

**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**  
**Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program (DVAAP)**  
**Accomplishment Report for Fiscal Year 2013**  
**And**  
**Plan Certification for Fiscal Year 2014**



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## **Department of Veterans Affairs**

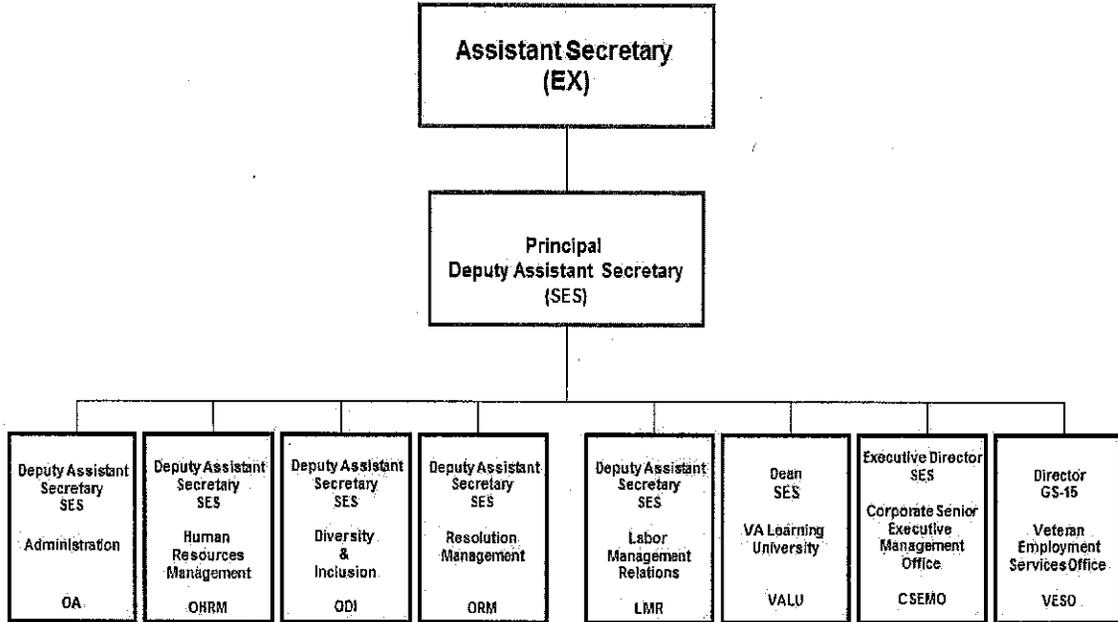
### **Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program (DVAAP) Executive Summary**

The Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program (DVAAP) is designed to promote Federal employment and advancement opportunities for qualified disabled Veterans. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is submitting this report pursuant to 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) §4214, as amended and 5 Code of Federal Regulation (C.F.R.) 720 Part C, which requires Federal agencies to submit an annual report on the implementation of these sections.

As the second largest Cabinet level agency, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employs over 300,000 employees and provides health care, benefits, and memorial services to approximately 25 million Veterans. VA provides these services through three major organizational Subcomponents: the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) with 157 medical centers; the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) with 56 regional offices; and the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) with 130 cemeteries. The VA Central Office (VACO) is the national headquarters office comprised of numerous Staff Offices, reporting to the Secretary of VA.

In fulfillment of VA's vision "to provide Veterans the world-class benefits and services they have earned - and to do so by adhering to the highest standards of compassion, commitment, excellence, professionalism, integrity, accountability, and stewardship," VA continued its efforts to build a diverse and high-performing workforce and an inclusive workplace that reflects our Nation and the Veterans we serve. VA is committed to providing equal employment opportunities for all, including disabled Veterans. This is demonstrated by the fiscal year (FY) 2013 accomplishments listed below, as they relate to disabled Veterans, with regards to methods utilized to: recruit and employ; provide and improve internal advancement opportunities; and monitor, review, and evaluate DVAAP 2013 Plan goals and activities. In addition, the Plan Certification for Fiscal Year 2014 addresses the Agency's annual plan for employment and advancement of disabled Veterans.

Office of the Assistant Secretary  
for  
Human Resources & Administration



## **Department of Veterans Affairs Mission:**

To fulfill President Lincoln's promise "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans.

The Department's mission is to serve America's Veterans and their families with dignity and compassion and to be their principal advocate in ensuring that they receive the care, support, and recognition earned in service to this Nation.

### **Core Values**

**Integrity:** Act with high moral principle. Adhere to the highest professional standards. Maintain the trust and confidence of all with whom I engage.

**Commitment:** Work diligently to serve Veterans and other beneficiaries. Be driven by an earnest belief in VA's mission. Fulfill my individual responsibilities and organizational responsibilities.

**Advocacy:** Be truly Veteran-centric by identifying, fully considering, and appropriately advancing the interests of Veterans and other beneficiaries.

**Respect:** Treat all those I serve and with whom I work with dignity and respect. Show respect to earn it.

**Excellence:** Strive for the highest quality and continuous improvement. Be thoughtful and decisive in leadership, accountable for my actions, willing to admit mistakes.



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**Fiscal Year**  
**2013**  
**Accomplishment Report**



## RECRUIT AND EMPLOY

### Veterans Health Administration (VHA)

In FY 2013, VHA continued to utilize methods to recruit and employ disabled Veterans, especially those who are 30 percent or more disabled. Human Resources Management Service (HRMS) and EEO Program Offices maintained close working relationships to place special emphasis on the recruitment and placement of disabled Veterans. Reasonable accommodation statements were included on job vacancy announcements to ensure applicants with disabilities had the availability of reasonable accommodations.

VHA Human Resources (HR) staffing specialists and selecting officials at the field facilities by way of training, meetings, and communications with managers and supervisors used special appointment authorities:

- Non-competitive Appointment Authority for 30 percent or more disabled Veterans
- Veterans Readjustment Appointment (VRA)
- Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA)

VHA VA Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) field facilities continued to solicit referral applicants from their respective Communities through affiliation with their local Departments of Labor (DOL), Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation Service, and Employment Service Centers to exchange employment information and establish recruitment sources for disabled Veterans. Field facilities maintained regular contact with various Veteran service organizations, such as the American Legion, American Veterans (AMVETS), Disabled American Veterans and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

The VHA Therapeutic and Supported Employment Services (TSES) was established for Veterans whose lives have been disrupted by mental illness or physical disabilities, and who would benefit from a supportive, stable, approach to work. TSES utilizes work-based treatment to facilitate and strengthen vocational rehabilitation potential and to provide a continuum of vocational skill development services. These programs are distinct and unique from the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program (VR&E) in two primary ways: (1) VA service connection, disability compensation, or VA pension are not required to receive TSES treatment, and (2) TSES vocational services are integrated in the Veteran's medical treatment and continuum of care.

The VHA TSES Program Components are:

- Incentive Therapy (IT): IT provides a diversified work experience at VA medical center for Veterans who exhibit severe mental illness and/or physical impairments. IT services may consist of full or part time work with token remuneration limited to the maximum of one half of the Federal minimum wage

- CWT/ Sheltered Workshop: CWT operates sheltered workshops at approximately 35 VA Medical Centers nationally. CWT sheltered work shop is a pre-employment vocational activity that provides an opportunity for work hardening and assessment in a simulated work environment. Participating Veterans are paid on a piece rate basis commensurate for the type of work performed.
- CWT/Transitional Work (CWT/TW): CWT/TW is pre-employment vocational assessment program that operates in VA medical centers and/or local community business and industry. CWT/TW participants are matched to real life work assignments for a time limited basis. Veterans are supervised by personnel of the sponsoring site, under the same job expectations experienced by non-CWT workers. CWT/TW participants are not considered employees and receive no traditional employee benefits. Participants receive the greater of Federal or state minimum wage, or more depending on the type of work.
- CWT/Supported Employment (CWT/SE): CWT/SE consists of full-time or part-time competitive employment with extensive clinical supports. The focus of CWT/SE is to assist Veterans with psychosis and other serious mental illness gain access to meaningful competitive employment. CWT/SE support services are generally phased out after the Veteran is able to maintain employment independently. CWT/SE is used for Veterans with spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury and PTSD through VA R&D sponsored research.
- Homeless Veterans Supported Employment Program (HVSEP): Decisive action was taken toward the goal of ending homelessness among our Nation's Veterans. To achieve this goal, a plan was developed to end homelessness among Veterans, which assists every eligible and willing homeless Veteran to receive services. Medical centers received up to four years of funding for the development of the Homeless Veteran Supported Employment Program. This program provides vocational assistance, job development and placement, and on-going employment supports designed to improve employment outcomes among homeless Veterans. HVSEP is coordinated among the Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) and Homeless Veteran Programs, and 400 Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists (VRS) hired for this initiative have been integrated into Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV), Grant and Per Diem (GPD), Department of Housing and Urban Development -Veterans Administration Supported Housing (HUD-VASH), Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans (DCHV), Healthcare for Re-Entry Veterans (HCRV), and the Veterans Justice Outreach Initiative (VJO) for the purpose of providing community-based vocational and employment services. All the HVSEP VRS consist of homeless, formerly homeless, or at risk of homelessness Veterans.

Other recruitment methods used by VHA field facilities included resources such as:

- Delegated Examining Units (DEUs) and Compensatory Coordinators to recruit disabled Veterans. DEUs allowed for recruitment from all sources, which created a larger applicant pool to select the best-qualified candidate;
- Compensable service connected Veterans with 30 percent or more disability were given hiring preference with the use of DEU referrals;

- VHA VISN field facilities worked with the 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
- Transition Assistance Program (TAP).

Veterans Vocational Specialists assisted disabled Veterans with their:

- Resumes;
- Applications for employment;
- Effective Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSAs);
- Preparing for performance based interviews; and
- Employment retention.

Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Coordinators were established to address the employment and career advancement barriers to improve the recruitment, advancement, and retention of returning disabled Veterans. The "Disabled Veterans Enrolled in VA Training" program allowed eligible disabled Veterans to receive training or work experience. VHA's Healthcare Recruitment and Retention Office (HRRO) National Recruitment Program (NRP) worked with Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Employment Coordinators to fill Information Technology (IT) positions with disabled Veterans who had graduated from IT academic programs. VHA's HRRO NRP collaborated with Transition Assistance Programs for recently separated military Veterans and the Veterans Employment Services Office (VESO), whose mission is to attract, recruit, and hire Veterans, particularly severely injured Veterans returning from recent conflicts. VHA continued to work with the VR&E VetSuccess Program, which has as its primary function to help Veterans who have service-connected disabilities become suitably employed, maintain employment, or achieve independence in daily living. The VR&E VetSuccess Program is authorized by Congress under Title 38, Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 31. It is sometimes referred to as the Chapter 31 program. A comprehensive evaluation is completed with a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to include an assessment of a Veteran's interests, aptitudes, and abilities to determine whether the Veteran is entitled to VR&E services. An assessment is also conducted to determine whether service-connected disabilities impair a Veteran's ability to find and/or hold a job using the occupational skills already attained. The VR&E VetSuccess program supports Veterans with service-connected disabilities so severe that they cannot immediately consider work to improve their ability to live as independently as possible. The VR&E VetSuccess program services include:

- Comprehensive rehabilitation evaluation to determine abilities, skills, and interests for employment;
- Vocational counseling and rehabilitation planning for employment services;
- Employment services such as job-training, job-seeking skills, resume development, and other work readiness assistance;
- Assistance finding and keeping a job, including the use of special employer incentives and job accommodations;
- On-the-job training (OJT), apprenticeships, and non-paid work experiences;
- Post-secondary training at a college, vocational, technical or business school;
- Supportive rehabilitation services including case management, counseling, and medical referrals; and
- Independent living services for Veterans who are unable to work due to the severity of their disabilities.

### **Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)**

VBA recognizes the service of our Nation's Veterans and the benefits of hiring Veterans and disabled Veterans, who possess knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired through practical experience in the military. In FY 2013, regional offices (ROs) continued to use special hiring authorities to hire Veterans and disabled Veterans through the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA), Veterans Recruitment Appointments (VRA), and Schedule A appointments. ROs participated in military briefings and monthly Transition Assistance Program (TAP) briefings, as well as job fairs held at universities, colleges, and educational institutions that were specifically targeted to recruit and hire Veterans and disabled Veterans.

In addition, vacancy announcements containing detailed information on hiring authorities for Veterans and disabled Veterans were posted on the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website, [www.USAJOBS.opm.gov](http://www.USAJOBS.opm.gov), RO Intranet sites, and listed with state Veterans service offices, military family support centers, and the VetSuccess program. VBA vacancy announcements were also posted for registered Veterans on VA's eBenefits website.

During orientation, all new VBA employees completed from OPM Standard Form-256, Self-Identification of Disability, which is a method used to identify employees with a disability including disabled Veterans.

## **National Cemetery Administration (NCA)**

In FY13, NCA leaders continued advocating for a very strong emphasis on using special hiring authorities as well as other devices to employ Veterans, disabled Veterans and other persons with disabilities. NCA's Human Resource Center supported leadership efforts by using various hiring authorities to include the Veterans Readjustment Appointment (VRA) Act; the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA); the 30 percent Disabled Veteran Program; and Schedule A Hiring authorities. In FY13 NCA demonstrated significant increases from FY12. NCA appointed 314 employees including 244 Veterans or 77.70 percent of the new hires, 130 were OIF/OEF Veterans, and 102 were 30 percent or more disabled Veterans which represented 31 percent of all the new hires at NCA. NCA's blend of leadership propensity and staff proficiency has elevated the administration to the position of being a model agency in the Federal Government when it comes to hiring Veterans and disabled Veterans. Following are some of the programs and efforts that facilitate these accomplishments.

NCA continued its practice of using recruiting resources, such as the Delegated Examining Units (DEU) and the VHA Compensated Work Therapy, (CWT) Program. The CWT Program allows NCA to recruit and develop applicants' pools of disabled Veterans for available positions at the Administration. DEUs allows managers to recruit from various sources increasing their ability to locate and appoint qualified disabled Veteran candidates to available NCA positions.

In FY13, the Hispanic Veterans Careers Coalition (HV2CC) program was initiated by NCA in cooperation with VBA, VHA, and ODI. This program reviews VA Hispanic employment practices and develops improved processes to increase Hispanic Veteran employment. The initiative also addresses reasons for high joblessness, and the impact of current outreach strategies.

As the representation of disabled Veterans and Persons with Targeted Disabilities grows in NCA's workforce, new efforts have been implemented to increase awareness of various programs that support these initiatives. One of the programs is the Reasonable Accommodations (RA) Program, which ensures all employees are able to perform the essential functions of their positions. An electronic tracking system, called the Reasonable Accommodation Compliance System (RACS) was incorporated into NCA operations in FY12. All Central Office (CO) and field locations were trained and are using this system. NCA was selected to pilot the system and worked with the contract development team. Subsequently, the Under Secretary of Memorial Affairs instructed that the NCA EEO Director deliver mandatory RA training to NCA managers. In response, NCA collaborated with the disability program manager at ODI resulting in 100 percent of NCA managers being trained on RAs. The RA training for managers has proven to be invaluable, ensuring that NCA managers understand RAs as they relate to the Americans with Disabilities Act, and more importantly, giving them the tools needed to ensure the program is successful at NCA. As the result of organizational preparation, the RA program at NCA has proven to be an unabated success guaranteeing continued superior service for NCA customers.

The NCA Homeless Veterans Apprenticeship Program, established in 2012, supports the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) strategic priority of ending Veteran homelessness by 2015, as well as President Obama's Veterans Employment Initiative (Executive Order 13518). The Apprenticeship is a one year paid employment training program for Veterans who are homeless or

at risk for homelessness. Through this program, VA is helping homeless Veterans obtain employment with education and training assistance opportunities. In the first year of the program, 24 Veterans were selected as caretaker apprentices. They received initial cemetery caretaker training, consisting of classroom instruction and hands-on training, at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri. In addition to the standard caretaker curriculum, the apprentices received an NCA orientation and specialized training to help navigate the new work environment. For the duration of the program, apprentices will undergo on-the-job training at their designated national cemeteries in Bay Pines, Florida; Fort Bliss, Texas; Mountain Home, Tennessee; Black Hills, South Dakota; and Puerto Rico. NCA will conduct Quarterly Training Review Meetings and conduct Lessons Learned sessions with apprentices.

NCA is currently assessing the Homeless Veterans Apprenticeship Program's success rate and anticipated 14 Veterans to graduate in October 2013. The success of the program will allow the team to further expand the program to other career fields, including grounds, facilities and equipment maintenance career fields within VA and other Federal agencies. In FY13, NCA also established the Executive Diversity Council and Sub-Committee and the Special Emphasis Program Advisory Committee. One of the items on the committee's action list is to link with the Minority Veteran Program Coordinators (MVPC) Program to increase outreach to Veterans including disabled Veterans to ensure they are aware of benefits, services and employment opportunities throughout VA.

NCA continues to enforce the Cemetery Intern Director's Program as a method of recruiting Veterans and disabled Veterans into NCA's leadership pipeline. The program is marketed throughout the organization and to external sources.

NCA took delivery of a new outreach/command and control vehicle similar to VHA's Mobile Vet Centers. The 35-foot RV-style vehicle became available for cemetery use at outreach events beginning in April FY13. The vehicle is fully stocked with outreach materials and displays. This is a very significant initiative that increases NCA's ability to conduct outreach to Veterans and disabled Veterans alike. NCA MVPCs will have the ability to submit requests for the vehicle to support outreach operations.

The Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs (USMA) spoke at 42 events where he discussed one or more of the following topics: Veterans' benefits, hiring Veterans, contracting with Veteran-owned/disabled Veteran-owned businesses or the value of diversity. NCA's executives, MVPCs and staff also continued their participation in a broad array of events related to Veteran and disabled Veteran outreach activities. Below is a list of some of the Veterans FY 13 outreach events in which NCA Leaders, MVPCs, and staff participated:

- Houston National Cemetery (HNC) delivered an outreach presentation to a group of Veterans at the Vet Center North Houston on April 10.
- Puerto Rico National Cemetery provided NCA outreach to the DAV Veterans Information Seminar in Arecibo, P.R., on May 23.

- Florida National Cemetery participated in NCA outreach at the Minority Veterans Town Hall Meeting in Sanford, Fla., April 20.
- South Florida, Bay Pines and Florida National Cemeteries participated in Florida's 26th Annual Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion, April 25-28.
- At the Memorial Day program at South Florida National Cemetery (SFNC), members of the Paws for Liberty group that helps hundreds of Veterans staffed an outreach table. "Paws for Liberty" is a nonprofit group that raises funds for, trains and places service dogs with Veterans suffering from physical and mental disabilities.
- The USMA spoke at a pre-Memorial Day ceremony on at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in Washington, D.C., on May 22.
- NCA participated in a program at the White House in support of The Soldier Ride on April 22. The Soldiers Ride is a collaborative effort between the Department of Defense and the Wounded Warrior Project to raise awareness about the physical and mental struggles our wounded Veterans face.
- Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery participated in a recent outreach event in Del Rio, Texas.
- The USMA served as guest speaker at the dedication ceremony of the Maryland Veterans Memorial Museum in Newburg, Md., on May 4. NCACO personnel staffed NCA's Mobile Command Vehicle for outreach.
- Memorial Service Network V (MSN) provided NCA outreach to the Veterans University Summit in San Francisco on April 24.
- Fort Gibson National Cemetery in Oklahoma held its first "Moment of Remembrance" memorial service on March 6 for 16 Veterans who were recently interred with no family members present to honor them.
- Sacramento Valley National Cemetery brought NCA outreach to an event honoring military women in Fairfield, Calif., March 13. The event, called "Honoring All Military Women, Past- Present-Future," was sponsored by the Napa and Solano Counties Collaborative for Our Military and Their Families.
- MSN II Chief of Operations presided over an Arbor Day ceremony at Chattanooga National Cemetery on March 1. During the event, he expressed appreciation to the City of Chattanooga and the Chattanooga Area Veterans Council for planting more than 80 trees at the cemetery over the course of a year.
- Five members of the Friends of American Veterans of the Korean War visited San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery in California on March 12. This annual visit was headed by Ho- Myung Shim to express gratitude to the American Veterans who liberated South Korea, allowing him and many other Korean and Korean-American citizens to succeed in life. Three members of the delegation traveled from South Korea.
- Carl Giddens and Eugenia Simmons provided outreach to women Veterans at the 6th Annual Tri-county Women's Veteran Health Fair held March 16 at the West Marion community Hospital in Ocala, Fla. The event attracted approximately 250 people.

- Assistant Directors Maurice Roan and Bernie Blizzard conducted the Quarterly Florida National Cemetery Veterans Memorial Service on March 13.
- Staff at the Florida National Cemetery attended the Annual Asia Fest. The Naples Asian Professionals Association presents Asia Fest annually to help ring in the Chinese New Year. The festival showcases a variety of Asian cuisine, vendors, and cultural performances.
- NCA participated in the Federal Asian Pacific Islanders Council.

In FY13, the USMA continued his practice of briefing the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans (ACMV) and the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans (ACWV) on NCA's progress on committee recommendations and NCA responses.

NCA's EEO staff continues to work collaboratively with its field Human Resources office and MSN Directors to make use of the Minority Veterans Program Coordinators (MVPC) located at cemeteries Nationwide, to incorporate targeted recruitment into their outreach activities.

NCA continued to adhere to the DVA Veterans First Contracting Program ensuring participation of disabled Veterans and Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business vendors/contractors. NCA considers small businesses for 100 percent of contracts, and has spent over \$40 million with them in FY13.

#### **Veterans Affairs Central Office (VACO)**

VACO created the Veterans Employment Services Office (VESO) and implemented the "*VA for Vets*" career development program that helps Veterans launch and advance their careers at VA. *VA for Vets* served as a main vehicle for recruiting and employing Veterans including disabled Veterans. The *VA for Vets* Career Center is an integrated job-search and career-building platform designed to help Veterans research open federal positions, evaluate their personal strengths, identify civilian competencies and match results to their ideal career. The online Career Center offers the most robust career tools currently available in the federal government. Veterans can assess their talents and strengths, translate their military skills and training into civilian language, create multiple easy-to-read resumes, and identify and apply for open federal positions that match their career ambitions. In FY13 more than 93,000 Veterans registered in the *VA for Vets* Resume database and 50,000 uploaded their resumes.

VA's Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program (DVAAP) is a component of VESO that promotes the recruitment of disabled Veterans with a special emphasis on Wounded Warriors. The DVAAP Program Manager continued to serve the wounded, ill, and injured by participating in events with curriculums designed to prepare active-duty services members awaiting medical discharge for success and life after the military. The DVAAP program manager partnered with The Semper Fi Odyssey Wounded Warrior Program which provided transition assistance and training to approximately 200 Wounded Warriors throughout the United States. Wounded Warriors received training on how to create a plan, communicate and set their career goals, sell their skills, and other universal tools to help reinforce the significance of mental, physical, spiritual, emotional, and social well-being.

The DVAAP program manager also collaborated with the USOs, Wounded Warrior and Family Care Programs and HireHeroes USA to link RVECs to “invitation only” “Career Opportunity Days” (CODs). CODs are limited to 20 employers and 100 wounded, ill, or injured troops who are making the transition to civilian careers. RVECs were connected directly with troops based on a mutual interest in either the employer’s industry or the Wounded Warrior’s military background. RVECs conducted mock interviews with these men and women onsite at the events. These mock interviews provided the wounded, ill, or injured troops an opportunity to interact with prospective employers in a new way and provided employers a unique opportunity to get to know the prospective candidates.

VESO’s Regional Veterans Employment Coordinated (RVECs) are strategically located throughout the United States and routinely participated in various outreach events to include: Hiring our Heroes events, Recruit Military, LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizen), SAIGE (Society American Indians Government Employees), BIG (Blacks in Government), Homeless Coalition events to include VHA CHALENG summits and Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS) Stand Down events.

In FY13, RVECs attended and conducted 757 career events and presentations, assisted 588 Veterans with gaining employment at VA, and managed 291 employee Veteran retention cases. The overall number of Veteran and derived preference individuals hired within VA for 15 RVECs since VESO’s inception 11/11/11 is 1,071.

RVECs participated in 37 virtual career fairs in FY 13. Veterans who were unable to travel to live hiring events could participate in virtual career fairs and take advantage of the same career services available at the live hiring fairs. These online events offered training sessions, live chats with RVECs and the opportunity to apply for federal positions. Thousands of Veterans took advantage of the virtual career fairs.

VESO participated in several Senior Level Veteran centric employment and transitional focused outreach events to include the Executive GPS TAP program and the Retired Officer Association Employment Fair.

VESO partnered with VHA to participate in the Telehealth Clinical Technician, My HealtheVet, and Peer Support Hiring Initiatives. These efforts resulted in the hiring of more than 190 Veterans in the VHA workforce and the referral of more than 6,000 Veterans for consideration for over 800 Peer Support positions.

In FY 2013, VESO supported VA managers in hiring a number of Schedule A and service-connected disabled Veterans returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom. In FY13, VA’s Human Capital Analysis Report recorded 35,654 disabled Veterans in permanent positions and 1,685 disabled Veterans in temporary positions; totaling 37,339 or 11.10 percent of VA’s total workforce, compared to 10.33 percent in FY12. VESO has broadened the awareness and usage of Veterans’ Preference and special hiring authorities, enabling VA to hire Veterans in just 29 days. VA is making great strides to hire Veterans quickly and efficiently.

VESO's *VA for Vets* program compliments other VA recruiting programs that assist disabled Veterans to include:

**Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E)** – Assists service-disabled Veterans to prepare for, obtain, and maintain suitable employment.

**Compensated Work Therapy Program (CWT)** – Vocational rehabilitation program that endeavors to match and support work ready Veterans in competitive jobs, and to consult with business and industry regarding their specific employment needs.

## **PROMOTE AND DEVELOP**

### **Veterans Health Administration (VHA)**

In FY 2013, VHA continued to give special attention to the use of methods to provide and improve internal advancement opportunities for disabled Veterans. VHA field facilities' EEO Managers conducted presentations to highlight the results of the DVAAP report with managers and supervisors from individual service care lines throughout the year to encourage, develop, and promote internal advancement opportunities for disabled Veterans. Career ladder promotions, which allowed recruitment at an entry level and required less specialized knowledge, were used by field facilities. Other methods included using the VRA Authority, which supported training agreement programs to allow for advancement to higher levels upon completion of provided training and the use of tuition support and tuition reimbursement. Upward mobility and worker trainee positions were also used for internal advancement opportunities. Personal Development Plans were used to identify training needs and to determine the resources to meet those needs. The Department of Defense Computer/ Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP) was used by VHA facilities to provide technology accommodations. Directors, Managers, and Supervisors were encouraged to attend CAP training sessions as they became available. The use of VA's web-based Learning University and VA Knowledge Network was encouraged. The Merit Promotion Plan was provided to improve internal advancement opportunities for disabled Veterans. In particular, this system was used to recruit qualified individuals into developmental positions below the full performance level in order to cultivate internal advancement.

VHA disabled Veteran employees had the same career advancement opportunities as all other VHA employees to participate in management and leadership development programs at every level of the organization. The following programs included clear paths for acquiring career competencies, skills, knowledge, and experience needed by disabled Veterans. While these programs were not specifically targeted to disabled Veterans they were able to take advantage of these opportunities as well.

### **Leadership, Effectiveness, Accountability, Development (LEAD) Program**

VHA's LEAD program is an integrated process of identifying, assessing, and developing high potential leaders. VHA widely promotes this program to ensure a diverse cadre of high potential leaders are prepared to assume greater roles of responsibility from entry-level positions to mid-management ranks.

### **Health Care Leadership Development Program (HCLDP)**

The HCLDP provided focused leadership training and experiences for high potential employees from the middle management ranks of GS-13, 14, 15, and Title 38 equivalents. Selections for the HCLDP were made through a national process that includes endorsements by leadership, performance based interviews, and application reviews by a national rating panel.

### **Executive Career Field Candidate Development Program (ECFCDP)**

VHA's ECFCDP provided developmental opportunities to prepare to apply for executive vacancies. It is a two year program with personal development planning and preceptor components, and a wide variety of educational and experiential learning opportunities. Candidates attended an assessment center and learning goals were tailored to meet identified individual's needs.

### **Graduate Healthcare Administration Training Program (GHATP)**

This program consists of three development programs that are designed to prepare today's promising candidates to become tomorrow's VHA administration leaders by providing career development opportunities to highly qualified individuals. The GHATP consists of three highly sought after administrative training programs and a continuing graduate education opportunity.

### **Technical Career Field (TCF) Internship Program**

This program was used to develop employees in fields where full-time training in VHA procedures and regulations is required. The two year internships were centrally funded with the recruitment focused on local colleges and universities. Each intern was placed at a VHA facility and trained by a preceptor who is experienced in the target position.

### **Employee Incentive Scholarship Program (EISP)**

VHA authorized award scholarships to employees pursuing degrees or training in health care disciplines for which recruitment and retention of qualified personnel is difficult. The academic curricula covered under this initiative include education and training programs in fields leading to appointments or retention in title 38 or hybrid title 38 positions listed in 38 U.S.C. § 7401.

### **National Nursing Education Initiative (NNEI)**

NNEI is a component of the EISP, which provided scholarships to registered nurses. From the inception of the program in 1999 to June 2010, over 10,426 VHA employees have received scholarships for academic programs related to Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 occupations.

### **VA Nursing Education for Employees Program (VANEEP)**

VANEEP is another component of EISP, which provided VA facilities replacement salary dollars for scholarship participants to accelerate their degree completion by attending school full time. The academic curricula covered under this initiative include education and training programs in fields leading to appointments or retention in Title 38 or Hybrid Title 38 positions.

### **Education Debt Reduction Program (EDRP)**

EDRP enhanced recruitment and retention of health professionals that are required to meet VHA staffing needs. This program assisted in the shortage of category Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 health care disciplines to reduce the principal and interest on government and commercial loans

obtained to fund their health care education.

### **VA Learning Opportunity Residency (VALOR)**

The VALOR Program is a VA-sponsored honors program for junior and senior year students in Nursing, Pharmacy and Medical Technology Programs. It provided learning opportunities which include classroom experiences, competency-based clinical practice with qualified preceptors, and participation in focused clinical conferences aligned with their respective area of study.

### **Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)**

VBA continued to shape future leaders through the Summer Internship Program. In FY 2013, VBA sponsored 23 interns from diverse backgrounds. VBA allocated resources to establish and maintain training and educational programs designed to improve internal advancement opportunities for all employees, including Veterans and disabled Veterans. Veterans and disabled Veterans were among the employees who were selected for and completed the following programs:

- Leadership Enhancement and Development (LEAD) Program
- Introduction to Leadership (ITL) Training
- Division Leadership Management Training (DLMT)
- Assistant Director Development Program (ADDP)
- Leadership Coaching Program (LCP)
- Senior Executive Series Career Development Program (SESCDP)

### **National Cemetery Administration (NCA)**

In FY 13, NCA sustained operations of the Cemetery Intern Director's Program which is the pillar of NCA's leadership pipeline. The program is marketed to all levels of the organization and external sources. In the 1st quarter of FY13, NCA conducted its initial webinar panel consisting of Cemetery Director Intern graduates from various leadership positions throughout the agency. Detailed marketing strategies were used prior to the event to ensure high levels of target group representation. These efforts contributed to a pool of more than 400 applicants for the FY13 class.

NCA continued the formal mentoring component to the Cemetery Director Intern program, which provides the mentees an opportunity to expand their knowledge of leadership skills and management practices with an experienced individual. The 2012 class, which was a diverse group of new leaders at NCA, received their planned assignments as Directors or Assistant to the Director at National Cemeteries nationwide and in United States territories. Seventy-two point five percent of Cemetery Directors at NCA are Veterans or Disabled Veterans, and reasonable accommodations are afforded to Cemetery Director interns as required.

NCA's, Homeless Veterans Apprenticeship Program, established in 2012, supports the VA's strategic priority of ending Veteran homelessness by 2015, as well as President Obama's Veterans Employment Initiative (Executive Order 13518). The Apprenticeship is a one year paid employment training program for Veterans who are homeless or at risk for homelessness. Through this program, VA is helping homeless Veterans obtain employment with education and training assistance opportunities.

NCA continued to collaborate with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to hire student interns through the National Diversity Intern Program (NDIP) at cemeteries nationwide.

### **Veterans Affairs Central Office (VACO)**

VACO continued to lay the ground-work on implementing the Veterans As Mentors (VAMs) program, which connects long-term Veterans employees with new Veteran hires. Under VAMs, VESO developed a mentoring guide and an array of tools and resources explaining mentoring relationship and how to help new employees adapt to VA's culture. These tools and resources can be found on the *VA for Vets* website.

VESO also developed the VAM's Discussion Forum to help foster communication creating an area where Veteran mentors and new hires can post questions and share insights. New hires can select or are assigned Veteran mentors who can relate best practices and provide confidential guidance to mentees. Mentors can choose to meet in person or virtually with their mentees. The VAMs program helps to strengthen Veteran professional networks across VA and encourage employees to build long-term VA careers. VAMs is scheduled to launch in FY 2014.

VESO's *VA for Vets* virtual career center provided 24/7 access to Veterans globally to connect with a variety of tools and services. The *VA for Vets* website provided online resources including live and web-based training for Veteran employees, hiring managers, and human resources staff. The training focused on employment and readiness, abiding by the Uniform Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA), accommodations, introduction to Career Center to search for advancement opportunities at VA, "Why Hire Veterans?" video, Veterans Opportunity to Work information, and special hiring authorities for non-competitive appointments.

*VA for Vets* program (as of FY 13 Stats):

- More than 93,000 unique Veterans are registered in the database
- Veterans have uploaded more than 50,000 resumes
- Military skills have been translated over 39,500 times using the Military Skills Translator
- Over 117,500 assessments have been completed
- More than 170 homeless Vets have received assistance

In FY 13, VESO started laying the ground work on introducing a Veteran-focused mobile Career Center application that will be available from major app stores and compliment the current mobile website. The app will guide Veterans through the noncompetitive hiring process and prepare them for the federal job application process. The Mobile Career Application is in the final development stage with the Department's IT Mobile App Dept. VESO expects to implement the app in FY 14.

Veteran employees throughout VA also have the opportunity to meet with their supervisors to write Individual Development Plans (IDP). The IDP is a tool to assist employees in career and personal development. Its primary purpose is to help employees reach short and long-term career goals, as well as improve current job performance.

VESO's *VA for Vets* program complements other VA training and professional development programs to help Veterans take their careers to the next level:

**MyCareer@VA** – Is an online resource that offers current and potential employees a one-stop shop for career planning and exploration. This career development site helps users define their career goals and provides guidance on the training, education and professional experiences necessary to chart a successful, long-term career at VA.

**The VA Learning University (VALU) and HR Academy** – Ensures that VA employees have the tools they need for professional development.

**VA's Talent Management System (TMS)** - A full-service training platform with more than 30,000 courses to enhance on-the-job performance. New features include automated Individual Development Plans (IDPs), 360-degree evaluations, career competency models and automated performance plans. Employees now have access to a variety of blogs, social networks and podcasts for on-the-go learning.

## **AGENCY OVERSIGHT**

### **Veterans Health Administration (VHA)**

In FY 2013, VHA conducted workforce succession planning to include analysis of the total workforce, leadership positions, program offices, and occupations to include strategies for employee development, succession programs, and organizational assessments to support VHA's DVAAP. Facility EEO Managers worked with Staffing Specialists from their Human Resources Offices to monitor their efforts. Special Emphasis Committees also worked with the Human Resources Office, EEO Manager, and other key officials in a combined effort to improve employment opportunities and eliminate any potential barriers for hiring Veterans with disabilities. VHA VISNs and field facilities used statistical data provided on a monthly basis via the Veterans Change Report from the VHA Support Service Center (VSSC) intranet website to monitor, review, and evaluate the effectiveness of the DVAAP. This information was reviewed by VISN Diversity Committees, facilities' Human Resources Specialists, EEO Managers, Special Emphasis Program Committees and Selective Placement Coordinators who worked on recruiting, hiring, and accommodating people with disabilities some of whom were disabled Veterans. The data was shared with all appropriate hiring and promoting personnel.

The 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, 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.

### **Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)**

Regional offices continued to monitor, review, and evaluate activities by using statistical information provided in the COIN PAI 204 (Disabled Veteran and Vietnam Era Veteran Employment) Report, HRIS (Human Resources Information System), PAID input from HRIS, and the VHA Support Service Center (VSSC), which monitors gains and losses of Veteran employees throughout the year. In addition, annual compliance reports such as Management Directive (MD) – 715 are used to monitor, review, and evaluate the effectiveness of programs and initiatives to increase recruitment efforts and employment of Veterans and disabled Veterans, particularly those in underrepresented groups like White, Hispanic, and Asian females.

### **National Cemetery Administration (NCA)**

NCA uses several different programs to monitor and deliver solutions for the major operating components at Central Office and in field operations.

**NCA Strategic Plan:** Revised in FY10, the NCA strategic plan is refreshed on a quarterly basis to monitor progress and update accomplishments. Likewise, NCA provides ODI with quarterly updates of accomplishments on the VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan.

**SES Performance Measures** also serve as a monitoring tool to ensure timely execution of projected strategies.

**Organizational Assessment and Improvement Program (OAI):** Assessments provide information that identifies and prioritizes continuing improvement opportunities within NCA. A program of ongoing review and assessment is a valuable educational tool for managers, as it focuses the entire organization on results and accountability, identifies best practices, and provides a systematic approach towards organizational excellence.

**All Employee Survey (AES):** AES is an annual survey which measures the overall employee satisfaction specifically the job satisfaction and civility indexes.

**Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey:** NCA established an annual process to determine NCA customer satisfaction. Surveys are sent to funeral directors and the family members of deceased service members. Customers' responses to the questions are then used to analyze whether or not changes need to be made in business operations to increase overall satisfaction of customers. NCA has continued its focus on customer service excellence by monitoring customer surveys and implementing appropriate actions whenever necessary. NCA customer service excellence is demonstrated by its phenomenal customer service scores which are the highest for any public or private organization.

**NCA EEO Office:** Conducts analysis on EEO complaint tempo and implement strategies such as training, facilitations at NCA facilities with workplace disputes, EEO site visits, and group

discussions at facilities with high levels of workplace grievances and complaints. The EEO office also conducts surveys at NCA facilities with workplace issues and works with NCA management to provide solutions.

**Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** In June of FY12, NCA implemented its own Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Implementation and strategized usage of these programs is strongly supported by the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs and other senior leaders to safeguard NCA's high performing workforce.

### **Veterans Affairs Central Office (VACO)**

Each administration and staff office reports Veteran hiring numbers on a monthly basis to the Deputy Secretary as part of their Monthly Performance Review meetings.

In September, FY13 VA's Human Capital Analysis Report recorded 35,654 disabled Veterans in permanent positions and 1,685 disabled Veterans in temporary positions; totaling 37,339 or 11.10 percent of VA's total workforce, compared to 10.33 percent in September FY12.

## **PROGRAM EXECUTION**

### **Veterans Health Administration (VHA)**

VHA field facilities employed 5,246 individuals with targeted disabilities, which is 1.89 percent of the total VHA workforce of 277,218 for Fiscal Year 2013. This is in comparison to the employment of 4,728 individuals with targeted disabilities for Fiscal Year 2012, which was 1.78 percent of the total VHA workforce of 265,676. VHA's workforce data was downloaded from the VHA Support Service Center (VSSC), Human Resources Reports, VHA Annual EEO Program Status Report, Table 1B, Total VHA Workforce by Disability and Workforce Planning, Targeted Disabilities employment data. In Fiscal Year 2013, the total populations of VHA's permanent workforce and disabled permanent employees increased; however, these two populations did not increase at the same rate.

In FY 2013, there were 26,042 on-board disabled Veterans and the percentage of the total number of VHA employees who are disabled Veterans was 9.39 percent.

| Fiscal Year | On-Board Disabled Veterans | Percent of Disabled Veterans |
|-------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| FY 2013     | 26,042                     | 9.39%                        |
| FY 2012     | 23,161                     | 8.72%                        |
| FY 2011     | 21,135                     | 8.18%                        |

VHA facilities continued to support the "Fulfilling the Commitment – Coming Home to Work" initiative. This initiative focuses on ensuring that transitional service members, particularly service-connected disabled Veterans from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) / Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) military campaigns have access to a full-range of resources to obtain suitable employment. This initiative will serve as an on-going catalyst to actively engage Veterans service organizations to increase the applicant pool of disabled Veterans. It is anticipated that the increase in the

applicant pool of disabled Veterans will also increase the number of individuals with targeted disabilities.

### **VHA VISNs Quarterly Targeted Disability Report**

In FY 2013, the VHA Employees with Targeted Disabilities Report was sent to the VISN Network Directors on a quarterly basis. These reports also provided resources and strategies that could be implemented to increase the on-board percentages of employees with targeted disabilities. Some of the resources and strategies included:

- Utilizing Schedule A Hiring Authority;
- Establishing effective relationships with area organizations that focus on the employment of individuals with disabilities;
- The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) electronic Bender list;
- Ensuring employees have the opportunity to complete the OPM Standard Form 256: Self-Identification of Disability;
- Utilizing the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP);
- Utilizing the Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP);
- Accessing the Veterans' Employment & Training Service (VETS);
- Accessing the Job Accommodation Network (JAN).

### **Automation of the OPM, SF-256, Self-Identification of Disability**

In FY 2013, VHA initiated the process of automating OPM's Standard Form 256 (Self-Identification of Disability), which was revised in July 2010. In his memorandum dated September 7, 2010, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs demonstrated his commitment to the hiring and employment of persons with targeted disabilities when he set a goal of 2 percent for the employment of persons with targeted disabilities. This supports President Obama's Executive Order 13548 to increase Federal employment of individuals with disabilities. It will further the position of the VA as a leader in Federal Government in hiring and maintaining a diverse workforce and support VHA's efforts in accurately reporting employees with targeted disabilities.

The disability data collected on employees will be used only in the production of reports and not for any purpose that will affect them individually. The only exception is that records may be used for selective placement purposes and selecting special populations for mailing of voluntary personnel research surveys. In addition, every precaution will be taken to ensure that the information provided by each employee is kept in the strictest confidence. In FY 2013, six VISNs reached the 2 percent goal of VHA employees with targeted disabilities and three VISNs reached above 1.90 percent.

### **Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)**

VBA regional offices have effectively used special hiring authorities and practices to recruit and hire Veterans and disabled Veterans. In FY 2013, regional offices continued to diligently reach out to those underrepresented targeted groups. Many Veterans Service Center Managers conducted on-

site interviews for possible employment in the Veterans Service Center. This is an excellent indicator of the outstanding efforts shown in VBA's commitment to eliminate barriers to the employment of Veterans, especially disabled Veterans, in our workforce.

VBA's recruitment efforts resulted in an increase in the hiring of Veterans and disabled Veterans. A review of the current statistical data demonstrates these gains. In addition to the increase in employment of Veterans and disabled Veterans, VBA also achieved gains in the employment of the three groups that are underrepresented - White, Hispanic, and Asian females.

The narratives below are summaries of the DVAAP reports submitted by VBA regional offices. These narratives highlight the regional offices' specific accomplishments related to Sections A through E of the FY 2013 DVAAP Report:

- **Detroit Regional Office** - Through the Detroit Regional Office's recruitment efforts, use of special hiring authorities, and creative use of career ladder development, four Veterans were converted to full-time, permanent career appointments in the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor position using the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) Pathways Program. In the 3rd quarter of FY 2013, 80 percent of all Detroit Regional Office hires were Veterans compared with 54.55 percent for the same period last year; this is a 25.45 percent increase. Veterans currently represent 45.37 percent of the Detroit Regional Office's workforce. Station employment increased from 228 in July 2012 to 238 in July 2013, with the total onboard Veteran count increasing from 98 in July 2012 to 108 in July 2013. The percentage of compensable disabled Veterans in the workforce has been steadily increasing each fiscal year. In FY 2009, compensable disabled Veterans were 16.6 percent of the workforce, and they are now 22.68 percent, up from 21.32 percent last year.
- **Hartford Regional Office** - The Hartford Regional Office's FY 2013 hires resulted in people with targeted disabilities being 11.11 percent of all new hires, far surpassing VA's 2 percent goal. As of this reporting period, the percentage of the workforce in Hartford with targeted disabilities is 4.85 percent, up from 3.81 percent in October 2012. The Hartford Regional Office has modified the work areas of severely disabled Veterans so that their service-connected disabilities do not impair their opportunities for advancement. The Regional Office has used job redesign and restructuring to assist severely disabled Veterans. In addition, the Hartford Regional Office provided ergonomic assessments for employees and disabled Veterans. The results of these assessments helped the Regional Office identify and provide employees, both Veterans and non-Veterans, with the necessary equipment or furniture to help them fulfill their job requirements. The Hartford Regional Office also utilized light duty assignments to assist disabled Veterans who experienced temporary physical or psychological problems performing their assigned duties.

The Hartford Regional Office conducted workforce succession planning, including analysis of the total workforce, leadership positions, program offices, and occupations, to identify strategies for employee development, succession programs, and organizational assessments in support of VBA's DVAAP.

- **Manchester/White River Junction Regional Offices** - During FY 2013, the Manchester Regional Office hired a total of 4 employees. Of these new hires, 3 (75 percent) are Veterans and 3 (75 percent) are disabled. The White River Junction Regional Office hired 2 new employees, both Veterans and 1 a disabled Veteran. In a comparison between FY 2012 and FY 2013 of the two regional offices' Veteran employee population versus overall employee population, the employment remained stable. The Manchester Regional Office had two retirements and one resignation. These two regional offices continue to retain a strong representation of Veterans in their workforce and plan to concentrate on hiring more Veterans in the coming year.
- **St. Petersburg Regional Office** - As part of the Regional Office's career development efforts, the Human Resources Management Division conducted KSAO, Resume Writing, and Understanding Your SF-50 training sessions. These sessions were made available to all employees. Additionally, the Regional Office promoted local and national competitive leadership training opportunities, such as Stepping with Pride, Leadership Bay Pines, Leadership Enhancement and Development, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Managerial Enhancement Program, VISN 8 Competency Development for Leaders Program, and Leadership VA. The Regional Office promoted awareness of these programs through emails, lunch and learns, and training, and provided special training in application preparation and interviewing skills.

The Quality Review Team (QRT) has provided approximately 75 of the required 80 hours of National Curriculum Training for Veterans Service Representatives (VSR) and Rating Veterans Service Representatives (RVSR) through Live Meetings and formal classroom instruction. The QRT also provided 3.5 hours of formal classroom instruction to all personnel taking the VSR/Journeyman RVSR Skills Certification Examination. The subject matter centered on navigation of reference material, claim development and promulgation, appeals, pension, federal benefits, and dependency. The training culminated with practical exercises, the boot camp test and review.

The St. Petersburg Regional Office used a local intranet site, accessible by all employees, to post all vacancy announcements. Available hiring flexibilities, such as direct hiring and VRA were used to expand or improve advancement opportunities for current employees who are disabled Veterans by permitting eligible employees who initially accepted employment in available lower-graded positions to advance to positions commensurate with their skills and abilities as the positions become available, but without necessarily being restricted by time-in-grade.

- **Winston-Salem Regional Office** - The Winston Salem Regional Office had 66 gains and 45 losses. The Regional Office's FTE increased slightly from 668 on June 30, 2012, to 689 on June 30, 2013. Of those new hires, 72.7 percent were Veterans. Veterans comprise 63.6 percent of the workforce at this station. Of the 63.6 percent Veteran employees, 38.5 percent were disabled Veterans and 30.8 percent were 30 percent or greater disabled Veterans. Progress in the internal advancement of disabled Veterans continued, as 45.7 percent of Veteran employees who received promotions were disabled Veterans.

- **Nashville Regional Office** - Merit promotion opportunities were on-going throughout the fiscal year (FY). There were 20 Veteran and non-Veteran permanent hires from October 1, 2012, through the present. Sixty-five percent of the 20 hires were Veterans; 45 percent were Veterans hired by various appointing authorities, i.e. excepted appointment (Vietnam Era and VRA), 30 percent disabled Veteran, reassignment and transfer. The Nashville Regional Office continues to strive to have an excellent record of hiring Veterans and disabled Veterans. During FY13, there was a hiring restriction which hindered further external recruitment.
- **Waco Regional Office** - Sixty-six new employees were hired at the Waco RO in FY 13. Forty five (68 percent) are Veterans and 25 (56 percent) of those are disabled Veterans. The FY 13 Veteran onboard percentage at Waco RO was 58.31 percent. Disabled Veterans consist of 37.94 percent of the workforce. The Waco RO promoted 99 disabled Veterans during FY 13, compared to 130 disabled Veterans in FY 12. Fifty four non-disabled Veterans were promoted in FY 2013. The Staff Assistant reviews quarterly statistical printouts for inadequacies and significant changes that may have occurred in the promotion and employment of disabled Veterans.
- **Phoenix Regional Office** - At the Phoenix Regional Office during fiscal year 2013, the overall number of Veterans increased from 278 to 308, and disabled Veterans in the workforce increased from 173 to 188. According to the Human Resource Information System (HRIS), which includes all Phoenix VARO workforce, the Regional Office's employment of 30 percent or more disabled Veterans increased from 135 (pay period ending 10/06/12) to 137 (pay period ending July 27, 2013). The total Veteran workforce increased to 309 (pay period ending 07/27/13). These increases are attributed to the Regional Office efforts to recruit qualified disabled Veterans.
- **Little Rock Regional Office** - The VR&E Officer, Employment Consultant, and other VR&E staff at the Little Rock Regional Office provided one-on-one contact with the VA Medical Center and numerous Federal agencies including the Federal Aviation Administration, U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide specific information regarding the placement of Veterans in Federal jobs. In addition, the VR&E Division utilized the Federal unpaid work experience program to place 4 disabled Veterans in positions at the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), the Federal Aviation Administration, the U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and the Little Rock VA Regional Office, leading to the permanent placement of all 4 disabled Veterans into federal jobs.

VBA's Office of Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity (20M2) relies on data obtained from COIN PAI 204 input from HRIS to monitor and determine the progress of VBA's workforce of Veterans and disabled Veterans. Based on the extracted data from COIN PAI (as of 09/30/13), there is an increase in Veterans and disabled Veterans. The data from COIN PAI 204 is summarized in the chart below.

|  | FY 2013 |        | FY 2012 |        | Increase/Decrease |
|--|---------|--------|---------|--------|-------------------|
| Total Employees  | 21,288  |        | 21,533  |        | -245              |
| All Veterans   | 10,012  | 47.03% | 9,748   | 45.27% | 264               |
| All Disabled Veterans including 30% or more                  | 4,917   | 23.10% | 8,227   | 38.21% | -3,310            |
| Data Extracted from COIN PAI 204 from 10/01/2012 to 09/30/13 |         |        |         |        |                   |

The Secretary established the goal of having 40 percent of VA's workforce comprised of Veterans. COIN PAI 204 reflects that VBA has far exceeded this goal. The report indicates that 47.03 percent of VBA's workforce is comprised of Veterans including disabled Veterans.

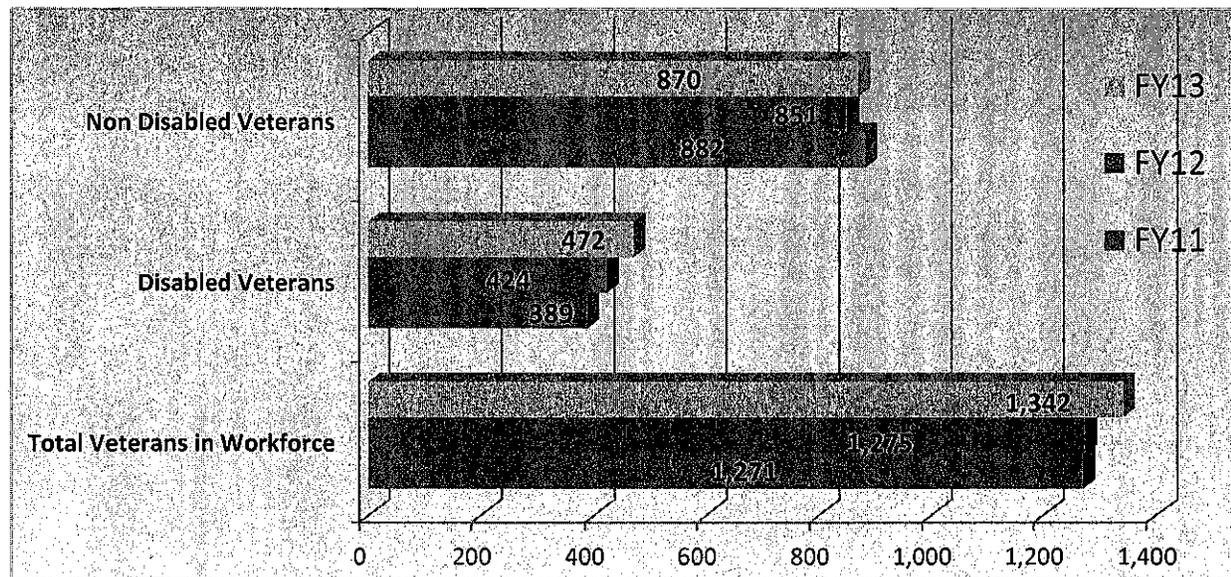
#### Highlights across VBA:

- EEO and affirmative action responsibilities are a part of the performance plan for all managers/supervisors. Station employees at all levels are encouraged to discuss employment opportunities for qualified disabled Veterans with friends and acquaintances.
- Recruitment methods at the various regional offices include requesting a list of certified eligibles from delegated examining units. These lists include the top three qualified Veteran applicants. Emphasis is placed on recruitment of and outreach to disabled Veterans when vacancies occur and qualified candidates are available.
- Regional offices use their local intranet sites to post all vacancy announcements to be accessed by all employees. Veterans' preference continues to be used for qualified Vietnam era and disabled Veterans for employment and promotion opportunities in the GS 0996 series (Veterans Service Representative).
- Various regional offices utilize their human resources management staff and employees of the VR&E Division to provide periodic training on special appointment authorities.

#### National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

In FY13, NCA continued using strategies to increase the number of Veterans and disabled Veterans in the workforce. Significant increases were noted in hiring Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF), and 30 percent or more disabled Veterans during the FY. During FY13, NCA hired 130 OIF/OEF Veterans, an increase of 32 OIF/OEF Veterans or 28 percent from FY12. During the FY, NCA's Human Resources Center continued to effectively utilize special hiring authorities to employ Veterans and disabled Veterans. These hiring authorities include the Veterans Readjustment Appointment (VRA) Act; the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA); and the 30 percent Disabled Veteran authorities. In FY13, NCA hired 244 Veterans out of 314 total hires, or 77.70 percent Veterans. Eighty-six of the 244 Veterans hired in FY13 were disabled Veterans representing 35 percent of total Veterans hired. Sixteen of the Veterans hired in FY13 had targeted disabilities which represented 6 percent of all new appointments at NCA through August 31, 2013, or three times the Secretary's goal of 2 percent hires for people with targeted disabilities.

NCA abides by the VEOA of 1998, strictly following its policy and guidelines, allowing eligible Veterans to apply for positions announced under the merit promotion procedures when the agency is recruiting from outside its own workforce. In FY13, NCA was also successful at hiring 30 percent or more disabled Veterans. Of the 314 employees hired at NCA in FY13, 102 were 30 percent or more disabled Veterans which is 31 percent of the total appointments at NCA in FY13. Overall, as of August FY13, NCA employs 1,342 Veterans representing 74.85 percent of the total workforce (1,793). Four hundred seventy two of the Veterans employed at NCA are identified as disabled which is 35 percent of all Veteran employees and 38 percent of the total workforce. The chart below demonstrates NCA's increases in Veteran and disabled Veterans employment over the last three fiscal years.



### Veterans Affairs Central Office (VACO)

The boost in Veteran hiring in 2013 represents an achievement for the Department that can be attributed in part to the launch of VESO's *VA for Vets* online Career Center and the effective program promotion conducted by Regional Veteran Employment Coordinators (RVECs). Additionally, attending both live and virtual hiring events combined with human resources process improvements have likely supported the boost as well.

In FY 2013, the Department has 108,822 Veterans currently employed (32.2 percent of VA's total workforce), including a significant number of service-connected disabled Veterans returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

VESO has broadened the awareness and usage of Schedule A and special hiring authorities for disabled Veterans; reducing the time it takes to hire Veterans in VA to less than 29 days compared to the government-wide time to hire using the competitive process.

## **AGENCY CHALLENGES**

Overall, VA continues to improve in the challenges of marketing the benefits, services, and career opportunities to all Veterans. Through the newly developed programs and the continued use of outreach programs, we hope to reach a greater audience of Veterans and disabled Veterans.

VA understands the importance of looking ahead and developing more innovative strategies that effectively deal with the future needs of Veterans as we increase awareness.

Lastly, VA continues to design programs and promote opportunities to retain our current Veteran population and to engage a future generation of Veterans committed to serving their fellow Veterans to the fullest extent.

VA will continue to use these challenges as opportunities to reach a larger pool of Veteran talent.

**Fiscal Year**  
**2014**  
**Agency Plan**



## Veterans Health Administration (VHA) – FY14 Plan

In FY 2014, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) will continue to support the recruitment, retention, and advancement of disabled Veterans. To accomplish this, VHA will continue current methods and implement the following activities for action plan for FY 2014:

- VHA VISN field facilities will continue to solicit referral applicants from their respective communities through affiliation with their local Departments of Labor (DOL), Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation Service, and Employment Service Centers to exchange employment information and establish recruitment sources for disabled Veterans. Field facilities will maintain regular contact with various Veteran service organizations, such as the American Legion, American Veterans (AMVETS), Disabled American Veterans and Veterans of Foreign Wars. Contacts will be made with Veterans Community Care Center's Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists in relation to the Compensated Work Therapy (CWT), Incentive Therapy (IT) Program, Transitional Work Experience (TWE), and Supportive Employment Program (SEP).
- VHA VISN field facilities will work with the State Directors of Veterans Employment and Training Service, DOL's Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP), State Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Projects with Industry, and the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). Veterans Vocational Specialists will assist disabled Veterans with their resumes, applications for employment, writing more effective KSAs, preparing for performance based interviews, and for employment retention. Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Coordinators will continue to address the employment and career advancement barriers to improve the recruitment, advancement, and retention of returning disabled Veterans.
- VHA Human Resources (HR) staffing specialists and selecting officials at the field facilities will continue to use special appointment authorities: Non-competitive Appointment Authority for 30 percent or more disabled Veterans, Veterans Readjustment Appointment (VRA) and the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA), to recruit Veterans with disabilities. Reasonable accommodation statements will also be included on job vacancy announcements to ensure applicants with disabilities have the availability of reasonable accommodations.
- VHA disabled Veteran employees have the same career advancement opportunities as all other VHA employees to participate in management and leadership development programs at every level of the organization. The following programs will be promoted to disabled Veteran employees to include clear paths for acquiring the competencies, skills, knowledge, and experience that disabled Veteran employee's need for their continual learning and career development. The Executive Career Field Candidate Development Program (ECFCDP) will provide developmental opportunities for the preparation in applying for executive vacancies. The Health Care Leadership Development Program (HCLDP) will provide focused leadership training and experiences for high potential employees from the middle management ranks of GS-13, 14, 15, and Title 38 equivalents. The Graduate Healthcare Administration Training Program (GHATP) consists of three development programs

designed to prepare promising candidates to become tomorrow's VHA administration leaders by providing career development opportunities to highly qualified individuals. The Leadership, Effectiveness, Accountability, Development (LEAD) Program is VHA's integrated process of identifying, assessing, and developing high potential leaders. The Technical Career Field (TCF) Internship Program is used to develop employees in fields where full-time training in VHA procedures and regulations is required. The Employee Incentive Scholarship Program (EISP) enables VHA to award scholarships to VHA employees pursuing degrees or training in Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 health care disciplines in which recruitment or retention is difficult. The National Nursing Education Initiative (NNEI), a component of the EISP, provides education scholarships to registered nurses. The VA Nursing Education for Employees Program (VANEEP) provides VHA medical centers replacement salary dollars for scholarship participants to accelerate their degree completion by attending school full time. The Education Debt Reduction Program (EDRP) is a tax-free recruitment incentive for Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 employees. The VA Learning Opportunity Residency (VALOR) Program continues to provide opportunities for outstanding students to develop competencies in clinical nursing, pharmacy and medical technology at approved VHA health care facilities. The VHA Mentor Certification Program will continue to provide structured training to ensure VHA is equipped with skilled certified mentors, coaches and preceptors to provide quality mentoring to VHA employees.

- VHA's workforce succession planning will conduct analysis of the total workforce, leadership positions, program offices, and occupations to include strategies for employee development, succession programs, and organizational assessments to support VHA's DVAAP. VHA VISN Lead EEO Managers will conduct site visits of their field facilities to evaluate the effectiveness of their programs and plans. Facility EEO Managers will work with Staffing Specialists from their Human Resources Offices to monitor program efforts. Special Emphasis Committees will work with the Human Resources Office, EEO Manager, and other key officials in a combined effort to improve employment opportunities and eliminate any potential barriers for hiring Veterans with disabilities. VHA VISNs and field facilities will use statistical data provided on a monthly basis via the Veterans Change Report from the VHA Support Service Center (VSSC) intranet website to monitor, review, and evaluate the effectiveness of the DVAAP. This information will be reviewed by VISN Diversity Committees and facilities' Human Resources Specialists, EEO Managers, and Special Emphasis Program Committees. The data will be shared with all appropriate hiring and promoting personnel. This report will be used to monitor, review, and evaluate the effectiveness of VHA field facilities DVAAP programs.

### **Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) – FY14 Plan**

VBA will continue its mission to provide exemplary service to Veterans and their families and ensure that these individuals receive their benefits in a responsive, timely, and compassionate manner. VBA is further committed to employing and retaining qualified Veterans and disabled Veterans to carry out this mission. To accomplish this, VBA has implemented the following action plan for FY 2014:

- Will continue to use special hiring authorities to employ Veterans and disabled Veterans, such as the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA), Veterans Recruitment Appointments (VRA), and Schedule A. Selecting officials will be encouraged to make full and appropriate use of these special appointing authorities.
- Will continue to participate in military briefings, the monthly Transition Assistance Program (TAP), and job fairs held at universities, colleges and schools that are specifically targeted for Veterans, and disabled Veterans.
- Vacancy announcements containing detailed information on hiring authorities for Veterans and disabled Veterans will continue to be posted on the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) website, [www.USAJOBS.opm.gov](http://www.USAJOBS.opm.gov), regional office intranet sites, and listed with state Veterans service offices, military family support centers, and the VetSuccess program. VBA vacancy announcements will also be posted for registered Veterans on VA's eBenefits website.
- During new employee orientation, VBA employees will continue to be asked to complete the Office of Personnel Management's Standard Form 256, Self-Identification of Disability, in order to identify employees with disabilities including disabled Veterans and ensure there is an accurate accounting of this group of individuals.
- Will continue to utilize Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) staff to identify qualified disabled Veterans for announced vacancies. VR&E staff will also continue to refer disabled Veterans for the Federal Unpaid Work Experience Program.
- Will continue to make positions available through Upward Mobility Programs and merit promotion. Work areas will be evaluated and modified to accommodate disabled Veterans. VBA will provide opportunities for disabled Veterans to be more competitive for internal advancement opportunities, and specific training will be designed to improve these opportunities.
- Will continue to hire Veterans and disabled Veterans by using internal merit promotion procedures and providing promotion opportunities through various programs including the summer internship program and VBA Circular 20-83-12, dated May 26, 1983, extending Veterans preference to qualified Vietnam Era Veterans and special disabled Veterans who are applying for specific merit promotion positions.
- Will continue to monitor, review and evaluate activities by using statistical information provided in the COIN PAI 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.

The above plan, in addition to the plans that regional offices have individually developed, will be implemented in accordance with 5 CFR 720.

## **National Cemetery Administration (NCA) – FY14 Plan**

In FY14, NCA will continue using Veterans and disabled Veterans hiring procedures that have proven to be successful in previous years. To ensure NCA's high levels of Veterans employment remains intact, NCA will make every effort improve current methods and implement new programs and practices as listed below:

- Implement chapters of the Federally Employed Women's program (FEW), the Hispanic Employee program (HEP), and the Employees with Disabilities program.
- Continue collaborative employment sharing services with organizations such as: the National Guard and Reserve, "Heroes Hire Heroes," Civilian-Military.com, Transition Assignment Program (TAP) employment centers, and Hispanic affinity groups in the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA) family. Under this effort, all NCA and Federal employment opportunities are shared by utilizing these organizations to promote outreach awareness among their constituents.
- Link NCA Special Emphasis Program & Minority Veteran Program Coordinator (MVPC) outreach activities to include emphasizing targeted outreach activities, educational and informational forums and utilization of targeted community networks to increase minority Veteran participation in benefits programs and employment at the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Complete development and delivery of NCA MVPC outreach packet encompassing outreach materials from each of the VA Administrations and from the USMA. This effort will support NCA's effort to create tangible measurements on NCA outreach effectiveness.
- Develop metrics for Memorial Service Networks for delivery in the first quarter of FY14 to use as a tool for developing realistic MVPC outreach goals for each NCA facility that staffs an MVPC.
- Issue an NCA MVPC Standard Operating Procedures guide to all NCA MVPCs.
- Continue to compile NCA SES Diversity and Inclusion worksheets for performance evaluations.
- Expand the Homeless Veterans Apprenticeship Program, established in 2012, which supports the VA strategic priority of ending Veteran homelessness by 2015, as well as President Obama's Veterans Employment Initiative (Executive Order 13518). The Apprenticeship is a one year paid employment training program for Veterans who are homeless or at risk for homelessness. Through this program, VA is helping homeless Veterans obtain employment with education and training assistance opportunities.
- Continue utilizing Small, Disadvantaged, and Veteran-Owned Businesses first for the majority of services needed at national cemeteries nationwide.

Conduct targeted recruitment webinars to market to and recruit Veterans and disabled Veterans for NCA's Cemetery Director Internship Program. The webinars will include a panel of graduates from the program who will each discuss different aspects of the program including the mentoring program.

### **Veterans Affairs Central Office (VACO) – FY14 Plan**

In FY 2014, VACO will continue to build on the success of the Veterans Employment Services Office (VESO) and *VA for Vets* career development program that helps Veterans launch and advance their careers at VA. The number of Veterans hired for positions within VA is expected to increase, along with the percentage of Veterans among total VA hires. To accomplish this, VACO will continue current methods and implement the following activities for action plan for FY 2014:

- Continue to support VESO in the recruitment, retention, and advancement of disabled Veterans throughout VA and will continue to have the overall responsibility for administering the DVAAP Reports and ensure that the allocation of resources are available to carry out an effective program.
- Continue to use "*VA for Vets*" as a main vehicle to recruit and employ disabled Veterans and to train VA's supervisors, hiring managers, HR professionals and coworkers about Veteran-specific issues and support resources for accommodating disabled Veterans.
- Continue to work closely with VESO to provide resume building workshops, benefits information and services including eBenefits, MyHealtheVet, wellness checks, survivor assistance, burial information and vocational rehabilitation.
- Continue to roll-out a Veteran-focused mobile Career Center application that will be available from major app stores and compliment the current mobile website. The app will guide Veterans through the noncompetitive hiring process and prepare them for the federal job application process.
- Continue to extend the reach of the VA Onboarding and Veterans As Mentors (VAMs) programs to close knowledge gaps and support new employees as they acclimate to civilian careers at VA and establish the Service members As Mentors (SAMs) program to support the drawdown of troops and workforce transitions.
- Continue to utilize Regional Veteran Employment Coordinators (RVECs) to assist VA's hiring managers and HR representatives with finding Veteran talent to meet their needs and fill positions quickly.
- Continue to make the *VA for Vets* Resume Database available for recruiters to search and identify talented Veterans for positions open nationwide.
- Continue to stress the importance of an IDP as a successful tool that assists Veteran employees in career and personal development and improving job performance.

- Continue Veteran's Onboarding Program to help Veterans fully transition to the culture of federal service and VA.
- Continue to utilize Veterans as Mentors Program to provide confidential guidance to mentees and assist with career development.
- Utilize the Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program to promote Federal employment of disabled Veterans and collaborate with VSOs and other programs with curriculums designed to prepare Wounded Warriors and active-duty services members awaiting medical discharge for success and life after the military.
- Continuing to utilize VESO's Data Cell to monitor progress, collect Veteran data, identify challenges, and evaluate effectiveness.
- Continue to utilize VA's Human Capital Monthly Reports to analyze the employment of disabled Veterans throughout VA's entire workforce.

# PLAN CERTIFICATION

## PLAN CERTIFICATION

This certification indicates that the program is being implemented as required by 5 CFR 720 and appropriate guidance issued by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. Additionally, this agency has a current plan as required by the regulation.

Please type or print clearly. After an original signature is obtained, scan and return this sheet.

### A. Designated DVAAP Certifying Official:

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### B. Designated DVAAP POC:

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C. Plan Last Amended: October 4, 2013  
Date

D. Date Effective: October 4, 2013  
Date

CERTIFYING OFFICIAL SIGNATURE  PDAS  
(Assistant Secretary for Human Resources & Administration)

DATE 31 March 2014