Commemorate

Federal Inter-Agency Holocaust Remembrance Program

The Federal Inter-Agency Committee will hold its 23rd Annual Holocaust Remembrance Program on Wednesday, May 4, 2016, at the Lincoln Theatre located at 1215 U Street NW in Washington, D.C. from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm. Supported by Federal agencies including the Department of Veterans Affairs, this program is designed to provide the experience through the voice of eyewitnesses. The Holocaust survivors, rescuers, liberators, resisters, witnesses, or relatives of these individuals remind us of what can happen if prejudice, hate, and intolerance against any individual or group of people are not challenged by each one of us. Continued on page 3.

Message from the DAS

VA joins the Nation in commemorating Minority Health Month and National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month this April and National Equal Pay Day recognizing gender pay inequality on April 12. Today women still make only 78 cents to every dollar earned by men. The Federal Inter-Agency Holocaust Remembrance Program will be held on May 4. Read more about this event and the other observances below.

This fiscal year, over half of all findings of discrimination rendered against VA have been based on retaliation. The Secretary’s Equal Employment Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion, No FEAR, and Whistleblower Rights and Protection Policy Statement articulates that all forms of prohibited discrimination, including retaliation, will not be tolerated in VA. Managers and supervisors bear a special responsibility and legal obligation to ensure that they don't engage in or tolerate retaliation in the workplace. To assist them in better understanding this issue, earlier this year VA’s Office of Resolution Management (ORM) released a document, “Retaliation Guide: Lessons for Managers.” Recently, ORM noticed an agency practice that could be perceived by a third party as retaliation resulting in more findings of discrimination. As a preventive measure and to promote a work environment free from retaliation, VA released further guidance.

While it may be prudent to separate the individual raising the allegation of harassment and the alleged harasser, it is important that the rights of those who report harassment be protected. Continued on page 4.

ORM

Steps Toward Resolution

Alternative Dispute Resolution can help with resolving conflict. To file a discrimination or harassment complaint, you must contact the Office of Resolution Management at (toll free) 888-737-3361 within 45 calendar days of the date of the alleged discriminatory incident.

Upcoming Events

April 2016

National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month
Minority Health Month

Autism Speaks, Light It Up Blue
April 2

National Equal Pay Day
April 12

Secretary’s Fifth Annual ADR Excellence and D&I Excellence Award Ceremony
April 18, 2 pm
VACO Room 230

Take our Daughters and Sons to Work Day
April 23

Survive. Thrive. Make a Difference.

FEDERAL INTER-AGENCY HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE PROGRAM

Lincoln Theatre
1215 U Street NW
April 4, 2016
11:30 AM — 1:00 PM
Training

Barrier Analysis Training will be offered on Thursday, April 21, 2016, from 1 to 4 pm. The course covers all aspects of the barrier analysis process under Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Management Directive 715 to include analysis and interpretation of workforce statistics, trigger identification, barrier analysis investigation, preparing action plans, and following up on the action plan. This training will allow the participants to work through the majority of the process using VA specific workforce statistics. Attendees must register through the VA Talent Management System (TMS). For more information, contact Ms. Ryan Pugh.

Conflict Management and Alternative Dispute Resolution Training sponsored by the Office of Resolution Management Centralized Alternative Dispute Resolution Office will be held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at the HUB Centers for Collaboration. Two sessions remain: April 26-28 (GS-14, 15 and Senior Executive Service) and May 10-12 (GS-13 and above). These three day trainings provide an opportunity for participants to examine the factors that contribute to workplace conflict and offer tools that managers can use to prevent situations from escalating and diverting valuable time, resources, and energy from VA’s mission. This training also allows participants to become more familiar with the role a third party can play in assisting managers and employees in resolving workplace disputes at the lowest possible level. While not asking you to become a professional mediator among your many other responsibilities at VA, it is hoped that by spending in-depth time studying, discussing, and trying the myriad of techniques and communication skills related to the mediation process, you will adopt new approaches, ideas, and skills in dealing with disputes. All of this will benefit you, all employees with whom you interact, and ultimately, the Veterans that you serve. The VA Learning University (VALU) is funding all travel associated costs for approved participants; VALU will not reimburse local travelers. Each training session is limited to 30 participants. Those on the wait list will be contacted in the order the nominations were received by this office upon notices of cancellations. For questions about this training (not relating to travel), contact Jeff Gangi.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) of 1994 prohibits discrimination in employment, retention, promotion, or any benefit of employment based on past, present, or application to the uniformed services. VA human resources personnel must complete DVA-014, course number 897931 in the Talent Management System, each fiscal year. For questions, contact VESO Director Eddie C. Riley.

Section 508 training for VA employees is available. Contact the Office of Information and Technology Section 508 Program Office.

The 31st Annual Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) National Leadership Training Program will be held in Orlando, Florida, May 9-13, 2016, at the Doubletree by Hilton. The FAPAC NLTP is a great opportunity to obtain leadership, EEO, diversity and inclusion and career advancement and management training, as well as gain useful information regarding the current policies directly affecting federal employees. It will also offer free seminars and programs specifically designed for students and Veterans. Costs associated with attending must be authorized by each employee’s organization. No centralized funding is available to pay for registration or travel. Employees who plan to attend the FAPAC NLTP should follow appropriate conference attendance approval procedures established for their respective organizations, and are also required to pre-register through the VA Attendance and Cost Estimation System (ACES). For the intranet link address, or for additional information, contact Ms. Angela James, VA’s National Asian American and Pacific Islander Employment Program Manager, ODI. Additional conference information including registration costs, course descriptions, and schedules is available online.

The 47th Annual Federally Employed Women (FEW) National Training Program (NTP) will be held in Dallas, Texas, July 11-14, 2016, at the Hilton Anatole. This year's program offers over 140 workshops on leadership, project management, career planning, interpersonal communications, finance, writing, human resources, equal employment opportunity, special emphasis programs, reasonable accommodation, and courses that address the Executive Core Qualifications required for the Senior Executive Service. Attendees must follow appropriate conference attendance approval procedures established for their respective organizations. Costs associated with attending the FEW NTP must be authorized by each employee’s organization. Employees who plan to attend the FEW NTP must also pre-register through ACES. For the intranet link address, or for additional information, contact Ms. Mercedes N. Kirkland, VA’s National Federal Women’s Program Manager, ODI. Additional conference information including registration costs, course descriptions, and schedules is available online.
Guest speakers will include moderator Stuart E. Eizenstat, Special Advisor to the Secretary of State on Holocaust Issues; Ruth Gruber, U.S. rescuer; Marione Ingram, Holocaust survivor; and Rubin Sztajer, Holocaust survivor.

The first Federal Inter-Agency Holocaust Remembrance Program was held in 1994 to commemorate the Days of Remembrance, an annual, national civic commemoration of the Holocaust. The purpose of the annual program—authorized through Public Law 96-388, which Congress passed on October 7, 1980, as part of honoring the Days of Remembrance—is to educate Federal employees, students, and the general public about the Holocaust.

VA employees are encouraged to obtain supervisory approval to attend this free and public event. Visit the Web site for more information.

National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month

VA joins the Nation in observing National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month this April. From the 2015 Presidential Proclamation: As Americans, we each have the power to shape our country's course and contribute to the extraordinary task of perfecting our Union. For more than two centuries, progress has been won by ordinary citizens—women and men who joined arms and marched toward justice. This month, we are once again reminded that we can change our culture for the better by standing together against the quiet tolerance of sexual assault and refusing to accept the unacceptable.

Nearly one in five women in America has been a victim of rape or attempted rape. Every year, too many women and too many men are sexually assaulted and abused. This is an affront to our basic decency and humanity, and it must end. Sexual assault harms our communities, weakens the foundation of our Nation, and hurts those we love most. For survivors, the awful pain can take years to heal—sometimes it never does. When an individual's possibilities are limited by the scars of violence and abuse, our country is deprived of enormous potential. Sexual assault takes a collective toll on all of us, and it is everyone's responsibility not only to speak out, but also to take action against this injustice.

More than two decades ago, then United States Senator Joe Biden did both. At a time when many victims were stigmatized or left to suffer in silence, he authored the Violence Against Women Act, which would forever improve the way our country responds to sexual assault and domestic violence. In the decades since, our Nation has built on that progress. We have taken strides toward changing the way people think about sexual misconduct, making it clear that every person has the fundamental human right to be free from sexual assault and domestic violence.

Thanks to the work of advocates, community leaders, public servants, and courageous survivors who shared their stories, our Nation has come an incredibly long way. But from schools to military bases and throughout all communities in America, we must do more to end the crime of sexual assault. My Administration has made this a priority since day one, beginning with the establishment of the first-ever White House Advisor on Violence Against Women. And we will keep fighting as long as it takes.

We have taken action to strengthen our criminal justice system, uphold the civil rights of victims and survivors of sexual assault, and ensure that all people can live free from sexual violence. Now in its second year, the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault is helping schools live up to their obligations to educate students in safe environments. We continue to address the impact of sexual assault on persons living with or at risk for HIV/AIDS. I have also made clear that violence and abuse have no place in the finest military this world has ever known. And last fall, we launched the “It’s On Us” campaign to let people know everyone has a role to play in preventing and effectively responding to sexual violence.

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Commemorate
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It's on parents and caregivers to teach their children to respect and value others. It's on teammates, classmates, and colleagues to recognize sexual misconduct and intervene to stop it. It's on all of us to work for the change we need to shift the attitudes and behaviors that allow sexual assault to go unnoticed, unreported, and unpunished. During National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, let us commit to being part of the solution and rededicate ourselves to creating a society where violence is not tolerated, survivors are supported, and all people are able to pursue their fullest measure of happiness without fear of abuse or assault.

National Equal Pay Day

VA joins the Nation in observing Equal Pay Day on April 12. From the 2015 Presidential Proclamation: In the United States, the promise of opportunity is built on the idea that everyone who works hard should have the chance to get ahead. This creed is at the core of our democracy, and it is central to our belief that America does best when all people are able to share in our Nation's prosperity and contribute to our success. Yet every day, countless women perform the same work as their male colleagues only to earn less than their fair share. On National Equal Pay Day, we mark how far into the new year women would have to work just to earn the same as men did in the previous year, and we renew our efforts to end this injustice.

On average, full-time working women earn 78 cents for every dollar earned by men, and women of color face an even greater disparity. This wage gap puts women at a career-long disadvantage, and it harms families, communities, and our entire economy. Today, in more than half of all households, women are breadwinners—49 million children depend on women's salaries. But our economy and our policies have not caught up to this reality. When women experience pay discrimination it limits their future, and it also hurts the people they provide for. It means less for their families' everyday needs, for investments in their children's futures, and for their own retirements. These effects reduce our shared prosperity and restrict our Nation's economic growth. Wage inequality affects us all, and we each must do more to make certain that women are full and equal participants in our economy.

When we take action to help women succeed, we help America succeed, and my Administration is committed to ensuring women have every opportunity to reach their fullest potential. The first bill I signed as President was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, and the following year—to crack down on violations of equal pay laws—I created the National Equal Pay Task Force, which to date has helped women recover millions of dollars in lost wages. If workers do not know they are underpaid, they cannot challenge the inequality; that is why we are going to require Federal contractors to submit data on employee compensation, including data by sex and race, and why last year I signed an Executive Order prohibiting Federal contractors from retaliating against employees who choose to discuss their pay. And I continue to call on the Congress to pass the Paycheck Fairness Act to protect all people's fundamental right to a fair wage.

In the last half-century, our economy has changed in many ways for the better because of the increased participation of women. But our values are not yet fully reflected in how we pay women. We tell our daughters that in America there are no limits to what they can achieve—yet their mothers face persistent barriers to equality and success. We have to do better because our daughters deserve better. If we come together, we can change the policies and attitudes that hold women back, and we can fix this. On this day, we recommit to making equal pay a reality, and we continue our work to build a world where all our children are limited only by the size of their dreams and the power of their imaginations.

Message from the DAS
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By adhering to these protocols, VA will ensure employees are free to raise workplace concerns and allegations of harassment without fear of retaliation. On behalf of the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, your support in communicating this policy to staff at your facility is appreciated. Contact the Office of Resolution Management to obtain a copy of the retaliation guide or for more guidance on this topic. ~Georgia Coffey, VA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion
MyCareer@VA
How to Diversify Your Network

Did you know that even someone as removed as a friend of a friend can impact your physical and mental health? So, it’s no surprise that people in your extended professional network can have an impact on your career, too. You can build a diverse network to help positively influence your career by using the tips below.

Benefits of a Diverse Network

We all have a tendency to associate with those similar to us. But, building and maintaining professional ties, even if they aren’t all close relationships, can open doors and lead to increased career satisfaction, a greater chance of promotion, and a higher salary. To boost the benefits of your network, make it as diverse as possible. A wide network can also lead to:

- More information, such as new job opportunities, without working as hard for it\(^1\),\(^2\)
- Better chances of advancing within your organization by increasing your visibility within it\(^3\)
- Improved job performance\(^4,\)\(^5\)
- Increased innovative thinking from sharing ideas with others\(^6\)
- Greater job satisfaction\(^7\)
- Increased influence on those around you.\(^8\)

Take a Look at Your Current Network

Analyze your network using the questions below to help you make it as diverse as possible.

- **Who are your 10-15 closest professional contacts?**
  These should be people you trust and who positively influence your career.
- **Do any of these contacts already know each other?**
  The ones who don’t know each other are more likely to have different networks you can tap into.
- **How far along are your contacts in their careers?**
  Believe it or not, you can benefit just as much from people who are at your career level and those junior to you, as those in senior positions.
- **Where do your contacts work?**
  Try to keep contacts in career fields other than your own, as they offer unique perspectives.
- **What are their professional backgrounds?**
  Your contacts’ resources and insights not only come from their current jobs, but previous ones too.
- **What are their educational backgrounds?**
  People with different degrees and fields of study can help you think differently and change the way you solve problems.
- **Where are your contacts located?**
  Having contacts in different locations—especially across the country—can open up new opportunities.

Take Action to Diversify

Once you’ve analyzed your professional network and chosen the contacts who could be most helpful in expanding your network, reach out. Here are some things that will help you prepare to reconnect with them:

- If you’re nervous or unsure of what you’d like to discuss, check out our networking myths article
- Learn more about how social media can help you expand your network
- Take some direct advice from our article, Tips for Expanding Your Network
- Come up with talking points and topic ideas for Informational Interviews
- Ask your contact for recommendations on others you should speak with
- Read Tips for Strengthening Your Network for help on maintaining the professional relationships you already have.

Remember—the more you focus on your career development and work towards achieving your goals, the more likely you are to be more satisfied with your job. And when you’re more satisfied at work, you can give it your best and help VA fulfill its mission of providing the best possible service to our Nation’s Veterans.

Visit our What’s New page to explore career development topics with more networking tips that you can start implementing today to help you achieve your career goals. And if you haven’t already, stay up-to-date with career advice and articles like this one by signing up for the MyCareer@VA Monthly Update.

Sources:
VA Demographics
Report for the Department of Veterans Affairs, February 2016

VA’s workforce diversity remains relatively steady through the end of the February 2016. Although the VA workforce increased by 13,640 employees since the beginning of the new fiscal year, the changes in representation for all groups in VA’s permanent and temporary workforce are negligible.

Comparing the demographic characteristics of VA’s workforce against the Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF)\(^1\), the representation of White women, Hispanic men and women, Asian men, and men and women reporting two or more races are lower than expected.

The Diversity Index is a single measure of workforce diversity that measures the convergence of VA’s aggregate workforce distribution by race, ethnicity, and gender to the Civilian Labor Force (CLF)\(^2\) or RCLF. Since September 2015, the RCLF-based diversity index decreased 2.91 percent and the CLF-based diversity index decreased 2.87 percent.

The proportion of individuals with targeted disabilities in VA’s workforce has increased by 0.09 percent since the beginning of the fiscal year. We continue to exceed the Secretary’s 2 percent onboard goal. The hiring of individuals with targeted disabilities also increased since the start of the fiscal year. Among all hires, individuals with targeted disabilities represent 2.98 percent, which is below the Secretary’s 3 percent hiring goal. For more information, contact ODI’s Workforce Analysis Team.

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<tr>
<td>Using CLF</td>
<td>90.96%</td>
<td>88.09%</td>
<td>2.87%</td>
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\(^1\) Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF) reflects all U.S. Citizens 16 years of age or over, excluding those in Armed Forces, who are employed in or actively seeking employment in VA specific occupations. This is based on the 2010 Census and includes Puerto Rico. The RCLF here is based on the end of FY 2014.

\(^2\) Civilian Labor Force (CLF) consists of all U.S. Citizens 16 years of age or over, excluding those in Armed Forces, who are employed or seeking employment. The CLF contains all occupations and is an accurate comparative basis for Federal Government-wide comparison, the largest employer in the U.S. with all occupations represented. This is based on the 2010 Census which is shown to be a higher benchmark compared with the 2000 Census. The CLF does not include Puerto Rico.