (NC) 88036  
Santa Fe (NC) 87501

### NEW YORK

Albany (MC) 12208  
Batavia (MC) 14020  
Bath (MC) 14810  
Bath (NC) 14810  
Bronx (MC) 10468  
Brooklyn (NC) 11208  
Brooklyn (MC) 11209  
Buffalo (HCS) 14215  
Buffalo (RO) 14202

Calverton (NC) 11933-1031  
Canandaigua (MC) 14424  
Castle Point (MC) 12511  
Elmira (NC) 14901  
Farmingdale (NC) 11735-1211  
Montrose (MC) 10548  
New York (MC) 10010  
New York (RO) 10001  
Northport (MC) 11749  
Schuylerville (NC) 12871-1721  
Syracuse (MC) 13210

### NORTH CAROLINA

Asheville (MC) 28805  
Durham (MC) 27705  
Fayetteville (MC) 28301  
New Bern (NC) 28560  
Raleigh (NC) 27610  
Salisbury (NC) 28144  
Salisbury (MC) 28144  
Wilmington (NC) 28403  
Winston-Salem (RO) 27155

### NORTH DAKOTA

Fargo (M&ROC) 58102

### OHIO

Chillicothe (MC) 45601  
Cincinnati (MC) 45220  
Cleveland (MC) 44106  
Cleveland (RO) 44199  
Columbus (OC) 43221  
Dayton (NC) 45428-1088  
Dayton (MC) 45428  
Rittman (NC) 44270

### OKLAHOMA

Ft. Gibson (NC) 74434  
Muskogee (MC) 74401  
Muskogee (RO) 74401  
Oklahoma City (MC) 73104

### OREGON

Eagle Point (NC) 97524  
Portland (NC) 97266  
Portland (MC) 97207-6937  
Portland (RO) 97204  
Roseburg (MC) 97470  
Roseburg (NC) 97470  
White City (D) 97503

## VA Locations

### PENNSYLVANIA

Altoona (MC) 16603  
Annville (NC) 17003-9618  
Butler (MC) 16001  
Coatesville (MC) 19320  
Erie (MC) 16501  
Lebanon (MC) 17042  
Philadelphia (NC) 19138  
Philadelphia (MC) 19104  
Philadelphia (RO&IC) 19101  
Philadelphia (BDC) 19101  
Philadelphia (MSN) 19101  
Pittsburgh (Highland Dr.) (MC)  
15206  
Pittsburgh (University Dr.)  
(MC) 15240  
Pittsburgh (RO) 15222  
Wilkes-Barre (MC) 18711

### PHILIPPINES

Manila (RO-OC) APO-AP  
96440

### PUERTO RICO

Bayamon (NC) 00960  
San Juan (MC) 00927  
San Juan (RO) 00936

### RHODE ISLAND

Providence (MC) 02908  
Providence (RO) 02903

### SOUTH CAROLINA

Beaufort (NC) 29902  
Charleston (MC) 29403  
Columbia (MC) 29201  
Columbia (RO) 29201  
Florence (NC) 29501

### SOUTH DAKOTA

Fort Meade (HCS) 57741  
Hot Springs (MC) 57747  
Hot Springs (NC) 57747  
Sioux Falls (M&ROC) 57117  
Sturgis (NC) 57785

### TENNESSEE

Chattanooga (NC) 37404  
Knoxville (NC) 37917  
Madison (NC) 37115-4619  
Memphis (NC) 38122  
Memphis (MC) 38104  
Mountain Home (MC) 37684  
Mountain Home (NC) 37684  
Murfreesboro (MC) 37130

Nashville (MC) 37203  
Nashville (RO) 37212

### TEXAS

Amarillo (MC) 79106  
Austin (AC) 78772  
Big Spring (MC) 79720  
Bonham (MC) 75418  
Dallas (NC) 75211  
Dallas (MC) 75216  
El Paso (OC) 79925  
Ft. Bliss (NC) 79906  
Houston (MC) 77030  
Houston (NC) 77038  
Houston (RO) 77054  
Kerrville (NC) 78028  
Kerrville (MC) 78028  
Marlin (MC) 76661  
San Antonio (NC) 78202  
San Antonio (NC) 78209  
San Antonio (MC) 78284  
Temple (MC) 76501  
Waco (MC) 76711  
Waco (RO) 76799

### UTAH

Salt Lake City (MC) 84148  
Salt Lake City (RO) 84147

### VERMONT

White River Junction (M&ROC)  
05001

### VIRGINIA

Alexandria (NC) 22314  
Arlington (NC) 22211  
Culpepper (NC) 22701  
Danville (NC) 24541  
Hampton (NC) 23669  
Hampton (MC) 23667  
Hopewell (NC) 23860  
Leesburg (NC) 22075  
Mechanicsville (NC) 23111  
Petersburg (NC) 23803  
Richmond (MC) 23249  
Richmond (NC) 23231  
Roanoke (RO) 24011  
Salem (MC) 24153  
Sandston (NC) 23150  
Staunton (NC) 24401  
Triangle (NC) 22172  
Winchester (NC) 22601

### WASHINGTON

Kent (NC) 98042-4868  
Seattle (MC) 98108  
Seattle (RO) 98174

Spokane (MC) 99205  
Tacoma (Am. Lake) (MC)  
98493  
Walla Walla (MC) 99362

### WEST VIRGINIA

Beckley (MC) 25801  
Clarksburg (MC) 26301  
Grafton (NC) 26354  
Huntington (MC) 25704  
Huntington (RO) 25701  
Martinsburg (MC) 25401

### WISCONSIN

Madison (MC) 53705  
Milwaukee (NC) 53295-4000  
Milwaukee (MC) 53295  
Milwaukee (RO) 53295  
Tomah (MC) 54660

### WYOMING

Cheyenne (M&ROC) 82001  
Sheridan (MC) 82801

### Legend:

(MC) - Medical Center  
(HCS) - Health Care System  
(RO) - Regional Office  
(M&ROC) - Medical &  
Regional Office Center  
(NCSC) - Northern Calif.  
System of Clinics  
(OC) - Outpatient Clinic  
(D) - Domiciliary  
(RO&IC) - Regional  
Office & Insurance  
Center  
(AC) - Automation Center  
(BDC) - Benefits Delivery  
Center  
(DDC) - Denver  
Distribution Center  
(NAC) - National  
Acquisition Center  
(MSN) - Memorial Service  
Network  
(PRDC) - Prosthetic  
Research and Development  
Center  
(RPC) - Records  
Processing Center  
(VCSCO&FC) - Veterans  
Canteen Service Central  
Office & Finance Center  
(NC) - National Cemetery  
(CO) - Central Office

# FEDERAL CODE OF ETHICS

## Principles of Ethical Conduct for Government Officers and Employees

U.S. OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT ETHICS, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20005

1. Public Service is a public trust, requiring employees to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws, and ethical principles above private gain.
2. Employees shall not hold financial interests that conflict with the conscientious performance of duty.
3. Employees shall not engage in financial transactions using nonpublic Government information or allow the improper use of such information to further any private interest.
4. An employee shall not, except pursuant to such reasonable exceptions as are provided by regulation, solicit or accept any gift or other item of monetary value from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by the employee's agency, or whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the employee's duties.
5. Employees shall put forth honest effort in the performance of their duties.
6. Employees shall make no unauthorized commitments or promises of any kind purporting to bind the Government.
7. Employees shall not use public office for private gain.
8. Employees shall act impartially and not give preferential treatment to any private organization or individual.
9. Employees shall protect and conserve Federal property and shall not use it for other than authorized activities.
10. Employees shall not engage in outside employment or activities, including seeking or negotiating for employment, that conflict with official Government duties and responsibilities.
11. Employees shall disclose waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption to appropriate authorities.
12. Employees shall satisfy in good faith their obligations as citizens, including all just financial obligations, especially those--such as Federal, State, or local taxes--that are imposed by law.
13. Employees shall adhere to all laws and regulations that provide equal opportunity for all Americans regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or handicap.
14. Employees shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that they are violating the law or the ethical standards promulgated pursuant to this order.

