



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON

March 17, 2008

TO ALL EMPLOYEES

SUBJECT: Prevention of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is an odious form of illegal discrimination, prohibited by Title VII, Section 703 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which generates a harmful and threatening atmosphere and undermines the integrity of the employment relationship. Sexual harassment also weakens morale and interferes with the productivity of its victims and their coworkers. All employees should refrain from such unacceptable conduct in the workplace.

Each employee has the responsibility for preventing or eliminating sexual harassment by (1) attending required training to become informed about the issue; (2) examining his or her behavior on the job; (3) identifying and taking individual action to stop inappropriate behavior by communicating directly and immediately with the person(s) whose behavior is offensive; and (4) if sexually harassed, bringing the matter to the attention of his or her supervisor, higher level manager, and/or the Office of Resolution Management (ORM). VA's policy on sexual harassment applies to all employees and covers harassment of a sexual nature between supervisors and subordinates, between employees, by employees outside the workplace while conducting Government business, and by non-VA employees while conducting business in VA's workplace. There are other incidents that would be considered sexual harassment. All allegations of sexual harassment should be reported within 45 calendar days of the alleged incident to ORM at toll free 1-888-737-3361, or by TTY/TDD at 1-888-626-9008.

I am holding all VA executives, managers, and supervisors accountable for taking the necessary steps to prevent and eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace. Allegations of sexual harassment will be dealt with swiftly and fairly. Substantiated complaints of sexual harassment will result in appropriate disciplinary or adverse action, up to and including removal. Also, appropriate disciplinary and/or adverse action will be taken against anyone who retaliates against an employee for reporting harassment or cooperating with the investigation of allegations of sexual harassment.

Supervisors should ensure that all employees receive training on the prevention of sexual harassment before December 31, 2008. New employees must receive face-to-face training. VA employees who have previously received this training may take their refresher course on-line. The Office of Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity (DM&EEO) will provide guidance for reporting compliance by May 2008.

I expect your full support and cooperation in preventing and eliminating sexual harassment in VA. To assist you, guidelines prepared by DM&EEO are attached.

James B. Peake, M.D.

Attachment