



Message from the DAS

Welcome to this inaugural issue of our monthly Diversity@Work newsletter! Due to overwhelming interest, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) will now be publishing this informative newsletter every month. Don't forget that this and all of our past are housed online at <http://www.diversity.va.gov>. Please feel free to access this valuable resource at your convenience and contact our editor, Yvonne Rannels, at Yvonne.Rannels@va.gov with story ideas or feedback.

September 15 through October 15 marks National Hispanic Heritage Month and VA Central Office is planning a number of events in honor of this observance. Please read more below. September 18, 2012, will mark the 15th anniversary of the issuance of a memo from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management to Heads of Executive Departments and Independent Agencies that raised concerns about Hispanic underrepresentation in the Federal workforce. To address this, ODI is creating a new VA plan for Hispanic employment, outreach, and retention. Part of ODI's outreach efforts include coordinating Hispanic employment outreach activities at the National Image Annual National Training Conference in Los Angeles September 10 through 14. Targeted outreach is an important step in addressing barriers to equal opportunity to groups with less than expected representation in VA, such as the Hispanic community.

As we close out the fiscal year, ODI has been busy with numerous outreach and training activities aimed at promoting our collective responsibility to cultivate a diverse VA workforce and inclusive VA workplace. In August, I provided opening remarks for the VA Agency Forum at the Blacks in Government Conference and announced the beginning of a new pilot project with VALU's MyCareer@VA aimed at cracking glass ceilings for our employees. [Continued on the next page.](#)

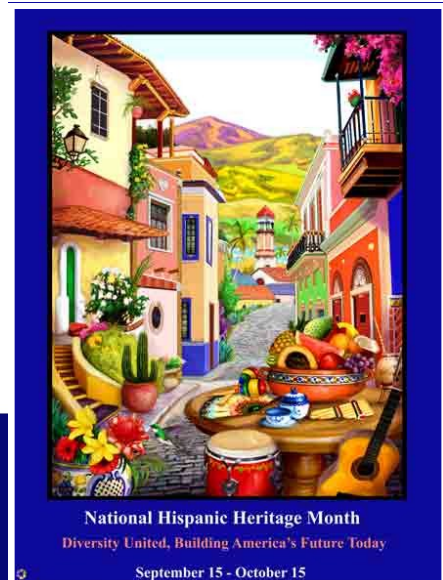
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Bookmarks:

- American GI Forum
<http://www.agifusa.org>
- Catholic War Veterans
<http://www.cwv.org>
- Hispanic-American Veterans of Connecticut
<http://www.havocct.org>
- Hispanic War Veterans of America
<http://www.hwva.us>
- Paralyzed Veterans of America
<http://www.pva.org>

Do you have an EEO complaint?
Contact Office of Resolution
Management at (888) 737-3361
within 45 days of alleged incident.



National Hispanic Heritage Month

Diversity United, Building America's Future Today

September 15 - October 15

Commemorate

National Hispanic Heritage Month

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) takes great pride in observing National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 through October 15, 2012. This year's theme is "Diversity United, Building America's Future Today."

Hispanic Heritage Month allows our Nation to pause and reflect on the scores of contributions generations of Hispanics—with heritage from Mexico, Spain, the Caribbean, and Central and South America—have made to our country. This month-long commemoration begins on September 15, the day of independence for five Latin American countries. These countries are: El Salvador, Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Mexico won its independence on September 16, while Chile gained its freedom on September 18. Contributing to the rich cultural diversity of America, the Hispanic American culture has shaped and strengthened our country.

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Message from the DAS

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Georgia Coffey

ODI's Dr. John Fuller partnered with the VHA's Office of Rural Health and delivered a highly praised 90 minute live broadcast on Cultural Competency and Caring for the Rural Veteran to over 200 VA locations nationwide, and continues to collaborate with VBA in providing foundational diversity and inclusion training to all employees. I was pleased to

provide core training to VA's newest members of the Senior Executive Service at the Senior Executive Core Training Pilot II. On September 19, I will be addressing the Federal Symposium - Promising Employment Practices for People with Disabilities. Read more about ODI training throughout this issue and please view our newly posted video featuring the VA Deputy Secretary and Under Secretaries promoting the new VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/plan.aspx>.



From L to R: Edgardo Diaz, Chief Voluntary Service; Martha Aleman, Service Chief of Audiology Service; Cyndia Ramirez, LGBT Manager; Silvia Valentin, Assistant Chief of Police Service; Enelida Gonzalez, Police Service; and Nilda Lopez, EEO Manager

Thanks to Cyndia Ramirez, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Manager and Communications Center Supervisor for the VA Caribbean Healthcare System, for submitting photos of the 2nd Annual LGBT Pride Month Observance in San Juan, Puerto Rico. We continue to rely on you, our VA readers, to share your photos and stories from your field activities so that we can share these practices with the rest of VA. Please continue to email us at odi@va.gov. ~Georgia Coffey, VA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion

VACO Notes

Farewell!

ODI wishes Bonnie Jeo, Staff Assistant on ODI's Administration Management Team, a fond farewell. Ms. Jeo has accepted a position with the Veterans Health Administration's Office of Informatics and Analytics. Ms. Jeo will be missed but her contributions to ODI will not be forgotten!

Field Notes

Workforce Resurvey

The Office of Human Resources and Administration is requesting all VA employees to participate in a workforce resurvey of employee disability status, and race and ethnicity disclosure. Participation in the resurvey is voluntary. Participation in the resurvey will ensure the data is current and accurate. With current and accurate data, VA will be able to develop more effective policies and programs for equal employment opportunity throughout the Department. This resurvey will remain open through September 30, 2012. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has made this effortless by leveraging the VHA Support Service Center system (VSSC)

to create two separate input portals for employees to enter their personal data on disability and race/ethnicity. Employees can access the disability status resurvey portal at <https://secure.vssc.med.va.gov/SF256>. Employees can access the race and ethnicity resurvey portal at <https://secure.vssc.med.va.gov/SF181>. Employees who do not have the ability to access to the Web portal (e.g. no access to PC, or laptop) and are willing to participate can contact their HR office to obtain the standard forms SF181 (Ethnicity and Race Identification) and SF256 (Self-Identification of Disability) and then update and return the completed copy to their HR office for processing. Please be assured that after the SF 181 and SF 256 data is keyed into the HRIS PAID database, the paper form is destroyed. Again, please note that this resurvey will remain open through September 30, 2012.



Training

Diversity News: An Online Training Resource

The September/October 2012 edition of *Diversity News* features Christy Compton, VA's National Disability Employment Program Manager. *Diversity News* is available both on the internal VA Knowledge Network and externally on ODI's Web site. To view current and past episodes, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx>. **Continued on the next page.**

Training

2012 National HBCU Week Conference

VA joins the Nation in observing Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Week. The 2012 National HBCU Week Conference will be held in Washington, DC on September 25 and 26.

This year's theme is "Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Enhancing Innovation and Advancement." For more information, visit <http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/whhbcu/2012-hbcu-week-conference> or contact Trina Faison, VA's National African American Employment Program Manager, ODI, at (202) 461-4044 or Trina.Faison@va.gov.

ADVANCE Conflict Management Training

ADVANCE Your Knowledge and Skill in Managing Conflict and Resolving Disputes through Mediation by taking classes at the Justice Center of Atlanta sponsored by the Office of Resolution Management Workplace Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Office.

The Managing Conflict and Resolving Disputes through Mediation training is a three-day course, that provides an opportunity to examine the factors that contribute to workplace conflict. It offers tools that managers can use to prevent these situations from escalating and diverting valuable time, resources, and energy from our mission. The course is balanced to include information on how to better manage conflict (i.e., asking effective questions, dealing with difficult people, negotiation skills), and understanding the mediation process.

While not asking you to become a professional mediator among your many other responsibilities at VA, it is hoped that by spending in-depth time studying, discussing, and trying the myriad of techniques and communication skills related to the mediation process, you will adopt new approaches, ideas, and skills in dealing with disputes.

Managing Conflict and Resolving Disputes Training is conducted by the Justice Center of Atlanta (JCA) in Atlanta, Georgia. The JCA has led the field of training and practice in conflict resolution for over 30 years and is nationally recognized as a provider of top quality practice and instruction in mediation by the U.S. Government Accounting Office. Targeted Audience: Senior Executives, GS-14-15s, GS-12-13 Supervisors, Leadership VA participants, and Title-38 Equivalentents who are in Supervisory Positions.

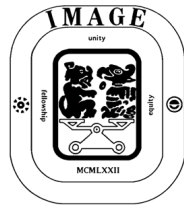
Classes are scheduled for September 11-13, October 23-25, November 6-8, December 11-13, January 15-17, February 26-28, March 19-21, April 23-25, and May 21-23. These classes are now listed in the Talent Management System and you may register by visiting

<https://www.tms.va.gov/plateau/user/login.jsp>. All questions regarding this class may be directed to Roy Ferguson, ADR Specialist, at Roy.Ferguson@va.gov or Rita Reese, Acting Director, Alternative Dispute Resolution, at Rita.Reese@va.gov. The VA Learning University is funding all travel associated costs for all approved participants for the September class.

Image Conference

The National Image, Inc. will hold its 40th Annual National Training Program Conference September 10-14 at the LAX Westin Hotel, located at 5400 West Century Boulevard, Los Angeles, California 90045.

The theme for this year's conference is "Pathway to Success Through: Leadership, Development, Partnering, and Outreach." The conference will offer workshops in areas such as Leadership, Career Development, Partnering and Outreach, Recruitment, and Equal Employment Opportunity, and many others. During the conference, staff from VA's Office of Resolution Management will participate in a Senior Executive Service Women's Leadership panel and will also be conducting an Alternative Dispute Resolution workshop, and the Office of Human Resources Management will be conducting workshops for 600 students interested in VA or Federal employment. National Image, Inc. is an organization dedicated to empower Hispanic Americans through leadership development. The conference is open to any Federal employee and qualifies as training in compliance with 5 U.S.C. Chapter 41. Supervisory approval should be obtained in order to attend the conference. Detailed information and registration forms can be obtained from Image's Web site at <http://www.national-image.org>. For more information, contact Andy Gonzalez, EEO Specialist, ODI, at (202) 299-4320 or Andy.Gonzalez@va.gov.



IALPAE, Inc. Conference

The International Association of Latino Public Administration Executives, Inc. (IALPAE, Inc.) will hold its 2nd Annual Executive Leadership and Diversity Training Conference December 3-5, 2012, in Arlington, Virginia. The theme for this conference is "Leading the President's Commitment to Diversity & Inclusion: Demonstrating Excellence, Equity, Integrity, and Transparency in Public Service." The IALPAE, Inc. Executive Leadership and Diversity Training Conference qualifies as training in compliance with 5 U.S.C. Chapter 41. This conference is open to all Federal employees and will provide training and workshops in areas such as Diversity and Inclusion, Ethics in the Workplace, Engaging in leadership Competencies to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workplace. Information about the conference, including the agenda and registration form, can be found online at <http://www.ialpae.org>. For more information, contact Arlene Gonzalez, EEO Specialist, ODI, at (202) 461-4041 or Arlene.Gonzalez2@va.gov. **Continued on page 5.**

New DIG Web Site

Diversity and Inclusion in Government (DIG) Web Site Now Available on MAX Portal

In celebration of the one year anniversary of the President's "Executive Order Establishing a Coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce," the Office of Personnel Management's Office of Diversity and Inclusion is pleased to share the new and improved Diversity and Inclusion in Government (DIG) Web site on the Office of Management and Budget's MAX portal. Federal employees can use DIG to enhance diversity, inclusion, innovation, productivity and connectivity in their agencies.

The DIG website has targeted communities of practice (CoPs) that Federal employees can use to:

- help their agencies pursue organizational objectives efficiently and effectively
- foster agency cultures that encourage collaboration, flexibility and fairness
- collaborate about best practices
- talk with other professionals about current issues
- trade useful resources
- synchronize efforts on task lists and through online meetings

Start using this tool in the following 5 easy steps:

Step 1: Go to the MAX homepage at <http://www.max.gov>.

Step 2: Click on the link at the top that says "Register Now."

Step 3: Fill out the short registration form.

Step 4: Log into MAX.

Step 5: Put "DIG" in the search box and select the first option or follow this link: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/0o60IQ>. Want to make this page easier to find in the future? Add it to your internet browser (by clicking ctrl+D) or to your MAX favorites.

Please send questions or concerns to Ms. Jesse Frank at diversityandinclusion@opm.gov.

Commemorate

[Continued from page 1.](#)

As members of the Armed Forces, brave Hispanic men and women have fought and died to defend the United States in every war since the American Revolution, many serving before becoming American citizens. Hispanics have always been committed to the defense of our Nation; 44 Hispanics have been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Hispanics have contributed to all aspects of American life, from the Supreme Court and halls of Congress to police officers and first responders who protect our neighborhoods to teachers and mentors who guide our Nation's young people. Entrepreneur Linda Alvarado said: "Whether we're called Hispanos or Mexicanos or Puertorriqueños, Cubanos, or Latinos, we are a family connected to a community of very talented people from very different backgrounds that are doing amazing things that our parents did not have the opportunity to do. As a Hispanic, I hope and long for the day when we will be valued for our abilities, not prejudged because of our heritage or gender. America is a country of immigrants and our success is built on the strength of our diversity."

When we examine VA's workforce, as of August 31, 2012, 6.65 percent (21,401 employees) are Hispanic. VA employs 103,068 Veterans, of which 7.47 percent (7,701 employees) are Hispanic. VA's employment of Hispanics decreased from 6.75 percent at the end of FY 2010 to 6.68 percent at the end of FY 2011. Hispanic men have a lower than expected participation rate at the GS 11-15 and Title 38 equivalent pay levels. Hispanic women have a participation rate that is lower than expected at the GS 12-15 and Title 38 equivalent pay levels.

The numbers indicate that much work is ahead of us to ensure that Hispanics are fully included in the VA workforce of the future. [Continued on page 9.](#)

Policy Alerts

Federal Student Loan Repayment Program

VA's policy regarding student loan repayment can be found in VA Handbook 5007, Pay Administration, Part VI, Recruitment and Retention Incentives, Chapter 8, Repayment of Student Loans. Questions related to the student loan repayment policy may be directed to the Compensation and Classification Service, Office of Human Resources Management at vacoclassif@va.gov.

Clarification of Veterans Hiring Flexibilities

VA remains deeply committed to the employment of Veterans and strongly supports the Secretary's goal of increasing Veteran employment to 40 percent of the VA workforce. There are various recruitment options available to VA hiring managers to achieve this goal, such as delegated examining, merit promotion, noncompetitive appointments, and direct hire authorities.

When using delegated examining procedures, applications are accepted from all qualified applicants but certain qualified Veterans are given preference, meaning they must be selected before a non-Veteran may be selected.

When using merit promotion procedures, applications are accepted from current or former Federal employees. In addition, applications are accepted from Veterans with three or more years of continuous active and honorable service eligible under the Veterans Employment Opportunity Act and individuals with disabilities eligible under the Schedule A authority. Under merit promotion procedures, Veterans are not given preference over other individuals who apply. Hiring managers are required to make their selection from among the group of applicants who are determined to be "best qualified" for the job.

In certain instances and when it is not feasible to post a job announcement, a hiring manager may choose to fill the job using a noncompetitive appointment, such as Veterans Recruitment Appointment, 30 Percent or More Service Connected Disabled Veterans, or Schedule A authority. Noncompetitive appointments allow individuals who are eligible and qualified to be quickly selected and placed in a job without competing with others.

Using a Government-wide Direct Hire Authority (DHA) is another option for filling a job quickly. When using a DHA, competitive procedures are not required and Veterans preference is applied. Human Resource Offices only need to post a job, accept resumes from applicants, and then provide a list of only the qualified applicants to the hiring manager.

Hiring managers are strongly encouraged to actively recruit qualified Veterans to fill their job vacancies. They may use any of the recruitment options as discussed above. Questions may be directed to Dennis May, Deputy Director, Veterans Employment Service Office, at (202) 461-5063 or Dennis.May@va.gov.

Training

Live Broadcast on Cultural Competency and Veterans Care

ODI, in partnership with the Rural Health Professions Institute (RHPI), delivered a 90-minute live broadcast to over 200 locations nationwide on August 17, 2012. Dr. John Fuller, Chief Diversity Educator, ODI, presented Cultural Competency and Caring for the Rural Veteran. This course will soon be available on-demand through the VHA MyVeHu virtual campus and will be worth 1.5 continuing education unit credits for participants and for medical professionals' recertification purposes. ODI, in collaboration with RHPI and faculty from East Tennessee State University, designed the curriculum to provide an overview of rural related, patient-centered philosophy, team care and to demonstrate the importance of increasing cultural competence in healthcare delivery. The course focused on heightened diversity awareness and positive cross-cultural interactions; and on how culture and language impact healthcare, medical literacy, and relationships with rural Veterans and their families. This ODI training is a product of an ongoing partnership established in January 2011 with VHA and RHPI. For more information, contact Dr. Fuller at (202) 461-4002 or John.Fuller2@va.gov. **Continued on the next page.**

Training

Section 508 Training Webinar Offerings

The Section 508 Program Office currently has two webinars to teach Section 508. The webinars are: General Section 508 and Programming with Section 508 in Mind. The webinars have their own TMS number for self-certification. Details for self-certification will be given at the end of the webinars. General Section 508 should be a prerequisite before taking Programming with Section 508 in Mind.

The General Section 508 webinar provides an overview of the law and its application to Electronic Information Technology (EIT) including the technical, functional, and documentation/support standards surrounding conformance to Section 508. VA employees attending the training session will learn more about VA's Section 508 Program Office and how it works to ensure that Electronic Information Technology products developed, procured, maintained, or used by the VA are Section 508 conformant. If you develop any of the following, supervise, procure, develop or administer policy relating to the following you should attend:

- Develop web pages
- Develop web-based applications
- Develop software
- Produce documents
- Develop or procure hardware
- Develop training materials
- Produce videos or other multimedia products
- Supervise activities above
- Develop or administer policy involving or relating to the above
- Have responsibility for the integration or maintenance of any of these items
- Are responsible for the procurement of any of these items
- Are involved in the contracting for the procurement of any of these items.

The Programming with Section 508 in Mind webinar will allow you to gain more insight into coding for accessibility from a programming perspective. Learn more about the W3C specification for Accessible Rich Internet Applications (ARIA). This informative session will prepare you to:

- Define common accessibility issues;
- Define accessibility issues with dynamic content;
- Include the new W3C ARIA specification in developing accessible dynamic content; and
- Identify tools available to validate your Web sites and applications.

Training is captioned. Visit the training calendar at <http://go.va.gov/fr7f> to select a course and date. For additional information, or questions, email VAITWD@va.gov.

1HR Connect! Broadcast Now Available

The 1HR Connect video broadcast and power point are a blended-learning strategy to meet diverse learning needs! Now available on the Office of Human Resources Management intranet Web site are three 1HR Connect videos from the June 5, 2012, live broadcast:

- Veterans Hiring
- Schedule A
- Student Hiring

The next 1HR Broadcast is scheduled for September 26, 2012. For more information, email the 1HR Connect team at vahrconnect@va.gov.

Federal Symposium—Promising Employment Practices for People with Disabilities

The Federal Symposium—Promising Employment Practices for People with Disabilities will be held on September 19, 2012, from 9–4:30 at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Madison Auditorium in Alexandria, Virginia. The Symposium will provide Selective Placement Program Coordinators, Disability Program Managers, and other managers working on disability issues with valuable expertise and information that will help establish the Federal Government as a model employer of individuals with disabilities. Workshop topics will include in-depth conversations about Schedule A for people with disabilities, reasonable accommodations, self-identification, return-to-work programs, recruiting resources and much more.

This training is presented by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the Department of Labor (Office of Disability Employment Policy and Office of Workers' Compensation Programs), the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and the Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program. There is no cost to attend but, due to space limitations, this event is open to Federal Employees only. To learn more and register for the Symposium, visit <https://max.omb.gov/maxportal/registrationForm.action>. You will first need to register for the MAX Federal Community by creating a username and password. Once you are registered, visit <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/IHJJQ> and fill out the short Symposium registration form. All participants must be pre-registered. There will be no on-site registration.

For questions concerning the Symposium or for registration support, contact OPM's Office of Diversity and Inclusion at (202) 606-0020 or DisabilityEmployment@opm.gov.

BIG Conference

ODI Hosted VA Agency Forum at 34th Annual Conference

In partnership with the 34th Annual Blacks in Government (BIG) National Conference, ODI hosted the VA Agency Employee Forum on Tuesday, August 14, 2012, from 1–5 p.m. at the Blacks in Government (BIG) National Training Conference in Detroit, Michigan. The theme for this year's conference was: "Educate to Escalate, Reaching your Potential Through BIG."

The forum delivered a successful diversity training program which provided information specific to VA's African American workforce, particularly regarding demographics, career development, advancement initiatives, and Veteran employment issues. The forum was open to all VA employees at no cost.

Speakers included Alphaeus Richburg, Acting Director of the Wood National Cemetery in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who provided the opening and closing remarks and shared his experiences and challenges throughout his career. Mr. Richburg is a retired U.S. Army Veteran having served 17½ years. Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion, presented both the Keynote Address and a session outlining the state of VA's African Americans workforce. Danita Brooks, VA Learning University (VALU), presented "VA Into the Future," which included tools within the Talent Management System and an overview of VALU "MyCareer@VA." Dr. John Fuller, ODI's Chief Diversity Educator, presented a diversity and inclusion session highlighting how external and internal factors affect the workforce. He also addressed how increasing cultural competency and inclusion, goals of the VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, will enhance productivity and performance for all VA employees in order to provide outstanding public services for our Nation's Veterans and their families.

In addition to the speakers, there was a Senior Leader Panel which provided employees the opportunity to engage in a moderated dialogue with panel member who shared personal experiences of career successes and leadership challenges from an African American perspective. Panel members included Guy B. Richardson, VISN 5 Deputy Network Director; Debra Walker, Director, Office of Survivor Service; and Avia Pichon-Cosey, Director, Detroit Human Resources Center, Veterans Benefits Administration. For more information about this event, contact Trina R. Faison, VA's National African American Employment Program Manager, at (202) 461-4044 or Trina.Faison@va.gov.



*Renae Allen, President, (R)
and Ethel Sligh, Treasurer,
BIG VA Headquarters Chapter*

Congratulations!

Blacks in Government (BIG) VA Headquarters Chapter Receives Sterling Membership Award

Members of the BIG VA Headquarters Chapter based at VA Central Office in Washington, DC, attended this year's BIG Conference expecting to witness history in the possible re-election of Darlene Young or the election of Shirley Jones as National President; they didn't expect to be making history. That is exactly what happened as the Chapter was selected for the Sterling Membership Award out of numerous chapters nominated in the 50–100 members category. This award recognizes chapters who have excelled in recruiting new members and retaining old members and for their outstanding

efforts and practices contributing to maintaining a strong membership base for the National organization. The Chapter received a plaque in recognition of their recruitment and retention efforts from July 1, 2011, through June 30, 2012. The Chapter signed up 22 new members in this time frame by conducting a series of Brown Bag Professional Development seminars. If you have questions or would like to become a member, contact Anna Crenshaw at

Anna.Crenshaw@va.gov or LaRae Dudley at LaRae.Dudley2@va.gov.

Focusing on Advancement

Opportunities for Individuals with Targeted Disabilities

The statutory language of Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, mandates that Federal agencies submit to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) for approval an annually updated "affirmative action program plan for the hiring, placement, and advancement of individuals with disabilities."

EEOC's Management Directive 715 instructs that: "Agencies with 1,000 or more permanent employees are to...describe the strategies and activities that will be undertaken during the coming fiscal year to maintain a special recruitment program for individuals with targeted disabilities and to establish specific goals for the employment and advancement of such individuals."

Historically, agencies were not given much guidance on how to advance employees with targeted disabilities (blindness, deafness, partial paralysis, total paralysis, missing extremities, epilepsy, dwarfism, psychological disabilities, and severe intellectual disabilities). Within VA, since fiscal year (FY) 2011, facilities have been encouraged to identify qualified employees and promote them non-competitively when possible. This can be done for any vacancy that is not slotted as an internal promotion covered by union rules. The Schedule A excepted appointment authority can be used to promote employees with disabilities to Title 5 positions, and the Title 38 positions are already non-competitive.

To determine whether employees with targeted disabilities are fully represented in the senior pay grades/Title 38 equivalent pay levels, we compare their ratios at each level to the ratio for the total workforce. Since the beginning of FY 2011, there has been a slight increase in the ratio of employees with targeted disabilities at the GS 12 and 13/Title 38 equivalent pay levels. However, this group still has a low participation rate at the GS 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15/Title 38 equivalent pay levels compared to the total workforce.

VA has a disproportionate number of employees with targeted disabilities in wage grade positions; while 8.95 percent of VA employees are in wage grade, 20.55 percent of employees with targeted disabilities are in wage grade positions. Part of this disparity is caused by the requirement that Housekeeping and other positions can only be filled by hiring Disabled Veterans. All facilities need to be mindful that if these wage grade hires are off-set by hires of individuals with targeted disabilities in the senior pay levels, the distribution will look better balanced.

VA has made tremendous progress in hiring individuals with targeted disabilities. In order to retain these individuals, we need to ensure that they are aware of promotion opportunities. All facilities are encouraged to post prominently on bulletin boards the contact information for the Selective Placement Coordinators in human resources offices and an explanation of facility efforts or venues for promoting employees with disabilities.

As the second largest Cabinet level agency, VA is well-positioned to become the top agency for employment of people with targeted disabilities. However, at present, this group is resigning almost as fast as they are hired. In the first three quarters of FY 2012, VA hired 687 individuals with targeted disabilities and 516 separated. This means that if we do not reduce the number of separations, we will have to keep hiring at a higher rate.

All VA employees have a role to play as co-workers, mentors, friends, supervisors, and recruiters. If you are uncertain how to talk to people with disabilities, check out our "Overview of People with Disabilities" PowerPoint under "Reasonable Accommodations and Disabilities" at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/training>. For further information on VA's Disability Program, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx>.

Diversity Council Activity

DISP Reporting Template Now Available

The VA Diversity Council (VADC) members have been asked to report on their organization's accomplishments towards VA's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan (DISP) on a quarterly basis. Their first report on FY 2012 accomplishments will be presented at the VADC meeting in October 2012. To obtain a copy of the template for reporting and for more information about submission deadlines, contact Brenda Martin, ODI, at Brenda.Martin@va.gov. For more information on the VADC, including meeting agendas and minutes, the roster, and a copy of the charter, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/council>.

Compliance Corner

Safeguarding EEO Complaint Information



As VA employees, we receive annual training about the importance of safeguarding Veterans' personal protected information. Federal statutes, including the American with Disabilities Act and the Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act, also require VA to safeguard certain types of employee medical information, such as an individual's medical diagnosis, and strictly limit how and to whom such medical information can be disclosed.

Likewise, VA has an affirmative duty to safeguard documents and information related to an employee's or applicant's equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaint. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has found that an agency must ensure that it does not disclose EEO complaint information to persons not directly involved in the EEO process, unless the complainant authorizes such disclosure. If an authorized disclosure is made it will be deemed to constitute reprisal per se. Reprisal per se applies to any action by an agency manager that interferes with an employee's EEO rights, or has the effect of intimidating or chilling the exercise of EEO rights.

In a recent case, an EEOC administrative judge found VA retaliated against an employee when the Acting EEO Manager inadvertently left a summary of one of the complainant's cases in the facility's canteen. The file was discovered by an outside vendor who discussed it with some of the complainant's co-workers and then gave the file to the complainant. It was undisputed that the complainant's EEO file became a topic of discussion among her co-workers.

According to the complainant, the file contained a document with her name, home address, her attorney's name and address, the name of the EEOC judge assigned to her case, and "the status of her case." The complainant did not report what she felt to be a breach of the confidentiality of her EEO complaint to the facility's Privacy Officer, the EEO Office, or anyone else at the facility. Instead, she turned the file over to her attorney.

While the EEOC administrative judge found that the Acting EEO Manager's actions were accidental, she concluded that they had a "potential chilling effect on the ultimate tool that employees have to enforce equal employment opportunity: the filing of a complaint." The judge determined that consistent with the EEOC's duty to ensure the integrity of the EEO process, a finding of reprisal per se must be made against VA because the Acting EEO Manager's actions "served to discourage the use of the EEO process." ~Maxanne R. Witkin, Director, VA's Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication

Commemorate

[Continued from page 4.](#)

We must make every effort to ensure they are fully engaged in every facet of the work cycle—from recruitment to career development to retention.

The 2010 Census reveals that more than 50 million citizens in our Nation identify as Hispanic. As we reflect on our Nation's rich cultural history and traditions, let us commemorate the contributions of Hispanics to shaping and strengthening our country—in Congress; on the Supreme Court; as entrepreneurs; and as brave members of the Armed Forces, defending the United States in every war since the American Revolution.

Managers and supervisors are encouraged to lead efforts and participate in VA activities that recognize the vast contributions Hispanic Americans have made to America.

For more information on VA's Hispanic Employment Program, contact Arlene Gonzalez, VA's National Hispanic Employment Program Manager, ODI, at (202) 461-4041 or Arlene.Gonzalez2@va.gov.

The VA Central Office Hispanic Heritage Month Committee will be hosting the kickoff event to its Hispanic Heritage Month observance on Thursday, September 27, 2012, at noon in the G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery's Conference Center, room 230. For more information, contact Tiffany Lewis at (202) 461-7911 or Tiffany.Lewis@va.gov.

D&I Online

Diversity@Work is published by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), a program office within the Office of Human Resources and Administration (HR&A).

To subscribe or unsubscribe, e-mail odi@va.gov.

CONTACT US

Mail:
810 Vermont Avenue
NW (06)
Washington, DC 20420

Phone:
(202) 461-4131

Fax:
(202) 501-2145

E-mail the Editor:
odi@va.gov

Visit our Web site
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OTHER USEFUL LINKS

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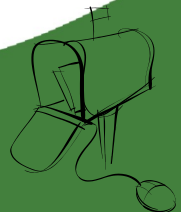
Veterans Health Administration's Diversity and Inclusion Community of Practice
Michael.Youngblood@va.gov

GOT NEWS?

We want to hear from you! If you'd like to share your story ideas, comments, or suggestions, e-mail us at odi@va.gov.

The mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs' diversity and inclusion program is to develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated, and strategic focus on diversity and inclusion as key components of the Department's human resources strategies. Here's a sampling of online tools available at <http://www.diversity.va.gov> that can help leverage diversity and build inclusion:

- ▶ National Hispanic Heritage Month and other observance resources.
- ▶ Training resources, guides, and reports.
- ▶ Links to professional and community organizations.
- ▶ Best practices for diversity management.



D&I In Your E-mail Inbox

Once a week, ODI sends out *NewsLink*, an e-mail message with annotated links to current news items and other information related to leveraging diversity and building inclusion. For a FREE subscription to this weekly electronic news service, e-mail odi@va.gov with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWSLINK in the subject line. Find a sample of *NewsLink* at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/newslink.aspx>.

D&I on Your TV or PC

Diversity News is a monthly video program produced by the VA Central Office Broadcast Center for ODI. *Diversity News* follows VA News on the VA Knowledge Network, Content Distribution Network, channel 2. Programs are also available at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx>.

Calendar

<http://www.diversity.va.gov/calendar>

September

Grandparents' Day
September 9

National Image Inc. 2012 Training Conference and Exposition
September 9–14; Los Angeles, CA
<http://www.national-image.org>

Patriot Day
September 11

Diversity, Inclusion and Innovation in Government 2012 Inaugural Annual National Conference
September 12–14; Washington, DC
<http://di2g.net>

Equal Opportunity Publications' STEM Diversity Career Expo
September 14; New York, NY
<http://www.eop.com/expos.php>

National Hispanic Heritage Month
September 15–October 15

Constitution Day/Citizenship Day
September 17

Federal Symposium—Promising Employment Practices for People with Disabilities
September 19; Alexandria, VA

Deaf Awareness Week
September 23–29

HBCU Week Conference
September 25–26; Washington, DC
<http://www.ed.gov/edblogs/whhbcu>

October

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Polish-American Heritage Month
Italian-American Heritage Month
German-American Heritage Month
National Work and Family Month