



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION**  
**WASHINGTON DC 20420**

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Ms. Carmen Andujar  
Recruitment, Examining, and Assessment Group  
Strategic Human Resources Policy Division  
U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
ATTN: Hispanic Report  
1900 E Street NW, Room 6500  
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Dear Ms. Andujar:

Enclosed please find the comprehensive Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 Ninth Annual Report on Hispanic Employment in the Federal Government, as a follow up to our October abbreviated Report. This report addresses best practices and innovative human capital practices to recruit, develop, and retain a high-performing workforce.

VA's total number of Hispanic Americans in its permanent workforce during FY 2009 is 17,922 or 6.61 percent. Of these, 6,329 Hispanic Americans are Veterans representing 7.48 percent of the Department's Veteran population.

Should you require additional information, please have your staff contact Ms. Tinisha Agramonte, Director for Outreach and Retention, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, at (202) 461-4030.

Sincerely yours,

  
John U. Sepúlveda

Enclosure

**Department of Veterans Affairs  
Ninth Annual Report on Hispanic Employment in the  
Federal Government  
Fiscal Year 2009 Report**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) continued its efforts to maximize and leverage human capital practices to ensure employment opportunities reach a wide pool of diverse audiences with vast talents and skills required to serve this Nation's Veterans. VA implemented several ground-breaking Diversity initiatives, to include executing its first Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, convening the Diversity Council, and executing significant community outreach functions with national affinity organizations.

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA), the Department's largest administration, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 employed 15,874 or 6.64 percent permanent Hispanic employees. The National Cemetery Administration's (NCA) total workforce was 1,812, which included 168 or 9.3 percent permanent Hispanic employees. Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Hispanic representation stood at 185 or 2.82 percent for FY 2009.

### **Community Outreach**

As part of the Department's community stakeholders partnering efforts, VA participates annually as an exhibitor at minority outreach conferences, for example, the National Association of Hispanic Nurses Conference, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and the American GI Forum National Annual Conference (AGIF). These exhibits are a valuable resource for increasing awareness of employment opportunities, establishing VA branding and outreach to the Hispanic community. VA's current workforce profile reflects opportunities to address and implement strategies that ensure Hispanics are afforded employment opportunities at all levels, in all key occupations, and in all organizational components. In FY 09, VA continued promoting strategic community outreach in order to increase employment outreach through a collaborative effort by participating in the following programs:

- VA and National Image Inc helped establish and implement two local community Veteran outreach groups-- the National Alliance for Veterans (NAV) and San Antonio Coalition for Veterans (SACV). These two new Hispanic affinity associations continued to work in the greater San Antonio metro area with Institutions of Higher Education (IHE), private sector, Federal, state and local governments to improve support for Texas Veterans, many of whom are Hispanic or Latino. They were instrumental in developing and implementing several key initiatives, such as the property tax exemption for 100% disabled Veterans, extension of education benefits to eligible Veterans'

spouses and children, and waiving tuition for children of military members who are Texas residents and have deployed for current combat operations.

- VA participated in LULAC's national convention and exposition; over 7,000 potential applicants visited VA recruitment booths. VA's senior leadership, including the Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, and Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion, all made public remarks at this outreach event.
- VA facilitated a train- the- trainer to AGIF Chapter Veterans' Training Coordinators. The training program addressed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), home foreclosure issues, suicide prevention, and Veteran employment center services. Texas' Governor Rick Perry addressed over 400 AGIF members at the Leadership Luncheon.
- VBA continues to mail recruitment letters twice a year to Hispanic businesses to market employment opportunities.
- Fort Bliss National Cemetery also participated in outreach events with a high percentage of Hispanics attendees, e.g., Homeless Veterans Stand-downs, and the Veterans Service Organization (VSO) meetings. The Cemetery Director at the Fort Custer National Cemetery regularly works with minority-owned television, radio and news media in an effort to reach out to Veterans in remote areas. The Director met with the Lansing Area Hispanic Business Association President to discuss business opportunities, and also met with Michigan State Representative, Valde Garcia concerning outreach efforts to Hispanic Veterans.
- The Ohio Western National Cemetery Director participated in the local Medina Home & Flower Garden Show, County Fairs and other outreach activities to reach the Hispanic population in that area.

- Cemeteries in the northeastern region participated in the Kalamazoo Valley Community College Resource Day. This event promotes employment and service in Government and other local civilian agencies. Other initiatives included attending various Veterans' support and special interest agency conventions, such as the American Legion, AMVETS, and the Vietnam Veterans of Michigan to provide information on employment opportunities and benefits of Federal employment to a wide spectrum of potential applicants, to include Hispanics.
- NCA established relationships with various community organizations and faith-based organizations, local VFW and VSO chapters, and local schools. Additionally, cemeteries nationwide hosted booths at State fairs providing Federal employment information to a wide-spectrum of the regional population. NCA also participated in several "Veteran Job Fairs" throughout the region. More than 2,000 participants attended, representing a broad and diverse spectrum of the general population.
- NCA announces annually its Cemetery Director Intern Program (CDIP) initiative, allowing individuals an opportunity to compete for the CDIP. If selected for the training program, applicants are trained at the NCA Training Center in St. Louis, and upon successful completion of the program, the candidates are assigned to national cemeteries across the United States, including Puerto Rico, Alaska, and Hawaii recruitment incentives Permanent Change of Station allowances.

## **Recruitment**

In an effort to maintain a competent, committed, and diverse workforce, VA continues to promote strategic recruitment outreach. In FY 09, VA continued its commitment in reach out to a wide-pool of professionally trained students through its partnership with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU). Additionally, VA developed several nationwide recruitment marketing tools and participated at numerous recruitment events.

- The Office of Diversity and Inclusion, with the assistance of VHA, produced a Spanish recruitment video designed to increase awareness of employment opportunities in the Department; the video was showcased at the LULAC National Conference job fair in Puerto Rico.
- VHA developed a Spanish public service announcement that focuses on the nursing field.
- VHA's Healthcare Recruitment and Retention Office (HRRO) partnered with HACU. HACU's internationally recognized award winning Hispanic National Internship Program (HNIP), which provided opportunities for students to gain professional work experience at VA enabling them to make educated career

choices and supplement their academic study with practical work experience. VHA's intern commitment with HACU during FY 2009 totaled \$598,500. The total number of interns who participated was 58. Of this number, 7 interns worked in VHA's Central Office, Washington, DC and 51 in VHA Veterans Affairs Medical Center field facilities.

- HRRO also reported recruiting at the following Hispanic conferences: Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans, Salt Lake City, UT, October 9-12, 2008; Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers, Phoenix, AZ, November 12-16, 2008; National Image, San Antonio, TX, May 11-16, 2009; LULAC, San Juan, Puerto Rico, July 13-18, 2009; Hispanic Nurses Association Annual Conference, San Antonio, TX, July 21-24, 2009; HACU, Orlando, FL, October 31- November 2, 2009. HRRO has developed an alliance with the Latinos for Hire career events throughout the nation, listing VA as a "Preferred Employer."
- VHA further provided minority students the opportunity to work at VA before making career choices through the Student Educational Employment Program (SEEP). The annual budget for this program was \$3,085,400. This year HRRO reported 328 students who participated in SEEP and 24 of these students attended a HACU affiliated school.
- VBA continues its internal recruitment initiatives through employee development and career planning programs, including the VBA Leadership Enhancement and Development Program and Leadership Coaching. Each of these two programs had one Hispanic employee in their FY 2009 classes. VBA sponsored 11 participants in the Summer Internship Program in 2009. Of these 11 participants, 5 interns were under the Hispanic Association for Colleges and Universities (HACU) National Internship Program. The total cost to VBA for the HACU internship Program was \$49,875.
- VBA Regional Offices (ROs) advertised in local newspapers such as the Hoy Newspaper to recruit Hispanics, and the Amsterdam News in cities with large population of Hispanics Americans. Additionally, ROs advertised job vacancies in bilingual communities.
- VBA senior executives and managers are actively involved in the recruitment and retention of a high quality and diverse workforce. VBA provided an array of recruitment tools for use by human resources and management officials in seeking desirable candidates. These services include:
  - Recruitment brochures
  - Recruitment tent-fold handouts
  - Instructions on establishing recruitment teams
  - Training for members of recruitment teams
  - Reference guide for HR and management officials

- Web site for VBA recruitment
  - Post vacancy announcements at state and local colleges and university career placement offices
  - Representatives attended job fairs and other related programs designed to create awareness of current employment opportunities for all groups, including Hispanics in the federal sector
  - ROs proactively partner with other organizations to provide federal employment information through multiple venues
- NCA VACO sponsored 4 interns and field facilities were given the opportunity to sponsor 7 interns from this program. Cemeteries throughout the nation utilize various recruitment authorities to attract and employ minorities, including Hispanics, as well as at-risk students in local schools.

### **Career Development**

VA continued to promote and encourage participation in upward mobility, training, employment development, and career planning programs to assist the current workforce, at all grade levels, in completing their educational goals and acquiring the necessary skills to be competitively marketable for promotional opportunities. These programs included VA's Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP), Executive Career Field Candidate Development Program (ECFCDP), Technical Career Field (TCF), Education Debt Reduction Program (EDRP) and others.

- SESCDP offered individuals a structured approach to prepare for SES. Successful candidates are certified by the Office of Personnel Management as placement eligible. There was one VHA Hispanic female employee and no VHA Hispanic males who participated in the SESCDP in FY 2009.
- ECFCDP provides developmental opportunities for high-potential employees, preparing them to apply for executive vacancies. ECFCDP is a two year program with personal development planning and mentor and preceptor components as well as a wide variety of educational and experiential learning opportunities. Candidates attend an assessment center and learning goals are tailored to meet the identified needs of the individual. The program does not guarantee placement in an executive position. For FY 2009, there were 113 applicants and 61 candidates; 1 (1.9%) applicant was Hispanic and he was selected as a candidate.
- VHA utilized an integrated process for identifying, assessing, and developing high-potential leaders at all levels of the organization. The Veterans Integrated Services Networks (VISNs) and Leadership, Effectiveness, Accountability, Development (LEAD) program extends the ECFCDP concept down through the organization to ensure that VHA has a diverse cadre of high-potential leaders prepared to assume roles of greater responsibility from

entry-level positions to the top of the mid-management ranks. Utilization of this concept promotes a three-tiered continuum of progression planning and leadership development at the local, VISN, and national levels. VISN LEAD Programs target Title 5 and Title 38 Employees at High Performance Development Model (HPDM) levels 2 and 3 (Title 5 is typically grade levels 9 through 13). Facility LEAD Programs target Title 5 and Title 38 Employees at HPDM levels 1 and 2 (Title 5 is typically grade levels entry through 9). Determination of eligible grade levels is at the discretion of management based on alignment with their strategic needs. VISN level LEAD programs have graduated 710 employees, 2.82% are male Hispanics and 4.08 % are female Hispanics. Facility level LEAD programs have graduated 1436 employees, 3.06% are Hispanic males and 4.81% are Hispanic females.

- VA's TCF internship program was created to develop employees in fields where full-time training in VHA procedures and regulations is required, such as Prosthetics Representative, Human Resource Specialist, Business Analyst, etc. Two-year internships are centrally funded and recruitment is focused on local colleges and universities. Each intern is placed at a VHA facility and trained by a preceptor experienced in the target position. Preceptors receive training, interns convene for an annual conference with their peers and the program is evaluated at the national level. The program is designed to adjust with changing workforce needs. The class of 2008 had 284 interns, 15 were Hispanic of which 3.17% were males and 2.11% were females. (The data from the class of 2009 will not be available until mid February, 2010, and will be reported in FY 2010's report.)
- In FY 2008, 109,882 (25,956 paid and 83,926 without compensation (WOC)) students/interns/residents received all, or part, of their clinical training in VA health care facilities in affiliation with over 1,000 institutions of higher education. 41 of these colleges and universities affiliated with VHA facilities are identified as Hispanic Serving Institutions by the Department of Education. These affiliations resulted in 5,173 (1,386 paid and 3,787 WOC) students from these HSIs receiving part of their required clinical education in a VA facility in FY 2008.
- VA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) actively participated in a number of outreach activities with various VSOs and HSIs. ORD sponsored a VA researcher to present their state of the art research in a scientific area that is of interest to the Hispanic Veteran Community at the AGIF's national conference. AGIF is a member of the ORD Minority and Women Veterans Service Organization Committee. It meets on an annual basis to discuss with the Chief Research and Development Officer concerns that impact their specific organizations.
- In 2000, the Employee Incentive Scholarship Program (EISP) authorized VA to award scholarships to employees pursuing degrees or training in health

care disciplines for which recruitment and retention of qualified personnel is difficult. EISP awards covered tuition and related expenses such as registration, fees, and books. 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. Section 7401. The following data reflects the total employee participants through FY 2009: 9,623; total number of employees completing the program (graduates), 5,281; total amount of funding for awards through FY 2012: \$121,173,844; average amount of award per participant: \$13,598. (HRRO does not collect race or nationality information from EISP participants.)

- EDRP helped recently appointed employees in shortage category Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 health care disciplines to reduce the interest and principal on government and commercial loans obtained to fund their health care education. One hundred twenty-three (123) employees who attended HACU-affiliated schools participated in FY 2009, as compared to one hundred nine (109) for FY 2008.
- NCA developed a basic boot camp for Foremen to provide them with the opportunity to develop core skills and supervisory skills to be successful in their careers.
- NCA launched its first-ever administration level Leadership Institute (LI) in FY 2007. This program follows the established VA leadership program model and continues to provide employees in grades 9-12 and Federal Wage System supervisors the opportunity to develop their leadership skills through this dynamic and collaborative program. The LI experience encompasses 3 one-week program modules and challenges the participants to enhance their interpersonal effectiveness, creative thinking, flexibility/adaptability and organizational stewardship through a variety of learning experiences, networking opportunities, and special projects that focus on enhancing NCA's already stellar record of service to our Nation's Veterans.
- NCA's Cemetery Directors Trainee program provides exposure to all aspects of cemetery operations, administrative and leadership/management required skills to successfully perform the role of director.
- NCA developed a supervisory training that is conducted quarterly to help develop core supervisory skills.
- VBA offered career development programs to assist participants from diverse backgrounds in acquiring the necessary skills to successfully compete for promotional opportunities. Training and career development opportunities were offered to employees in VBA and government-wide career development programs.

## **Accountability**

VA's mission is to deliver world-class service to veterans and their families by applying sound business principles that result in effective management of people, communications, technology, and governance. VA has undertaken numerous activities to recruit, train, and retain Hispanics. VA senior executives and managers are involved in all phases of recruitment, outreach, and retention of a qualified, diverse, workforce. This accountability is linked to the performance plans of senior executives in field and headquarters. Local human resource reviews are conducted in compliance with Federal Mandates, Executive Orders, Directives, and internal VA policies to assist VA in identifying any barriers to becoming a more diverse workforce.

- All Equal Employment Opportunity Managers and Alternative Dispute Resolution Coordinators must complete annual diversity mandatory training. This training consists of both national and local training courses. All training is tracked through the Learning Management System.
- VBA sponsored "Our Diversity is our Strength," national training conference to provide additional diversity training to senior executives, EEO Managers, and ADR Coordinators. The training covered all aspects of diversity and inclusion.
- In FY 09, Human Resource Centers conducted audits of hiring certificates to ensure selections were made in accordance with OPM regulations and EEOC MD 715 guidance.
- Many RO managers participated on an Interagency Task Force on Hispanic Employment in the Federal Government, which fosters improved communication, education, and collaboration under E.O. 13171. The task force members meet regularly to discuss the latest statistical information and share best practices among ROs about government-wide and agency-specific recruiting.
- The following are some effective practices that ROs continue to use to create a workforce that draws on the strength of our VA workforce diversity:
  - Reviewing internal policies to avoid barriers to effective recruitment and ensure the broadest consideration of applicants
  - Evaluating recruitment initiatives and retention strategies to identify effective practices
  - Collecting and analyzing workforce diversity data on attrition to develop succession planning
  - Implementing strategies to ensure the ROs have an effective workforce

- Identifying and removing any existing barriers to recruiting, developing, and retaining talent, including Hispanics
- Involving employees at every level to create an organization committed to diversity and inclusion
- Requiring diversity-related training for managers and supervisors