



Department of Veterans Affairs

# Diversity@Work

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

Volume 14, Issue 3  
December 2014

## Message from the DAS

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Have a dispute?  
VA's Alternative Dispute Resolution program can help:  
<http://www.va.gov/adr>.

Have an EEO complaint?  
Contact the Office of Resolution Management at (888) 737-3361 within 45 calendar days of the alleged incident:  
<http://www.va.gov/ORM/EEOcomplaint.asp>.

Season's greetings from our Nation's Capital! I hope you had a wonderful Thanksgiving and that the celebrations you observe throughout the remainder of the year are just as enjoyable.

Just in time for several holidays, Guidance on Religious Exercise and Expression in VA Facilities and Property Under the Charge and Control of VA has been issued. As our Nation becomes increasingly diverse, so do the religious affiliations and belief systems of its citizens and we must respect the diverse belief systems and the First Amendment rights of all its employees, Veterans, stakeholders, and others in the conduct of VA business. All employees should be aware of their rights and responsibilities as we approach the holiday season. Learn more by watching *Diversity News* (see **page 3**) and reading the Policy Alerts on **page 8**.

Congratulations to the recently-named winners of the Secretary's Fourth Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards! In the Nonsupervisory Employee category, the winner this year is Leslie R. M. Hausmann, PhD, a Research Health Scientist in the Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, Veterans Health Administration (VHA), in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In the Manager/Supervisor category, the winner is Perdita Johnson-Abercrombie, Equal Employment Opportunity Manager, National Cemetery Administration (NCA), VA Central Office, Washington, DC. In the Team category, the winner is the VISN 8 Diversity & Inclusion Sub-Committee, VHA, in St. Petersburg, Florida. Team members include (in alphabetical order): Patricia Donaldson, Shelly Flanagan, Patricia Hawk (Co-chair), Gealdina Irvine, Edwin Johnson, Mary Allen Austria Lausman, Shella Miller (Co-chair), Sheila O'Hara, and Tonya Wieck.

**Continued on the next page.**



3 December  
**International Day of  
People with Disability**

## Commemorate

*International Day of Persons with Disabilities*

VA joins the Nation in commemorating International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3. From the 2013 Presidential Proclamation (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/12/02/presidential-proclamation-international-day-persons-disabilities-2013>):

Nearly a quarter century has gone by since our Nation passed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a landmark civil rights bill that enshrined the principles of inclusion, access, and equal opportunity into law. The ADA was born out of a movement sparked by those who understood their disabilities should not be an obstacle to success and took up the mission of tearing down physical and social barriers that stood in their way. On this International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we celebrate the enormous progress made at home and abroad and we strengthen our resolve to realize a world free of prejudice. **Continued on page 9.**

# DAS Message

*Continued from Page 1*

I recently had the privilege of providing congratulatory remarks to the team virtually as they were presented their award in person by Joleen Clark, VISN 8 Network Director. I look forward to doing the same at the other awards presentations. Read more about all of the winners' accomplishments on [page 4](#).

As a reminder, ODI established a centralized fund for fiscal year 2015 to reimburse facilities VA-wide who hire Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) interns. The WRP provides work experience opportunities for college students and recent graduates with disabilities. If you are interested in obtaining a WRP intern for 10 to 14 weeks, you can find out more details about this program by reading the article under the Field Notes section on [page 6](#).

Finally, VA joins the Nation in commemorating International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3, Human Rights Day on December 10, Human Rights Week December 10–17, and Bill of Rights Day on December 15. You can read about these observances beginning on [page 1](#).

Once again, Happy Holidays to you and your families! ~Georgia Coffey, VA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion



*Georgia Coffey*

## VACO Notes

***Welcome, New ODI Employees!***

ODI welcomes new employees Karen Basnight, Mercedes Kirkland-Doyle, and Antony Washington.

Karen Basnight serves as Director of the Outreach and Retention Team. Previously, she worked at the U.S. Department of Justice as an Assistant Director, Justice Management Division EEO Staff, where she provided leadership and guidance for the departmental Affirmative Employment Programs, and synchronized all efforts to implement a Model EEO Program. Ms. Basnight also worked at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)/National Institutes of Health (NIH), and held several progressively challenging positions within the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management to include Branch Chief, Outreach and Recruitment; Acting Director, Division of Complaints Management and Resolution; and Branch Chief, Division of Institute/Center Services. While at DHHS/NIH, she also served as EEO Officer at the National Institute of General Medical Sciences. Prior to joining DHHS/NIH, she worked at the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission as an Investigator. Ms. Basnight received a bachelor's degree in Social Work cum laude from Virginia State University, and is a certified mediator. She is an affiliate of the African American Federal Executives Association, and is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Welcome, Ms. Basnight!

Mercedes N. Kirkland-Doyle serves on the Outreach and Retention Team as the National Program Manager for the Black Employment Program and Federal Women's Program. She is an Army Veteran with over 13 years of Federal experience, having served in Oklahoma, The Republic of South Korea, Florida, and Texas. In 2012, Ms. Kirkland-Doyle was accepted into the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA's) National Technical Career Field program. She completed her internship in VISN 5 at the Martinsburg VA Medical Center where she successfully counseled leadership and staff on the essential elements of a Model EEO Program, as well as diversity and inclusion mandates. Ms. Kirkland-Doyle was later assigned as the EEO Officer in VISN 23 at the Nebraska Western-Iowa Health Care System in Omaha. Ms. Kirkland-Doyle holds a Master of Science in Human Resources Management from the University of Maryland University College, and is a certified VA mediator and EEO investigator. Welcome, Ms. Kirkland-Doyle! **Continued on Page 6.**



*Mercedes Kirkland-Doyle*

# Training

## Barrier Analysis

ODI is pleased to announce the FY 2015 Barrier Analysis Training schedule. Barrier elimination is essential for VA to become a model employer. To achieve this status, VA has to create a barrier-free environment where all applicants and employees have the opportunity to compete and work to their fullest potential. This training course covers all aspects of the barrier analysis process under MD 715 to include: analysis and interpretation of workforce statistics, trigger identification, barrier analysis investigation, preparing action plans, and following up on the action plan. This training, in its entirety, will allow the participants to work through the majority of the process using VA specific workforce statistics. To sign up for this training, use the following link [https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink\\_redirect.jsp?linkId=ITEM\\_DETAILS&componentID=3844925&componentTypeID=VA&revisionDate=136810680000](https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=ITEM_DETAILS&componentID=3844925&componentTypeID=VA&revisionDate=136810680000).

### Training Dates and Times:

- Thursday, February 19, 2015, from 1 to 4 pm
- Thursday, April 23, 2015, from 1 to 4 pm
- Thursday, June 18, 2015, from 1 to 4 pm
- Thursday, August 20, 2015, from 1 to 4 pm

If you have any questions regarding this training or the registration process, please contact Ryan Pugh at [Ryan.Pugh2@va.gov](mailto:Ryan.Pugh2@va.gov) or 202-461-4155 or contact Nanese Loza at [Nanese.Loza@va.gov](mailto:Nanese.Loza@va.gov) or 202-461-4049.

## 2015-2016 AAGEN SES Development Program

ODI and the VA Learning University signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the African American Federal Executive Association (AAFEA) and the Asian American Government Executives Network (AAGEN) to promote leadership development opportunities to diverse populations. The AAGEN Senior Executive Service (SES) Development Program is a tuition-free program that offers executive development courses, coaching in mock interviews, individual mentoring, and career counseling for candidates to gain the skills to effectively compete for SES positions. Each candidate will be assigned a SES or a Flag officer mentor who will provide guidance throughout the program. Other benefits include:

- SES application preparation
- Public speaking tutorials
- Leadership training

- Mentorship
- Networking opportunities

Eligible applicants must be at the GS-15 equivalent level or higher, have at least one year of supervisory experience, have the explicit approval and support of their current organizations to apply, and be registered as an AAGEN member for the current year of application. Current Federal government employees and qualified professionals from outside the federal government may apply. AAGEN will select up to twenty-four candidates for the class, up to four of whom may be selected from applicants outside the Federal government.

Registration ends promptly at 11:59PM on December 31, 2014, and the selectees will be notified prior to mid-March 2015. The next class will commence in April 2015 and the program will continue to March 2016. The training sessions will be held each quarter in the Washington, DC metro area. Applicants must: (1) submit an online application available at <http://www.aagen.org> and (2) email supporting documents and materials including a completed Executive Development Plan (a sample is available online at <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/executive-development/edptemplate.pdf>), a completed Executive Core Qualifications (see the OPM guidance at <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/executive-core-qualifications/#url=Fundamental-Competencies> for further details), a current resume, and up to two written references (optional) to [programs@aagen.org](mailto:programs@aagen.org). Both the online application submission and the e-mail with attachment are a part of your application package. Incomplete applications will be rated as "ineligible" and will not be considered.

## Diversity News

Diversity News is a 15-minute bi-monthly video co-produced by ODI and the VA Central Office Broadcast Center for you. The December 2014/ January 2015 edition focuses on the "Guidance on Religious

Exercise and Expression in VA Facilities and Property Under the Charge and Control of VA". Diversity News follows VA News on the VA Knowledge Network, Content Distribution Network, channel 2. To view current and past episodes, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx>.



# Secretary's D&I Awards

## *Congratulations to the Winners of the Fourth Annual Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards*

The Secretary's Annual Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Awards Program was established in 1988 to recognize EEO achievements associated with legally-protected classes established by EEO laws. In fiscal year (FY) 2009, the program was redesigned as "The Secretary's Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards Program" to align with VA's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for FY 2009–2013.



In alignment with President Obama's Executive Order 13583 on Establishing a Coordinated Government-Wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce, the Department produced a revised VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for FY 2012–2016. The criteria for the Secretary's Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards are aligned with the three goals contained in this plan: build a diverse, high-performing workforce that reflects all segments of society; cultivate a flexible, collaborative, and inclusive work environment that leverages diversity and empowers all contributors; and facilitate outstanding, culturally competent public service and stakeholder relations through effective leadership and accountability.

In the Nonsupervisory Employee category, the winner this year is **Leslie R. M. Hausmann**, PhD, a Research Health Scientist in the Center for Health Equity Research and Promotion at the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System, Veterans Health Administration (VHA), in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Dr. Hausmann is being recognized for her efforts to increase the representation of less than expected groups in the health sciences by mentoring diverse students in clinical research activities. She is also being recognized for promoting civility, respect, engagement, and inclusion in the workplace; improving cultural competency through training opportunities; advancing understanding regarding racial and ethnic differences in patient health care experiences within and between VA facilities; improving the quality and equity of blood pressure control among Veterans with hypertension; advancing the science of health equity research; and providing service to the national health equity research community.

In the Manager/Supervisor category, the winner this year is **Perdita Johnson-Abercrombie**, Equal Employment Opportunity Manager, National Cemetery Administration (NCA), VA Central Office, Washington, DC. Ms. Johnson-Abercrombie is being recognized for orchestrating strategies that were instrumental in NCA's improvement in hiring individuals with disabilities, resulting in NCA appointing more than double the Secretary's goal of 3% for the hiring of employees with targeted disabilities. Ms. Johnson-Abercrombie launched an awareness program focused on reasonable accommodations (RA) and implemented a RA training program that resulted in 100% of NCA's managers and supervisors receiving RA training by the end of fiscal year 2013. NCA continues to employ the SES Diversity Accomplishment forums developed by Ms. Johnson-Abercrombie. These forums are used in conjunction with SES performance plans as a method of demonstrating, through metrics, both areas of accomplishment and areas needing improvement during SES rating periods. Ms. Johnson-Abercrombie also marketed NCA's Cemetery Director Internship Program as a strategy to increase leadership diversity, implemented strategies to resolve workplace disputes, championed the MyCareer@VA program, and partnered with external offices to deliver training focused on barrier analysis and improving respect and civility in the workplace.

In the Team category, the winner this year is the **VISN 8 Diversity & Inclusion Sub-Committee**, VHA, in St. Petersburg, Florida. This team is being recognized for their work in championing a diverse workforce by ensuring that Veterans, Disabled Veterans, and individuals with disabilities learn about VA employment opportunities. This team is also being recognized for their work in ensuring that VA is an inclusive workplace by coordinating VISN-wide training opportunities in the areas of cultural competency and prevention of micro-inequities. Team members include (in alphabetical order): Patricia Donaldson, Shelly Flanagan, Patricia Hawk (Co-chair), Gealdina Irvine, Edwin Johnson, Mary Allen Austria Lausman, Shella Miller (Co-chair), Sheila O'Hara, and Tonya Wieck.

Congratulations again to the awardees! For more information on the Secretary's Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/sec-awards.aspx>.

# MyCareer@VA

VA Leaders Share Their Secrets to Career Success

Developing your career isn't always easy, but we have good news for you: you are not alone. In fact, many leaders at VA have been where you are. In MyCareer@VA's CareerTalk podcasts (<http://go.usa.gov/7eAR>), the MyCareer@VA team interviewed VA leaders about their secrets to career success. While each leader followed a different path, they used similar approaches to develop their careers. Read on for advice from VA leaders to help you grow in your career.

## It's Okay to Pursue the 'Road Less Traveled'

If there's one thing we learned from VA leaders that should reassure you in your career, it's that there is no one way or right way to reach your career goals. Fernando Rivera and Timothy Cooke are just two examples of leaders who took unique, unexpected paths to get where they are today.

"I wish I could tell you that I set a very clear career path to become a network director. I did not," said Fernando Rivera (<http://go.usa.gov/7eAd>), Director of the VA Capitol Health Care Network (VISN 5) for the Veterans Health Administration. "But I knew that I wanted to be in a leadership role in health care administration, so I took deliberate actions to prepare myself for that."

Like Rivera, Timothy Cooke (<http://go.usa.gov/7es3>) took advantage of his unique career path by learning from each position he held. The Medical Center Director of the Martinsburg VA Medical Center explained, "You get to learn so many different things along the way...The variety, the culture, whether it's the location or the service that you provide...You become a far stronger person, employee, or leader throughout that entire journey."

## Identify What Drives You

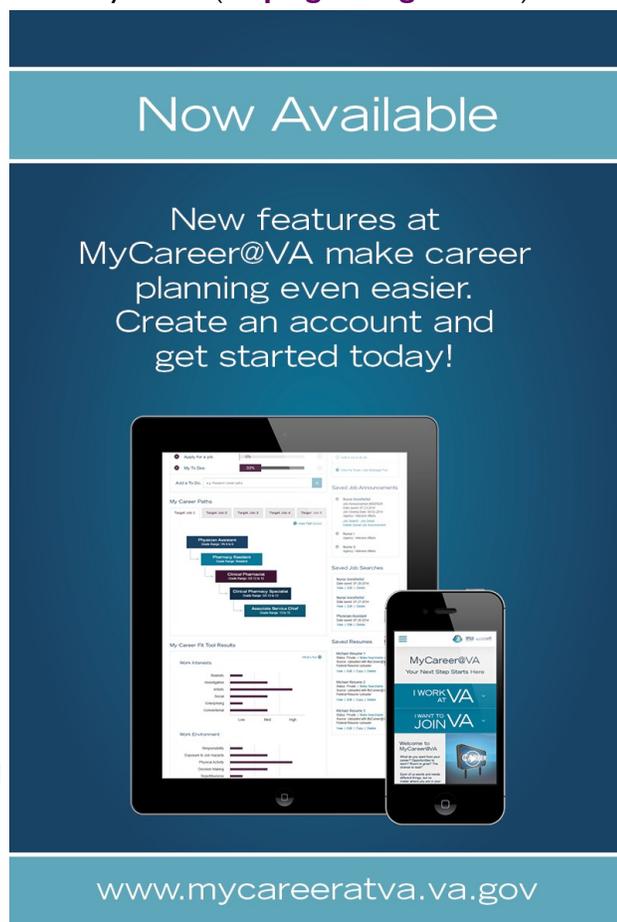
Prior to making big career changes, make sure to stop and take some time to assess yourself (<http://go.usa.gov/7esT>)—it's as simple as brainstorming your interests, priorities, and goals. One part of this assessment is identifying what you're passionate about, according to Aaron Lee (<http://go.usa.gov/7es9>), Director of the Leadership & Professional Development Division for the Veterans Benefits Administration. Lee suggested asking yourself what wakes you up at night and what gets you up in the morning, "Those are the things that drive you. And so when you are able to identify the driving forces in your life, then that makes your decision to transition into [a] career that much more clear."

Identifying what drives you might also mean taking a step back and looking for a running theme in your work history. "I'd had different jobs and goals throughout my career," said Lee Becker (<http://go.usa.gov/7esm>), Chief of the Administrative Support Division for the Board of Veterans Appeals. "But every job I've had has involved the idea of service and specifically serving others and providing value."

## Take Risks and Roll Up Your Sleeves

Many VA leaders talked about stepping outside of their job descriptions—and often out of their comfort zones—to grow in their careers. First and foremost, it's important to take the time to identify the experience you still need to reach your next position. Scheduling just 30 minutes to focus on your goals can help you plan for the future. Then it's a matter of finding ways to get the training or developmental opportunities you need.

Continued on page 10.



Now Available

New features at MyCareer@VA make career planning even easier. Create an account and get started today!

[www.mycareeratva.va.gov](http://www.mycareeratva.va.gov)

# VACO Notes

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Antony Washington serves on the Training and Communications team and specializes in the design, development, and delivery of workplace diversity and inclusion training. Prior to joining ODI, he held several positions in the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) with the Department of Labor where he served as a Senior Equal Employment Opportunity Compliance Specialist, Freedom of Information Act Coordinator, and Records Management Officer for OFCCP's Division of Program Operations. Mr. Washington is a retired Infantry Soldier and brings a wealth of training and leadership experience after serving 20 years in the Army. At Headquarters, Department of the Army, Pentagon, he served as the Deputy Chief for the Army's Military Equal Opportunity program. Mr. Washington is a proud graduate of the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute and a 101st ABN Division Gulf War Veteran. He earned his undergraduate degrees from Austin Peay State University and a Master's of Public Administration from Troy University. Welcome, Mr. Washington!



*Antony Washington*

## Field Notes

### **Workforce Recruitment Program Centralized Fund**

ODI established a centralized fund for fiscal year (FY) 2015 to reimburse facilities VA-wide who hire Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) interns. The WRP provides work experience opportunities for college students and recent graduates with disabilities who are interested in working 10 to 14 weeks during the winter (December through February), spring (March through May), and summer (June through August) months. The WRP centralized fund is a VA-wide initiative in support of Executive Order 13548, "Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities" and the Secretary's three percent goal for hiring individuals with targeted disabilities. To obtain a WRP intern using centralized funding, access VA's WRP Web page at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx#WRP> and complete the required forms. It's important to act promptly and begin searching for candidates via the WRP Web site at <http://www.wrp.gov> no later than mid-December. For questions, contact Aurelia Waters, VA WRP Program Manager, ODI, at (202) 461-4124 or [Aurelia.Waters@va.gov](mailto:Aurelia.Waters@va.gov).

### **LVAAA Awards Season Kicks Off**

The Leadership VA Alumni Association (LVAAA) is gearing up for its upcoming award season. Consider your leaders, colleagues or staff for the following:

- **LVAAA Team Spirit Award:** This award celebrates the efforts of an outstanding team of VA employees that displayed extraordinary achievement and leadership accomplished through a team effort. This effort should have some positive impact on Veteran treatment and the community. The winning team receives an engraved plaque.
- **LVAAA Honorary Leadership Award:** LVAAA honors two employees with this award—one employee at the GS-13-15 levels (or wage grade and Title 38 equivalent) and one to an employee at the Senior Executive Service level. LVAAA is looking for leaders who have made major contributions to their organization, Veterans, and community. Each winner receives an engraved plaque.
- **LVAAA Exemplary Service Award:** LVAAA recognizes up and coming leaders from the mid and junior ranks. For this award, the VA employee must be at the GS-12 level and below, including wage grade and equivalent Title 38. LVAAA presents two awards to deserving VA employees: one for an employee in the grade GS-1 through GS-8 and another for an employee in the grade GS-9 through GS-12. Each winner receives an engraved plaque.
- **LVAAA Academic Scholarship Award:** LVAAA also values efforts made by VA employees for furthering their education. This award recognizes a VA employee who is also a student, in good standing, and whose educational costs are not fully covered by another scholarship program. LVAAA provides a \$2,500 scholarship to the educational institution of the winner to cover tuition, lab fees, books, and other course-related supplies.

Each award has its own nomination and disclosure forms. The deadline for all nomination packets is December 19. For questions, contact Cheryl Ludwa, LVAAA Awards Chairperson, at [Cheryl.Ludwa@va.gov](mailto:Cheryl.Ludwa@va.gov).

# Operation S.A.V.E.

## Suicide Prevention

As a VA employee, you are an important member of a team that serves our Nation's Veterans and Active Duty personnel. During the course of working with Veterans, you might come across someone in crisis—maybe even someone considering suicide. Some people think that if a person really wants to die by suicide, there is nothing we can do to help him or her. In fact, we know that this is not true. Most people who die by suicide actually communicate something about the suicidal intent before they die. Talking to someone about suicide does not make it more likely that he or she will attempt or die by suicide. Rather, it communicates that someone cares and that the person is not alone. It also gives the listener the chance to try to help before suicidal behaviors actually occur.

Operation S.A.V.E. will help you act with care and compassion if you encounter a person who is suicidal. The acronym "SAVE" summarizes the steps needed to take an active and valuable role in suicide prevention:

**S**igns of suicidal thinking

**A**sk questions

**V**alidate the person's experience

**E**ncourage treatment and expedite getting help

Suicidal individuals are not always easy to identify, some are obvious, while others are not. Some of the recognizable warning **S**igns of suicide may be:

- Hopelessness, feeling like there's no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug abuse
- Withdrawing from family and friends

When you encounter a Veteran or Active Duty Servicemember who you think might be contemplating suicide, don't be afraid to show that you care by **A**sking: "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" People who are considering suicide are typically relieved when someone opens this conversation and genuinely listens to what they have to say.

If the person is thinking about suicide, **V**alidate the experience by letting the person know that he or she is not alone. Many people think about suicide, and there are numerous ways to help a person who is considering suicide to find other ways of coping.

**E**ncourage and help that person get the services he or she needs to find alternative ways of coping.

When helping a person in crisis to get assistance, there are a number of resources available at all VA facilities; please learn what your local options are. All Veterans Health Administration (VHA) facilities have a crisis intervention plan, developed by a facility Suicide Prevention Coordinator (SPC); make sure you are familiar with the plan and are aware of all local resources. If you work in a VHA facility that has an emergency department, the person can be taken there and evaluated for mental health and social service interventions on that same day. Finally, for all VA employees, the Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) can be reached by dialing 1-800-273-8255 and pressing "1". The VCL can help in directing you how to intervene and/or in speaking directly to the person in crisis. When connecting a caller with the VCL, ALWAYS stay on the line to introduce the Veteran to the responder and to report the phone number from where he or she called. If a call is transferred, the caller ID number does not go through. Without this "warm transfer," the VCL staff will not have the correct phone number, and if the caller disconnects, it might not be possible to contact him or her back. It is important to provide as much information as possible about the Veteran of concern. **Continued on the next page.**

# Policy Alerts

## ***Guidance on Religious Exercise and Expression in VA Facilities and Property Under the Charge and Control of VA***

VA is committed to maintaining a diverse workforce and inclusive work environment and to protecting First Amendment freedoms. As our Nation becomes increasingly diverse, so do the religious affiliations and belief systems of its citizens. VA must be mindful and respectful of the diverse belief systems and the First Amendment rights of all its employees, Veterans, stakeholders, and others in the conduct of VA business.

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits the making of any law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise of religion. The First Amendment has been interpreted to prohibit the government including its employees acting in their official capacities from endorsing, favoring, or inhibiting religion.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, among other bases, and protects all aspects of an employee's religious beliefs or practices. According to the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for the purposes of Title VII, religion includes not only traditional, organized religions, but also beliefs that are theistic, nontheistic, new, uncommon, or unaffiliated with a formal church or sect. Accordingly, VA prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion and shall not endorse, favor or disfavor any faith or belief system.

VA honors and respects the humanity of all, and protects the freedoms and rights guaranteed for each of us. Please ensure that all managers and supervisors are informed and understand their responsibilities regarding this guidance and the Frequently Asked Questions document available online at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/policy/diversity.aspx>.

### ***Hours of Duty and Leave***

VA Handbook 501 I, Part I, paragraph e; Part II, Chapter 3, paragraph 2a; and Part II, Appendix I, paragraph 10b(2)(b) has been revised and the attached policy change will be incorporated into the electronic version of the handbook. Significant changes include:

- a. Revises the procedures for scheduling the basic 40-hour administrative workweek and tour of duty for full-time physicians and dentists in order to cover extended service hours during evenings and weekends; and
- b. Clarifies the use of fee basis appointments.

# Operation S.A.V.E.

## ***Continued from the Previous Page***

The most important information is:

- The Veteran's phone number
- Veteran's name, if known
- Security Number or "last 4"
- Address, if known, or current location

A variety of additional resources exists to provide VA employees with information on suicide prevention. SPCs are affiliated with each VHA facility and can provide full trainings in Operation S.A.V.E. VA's Talent Management System (TMS) also offers multiple trainings, which can increase your understanding of suicide and how it affects Veterans and Active Duty personnel. Several trainings are available such as, "Suicide Risk Management Training for Clinicians (Course 6201)." Entering the word "suicide" in the "Search Catalog" field brings up multiple choices for trainings on suicide assessment and intervention with different populations.

# Commemorate

*Continued from Page 1*

Every child deserves a decent education, every adult deserves equal access to the workplace, and every nation that allows injustice to stand denies itself the full talents and contributions of individuals with disabilities...This year, as we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Rehabilitation Act, we updated rules to improve hiring of Veterans and people with disabilities, especially among Federal contractors and subcontractors. Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, insurers can no longer put lifetime dollar limits on essential health benefits for Americans with disabilities. And in January, it will be illegal to deny coverage because of pre-existing conditions.

The changes achieved in the last two decades speak to what people can accomplish when they refuse to accept the world as it is. Today let us once again reach for the world that should be—one where all people, regardless of country or disability, enjoy equal access, equal opportunity, and the freedom to realize their limitless potential.

## **Human Rights Day and Human Rights Week**

VA joins the Nation in commemorating Human Rights Day on December 10 and Human Rights Week December 10–17. From the 2013 Presidential Proclamation (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/12/09/presidential-proclamation-human-rights-day-and-human-rights-week-2013>): Six and a half decades ago, delegates from around the world convened to adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, rejecting the notion that individual aspirations should be subject to the whims of tyrants and empires, and affirming every person's right to liberty, equality, and justice under the law. On Human Rights Day and during Human Rights Week, we resolve not only to celebrate these ideals but also to advance them in our time.

Humanity thrives because of our differences; the exchange of ideas among vibrant cultures is a source of innovation, beauty, and vitality. Yet across the globe, our common and inalienable rights bind us as one. All women and men—across borders and regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, or income level—share the freedoms of expression, religion, assembly, and association. We all have the right to take part in government, directly or through freely elected representatives. And as societies, we have the right to choose our own destiny.

But in many parts of the world, people are still persecuted for their beliefs, imprisoned for their ideals, and punished for their convictions. A growing number of countries are passing laws designed to stifle civil society—including organizations that promote universal human rights, support good governance, and bolster economic development. Securing freedoms that are threatened or denied will require an unceasing commitment. Today and always, let us break down prejudice, amplify the courageous voices that sound the call for change, and reaffirm our unwavering support for the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

## **Bill of Rights Day**

VA joins the Nation in commemorating the Bill of Rights Day on December 15. From the 2013 Presidential Proclamation (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/12/13/presidential-proclamation-bill-rights-day-2013>): When America's Founders declared our independence, they set forth an idea that became our Nation's defining creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." They understood that while these truths have always been self-evident, they have never been self-executing. After 15 years of democratic experimentation and national debate, the Bill of Rights came into force, touching off a long journey to carve America's highest ideals into enduring, enforceable law.

The Bill of Rights is the foundation of American liberty, securing our most fundamental rights—from the freedom to speak, assemble, and practice our faith as we please to the protections that ensure justice under the law.

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# Commemorate

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For almost two and a quarter centuries, these 10 Constitutional Amendments have served as a basis from which civil society could grow and flourish. They have encouraged innovation and defended Americans who questioned, challenged, and dared our Nation to be greater.

Thomas Jefferson once wrote, “I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions, but laws and constitutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind.” Our liberties opened heated debate over the questions of citizenship and human rights, driving progress in the American mind. We learned that our Nation, built on the principles of freedom and equality, could not survive half-slave and half-free. We resolved that our daughters must have the same rights, the same chances, and the same freedom to pursue their dreams as our sons, and that if we are truly created equal, then the love we commit to one another must be equal as well. Americans with disabilities tore down legal and social barriers; disenfranchised farmworkers united to claim their rights to dignity, fairness, and a living wage; civil rights activists marched, bled, and gave their lives to bring the era of segregation to an end. As we celebrate the anniversary of the Bill of Rights, let us reach for a day when we all may enjoy the basic truths of liberty and equality.

## MyCareer@VA

*Continued from Page 5*

“Don't be afraid to take risks by asking the question or volunteering your time to work on a project that interests you,” said Becker (<http://go.usa.gov/7esm>). “You may need to sacrifice time on your end to get the desired result and to prepare for the future because you never know where it could lead.”

And remember that there are many ways to gain the experience you need. According to Georgia Coffey (<http://go.usa.gov/7esj>), Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion, “[E]ducation comes in all forms; it can come in the formal classes that you will take both inside and outside of VA but it also comes in the relationships that you form with human beings inside and outside VA.”

### Polish Your Resume and Interview Skills

When you're searching for a new job, your resume and interview skills are an important asset. VA leaders spoke about how these skills were important as they sought out and applied for positions throughout their careers.

As you search for a new position, think intentionally about the jobs you go after. “I do not apply for a job just to be applying for a job. I do not do a generic resume and send it out to the masses,” said Jacqueline Hillian-Craig (<http://go.usa.gov/7eHY>), Director of Finance Service for the National Cemetery Administration. “I look for the job, and I have to feel it in my heart that this is my job; and once I feel that that's the job, I will apply for it.”

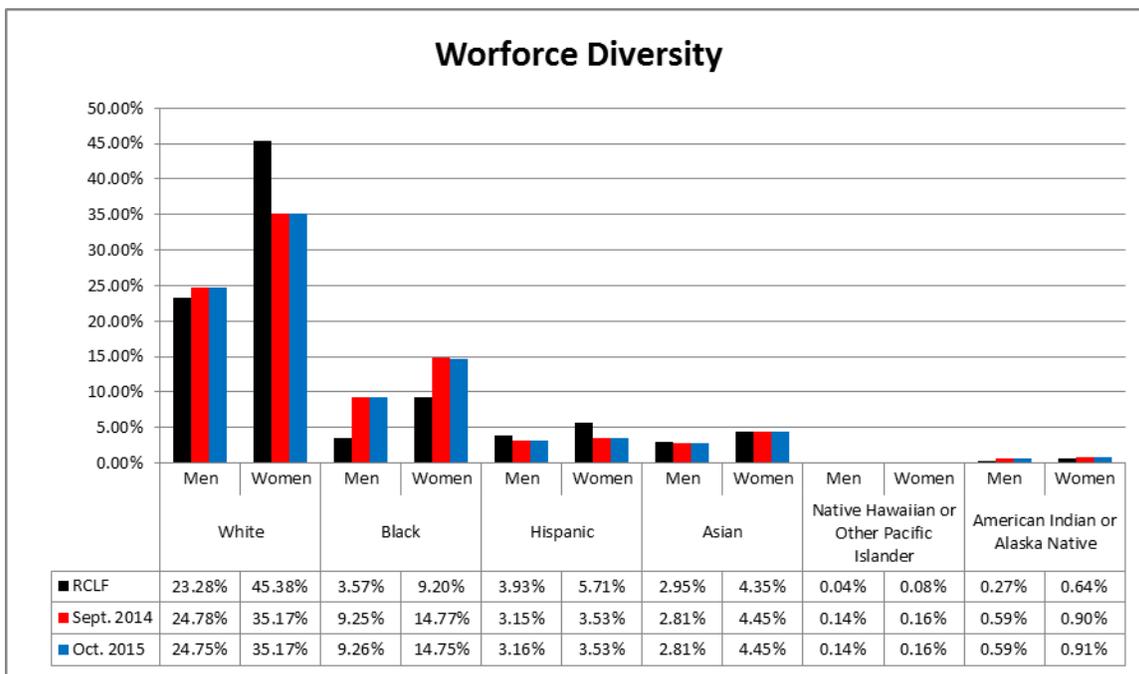
When preparing for an interview, Rivera (<http://go.usa.gov/7eAd>) also stressed the importance of understanding the organization's culture and values. “In my opinion, it's silly to pretend to be someone you're not in an interview, get the job, and then be part of an organization where you know you don't fit in and you don't believe,” he said. “That can be very unsatisfying.”

Learning from those who have gone before you is a great way to help you find your own direction. Want to hear more advice from these VA leaders and others? Check out MyCareer@VA's CareerTalk entire podcast series (<http://go.usa.gov/7eAR>), and get the inside scoop on how they navigated their careers at VA. And as always, visit MyCareer@VA (<http://go.usa.gov/7eHe>) and the VA Learning University (<http://www.valu.va.gov>) for more training and career development information.

# VA Demographics Report

Demographic Report for the Department of Veterans Affairs, October 2014

VA's workforce diversity remains relatively steady through October 2014. Although the VA workforce increased by 1,068 employees since the beginning of the new fiscal year, the changes in representation for all groups in VA's permanent and temporary workforce were negligible.



Comparing the demographic characteristics of VA's workforce against the Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF)\*, the representation of White women, Hispanic men and women, and Asian men in VA are lower than expected.

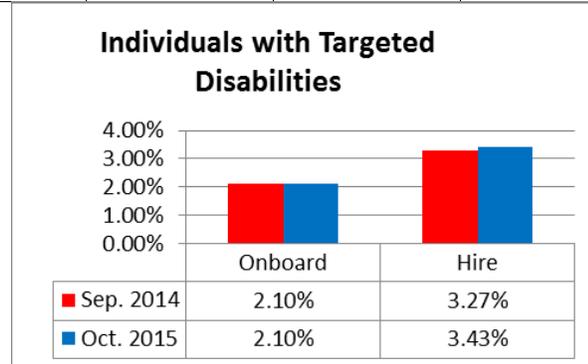
## Diversity Index

The Diversity Index is a single measure of workforce diversity that measures the convergence of VA's aggregate workforce distribution by race, ethnicity, and gender to the Civilian Labor Force (CLF)\*\* or RCLF. Since September 2014, the RCLF-based diversity index increased 0.58 percent and the CLF-based diversity index increased 0.54 percent.

	Sep. 2014	Oct. 2015	Change
Using RCLF	87.63%	88.21%	0.58%
Using CLF	86.66%	87.20%	0.54%

## Individuals with Targeted Disabilities

The proportion of individuals with targeted disabilities in VA's workforce has remained the same since the beginning of the fiscal year. We continue to exceed the Secretary's 2 percent onboard goal.



The hiring of individuals with targeted disabilities also increased since the start of the fiscal year. Let's keep up the good work, VA!

For more information, contact ODI's Workforce Analysis Team at [odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov).

\*Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF) reflects all U.S. Citizens 16 years of age or over, excluding those in Armed Forces, who are employed in or actively seeking employment in VA specific occupations. This is based on the 2010 Census and does include Puerto Rico. The RCLF seen here is based on the end of FY13.

\*\*Civilian Labor Force (CLF) consists of all U.S. Citizens 16 years of age or over, excluding those in Armed Forces, who are employed or seeking employment. The CLF contains all occupations and is an accurate comparative basis for Federal Government-wide comparison, the largest employer in the U.S. with all occupations represented. This is based on the 2010 Census which is shown to be a higher benchmark compared with the 2000 Census. The CLF does not include Puerto Rico.

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](mailto:odi@va.gov).

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Visit our Web site <http://www.diversity.va.gov> for staff e-mail addresses.

#### GOT NEWS?

We want to hear from you! E-mail us at [odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov).

#### OTHER USEFUL LINKS

MyCareer@VA  
<http://www.mycareeratva.va.gov>

HR&A  
<http://www.va.gov/employee>

Office of Human Resources Management  
<http://www.va.gov/ohrm>

Office of Resolution Management  
<http://www.va.gov/orm>

Resolution Support Center  
<http://www.va.gov/ORM/RSC.asp>  
1-888-566-3982

VA Whistleblower Rights and Protections  
<http://www.diversity.va.gov/whistleblower.aspx>

VHA Diversity and Inclusion Community of Practice  
[David.Rabb@va.gov](mailto:David.Rabb@va.gov)

VA on Facebook  
<http://www.facebook.com/veteransaffairs>

VA on YouTube  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/DeptVetAffairs>

# D&I Online

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:

- ▶ 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

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 electronic news service, e-mail [odi@va.gov](mailto: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 video co-produced by ODI and the VA Central Office Broadcast Center for you. *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>.

## December 2014 Calendar

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

Universal Human Rights Month

Hanukkah (Feast of Lights/Dedication)  
December 16–December 24

Rosa Parks Day  
December 1

Christmas  
December 25

World AIDS Day  
December 1

Kwanzaa  
December 26–January 1

International Day of Persons with Disabilities  
December 3

New Year's Eve  
December 31

National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day  
December 7

Human Rights Day  
December 10

Human Rights Week  
December 10–17

Bill of Rights Day  
December 15



Integrity  
Commitment  
Advocacy  
Respect  
Excellence