



Upcoming Events

October 2019

Disability Employment Awareness Month

Italian American Heritage Month

Polish American Heritage Month

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Work & Family Month

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Annual Conference

October 4-8; Chicago, IL

Leif Erikson Day

October 9

World Mental Health Day

October 10

General Pulaski Memorial Day

National Coming Out Day

October 11

National Indigenous People's Day

Columbus Day

October 14

Out & Equal Workplace Summit

October 14-17; Washington, DC



Commemorate Disability Employment Awareness Month

VA joins the Nation in commemorating National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) this October. This observance celebrates the contributions of individuals with disabilities to America's workforce. The 2019 NDEAM theme is "The Right Talent, Right Now."

VA must leverage diversity of thought to creatively explore and identify innovative solutions that address the concerns of our Nation's Veterans. To do this, the Department must foster a diverse workforce and an inclusive workplace where all employees, including individuals with disabilities, can contribute to their fullest potential. Ensuring that VA's workforce is practicing proper disability etiquette is fundamental to attracting and retaining the right talent.

Employment research suggests that prevalent attitudinal barriers faced by individuals with disabilities are a significant workforce barrier for this group of individuals. Though we may be intimidated by what we do not understand, we can acknowledge that disability is a common human experience we share and accordingly should take responsibility for eliminating barriers to full participation in VA's mission.

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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.

Training

Out & Equal Workplace Summit

Out & Equal Workplace Advocates will host its annual Workplace Summit on October 14-17, 2019, at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center in National Harbor, Maryland. Encompassing over 90 workshops, featured panels, community advisory roundtables, special networking mixers, receptions, and events, this dynamic forum further serves the educational commitment and focus of this conference with its emphasis on Peer-to Peer Education, Commitment to Diversity, and Focus on LGBTQ Workplace Equality. Employees who wish to attend the Workplace Summit must preregister. Employees are responsible for securing authorization to attend from their respective supervisors before registering on the [Out & Equal website](#). For more information, contact [Mr. Sterling Akins](#), VA's National LGBT Program Manager.

HACU Conference

The Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) will host its 33rd Annual Conference October 4-8, 2019, at the Hilton Chicago in Illinois. It will provide a unique forum to share information and ideas for the most promising practices in the education of Hispanics. Employees are responsible for securing authorization to attend from their respective supervisors before registering on the [HACU website](#). For more information, contact [Ms. Edith Perry](#), VA's National Hispanic Employment Program Manager.



Affinity Conference

External Affinity Conferences Approved for VA-wide Participation

Affinity conferences are national meetings convened by external private or public nonprofit organizations representing diverse segments of the population for the primary purpose of promoting equal employment opportunity and providing career development, education, and employment outreach services. VA strongly supports leveraging external partnerships with affinity conferences for professional development and recruitment outreach purposes.

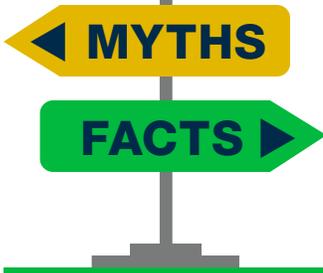
The list of [Fiscal Year 2020 External Affinity Conferences Approved for VA-wide Participation](#) is now available online.

Second Chance Hiring Initiative Resources

Federal Agencies Focus on Initiatives for the Reentry Population

Each year, approximately 10 million people in the United States return to their communities from jail or prison. When reentry fails, the social and economic costs are high. Federal agencies are focusing on initiatives for the reentry population, working together to enhance community safety and well-being, assist those returning from prison and jail in becoming productive citizens, and save taxpayer dollars by lowering the direct and collateral costs of incarceration. The *First Step Act*, signed on December 21, 2018, reforms the U.S. Federal prison system, and seeks to reduce recidivism. It incorporates the *Second Chance Reauthorization Act*, which reauthorizes and amends the *Second Chance Act*, a law that supports state and local reentry programs.

In collaboration with Federal agencies, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is offering resources to help formerly incarcerated individuals understand the Federal hiring process as well as the myths associated with applying for Federal jobs. OPM created and is disseminating the [Second Chance Act Federal Job Search Guide \(Guide\)](#), to provide easy-to-follow steps on how to qualify, search, and apply for Federal jobs. Also, OPM has published a [Federal Hiring Mythbusters one-page flyer](#) to dispel common misinformation about Federal hiring of individuals with criminal records also available on the next page.



What is the federal policy on hiring individuals with criminal records?

Federal agencies have renewed their focus on initiatives for the reentry population. Reentry intersects all aspects of an individual's well-being, and also the well-being of their community. This fact sheet clarifies existing federal policies related to the hiring and employment of formerly incarcerated individuals and their families.

"The Federal Government's hiring policies prohibit employment of people with criminal records."

MYTH

FACT

People with criminal records are eligible to compete for the vast majority of federal jobs.

The Federal Government employs people—including some who may have criminal records—that possess the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Consistent with **Merit System Principles**, agencies are generally required to consider people with criminal records when filling positions if they are among the highest rated candidates and can comply with requirements.

For most federal jobs, questions regarding criminal history do not appear on initial job applications. If a candidate seeking admission to the civil service receives a conditional offer of employment, they will be asked to complete a Declaration for Federal Employment (OF 306) and undergo a background investigation to establish "suitability," or fitness for employment.

People with criminal records are eligible for employment in the vast majority of federal jobs. For a few positions, they may not be eligible because specific laws or statutes prohibit employment, depending on the crime committed.

For example:

- ▶ Certain federal laws, like those prohibiting treason, carry with them a lifelong ban on federal employment.
- ▶ Other laws prohibit federal employment for a certain number of years.
- ▶ The Bond Amendment imposes restrictions related to national security positions.

The principal considerations for agencies hiring people with criminal records involve making determinations related to:

- ▶ An individual's character traits and conduct
- ▶ Potential conflicts between criminal conduct and the core duties of the job
- ▶ Potential conflicts between employment of the individual and interests of national security
- ▶ The nature, seriousness, recency, and circumstance of the individual's criminal activity; and
- ▶ Rehabilitation or efforts toward rehabilitation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Federal Background Investigations:
visit nbib.opm.gov

Suitability:
visit ecfr.gov and search for Title 5, Part 731

Bond Amendment:
visit cdse.edu

On March 7, 2018, President Trump issued Executive Order 13826 to improve public safety by providing those who have engaged in criminal activity with greater opportunities to lead productive lives. The order established a Federal Interagency Council on Crime Prevention and Improving Reentry to engage with stakeholders that play a role in preventing youths and adults from entering or reentering the criminal justice system.



DIVERSITY

Workplace diversity and workplace inclusion can improve employee performance.

We can all benefit by effectively leveraging the differences among others to grow a diverse workforce and cultivate an inclusive work environment.

Here's how:

- Employee retention – Team members tend to be more appreciative and respectful of individual differences and similarities.
- Creativity – It makes sense that a group of people from a wide range of backgrounds would have increased creativity and problem-solving skills. And a broader range of talents means fresh perspectives that can help your company succeed.
- Conflict management – As with creativity, visible diversity tends to cause people to be able to handle conflict better than those in groups where diversity isn't evident.

The VA offers a wide range of online resources to help you learn and grow an aptitude of diversity, as well as many other topics. For information regarding all courses, books, and videos available to you 24/7, please go to the following internal website:

Skillsoft Pulse

<https://www.vapulse.net/groups/skillsoft-courses-books-audio-books-and-videos>

For login questions to the TMS and VA Books website send an email to VASKILLSOFTHELP@va.gov.

CLICK TO LAUNCH FEATURED ASSETS



Watch:

[Your Role in Workplace Diversity](#)



Read:

[How to Work with and Lead People not Like You: Practical Solutions for Today's Diverse Workplace](#)



Listen:

[The Power of Diversity](#)



Commemorate

Continued from Page 1

The following disability etiquette considerations are essential for both communication and interaction with individuals with disabilities in a respectful and courteous manner:

- Always use “people first” language. Recognize that individuals are more than their disabilities.
- Do not ask any questions about an individual’s disability unless it is brought up by the individual.
- Speak directly to the individual with a disability and not to a companion, assistant, or sign language interpreter.
- If you offer your assistance, wait until the offer is accepted before acting. Listen to or ask for instructions if your offer is accepted but be gracious if your offer is declined.
- Treat adults as adults. Address individuals with disabilities by their first names only when extending the same familiarity to all others.
- When introduced to an individual with a disability, offer to shake hands. Individuals with limited hand use or artificial limbs usually shake hands. Shaking hands with your left hand is also an acceptable greeting.
- Do not be hesitant to ask questions when you are unsure of what to do.

This NDEAM, and throughout the year, we can each do our own part to ensure that we are dispelling stereotypes and acting as advocates and allies for individuals with disabilities. Speak out when an individual with a disability is not appropriately addressed. Ensure that your communications and interactions model professional behavior such as active listening and service-minded focus. Listen, observe body language, paraphrase, clarify, summarize, and most importantly demonstrate your eagerness to provide a high level of customer service. These techniques can benefit both those with whom we work and those we serve.

As of August 31, 2019, VA exceeded all four Equal Employment Opportunity Commission goals for increasing the employment of persons with disabilities (PWD) and targeted disabilities (PWTD). PWD represent 16.68 percent of VA’s permanent workforce, exceeding the 12 percent goal; and PWTD represent 3.17 percent, exceeding the 2 percent goal. For GS-11 to SES: PWD represent 12.04 percent, exceeding the 12 percent goal; and PWTD represent 2.17 percent, exceeding the 2 percent goal. Additionally, Disabled Veterans represent 14.10 percent of VA’s permanent workforce.

For more information on VA’s National Individuals with Disabilities Employment Program, Reasonable Accommodation, or the Selective Placement Program for Individuals with Disabilities, visit <https://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/iwd.aspx>.

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A Publication by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Center for Minority Veterans

As Fiscal Year 2019 comes to a close, the Center for Minority Veterans is launching their inaugural web-based formatted edition of [The VOICE!](#) Prior editions of the newsletters will be available online in the near future. [Subscribe](#) to receive updates about this topic as new issues are released.



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