



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON

February 8, 2007

TO ALL EMPLOYEES

SUBJECT: Alternative Dispute Resolution for Workplace Disputes

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to providing a workplace environment that enables VA employees to deliver quality care and services to our Nation's veterans and their beneficiaries. To do this, employees must have access to effective and efficient mechanisms for managing conflict and resolving workplace disputes. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) is a valuable resource in managing conflict and resolving disputes. Historically, responsibility for the Department's ADR Program for Workplace Disputes was shared by the Dispute Resolution Specialist in the Board of Contract Appeals (BCA), the Office of Resolution Management (ORM), the Administrations, and staff offices. With the recent consolidation of BCA into a Civilian Board of Contract Appeals within the General Services Administration, I am pleased to announce that the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration (HR&A) will assume the role of the Agency's Dispute Resolution Specialist. The Deputy Assistant Secretary for ORM will assume overall responsibility for management of VA's Workplace ADR Program, as the Deputy Dispute Resolution Specialist for Workplace ADR.

ADR processes, such as mediation, further VA's core values, including open communication and respect in the workplace. I believe it is important to recognize exceptional initiative and innovation in ADR that contributes to the work and mission of the Department. Therefore, I have also asked the Assistant Secretary for HR&A to develop an awards and recognition program to recognize, on an annual basis, achievements in promoting and advancing workplace conflict management and ADR within VA's Workplace ADR Program.

I anticipate that this approach will continue to promote the use of ADR Department-wide and coordinate evaluation of ADR program effectiveness and improvements.

Every employee has the power to prevent workplace conflict and achieve early resolution of workplace disputes. I expect all VA employees to actively use ADR techniques to resolve workplace disputes at the lowest organizational level. I also expect VA managers to pro-actively encourage and support ADR use to address workplace conflict.

Thank you for your continued support of this program.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. James Nicholson".

R. James Nicholson