

**DISABLED VETERANS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM (DVAAP)
FY 2006 Accomplishment Report**

**Section A – Methods Used to Recruit and Employ Disabled Veterans,
Especially Those Who Are 30 Percent or More Disabled**

The VA actively uses the Veterans Employment Opportunity Act and the Veterans Recruitment Appointment authority, under which we hired 2,245 disabled veterans into permanent and temporary positions in FY 2006.

VA continues to implement the "Fulfilling the Commitment – Coming Home to Work" initiative. This initiative focuses on ensuring that transitioning service members, particularly service-connected disabled veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), have access to a full-range of resources to obtain and retain suitable employment. This program acts as an early intervention outreach to address the specific period of transition for service members in assisting them with their resumes, work experience, tutoring, tuition reimbursement, career development, and other vital components to prepare them to become marketable and competitive for job opportunities. This program focuses on linking seriously injured and wounded OEF/OIF service members to existing resources through local and regional job markets, regardless of where they separate from, where they return to or the career/education they choose to pursue. Outreach initiatives include targeted efforts to locate job opportunities in both the visible and hidden markets through development of relationships with public/Federal agencies, national trade associations, state governors, and an integrated network of interested partners. VA continues to actively engage veterans service organizations (VSOs) in the Washington Metropolitan area; state and district employment services, the regional office One Stop Career Center and other veterans employment representatives from national employment services for referrals of Disabled Veterans (DVs) and Vietnam Era Veterans (VEVs).

VA employs more veterans than any other Federal agency with the exception of the Department of Defense. The VA administrations (listed below) provide job announcements to state and local government agencies and VSOs. Each announcement contains a reasonable accommodation statement. Regular contact is maintained with VSOs including American Legion, AMVETS, Disabled American Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and Veterans of Foreign Wars. Representatives visit military bases, medical centers, transition centers, and attend job fairs to provide information to military personnel and veterans.

The VA Central Office Human Resources Service (COHRS) staff will be proactive in assessing organizational staffing needs and inform management of recruitment options by utilizing veteran job fairs and military bases. Through this medium staff can continue to provide sound

information to veterans about employment opportunities, and encourage them to seek federal careers.

Veteran Employment Coordinators (VECs) were established and located within HR field offices throughout VA. Initiated by the Office of Marketing and Veterans Employment Outreach Service, VECs serve as leads for veteran employment options and work solely towards attracting and recruiting new veterans. They also work with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in acquiring employment for DV and VEV applicants.

Veterans Health Administration (VHA): Recruiting resources such as Delegated Examining Units (DEU) and Compensated Work Therapy Coordinators at VA medical centers are used to recruit disabled veterans for available positions. DEU allows managers to recruit from all sources, which in turn create a larger applicant pool for the best qualified candidate.

In Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 9, the Tennessee Valley Healthcare System Human Resources staff attended recruitment fairs at Fort Campbell military installation and all staffing specialists were provided COIN-VAD 1 (Hospital Specialty Discharge Listings) on a monthly basis as a recruitment tool.

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA): All appointment-eligible veterans are interviewed by a personnel specialist when they inquire about possible employment. Eligibility for the various special appointment authorities is discussed.

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Twelve national and state veterans organizations maintain offices in the Philadelphia VA Regional Office and Insurance Center (VAROIC). Officials from these veterans organizations have regularly scheduled meetings with VAROIC officials.

The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Divisions hold semi-annual workshops in local jurisdictions. Special emphasis is placed on veterans with disabilities.

The Employment Security Commission in Oklahoma and the local VR&E Division gives special consideration to 30 percent or more service-connected disabled veterans. During FY 2006, the Muskogee Regional Office hired 43 veterans, representing 51 percent of the total number of newly hired employees. Of the 43 veterans hired, 30 were disabled and 19 were rated 30 percent or more. Six of

these veterans were Chapter 31 recipients and were direct referrals from the local VR&E office.

Vacancies at various regional offices are included as part of Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) briefings.

The COHRS Veteran Employment Coordinator will work in alliance with Veteran Rehabilitation Coordinators located within VBA to increase employment opportunities for disabled veterans and serve as a liaison fielding questions regarding employment options.

National Cemetery Administration (NCA): A memorandum of understanding between NCA and the VBA VR&E Service, established in FY 2003, continues to provide greater job recruitment opportunities to veterans who return to the workforce following medical rehabilitation. Additional employees are recruited from the Compensated Work Therapy Program coordinators.

Veterans Readjustment Appointment (VRA), a special hiring authority, allows NCA to hire eligible veterans using direct appointments if they meet the basic veterans' readjustment eligibility requirements provided by law.

NCA ensures the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) of 1998 is followed, allowing eligible veterans to apply for positions announced under merit promotion procedures when the agency is recruiting from outside its own workforce.

The servicing station Human Resources (HR) Management Office publishes vacancy announcements for field positions, distributes them to the cemetery, posts them on bulletin boards at the medical center and supplies them to state/local government agencies. Maximum consideration is given to VRA, VEOA, and special authority for non-competitive employment of 30 percent disabled veterans.

NCA's HR department uses the hiring authority of Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations, 315.604, which allows direct appointments without examination. This type of opportunity may lead to career appointments for veterans who have a service connected disability of 30 percent or more.

NCA continues to show their commitment and support of the "Fulfilling the Commitment – Coming Home to Work" initiative.

VA Central Office (VACO): The Office of Marketing and Veterans Employment Outreach Services established a veteran/disabled veteran network in the National Capital Region to assist VACO hiring managers in filling vacancies using noncompetitive hiring authorities for veterans. This effort has had tremendous success by streamlining the hiring process for hiring officials and

allowing qualified disabled veterans to access VA career opportunities via noncompetitive hiring appointments.

COHRS staff included statements in each VACO vacancy announcement addressing alternate staffing means for DVs and VEVs.

Volunteer DVs and disabled employees of VACO visited disabled soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, who recently returned home from Afghanistan and Iraq, to share information about training and career opportunities in VA.

The established veteran/disabled veteran network in the National Capital Region, established by the Office of Marketing and Veterans Employment Outreach Services, assists VACO hiring managers utilizing competitive hiring authorities to fill vacancies, streamlining the hiring process for qualified DVs.

VACO emphasizes interviewing and providing pertinent employment information to all DV and VEV walk-in applicants and attends career fairs to provide counseling and employment information to military personnel and veterans in attendance.

Section B – Methods Used to Provide or Improve Internal Advancement Opportunities for Disabled Veterans, Including Developmental Opportunities

Individual development plans are used throughout VA to identify training needs and to determine resources to meet those needs. VA is the Government's largest user of the Department of Defense Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP) to provide technology accommodations. Supervisors and directors are strongly encouraged to attend CAP training sessions as they become available. VA provides extensive online training through VA's Learning University, VA's broadcast system, the Memorial Service Network (MSN) resource library, and the VA Knowledge Network. These sources provide a myriad of courses that offer continuing education units and self-improvement classes. All employees, including veterans, are encouraged to participate in available on-line training. Disabled veterans are included on local committees and task forces to provide input and support to these career-enhancing programs.

VHA: EEO managers discuss the results of the DVAAP report with managers and supervisors at medical center Directors' staff meetings and individual service care lines throughout the year to encourage and promote strong internal advancement opportunities. Managers are also informed when disabled veterans are listed on the selection certificates and reminded of their responsibility to support the affirmative action plan for disabled veterans.

Additional methods providing internal advancement opportunities include:

- Career ladder promotions, allowing recruitment at an entry level and requiring less specialized knowledge which may be developed on the job.
- Veterans Readjustment Act Authority, which supports training agreement programs to allow for advancement to higher levels upon completion of training provided.
- Tuition support and tuition reimbursement.
- Upward Mobility and Worker Trainee positions for internal advancement opportunities.

Many EEO Special Emphasis Program Managers networked with local community organizations and encouraged disabled veterans to apply for posted vacancies. In an effort to enhance opportunities for disabled veterans, educational and career counseling opportunities were offered at many medical centers and disabled veterans were included on local committees and task forces to solicit their cooperation and support of this Program.

VBA: Individual disabled veterans who are leaving VA employment are interviewed to ensure that means of retaining them are not overlooked. Upward mobility and career ladder programs are emphasized in order to retain qualified disabled veterans.

NCA: The MSN resource library provides additional continuing education and self-improvement classes. Individual Development Plans are used for NCA employees to identify training requirements needed to prepare employees for career advancement.

VACO: Supervisory training sessions and meetings with HR liaisons are used to educate managers about the special laws and authorities enacted by Congress that provide for veterans preference in Federal employment.

Section C – A Description of How the Activities of Major Operating Components and Field Installations Were Monitored, Reviewed, and Evaluated

VA is a Government leader in online workforce data reports, available to all managers, Human Resource specialists, and EEO managers throughout the Department. Our system has automated reports for tracking the employment of veterans and disabled veterans, and during FY 2006, VA continues to implement this system throughout the field facilities. During FY 2007, VA will be able to track not only the employment of disabled veterans, but the accomplishment of the plans to enhance that employment. VA has produced an hour-long training video on how to use these online systems.

A statistical summary of workforce issues is presented and discussed with the Deputy Secretary and senior management at VA's Monthly Performance Review,

which includes tracking the employment of disabled veterans and other persons with targeted disabilities.

VHA: All facilities have internal monitoring systems that provide ongoing review and evaluation of the accomplishments of the DVAAP. The Program is also discussed with medical center Directors, executive staff, service chiefs, and selecting officials. Gains and losses are monitored on a regular basis to evaluate hiring trends. Monitoring also includes the identification of problem areas, goals, and objectives to eliminate or reduce problems. HR specialists, EEO managers and EEO committee members work collaboratively to help ensure this program functions in an effective manner. Facilities also used statistical data from the COIN-PAI 204 (Disabled Veteran and Vietnam Era Veteran Employment Report) and the VHA Support Service Center (VSSC) Web site to monitor, review and evaluate the effectiveness of this Program.

VBA: All supervisors and selecting officials continue to be made aware of the President's and Secretary's special interest in disabled veterans, and their responsibility to give serious consideration to all qualified disabled veterans referred for vacancies. Regional office Directors periodically review hiring practices with the Assistant Directors and Human Resources staff.

Analysis of the regional office local veteran workforce in support of DVAAP is conducted routinely to determine the status of DVs. Statistics on the COIN-PAI 204 are reviewed and evaluated on a regular basis.

NCA: NCA's Workforce Planning Council meets quarterly to monitor and evaluate the progress of DVAAP, and provide recommendations for improvement. Also, NCA has created a Diversity Advisory Board, comprised of charter members throughout the administration, who will participate in monitoring and reviewing the DVAAP.

VACO: COHRS receives the COIN-PAI 204 on a quarterly basis. Information from this report is used to monitor the employment of DVs and VEVs in each administration and staff office.

COHRS uses the VSSC Web site to access veteran hiring trend information, and informs VACO organizations of their progress in veteran employment hiring trends.

Section D – An Explanation of the Agency's Progress in Implementing Its Affirmative Action Plan During the Fiscal Year

Based on the COIN-PAI 204, dated June 30, 2006, 61 percent of disabled veterans are 30 percent or more disabled; this is a 3.5 percent increase over FY 2005.

During FY 2006, the proportion of disabled veterans in permanent VA positions increased very slightly from 7.42 percent in FY 2005 to 7.60 percent in FY 2006, continuing a long-term trend, up from 6.49 percent in FY 1996. This growth is all the more noteworthy because the proportion of *total* veterans declined during these same 10 years from 28.60 percent to 26.39 percent, and the proportion of employees with *targeted disabilities* declined from 1.58 percent in FY 2005 to 1.55 percent in FY 2006.

Several VA occupations extensively employ disabled veterans, including Chaplain (17.19 percent), Police (18.84 percent), Veterans Claims Examiner (24.23 percent), Cemetery Administration (25.27 percent), Facility Management (9.09 percent), Vocational Rehabilitation (21.10 percent), General Inspections (36.76 percent), Maintenance Mechanic (17.98 percent), and Motor Vehicle Operator (20.15 percent). Disabled veterans are 10.07 percent of VA Senior Executive Service and 11.11 percent of the Executive pay plan.

These figures illustrate VA's commitment to employing disabled veterans and that VA continues to place emphasis on the ability and not the disability. During FY 2006, new automated EEO Plans will be closely tracked, which should provide a more precise indication of how this is being accomplished.

VHA: VHA has an overall plan to increase the number of employees with targeted disabilities. Each VISN Director is asked to increase the employment of individuals with targeted disabilities to 1.5 percent in FY 2007, and incrementally progressing to 2.2 percent by FY 2011. It is anticipated that this effort will also increase the number of disabled veterans in the Administration's workforce. A VHA Progress Report will be submitted upon receipt of FY 2006 COIN-PAI 204 data.

The total number of VHA workforce for FY 2006 is 215,608; disabled veterans represent 14,219, or 6.60 percent.

VBA: The total number of VBA workforce for FY 2006 is 13,174; disabled veterans represent 2,947, or 22.37 percent.

NCA: In FY 2006, NCA's total workforce comprised of 1,601 employees; of that, disabled veterans represented 17.03 percent (273), and of the 273 disabled veterans, 55 percent (150) were 30 percent or more disabled. NCA is committed to increasing the representation of disabled veterans in its workforce and continues to place emphasis on their ability and not their disability.

VACO: During FY 2006, VACO's overall population increased by 98 employees. New hires totaled 474 while 766 promotions were effected. Employment of preference eligible veterans at VACO decreased by 0.13 percent, representing 23.61 percent of the total VACO workforce.