



**Office of Resolution Management Strategic Plan
2006 - 2010
Updated – April 29, 2008**

Introduction

This Strategic Plan provides the foundation for the transformation of the Office of Resolution Management (ORM) from a complaint processing organization to one dedicated to resolving workplace disputes as early as possible. It serves as a roadmap for change. The Plan is designed to achieve four over-arching goals: 1) The prevention of workplace disputes; 2) The early resolution of workplace disputes that do occur; 3) The timely and efficient processing of discrimination complaints; and 4) Obtaining and retaining a high quality workforce.

The strategic plan is a living document. We are now two years into this Plan's implementation and have made significant progress towards achieving our goals and objectives. This updated version modifies the original Plan as strategies have been implemented and goals and objectives attained. Consequently, we have removed those objectives which have been completed and have modified other objectives in order to reflect FY 2008 targets.

You will also note that some performance measures have been modified as well. In some areas of this Plan, targets have been increased to challenge the organization. New measures have also been added to ensure that new organizational procedures and processes are covered. Lastly, we have updated the performance measures that are posted on ORM's website. These measures are monitored and updated on a monthly basis. To view the current status of our key performance measures, please visit: <http://www.va.gov/orm/sport.asp>.

ORM is no longer simply a complaint processing organization; we are emerging as the true "Office of Resolution Management." Our focus is on prevention and the early resolution of any and all disputes, whether or not an EEO complaint has been filed. We are guided in all of our activities by a vision of the Department of Veterans Affairs as the recognized leader in promoting a discrimination-free work environment. Any success we achieve is due in large part to the efforts of the customers we serve. Ultimately, our achievements will be measured by the degree to which disputes within our work environments are defused quickly and productive workplace relationships are preserved. To that end, we will strive to provide VA's supervisors and employees with the information and training they need to recognize and resolve workplace disputes as early as possible, so that people at all levels within the Department can focus on the honorable work before them — serving America's veterans and their families.

Several of the key highlights of the five-year plan are as follows:

- **Prevention** - ORM will work with its partners in the Administrations and Staff Offices to develop and implement an aggressive prevention campaign that will focus on the education of VA managers and employees about the characteristics of a healthy work environment and the provision of the necessary tools to prevent and address workplace disputes.
- **Early Resolution** – ORM will work with the Administrations and Staff Offices to promote the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) prior to and during the EEO process. ORM will seek to enhance the role of the EEO counselor in marketing the benefits of ADR during the EEO process and using resolution – related skills during counseling.
- **Overall Complaint Processing** – ORM will implement a case manager concept that provides a single point of contact for formal complaints and improves the transition and coordination of ORM functions involved in the process (intake and investigations). ORM will engage in extensive internal and external benchmarking to identify and understand best practices. ORM will seek to establish standard operating procedures for its work process that are based on observed best practices. ORM will encourage the planning and implementation of structured pilot projects to allow for creativity and innovation. Pilot projects will focus on improving operational effectiveness and efficiencies. Where successful, the pilot projects will form the basis for new standard operating procedures.
- **Changing the Culture and Work Environment** – ORM will implement strategies that improve its workforce competencies and change its organizational culture to one that promotes a “One ORM” team approach. ORM will recruit, develop, train and retain a highly competent and diverse workforce by promoting a positive work environment that centers on training and development, effective communications at all levels, and rewards and recognition. ORM will also focus on improving its ancillary business processes to enable it to more effectively achieve its core mission.

This Strategic Plan was revised in partnership with ORM managers in Central Office and the field. Milestones and Performance Measures have been updated using actual FY 2007 data, and projections for FY 2008, FY 2009, and the Strategic Target of FY 2010.



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Office of Resolution Management

Updated Strategic Plan for 2006-2010

Mission Statement – to promote a discrimination-free work environment focused on serving veterans by preventing, resolving, and processing workplace disputes in a timely and effective manner.

Vision Statement – VA is recognized as the leader in promoting a discrimination free environment for those who serve our Nation’s veterans.

ORM has developed a five-year strategic plan designed to achieve four overarching goals:

Prevention: Implement a prevention program that ensures employees and managers understand the characteristics of a healthy work environment and have the tools to address workplace disputes.

Early Resolution: Serve as a resource for resolution of workplace disputes.

Process Improvement: Improve the overall management of the EEO complaint process.

High Quality Workforce: Recruit, develop, train, and retain a highly competent and diverse workforce by promoting a positive work environment.

The objectives and strategies in this plan focus on measurable outcomes that incorporate the use of best practices in early resolution and complaint processing. The objectives and strategies also maximize the use of allocated human capital, outsource tasks as appropriate, and integrate information technology into the process as needed.

ORM’s Strategic Plan for 2006-2010 is in direct support of the enabling goal identified in VA’s Strategic Plan – “Deliver world-class service to veterans and their families by applying sound business principles that result in effective management of people, communications, technology and governance.”

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal 1. PREVENTION: Implement a prevention program that ensures employees and managers understand the characteristics of a healthy work environment and have the tools to address workplace disputes.

Objective 1.1 Develop and disseminate education and training tools for managers and employees to address workplace disputes.

Objective 1.2 Develop, update and market the use of data to increase management's understanding of the work environment and to support efforts to improve it.

Objective 1.3 Improve the value and use of the Organization Climate Assessment Program (OCAP).

Goal 2. EARLY RESOLUTION: Serve as a resource for resolution of workplace disputes.

Objective 2.1 Increase ADR activity VA wide through education, communication, and marketing efforts.

Objective 2.2 Provide tools and resources to aid in early resolution of workplace disputes.

Objective 2.3 Provide high quality, timely, and responsive EEO counseling and assistance to employees and managers.

Objective 2.4 Implement assessment methodology to measure the effect of ADR initiatives and satisfaction with the program.

Goal 3. PROCESS IMPROVEMENT: Improve the overall management of the EEO complaint process.

- Objective 3.1** Improve the efficiency of the EEO complaint process.
- Objective 3.2** Maintain an accurate electronic data management system.
- Objective 3.3** Develop and maintain a comprehensive Quality Assurance Program for the EEO complaint process.
- Objective 3.4** Keep stakeholders advised of program issues and developments.
- Objective 3.5** Improve customer service.

Goal 4. HIGH QUALITY ORM WORKFORCE: Recruit, develop, train and retain a highly competent and diverse workforce by promoting a positive work environment.

- Objective 4. 1** Develop effective employee training and education strategies.
- Objective 4. 2** Develop recruitment and retention strategies.
- Objective 4. 3** Ensure efficient and responsive ancillary business processes.

Goal 1. PREVENTION: Implement a prevention program that ensures employees and managers understand the characteristics of a healthy work environment and have the tools to address workplace disputes.

Creating a discrimination-free workplace within VA requires a comprehensive strategy designed to eliminate behaviors and situations that may be perceived as discriminatory or are discriminatory in nature. This goal requires ORM to solicit and gain participation from all elements of VA in order to identify the reasons for workplace disputes and develop plans to improve the work environment in VA.

ORM contributes to the education and training of VA management and staff in the areas of prevention and early resolution of workplace disputes. It also provides data and assessments on the work environment for the agency.

Strategic Outcomes:

- Increased managers' understanding of issues that lead to workplace disputes within their organization
- Reduction in workplace disputes that result in informal and formal complaints of discrimination
- Improved workplace environments that promote open communication
- Improved employee satisfaction
- Increased number of managers and employees trained in the prevention of workplace disputes

Objective 1.1 Develop and disseminate education and training tools for managers and employees to address workplace disputes.

Strategy	Milestones		
	2008	2009	2010
1.1.a In partnership with VALU, incorporate the Root Cause DVD in the new managers and new employee orientation programs.		X	
1.1. b Provide awareness of prevention tools to VALU and VA Administrations for incorporation into the supervisors and managers orientation programs		X	
1.1.c. Promote the Crucial Conversations mastery course to VA employees.		X	

Objective 1.2 Develop, update, and market the use of data to increase management's understanding of the work environment and to support efforts to improve it.

Strategy	Milestones		
	2008	2009	2010
1.2.a Develop a marketing strategy to communicate the availability of ORM data resources such as Root Cause and Trend data.		X	

Objective 1.3 Improve the value and use of the Organization Climate Assessment Program (OCAP).

Strategy	Milestones		
	2008	2009	2010
1.3.a Develop a survey tool to solicit customer feedback on OCAP.		X	
1.3.b Work with VHA's NCOD to assess the OCAP methodology and survey questions to enhance the effectiveness of the OCAP process.		X	
1.3.c Offer necessary training on the use of the OCAP report.		X	
1.3.d Compare OCAP Reports when problems are identified and share best practices that address problem areas.		X	

Goal 1: Performance Measures

Outcome Measures	Current Baseline	FY 2007 Actuals	FY 2008 Target	2010 Strategic Target
Increase the percentage of VA employees who receive prevention tools to address workplace disputes (ADR mediation).	91%	91%	94%	100%
Reduce per capita rate of informal complaints received.	15.9%	15.1%	15.0%	14.7%
Reduce per capita rate of formal complaints received.	8.5%	7.5%	7.5%	7.3%
Increase the number of managers responding positively to the value of the OCAP reviews.	No Current Baseline	Not Measured	Establish Baseline	TBD

Goal 2. EARLY RESOLUTION: Serve as a resource for resolution of workplace disputes.

In addition to promoting the use of ADR during the informal and formal stages of the EEO complaint process, ORM strongly encourages the use of ADR and other conflict management and dispute resolution techniques prior to or in lieu of the EEO process. The objectives and strategies in this goal are designed to make significant changes to how workplace disputes are handled at the onset. To accomplish this paradigm shift, VA managers and employees must be empowered to have control over the outcome of disputes without relying solely on administrative processes to address disputes. Considerable emphasis will be placed on increasing the use of mediation and introducing other ADR techniques.

This goal also serves to enhance the effectiveness of EEO counselors and EEO program managers, helping them to reduce and resolve complaints and better manage disputes. Processes will be put in place to encourage collaborative efforts between ORM and VA field facilities to improve coordination and facilitate resolution as early as possible.

Strategic Outcomes:

- Reduce informal and formal EEO complaint activity in VA
- Increase ADR offer and participation rates
- Increase dispute resolution
- Improve work environment
- Improve supervisor/employee communication

Objective 2.1 Increase ADR activity VA-wide through education, communication, and marketing efforts.

Strategy	Milestones		
	2008	2009	2010
2.1.a Support implementation and assess the impact of the Administrations' facility-based EEO pilot program on informal contacts.		X	
2.1.b Continue to develop relationships with the Administrations, Staff Offices, and other stakeholders to coordinate Workplace ADR site visits as needed.		X	
2.1.c Increase ADR offers and participation during the informal and formal EEO complaint process.	X		

Objective 2.2 Provide tools and resources to aid in early resolution of workplace disputes.

Strategy	Milestones		
	2008	2009	2010
2.2.a Provide quarterly ADR activity reports to the Administrations, Staff Offices and other stakeholders no later than 30 days after the end of each quarter.	X		
2.2.b Collaborate with the Administrations to develop a database for monitoring all ADR activities.		X	
2.2.c Train all ORM employees in basic ADR skills.		X	
2.2.d Develop a cadre of ADR trainers by geographic area at VA field facilities.		X	
2.2.e Create partnerships and alliances with the Administrations, Staff Offices, and the Unions to encourage the effective use of ADR.		X	
2.2.f Establish an all employee ADR training module.		X	
2.2.g Develop and disseminate brochures, pamphlets, pay stub messages and other promotional material on ADR.	X		
2.2.h Change and modify ORM's Web site to include information on ADR/mediation and other methods of ADR.		X	
2.2.i Train ORM investigators on ADR so that they can hold fact-finding conferences in an attempt to reach a resolution prior to the completion of the investigation and/or the employee making an election for a hearing or immediate Final Agency Decision.		X	
2.2.j Develop strategies for increasing the ADR offer and participation rate.	X		
2.2.k Collaborate with Diversity Management to include an ADR awards component in the Secretary's Annual EEO Awards Program.		X	

Objective 2.3 Provide high quality, timely, and responsive EEO counseling and assistance to employees and managers.

Strategy	Milestones		
	2008	2009	2010
2.3.a Identify external best practices and other ADR techniques to improve resolution during the informal complaint process.	X		
2.3.b Design and distribute educational awareness tools such as videos/DVDs, etc.		X	

Objective 2.4 Implement assessment methodology to measure the effect of ADR initiatives and satisfaction with the program.

Strategy	Milestones		
	2008	2009	2010
2.4.a Create an evaluation tool to measure employees' and supervisors' satisfaction when the ADR process is used.	X		
2.4.b Develop an assessment tool to evaluate neutrals' performance in providing ADR services.	X		
2.4.c Obtain feedback from the Administrations for continued program improvement.		X	

Goal 2: Performance Measures

Outcome Measures	Current Baseline	FY 2007 Actuals	FY 2008 Target	FT 2010 Strategic Target
Increase the percentage of EEO complaints resolved at the informal stage of the EEO complaint process through ADR.	50%	50%	55%	60%
Increase the ADR participation rate at the informal stage of the EEO Process.	17%	20%	30%	45%
Decrease average processing time for ADR in the EEO Process.	No Current Baseline	Not Measured	Obtain Baseline	TBD
Increase the rate of customer (employees and supervisors) satisfaction with ADR services.	No Current Baseline	Not Measured	Obtain Baseline	TBD
Increase the use of ADR outside of the EEO process.	No Current Baseline	Not Measured	Obtain Baseline	TBD

Goal 3. PROCESS IMPROVEMENT: Improve the overall management of the EEO complaint process.

This goal is intended to incorporate process improvements, standard operating procedures, performance monitors and measures related to the efficient management of the EEO complaint process, such as: 1) How we process complaints during the formal and informal process; 2) How well the complaints are processed; 3) Innovative ways to process complaints in the future; and 4) To improve the transition and coordination of multiple ORM functions such as counseling, intake and investigation.

Strategic Outcomes:

- Timely complaint processing
- Quality and consistency throughout the complaint process
- Paper reduction
- Stakeholder buy-in
- Improved customer service
- Streamlined processes
- Accurate reporting of activities to stakeholders

Objective 3.1 Improve the efficiency of the EEO complaint process.

Strategy	Milestones		
	2008	2009	2010
3.1.a Create a generalist position (EEO) that can complete all stages of the EEO process.		X	
3.1.b Fully implement the EEO Intern Program.		X	

Objective 3.2 Maintain an accurate electronic data management system.

Strategy	Milestones		
	2008	2009	2010
3.2.a Conduct random reviews of data in CATS.		X	
3.2.b Implement Phase II of CATS.		X	

Objective 3.3 Develop and maintain a comprehensive Quality Assurance Program for the EEO process.

Strategy	Milestones		
	2008	2009	2010
3.3.a Establish and implement SOP to review the quality of cases during and after the complaint process.		X	
3.3.b Establish and implement SOP to review the consistency of cases from field office to field office.		X	

Objective 3.4 Keep stakeholders advised of program issues and developments.

Strategy	Milestones		
	2008	2009	2010
3.4.a Re-instate periodic Stakeholder Meetings	X		

Objective 3.5 Improve customer service.

Strategy	Milestones		
	2008	2009	2010
3.5.a Continue assessing customer satisfaction through customer surveys.	X		
3.5.b Identify and share best practices throughout ORM in order to enhance ORM service delivery models and improve customer satisfaction.		X	

Goal 3: Performance Measures

Outcome Measures	Current Baseline	FY 2007 Actual	FY 2008 Target	FY 2010 Strategic Target
Average 180 days or less to complete investigations for unamended complaints.	215	215	180	<180
Average 360 days or less to complete investigations for amended complaints.	280	280	250	245
Average 30 days or less to complete counseling (without ADR).	27.7	27 days	28 days	26 days
Increase the percentage of non-amended cases investigated in under 180 days.	49%	49%	66%	75%
Improve the percentage of cases resolved during counseling.	46%	48%	50%	70%
Improve customer satisfaction rate.	80 % satisfied	80% satisfied	81% satisfied	83% satisfied

Goal 4. HIGH QUALITY WORKFORCE: Recruit, develop, train, and retain a highly competent and diverse workforce by promoting a positive work environment.

Our employees are the most important asset in ORM. Considerable effort is devoted to selecting the best person for a job and providing the necessary training to ensure success and job satisfaction. This goal ensures that ORM is effectively managing and developing its employees.

Strategic Outcomes:

- Competent workforce
- Improved recruitment process
- Improved employee job satisfaction
- Improved retention rate
- Improved employee morale
- Effective delivery of ancillary business processes

Objective 4.1 Develop effective employee training and education strategies.

<i>Strategy</i>	Milestones		
	2008	2009	2010
4.1.a Provide new employee orientation training within 30 days of entry on duty to new ORM staff.		X	
4.1.b Develop core competencies for all positions in ORM.		X	
4.1.c Develop and make available training resources to ORM employees, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader-focused writing • Time management • Stress management • HPDM training • On-line research 		X	
4.1.d Evaluate core competencies, knowledge and skill sets of field operations employees in core positions and develop training to improve them, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling skills / Interviewing techniques • Alternative Dispute Resolution techniques • Personnel law, policy and practice • Information analysis 		X	
4.1.e Develop and implement mandatory recurring training requirements for core positions.		X	
4.1.f Develop mentoring program for ORM employees.		X	

Objective 4.2 Develop recruitment and retention strategies.

Strategy	Milestones		
	2008	2009	2010
4.2.a Require certification of position descriptions every 3 years.		X	
4.2.b Reevaluate performance standards to determine if more equitable and accurate methods are available to measure and evaluate performance of core positions in ORM.		X	
4.2.c Require selecting officials to certify crediting plans as accurate for each recruitment request.		X	
4.2.d Implement Standard Operating Procedure for hiring panels.	X		
4.2.e Develop Outreach Program to communicate employment opportunities in ORM to high school, colleges, and universities.		X	
4.2.f Develop and implement recruitment and retention plan which would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexi-place (CWS/AWS/Flexi-time) • Retention Bonuses • Educational Loan Repayment • Succession Planning 		X	
4.2.g Establish employee workgroup to recommend improvements in the work environment.		X	
4.2.h Implement plan to foster communications within ORM among employees and to ORM stakeholders.	X		
4.2.i Conduct an organization climate assessment of ORM.		X	

Objective 4.3 Ensure efficient and responsive ancillary business processes.

Strategy	Milestones		
	2008	2009	2010
4.3.a Create a Web-based human resources library.		X	

Goal 4: Performance Measures

Outcome Measures	FY 2007 Actual	FY 2008 Target	FY 2010 Strategic Target
Improve employee satisfaction rate.	62% Satisfied	64% Satisfied	70% Satisfied
Reduce the employee turnover rate.	25%	15%	10%

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