Upcoming Events

September 2019

Suicide Prevention Month

Labor Day
September 2

National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week Conference
September 8-10; Washington, DC

Patriot Day
September 11

Hispanic Heritage Month
September 15–October 15

African American Federal Executive Association Leadership Development Workshop
September 16–18; College Park, MD

National Image, Inc. National Training Program
September 16-19; Las Vegas, NV

Constitution/Citizenship Day
September 17

National POW/MIA Recognition Day
September 20

Federal Asian Pacific American Council Student Career Fair
September 27; Rockville, MD

ORM

Steps Toward Conflict Resolution

Callers can REACH to the Office of Resolution Management (ORM) using the new number, 1-888-566-3982 (TDD: 1-888-626-9008), and speak with a specialist regarding Equal Employment Opportunity Complaint Processing, Alternative Dispute Resolution, and the Harassment Prevention Program. REACH to ORM is available from 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m. in all time zones. To file a discrimination or harassment complaint, you must contact ORM within 45 calendar days of the date of the alleged discriminatory incident.

Commemorate
Hispanic Heritage Month

VA joins the Nation in commemorating Hispanic Heritage month this September 15 to October 15. This year’s theme is “Essential to the Blueprint of Our Nation.” VA managers and supervisors are encouraged to support events and activities that recognize Hispanics and their many contributions to American society.

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Federal Relay Customer Service
Ensuring Telecommunications Service with and within the Federal Government

Federal Relay provides an intermediary telecommunications service for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, and/or have speech disabilities, including federal employees, for communications with and within the Federal Government. Text Telephone Relay (TTY) is for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, or have speech disabilities and wish to communicate with a hearing person who uses a standard telephone. TTY relay calls are generally made using a text telephone, also known as TTY, which is a communications device equipped with a keyboard for typing messages and a screen for reading messages. A TTY device connects to a standard phone line. TTY callers call the Federal Relay TTY Toll-Free Number to reach a Communication Assistant (CA) who processes their calls. Once connected, the TTY user types messages to the CA, who relays the conversation by reading it aloud to the hearing person. The CA then listens to the hearing person’s reply and types it to the TTY user. To reach the Federal Relay Customer Service, dial (800) 877-0996 (Voice, TTY, ASCII and Spanish). For more information, visit the Federal Relay website.

Reasonable Accommodations
Join the VA Pulse RA Community of Practice

For timely and accurate information regarding reasonable accommodations (RA), join the VA Pulse RA Community of Practice. For direct support of your RA inquiries, reach out to the following National RA Coordinators:

Andree Sutton, Chief of Reasonable Accommodation Services
Denise DeShields, Management Analyst, Reasonable Accommodation Services
Kenneth Law, EEO Manager (Veterans Health Administration)
Karen Agee, Deputy Director, HR Operations (Veterans Benefits Administration)
Catherine Walker, Program Specialist (National Cemetery Administration)
Nancy Hamilton, Supervisor, Human Capital Management (Office of Information Technology)

VA’s Office of Reasonable Accommodation Services works to ensure that every VA employee with a disability is provided the necessary tools, resources, and effective reasonable accommodation to enable them to provide our Nation’s Veterans with the world class benefits and services they deserve. For more information, visit VA’s Reasonable Accommodation Program webpage.

Training
AAFEA, Inc. Leadership Development Workshop

The African American Federal Executives Association (AAFEA, Inc.) will host its 15th Annual Training Workshop at the College Park Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Maryland on Monday, September 16, through Wednesday, September 18, 2019. This year’s theme is “Leadership 2020.” Employees who wish to attend must register on the AAFEA website. Employees are responsible for securing authorization to attend from their respective managers before registering. For more information, email odi@va.gov.

2019 National Minority Veterans Summit
Department to Host First Summit Focusing on Needs of Minority Veterans

The 2019 National Minority Veterans Summit will be held at the Sheraton Dallas Hotel in Texas on September 27 and 28, 2019. This will be the first-ever minority Veterans summit, and will focus on the needs and issues important to minority Veterans. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from Veterans Affairs senior leaders, participate in breakout sessions focused on employment, mental health, entrepreneurship, and more. Plenary sessions will focus on VA care and benefits, partner organizations, and special “Voice of the Veteran” panels. There will be a pre-summit one-day training event for VA’s Minority Veteran Program Coordinators, followed by the two-day summit to consist of lectures, discussion panels, and exhibit hall, and an open forum. For more information, visit the National Minority Veterans Summit website.
TEDx Videos on TMS
Resources for VA Employees

The latest iteration of TEDxVeteransAffairs videos are now available on TMS (Search TEDx). The program is led by Voluntary Service and features talks from speakers throughout the VA enterprise including medical center directors, neuroscientists, psychiatrists, volunteers, and management specialists. This year’s theme, What’s Your Why?, allowed speakers to cover topics as wide-ranging as addiction, homelessness, and suicidal ideations to the importance of the patient experience, civility, and the power of volunteerism. Some talks are light, some are informative, and some are poignant and powerful, but all are interesting and aim to add value to your day. The new videos include:

How I Made My Way Back from a Vietnam Jungle (TMS ID# 4526497): Eugene “Tree” Hairston, Bay Pines VA Medical Center (VAMC), recounts his struggles with addiction and homelessness and how VA helped him turn his life around.

The Green Dress (TMS ID# 4526505): Dr. Jennifer McDonald, Madison VAMC, and Jose Gonzalez, VA Central Office, Operations, Security, and Preparedness, share the story of “Sean”, an OEF/OIF Veteran who suffers from addiction and who ultimately attempts suicide before VA is able to assist.

Farewell to the Octopus (TMS ID# 4526502): Brianne Ogilvie, Executive Director, Veterans Benefits Administration, shares important and thoughtful work/life balance lessons through the perspective of one of VA’s youngest senior executives.

Why I Was Named One of Time Magazine’s 100 Most Influential People (TMS ID# 4527057): Dr. Ann McKee, Boston VAMC, discusses her work as a neurologist that led to the awareness of Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy and the long-term consequences of Traumatic Brain Injuries to NFL players and certain Veterans.

How This Country Became My Home (TMS ID# 4526509): Evelyn Valdez, Office of Acquisitions, Logistics, and Construction, tells the history of her family’s journey from Peru to the United States and the U.S. Army and how her father and uncle instilled a strong sense of patriotism in their families, connecting her to her work at VA.

Keeping Veterans at the Center of Our Work (TMS ID# 4526498): Director RimaAnn Nelson, Phoenix VAMC, asks her Veteran employees two important questions. Through several stories, she emphasizes the impact and importance of remembering our “why” every day.

So, You Think You Know How to Hold People Accountable? (TMS ID# 4526503): Director Dr. David Walker, Jackson VAMC, talks about the importance of accountability and empowerment in building strong teams.

The Value of Civility in the Workplace (TMS ID# 4526499): Laurie Young, Office of Resolution Management, defines civility and discusses how it fits into VA’s core values, while offering several practical tips on how to incorporate civility in your workplace.

Millennials Make a Difference (TMS ID# 4526501): 2019 Parke Award Winner, Daniel Finney, Dorn VAMC, talks about the power of volunteering and how spending time with Veterans during his high school years helped him to discover his “why.”

Why the Patient Experience Matters (TMS ID# 4526504) – Martina Malek, Minneapolis VAMC, uses the story of a patient receiving VA care to explain the difference between customer service and the patient experience.

Monthly e-Learning Digest
Available on the Skillsoft VA Pulse Site

The Monthly e-Learning Digest is a resource for all VA employees. The career center topic of the month as featured in the September 2019 issue is, “Critical Thinking” and the resources offered—links to various online courses and videos, which are assessable via the TMS — and focus on the foundation and skills necessary in making sound business decisions. This issue also highlights more than 160 new online learning items added to the TMS in September. To obtain a list of the newest Skillsoft courses with linked descriptions, join the “Skillsoft Courses, Books, Audio Books, and Videos” group on Skillsoft VA Pulse Site.

Policy Alert
Religious Symbols in VA Facilities

VA Directive 0022, Religious Symbols in VA Facilities, was recently reissued and is available from the ODI website.
Mission One
RECRUIT, RETAIN
AND HONOR
A World-Class Workforce To
Serve the American People

Your Growth Is Our Strategic Goal
Learn more about the Dept. of Veteran Affairs e-Learning program created for Federal employees to succeed, prosper, and advance in their careers.

Grow In Your Career
Training throughout an employee’s career—from entry-level to executive—is critical to mission accomplishment. The VA offers learning resources in the TMS and the VA Books site for the following:

- Compliancy training
- Business Skills – Customer service, Teamwork, Change Management, Communications, and much more
- Project Management
- Leadership
- Microsoft Office 2016 and Office 365
- Technology Skills and Certification – CompTIA, Cybersecurity, PL/SQL, Python, etc.

Why Choose e-Learning
- Self-paced learning satisfies unique learning styles
- CPE, CEU, and college credits for professional growth
- Instant access anytime, anywhere
- Flexibility to fit your demanding schedule

Need More Information?
Go to the 24x7 Learning page for documentation, course catalogs, and information: https://www.valu.va.gov/Home/Explore about resources available to you.
Commemorate
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During National Hispanic Heritage Month, VA commemorates Hispanic cultures and histories, and significant contributions Hispanics have made to American Society and to our Nation. In 1968, Congress passed Public Law 40-498 to honor the achievements of Hispanics in America with histories and cultures from ancestors who came from Spain, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Congress, by Public Law 100-402, as amended, authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation designating September 15 through October 15 as “National Hispanic Heritage Month.” These dates are significant as they commemorate the independence of various Latin American countries among them are Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico declared independence on September 16, and Chile on September 18.

As of June 30, 2019, Hispanics represented 6.98 percent of VA’s permanent workforce. Of its permanent workforce, VA employs 123,933 Veterans, of which 7.73 percent are Hispanic. VA is experiencing less than expected participation for Hispanic men and women when compared to the Relevant Civilian Labor Force. In addition, Hispanic men have less than expected participation rates at GS-11 through 14 and Senior Executive Service (SES) level and women have less than expected participation rates at GS 10, GS-12 through 15, and SES level when compared to the pay grade distribution of the total permanent VA workforce. Although VA continues to develop and implement strategies to improve outreach and career development, VA employees, to include supervisors and non-supervisors, are charged with creating greater awareness for Hispanic employment outreach. For more information, visit VA’s Hispanic Employment Program webpage.

Constitution Day and Citizenship Day

Prior to beginning their service, every VA employee takes an oath of office to, “support and defend the Constitution of the United States” (SF-61, Appointment Affidavit).

Constitution Day and Citizenship Day is observed each year on September 17 to commemorate the signing of the Constitution on September 17, 1787, and “recognize all who, by coming of age or by naturalization, have become citizens.”

This commemoration had its origin in 1940, when Congress passed a joint resolution authorizing and requesting the President to issue annually a proclamation setting aside the third Sunday in May for the public recognition of all who had attained the status of American citizenship. The designation for this day was “I Am An American Day.”

In 1952 Congress repealed this joint resolution and passed a new law moving the date to September 17 to commemorate “the formation and signing, on September 17, 1787, of the Constitution of the United States.” The day was still designated as “Citizenship Day” and retained its original purpose of recognizing all those who had attained American citizenship. This law urged civil and educational authorities of states, counties, cities and towns to make plans for the proper observance of the day and “for the complete instruction of citizens in their responsibilities and opportunities as citizens of the United States and of the State and locality in which they reside.”

In 2004 under Senator Byrd’s urging, Congress changed the designation of this day to “Constitution Day and Citizenship Day” and added a new requirement in the commemoration of this Day that the head of every federal agency provide each employee with educational and training materials concerning the Constitution on September 17th. (Source: The Library of Congress)

The Declaration of Independence, Constitution of the United States, and Bill of Rights are collectively known as the Charters of Freedom. The Declaration of Independence, written in 1776, announces a complete break with Britain and expresses the ideals on which the United States was founded: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Written in 1787, the Constitution established an ingenious practical system of government that derives its power from “We the People of the United States” and promotes the welfare of all its citizens. The Bill of Rights protects freedom of speech, press, religion, and assembly, among many other rights. For more information on these documents that are instrumental to the founding and philosophy of the United States, visit the National Archives Museum website.