

## **DISABLED VETERANS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM (DVAAP) FY 2009 Accomplishment Report**

### **Section 1 – Methods Used to Recruit and Employ Disabled Veterans, Especially Those Who Are 30 Percent or More Disabled**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) actively uses the Veterans Employment Opportunity Act and the Veterans Recruitment Appointment authority, under which we hired 3,617 Disabled Veterans into permanent and temporary positions in FY 2009.

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/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/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 also has a strong commitment with regard to employing graduates of the Department’s Chapter 31 program, Veterans who have received vocational rehabilitation and educational training.

In FY 2009, the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment service (VR&E) helped place 678 Veterans with disabilities into suitable employment with VA. Of the 678 Veterans, 388 work for the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), 286 work for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and four Veterans work for the National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

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.

**Veterans Health Administration (VHA):** Field facilities also used other recruitment methods for Disabled Veterans to include resources such as Delegated Examining Units (DEUs) and Compensatory Coordinators, used to recruit Disabled Veterans for available positions. DEUs allow managers to recruit from all sources, which in turn creates a larger applicant pool in order to select the best-qualified candidate. Compensable Veterans with a 30 percent or more service-connected disability are given hiring preference with the use of DEU referrals. VHA worked on a continual basis with State Directors of Veterans Employment and Training Service, Department of Labor's Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP), State Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Projects with Industry, and the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). VA's Job Ready Disabled Veterans Connection (JRDBC) electronic referral process, which is accessible through OPM's Automatic Applicant Referral System, was used as a nationwide resource for job-ready Disabled Veterans. Veterans Vocational Specialists assisted Disabled Veterans with the development of resumes, applications for employment, writing more effective KSAs, preparing for performance-based interviews, and selective placement. Selective Placement Coordinators were identified by Human Resources to address employment and career advancement barriers to improve the recruitment, advancement, and retention of Disabled Veterans. The establishment of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Coordinators also worked to provide employment assistance to returning Veterans. VHA Field Facilities attended Military Job Fairs to share employment opportunities and application procedures to outgoing military personnel. Employment information was shared and communicated with local area colleges and universities for Veterans. Many EEO Special Emphasis Program Managers networked with local community organizations and encouraged Disabled Veterans to apply for posted vacancies.

**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. Vacancy announcements are posted to the OPM Web site, which contains detailed information on hiring authorities for Veterans, including Disabled Veterans. Recruitment methods at the various Regional Offices (ROs) include requesting a list of certified eligibles from DEUs. These lists include the top three qualified Veteran applicants. Emphasis is placed on outreach and recruitment of Disabled Veterans when vacancies occur and qualified candidates are available.

The St. Petersburg RO, as part of its efforts to recruit Disabled Veterans, established partnerships with several military organizations and participated in job fairs that frequently took place at MacDill Air Force Base. The St. Petersburg RO also offers employment services to Disabled Veterans through a Disabled Veterans outreach program representative for the state employment office. The

St. Petersburg RO increased the number of Disabled Veterans in its workforce from 211 in FY 2008 to 236 in FY 2009.

**National Cemetery Administration (NCA):** NCA's EEO office is working collaboratively with NCA's field HRC office to utilize the Minority Veterans Program Coordinators (MVPC) located at each cemetery nationwide to incorporate targeted recruitment during their outreach activities. This will further provide NCA with an additional tool to conduct targeted recruitment while reaching a large number of Veterans.

NCA has identified Veterans Employment Coordinators for central office and the field. They are responsible for providing assistance with employment information, as well as contacting local military facilities to identify Veterans separating from service.

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 continues to use 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.

**VA Central Office (VACO):** The Veterans Employment Coordination Service (VECS) currently has nine regional Veterans Employment Coordinators (VECs) in Seattle; San Diego; Denver; San Antonio; Augusta, GA; Louisville, KY; Fayetteville, NC; New York City; and Washington, DC.

- VECS worked closely with over 160 previously established collateral duty VECs at local Human Resources offices nationwide to identify potential employment opportunities.
- VECS provided Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Veterans with various services that include an introduction to VA Careers, Skills, Qualifications and Career Match; Training and Development Counseling; Resume Review and Assistance;

Writing KSAs; Federal Applications; USA Staffing; and Placement Assistance.

- Local Veteran Employment Coordinators (LVECs) participated in 93 activities, including job fairs, outreach events, disability awareness events, and Welcome Home events for Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. LVECs collected 942 resumes and interviewed 304 potential applicants for VA careers.
- In FY 09, VECS was instrumental in hiring 76 (OIF/OEF) severely injured Veterans, 35 (OIF/OEF) 30 percent service connected Disabled Veterans, and four (OIF/OEF) less-than-30 percent service connected Disabled Veterans.
- The Office of Inspector General (OIG) participated in recruitment and job fair events nationwide to educate Veterans and college students on the employment opportunities in the Office of Inspector General.
- Volunteer Disabled Veterans and disabled employees from VACO make periodic visits to Walter Reed Army Hospital to visit the disabled soldiers who recently returned home from fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, sharing their past work experience, and providing information on training and career opportunities that are available to them in the Department.

## **Section 2 – Methods Used to Provide or Improve Internal Advancement Opportunities for Disabled Veterans.**

Individual development plans are used throughout VA to identify training needs and to determine resources to meet those needs. VA is the government's second 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 online 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 responsibility to support the affirmative action plan for Disabled Veterans.

Additional methods providing internal advancement opportunities include:

- Career ladder promotions, which allow recruitment at an entry level and require less specialized knowledge which may be developed on the job.
- Veterans Readjustment Act Authority, which supports training agreement programs that 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.

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 the Disabled Veteran Employment Program.

**VBA:** The Philadelphia RO&IC 's managers conduct yearly reviews of central office statistical summaries of facility levels of Disabled Veterans to ensure Disabled Veterans are not overlooked for promotions. The director of the Philadelphia RO&IC further conducts periodic reviews with assistant directors and human resources staff to assess whether special hiring authorities or internal merit promotion procedures are being used to hire and promote Disabled Veterans. Since September 30, 2008, there have been 403 promotions in Philadelphia; 105 of those were awarded to Disabled Veterans.

The Muskogee RO utilized the above mentioned provisions and methods to internally promote 58 Disabled Veterans, 31 of whom were 30 percent or more disabled. In addition, five more Disabled Veterans received development leadership training to prepare them for future promotion opportunities. The Muskogee RO also hired 20 Disabled Veterans who were referred from the vocational rehabilitation and employment services nonpaid work experience program.

**NCA:** All employees, including Disabled Veterans, are encouraged to seek additional training through VA Learning University. 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 3 – 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 2009, VA continued to implement this system throughout the field facilities. Currently, VA is 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:** VHA VISN Lead EEO Managers conduct site visits of their respective field facilities to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs and plans. Facility EEO Managers work with Staffing Specialists from their Human Resources Offices to monitor their efforts. Special Emphasis Committees also work with the Human Resources Office, EEO Managers, and other key officials in a combined effort to improve employment opportunities and eliminate any potential barriers for hiring Veterans with disabilities. Statistical data provided on a monthly basis via the Veterans Change Report from the VHA Support Service Center (VSSC) intranet Web site was used by field facilities. The Disabled Veteran and Vietnam Era Veteran Employment Report (COIN PAI 204), which is available quarterly, tracks the hiring, promotions, and separations of Veterans. This report was used to monitor, review, and evaluate the effectiveness of DVAAP programs. This information was reviewed by facility Human Resources Management Staff, EEO Managers, Minority Veteran Program Coordinators, locally established EEO Committees, Special Emphasis Program subcommittees, and the Unions in an effort to ensure the DVAAP program functioned in an effective manner and to identify placement opportunities for Disabled Veterans. Problem areas were identified and goals and objectives were established to eliminate or reduce challenges related to hiring Disabled Veterans. DVAAP accomplishments were discussed with Medical Center Directors, Executive Staff, Service Chiefs, and selecting officials. The gains and losses were monitored within the employee population to evaluate hiring trends. Facility EEO Managers and their Chiefs of Human Resources met to discuss the hiring of Disabled Veterans. One main

focus was to concentrate on ensuring that employees who were Veterans were coded correctly. More emphasis was also placed on making managers aware of the importance of hiring Disabled Veterans.

**VBA:** ROs continue to monitor, review, and evaluate activities through the use of statistical information provided in the COIN PAL 204 (Disabled Veteran and Vietnam Era Veteran Employment Report), HRIS (Human Resources Information System) and the VHA Support Service Center (VSSC), which monitors gains and losses of Veteran employees throughout the year.

**NCA:** NCA works closely with VA's Office of Diversity and Inclusion in monitoring and reviewing methods used to improve the representation of Disabled Veterans. Additionally, NCA receives the COIN-PAI 204 (Disabled Veteran and Vietnam Era Veterans Employment Report) on a quarterly basis to monitor the employment of Disabled Veterans and Vietnam Era Veterans.

**VACO:** The COIN-PAI 204 (Disabled Veteran and Vietnam Era Veteran Employment Report) VSSC version is utilized by COHRS to monitor the employment of DVs and VEVs of Staff Office organizations. This data is used to assess whether participation rates are at par with the Relevant Civilian Labor Workforce trends.

#### **Section 4 – VA's Progress in Implementing Its Affirmative Action Plan during Fiscal Year 2009.**

**VA-Wide:** In FY 2009, VHA's total workforce was comprised of 271,168 employees, of whom 23,905 were Disabled Veterans. Disabled Veterans made up 8.81 percent of the total workforce, representing a slight increase of 0.29 percent from FY 2008. In FY 2009, 4,697 promotions were awarded to Disabled Veterans. This was an increase of 595 promotions, when compared with the 4,102 promotions awarded to Disabled Veterans in FY 2008.

Several VA occupations extensively employ Disabled Veterans, including Chaplain (19.97 percent), Police (20.47 percent), Veterans Claims Examiner (23.78 percent), Cemetery Caretaking (17.95 percent), Cemetery Administration (32.64 percent), Vocational Rehabilitation (22.82 percent), General Inspections (44.1 percent), Telecommunications Mechanic (45.45 percent), and Occupational Health and Safety (23.22 percent). Disabled Veterans make up 6.44 percent of VA Senior Executive Service positions within VA.

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 2010, automated EEO Plans will be closely tracked, to monitor and review program best practices and to identify and correct any deficiencies.

**VHA:** In FY 2009, VHA's total workforce was composed of 241,919 employees, of whom 17,770 were Disabled Veterans. Disabled Veterans made up 7.34 percent of the total workforce, representing a slight increase of .26 percent from FY 2008. In FY 2009, 2,565 promotions were awarded to Disabled Veterans, an increase of 57 promotions, when compared with the number of promotions awarded to Disabled Veterans in FY 2008.

**VBA:** In FY 2009, VBA's total workforce was composed of 15,766 employees, of whom 4,247 are Disabled Veterans. Disabled Veterans made up 25.01 percent of the total workforce. In FY 2009, 1,866 promotions were awarded to Disabled Veterans, an increase of 550 promotions when compared to the 1,316 promotions awarded to Disabled Veterans in FY 2008.

**NCA:** In FY 2009, NCA's total workforce was comprised of 17.71 employees, of whom 302 were Disabled Veterans. Disabled Veterans made up 19.36 percent of the total workforce, an increase of 1.65 percent from FY 2008. In FY 2009, 49 promotions were awarded to Disabled Veterans, an increase of three promotions when compared to the 47 promotions awarded to Disabled Veterans in FY 2008.

**VACO:** In FY 2009, VACO's total workforce was comprised of 2,830 employees, of whom 218 were Disabled Veterans. Disabled Veterans made up 7.71 percent of the total workforce, an increase of .08 percent from FY 2008. In FY 2009, 27 promotions were awarded to Disabled Veterans, a decrease of four promotions when compared to the 31 promotions awarded to Disabled Veterans in FY 2008.



**PURPOSE:**

To request the signature of the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration for the Annual Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program (DVAAP) Plan Certification for Fiscal Year 2010 and Accomplishment Report for Fiscal Year 2009 in accordance with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) memorandum dated August 28 2009.

**DISCUSSION:**

Federal statutes require agencies to develop annual DVAAP plans and reports regarding their efforts to recruit, hire, and train Disabled Veterans. OPM requested the FY 2010 DVAAP Plan Certification and FY 2009 Accomplishments, citing December 1, 2009, as the due date.

Included in this submission are:

- A signed certification that VA has a DVAAP plan for FY 2009
- A description of the methods used to recruit, employ, and improve internal advancement opportunities for Disabled Veterans.
- A description of how the activities of major operating components and field installations were monitored, reviewed, and evaluated.
- An explanation of the agency's progress in implementing its DVAAP plan during FY 2009.

**IMPLICATION:**

We have obtained all the necessary concurrences, and the submission meets statutory reporting requirements and conveys VA's support and focus on providing equal employment and training opportunities for Disabled Veterans.