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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 350,000 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 152 medical centers; the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) with 56 regional offices; and the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) with 131 cemeteries. The VA Central Office (VACO) is the national headquarters office comprised of 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) 2014 accomplishments included in this report as they relate to disabled Veterans and methods used to: recruit and employ; provide and improve internal advancement opportunities; and monitor, review, and evaluate DVAAP 2014 Plan goals and activities. In addition, the Plan Certification for Fiscal Year 2015 addresses the Agency's annual plan for employment and advancement of disabled Veterans.
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources & Administration

Assistant Secretary (EX)

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary (SES)

Deputy Assistant Secretary SES Administration

Deputy Assistant Secretary SES Human Resources Management

Deputy Assistant Secretary SES Diversity & Inclusion

Deputy Assistant Secretary SES Resolution Management

Deputy Assistant Secretary SES Labor Management

Deputy Assistant Secretary SES VA Learning University

Deputy Assistant Secretary SES Corporate Senior Executive Management Office

Executive Director SES Veteran Employment Services Office

Director GS-18 Veteran Employment Services Office

Director VESO
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, and rigorous in correcting them.
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RECRUIT AND EMPLOY

Veterans Health Administration (VHA)

In FY 2014, VHA continued to use 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 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 (VSOs), such as the American Legion, American Veterans, 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 uses 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.

- **Compensated Work Therapy (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 Research & Development 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 HVSEP. 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 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 Services;
- Department of Labor's Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP);
- State Vocational Rehabilitation Services;
- Projects with Industry;
- 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 Chapter 31 Vocational Rehabilitation 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 Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO), which has the mission to attract, recruit, and hire Veterans in VA. VHA continued to work with the Chapter 31 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, and 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 of whether service-connected disabilities impair a Veteran's ability is also conducted 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. VR&E VetSuccess program services provided 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, vocation, technical or business school;
- Supportive rehabilitation services including case management, counseling, and medical referrals; and
- Independent living services for Veterans 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 2014, regional offices (ROs) continued to use special hiring authorities to hire Veterans and disabled Veterans through the VEOA, VRA, and Schedule A appointments. 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.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 OPM’s Standard Form-256, Self-Identification of Disability, which is used to identify employees with a disability including disabled Veterans.

National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

In fiscal year FY 2014, for the first time NCA developed and implemented its own Merit Promotion Plan. In the past, NCA worked under two plans. One plan covered field locations and the second the headquarters positions. In August FY 2014, the final draft of the plan was completed and reviewed by the EEO office and key members of the HR team. This plan will be reevaluated every three years in alignment with the plan review policy.

NCA leaders and HR personnel understand Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program (DVAAAP) requirements and work together to ensure that all of the requirements are acted upon. As a continuing practice from previous years, NCA’s recruitment activities focused heavily on increasing workforce participation for Veterans, disabled Veterans, and people with targeted disabilities. In concert with leadership’s intent, the Human Resource Center (HRC) continued to use several hiring authorities in FY 2014 to achieve these goals including: the VRA; the VEOA; the 30 percent Disabled Veteran appointing authority; and Schedule A Hiring authorities. NCA’s steadfast adherence to these Veteran employment instruments has factored heavily in workforce increases for Veterans, disabled Veterans and other targeted groups as demonstrated below.

In FY 2014, NCA continued to exceed Federal sector standards for employment of Veterans and disabled Veterans. In FY 2014, NCA appointed 277 employees, of which, 220 were Veterans representing 79 percent of total selectees. Although NCA had a slight decrease in Veteran workforce representation from 74.71 percent in FY 2013, to 74.29 percent in FY 2014, it remains the highest Federal agency for Veteran workforce representation by a large margin. NCA’s stewardship of the processes used to increase employment levels for Veterans, disabled Veterans, and people with targeted disabilities, has resulted in significant increases in employment levels for these groups over a period of several fiscal years. Over the 5-year period from FY 2010 through FY 2014, disabled Veteran employee representation increased from 20.94 percent of the workforce in FY 2010, to 27.12 percent in FY 2014. Employee levels for people with targeted disabilities has also revealed significant increases, from FY 2010 to FY 2014, increasing from 1.53 percent in FY 2010, to 3.16 percent of the workforce in FY14, also representing a Federal sector high. Many of NCA’s employees with targeted disabilities are Veterans. NCA has gone to great lengths to support the influx of disabled Veterans and other employees with disabilities by developing and implementing a comprehensive Reasonable Accommodations (RAs) program to provide employees with the support needed to perform their duties. Veteran representation at NCA is even more pervasive in leadership. In FY 2014, 80 percent of executive leadership and cemetery directors at NCA were Veterans.

In FY 2014, NCA appointed 88 Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)/Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Veterans. Seventy-four of the appointed Veterans were rated as 30 percent or more disabled; and 35 appointments were made using the Schedule A hiring authority.

In order to sustain these levels of employment for Veterans in FY 2015, NCA continues to develop and implement recruitment strategies to maintain a large pool of Veterans for employment
opportunities at the Administration, including developing a list of all the Retirement Services Offices (RSOs) to ensure retiring Veterans nationwide are aware of NCA employment opportunities.

In FY 2014, NCA continued to use DEUs and VHA’s CWT program as a strategy for hiring and developing Veterans and disabled Veterans who may not have been eligible for employment through normal hiring procedures. These programs support other NCA objectives including: succession planning, workforce augmentation, and sustaining Veteran workforce population levels.

NCA’s 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 first class of apprentices, who were either homeless or at risk of homelessness, was appointed in October 2012 and 13 graduated in November 2013. A second cohort matriculated November 2013 will graduate in December 2014; this group has experienced dramatically increased retention over the initial class, thanks to improved screening of participants. NCA apprentices are hired using either Schedule A, or non-competitive Veterans hiring authority 30 percent disabled, or the VRA.

In FY 2014, NCA continued collaborating with VBA, VHA, and Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) on the Hispanic Veterans Careers Coalition (HV2CC) program which was introduced by NCA. This program continues to review VA Hispanic Veteran employment practices and develop improved processes to increase Hispanic Veteran employment. The initiative also addresses reasons for high joblessness and the impact of current outreach strategies.

In FY14, NCA selected 15 new Cemetery Administrator Interns, 12 (80 percent) were Veterans; 2 were Schedule A hires; and 2 were VA employees. In FY 2014, a diverse group of 14 Cemetery Administrators graduated and were assigned to leadership positions at national cemeteries nationwide. The data demonstrates that NCA continues to successfully use the program as a mechanism to employ Veterans and disabled Veterans in the workforce. The Administration continues to conduct targeted recruitment events prior to Cemetery Administrator Intern selections in April in order to increase the level of diversity and Veterans in the pools of candidates.

The leaders and employees alike continue to represent the organization at events nationwide discussing both benefits and employment opportunities. NCA executives, Minority Veterans Program Coordinators (MVPCS) and staff also continued their participation in a broad array of events related to Veteran and disabled Veteran outreach activities.

In FY 2014, the USMA continued the 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 responses.

The EEO staff continues to work collaboratively with its field HR office and Memorial Service Network (MSN) Directors to use the MVPC located at cemeteries nationwide, to incorporate targeted recruitment into their outreach activities.
The Administration continued to observe VA’s Veterans First Contracting Program to maximize Veteran participation of Veteran Owned Small Businesses (VOSB) and Service Disabled Veteran Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) vendors/contractors. NCA considers VOSB for 100 percent of its contracts. In FY 2014, NCA awarded 1,431 contracts to VOSBs equaling more than $122 million dollars; during that same period 1,329 contracts were awarded to SDVOSBs worth over $118 million dollars. National cemeteries are ideal venues to maximize usage of Veteran owned businesses and NCA has developed a business model structured to ensure Veterans businesses are considered for every contract.

In the second quarter of FY 2014, NCA conducted its second annual Cemetery Director Intern Job Information Webinar. The webinar was a strategy to increase diversity within NCA’s leadership. To further assist applicants, a performance based interview webinar was also offered. These events were marketed to Veterans nationwide.

![NCA Veteran and Disabled Veteran Employment Percentages FY10 to FY14](image)

**Veterans Affairs Central Office (VACO)**

The Veteran Employment Services Office *VA for Vets* program served as a main vehicle for recruiting and employing Veterans including disabled Veterans within VACO. 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 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. As of FY 2014 more than 151,000 accounts are registered in the VA for Vets Resume database. Over 85,000 resumes are stored, of which 22,000 are public.

VA’s 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 supporting events with curriculums designed to prepare services members awaiting medical discharge for success and life after the military. The DVAAP Program Manager continued to serve as a Team Leader with The Semper Fi Odyssey Wounded Warrior Program; a program that provides transition assistance and training to Wounded Warriors from Medical Treatment facilities 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 life skill tools to help transition from the military to civilian life. In FY14, DVAAP collaborated with Semper Fi Odyssey Wounded Warrior Program and to date, have provided a holistic-five-day training to over 600 wounded, ill, or injured service members (Mostly Marines and Soldiers).

The DVAAP Program Manager collaborated with the USOs, Wounded Warrior and Family Care Programs and HireOurHeroes USA to link VESO’s Regional Veteran Employment Coordinators (RVECs) to invitation-only Career Opportunity Days (CODs). CODs are limited to 20 employers and approximately 50-75 wounded, ill, or injured service members 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. Currently, the USO Warrior and Family Care and Hire Heroes USA host 129 COD events at or near military bases throughout the country, accessing over 5,000 active-duty services members and Veterans annually. To date, RVECs in Regions 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 13, 14, and 15 have participated in CODs, accessing hundreds of wounded, ill, or injured service members throughout the country.

Feedback from participants:

- 91 percent troops/spouses felt that the COD very positively or positively impacted their confidence
- 100 percent troops/spouses would recommend the COD to others
- 99 percent employer representatives reported that they would recommend the CODs to other employers

VESO’s RVECs are strategically located throughout the United States and routinely participated in various outreach events to include: Hiring our Heroes events, Recruit Military, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), (Society American Indians Government Employees (SAIGE), Blacks in Government (BIG), and Homeless Coalition events to include VHA CHALENG summits and Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS) Stand Down events.
In FY14, RVECs attended and conducted 280 career events, reaching over 87,598 Veterans. They assisted 897 Veterans with gaining employment at VA, and managed 319 employee Veteran retention cases. The overall number of Veteran and derived preference individuals hired within VA from direct involvement of our 15 RVECs since VESO’s inception on November11, 2011is 1,937.

VESO participated in several senior-level Veteran-centric employment and transitional focused outreach events to include the Executive Goals, Plans, Success Program and the Retired Officer Association Employment Fair.

In FY 2014, VESO supported VA managers in hiring a number of Schedule A and service-connected disabled Veterans returning from OEF and OIF. In FY 2014, VA’s Human Capital Analysis Report recorded 40,132 disabled Veterans in permanent positions and 1,807 disabled Veterans in temporary positions; totaling 41,939 or 12.7 percent of VA’s total workforce, compared to 11.10 percent in FY 2013.

The VA for Vets program complements other VA recruiting programs that assist disabled Veterans to include, VR&E and CWT.

PROMOTE AND DEVELOP

Veterans Health Administration

In FY 2014, 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 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. Individual 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 them, the disabled Veterans 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 diverse cadre of high-potential leaders is prepared to assume greater responsibility as they transition 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, GS-14, GS-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)**
  
  The 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.
• New Executive Training (NExT) Program

The New Executive Training (NExT) Program is a one year, first time executive orientation program. New health care executives are introduced to an improved on-boarding process by receiving guidance from an assigned certified VHA mentor, participating in a multidisciplinary coaching team, attending the NExT orientation among peers and joining a new discipline specific Community of Practice group. Four health care executive groups are represented within this program: Associate Directors of Patient Care Services/Nurse Executives, Chiefs of Staff, Assistant Directors and Deputy Network Directors.

• 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 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) Program

This program was used to develop employees in fields where full-time training in VHA procedures and regulations is required. The two year training programs 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)

The VHA authorized award scholarships to employees pursing 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**

The VBA has continued to shape future leaders through the Summer Internship Program by sponsoring seven interns from diverse backgrounds. The 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 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

Current Leaders

Eighty percent of NCA leadership, SES and Cemetery Directors, are Veterans. Even more remarkable is that at the end of FY 2014, NCA’s primary leadership feeder group, occupational series 1630 was comprised of 47.36 percent disabled Veterans, and 99.8 percent Veterans.

In FY 2014, NCA continued to apply the formal mentoring component of the Cemetery Director Intern Program, providing mentees with opportunities to expand their management and leadership skills with seasoned managers. The class that graduated on August 8, 2014, echoed the diversity of the previous classes and illustrates NCA’s determination to broaden diversity in leadership and to increase inclusion in its workforce. Veterans serving Veterans is one of the measures NCA has in place to ensure superior service to our customer base. The NCA continued to employ marketing strategies for the Cemetery Director Intern Program to maintain our Veteran footprint and to increase diversity. These strategies included webinar panels comprised of former graduates, and added performance based interview information webinars for those interested in applying for the positions.

Emerging Leaders

An assessment of the NCA Apprentice training program (for homeless/formerly homeless Veterans) is scheduled for the first quarter of FY 2015. Items to be assessed include retention and advancement among the graduates. To date, 10 of the Cemetery Caretaker Apprentices have been promoted beyond their WG-04 entry grade. One of the apprentices who started with the current cohort has already advanced to become a WG-10 Equipment Operator.

The focus for FY15 will be to expand the Apprenticeship Program to cover NCA’s next critical-fill position: Cemetery Representative, GS-303-05. The goal is to increase the hiring of female Veterans. As NCA launches the inaugural class of Cemetery Representative Apprentices, the NCA Business Process and Improvement Service will evaluate the first two classes of Cemetery Caretakers to see how well the program has served both the participants and NCA.

In FY 2012, NCA was one of five agencies to participate in a pilot program for the Goals, Engagement, Accountability, Results (GEAR) framework from the National Council on Federal Labor-Management Relations. An advisory committee was instituted by Executive Order No.13522. The pilot program was implemented at one of NCA’s five MSNs. In October, 2013, NCA implemented GEAR at the remaining MSNs. The GEAR program now covers 17 mission critical occupations at each of the MSNs which include approximately 1,380 employees. All NCA employees participating in the GEAR program have newly written performance plans.
aligned with NCA's strategic goals and clearly describe performance expectations at the fully successful and exceptional levels. NCA employees participate in three formal progress reviews during the year: February, June and October. The reviews focus on their cemetery’s performance and challenges; the employee’s performance and contributions during the previous four months; and how the employee’s future contributions can further enhance organizational performance at all levels of the organization. The assessment and selection processes for NCA supervisor have been reviewed and a new approach has been develop, which includes: 1) a structured interview with performance based questions based on the critical aspects of the job; 2). a writing sample and 3). A thoroughly structured reference check will be implemented NCA wide in 2014. In FY 15, NCA will complete GEAR Program implementation. Through GEAR, NCA hopes to retain more of our Veteran and disabled workforce by providing expedient guidance, direction, and feedback frequently throughout the work year.

In FY14, NCA began developing plans to create nationwide Employee Resource Groups (ERG) for FY15. This will include a Veterans’ ERG. The ERG functions will include:

- Participating in the onboarding process by engaging employees about their transition into the workforce and discussing developmental opportunities
- Employee Engagement (coaching and mentoring new employees)
- Participating in the exit survey process to gather and develop data for analysis used to increase retention levels
- Talent management and targeted recruitment; and
- Regional Workforce and Barrier Analysis/Management Directive 715 (MD-715)

In FY14, NCA continued to use the Special Emphasis Program to provide training for managers, supervisors and employees. The program also increased awareness on the needs of targeted groups such as our Nation’s disabled Veterans and served as a resource for both managers and employees.

Veterans Affairs Central Office

The 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 14 Stats):

- More than 151,000 unique Veterans are registered in the database
- Over 85,000 resumes are stored, of which over 22,000 are public
- Accounts with a saved Military Skills Translator Profile exceeded 37,000
- Over 163,000 assessments have been completed
- 1,168,411 users visited the VA for Vets website
The **VA for Vets** program complements other VA training and professional development programs to help Veterans take their careers to the next level:

Several 2014 accomplishments described herein were attributed to VESO **VA for Vets** online career center (Military Skills Translator, Resume Databases). In December 2014, those online tools were removed from the **VA for Vets** website and integrated in the eBenefits Veteran Employment Center for centralized customer access.

**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

In FY 2014, 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 HR offices to monitor their efforts. Special Emphasis Committees also worked with the HR 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. The 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’ HR 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.

This information was reviewed by facility HR 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 HR met to discuss the hiring of disabled Veterans.

Veterans Benefits Administration

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, Human Resources Information System (HRIS), PAID input from HRIS, and the (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

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

**GEAR Program:** The GEAR program measures employees’ development and performance.

**NCA Strategic Plan:** The NCA strategic plan is reviewed on a quarterly basis to monitor progress and document accomplishments.

**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. In FY 2014, NCA had an estimated participation rate of 72 percent.

**Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey:** The NCA established an annual process to determine NCA’s customer satisfaction. Surveys are sent to funeral directors and the family members of deceased service members. Customer’s responses are analyzed to determine whether changes to business operations are necessary to increase overall satisfaction of customers. The NCA has continued its focus on customer service excellence by monitoring customer surveys and implementing appropriate actions whenever necessary.

**NCA EEO Office:** Conducts analysis on EEO complaint tempo, reports to leadership and implements strategies such as training and facilitations at NCA facilities with high levels of workplace grievances and complaints to address workplace disputes, EEO site visits, and group discussions at facilities. The EEO office also conducts surveys at NCA facilities with workplace issues and works with NCA management to provide solutions. In FY14, NCA conducted four visits to national cemeteries to improve workplace climate.

**Employee Assistance Program (EAP):** In June FY 2012, NCA implemented its own EAP. Implementation and strategized use of this program 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**

Each Administration and Staff Office reports Veteran hiring numbers on a monthly basis to the Deputy Secretary, VA, as part of their Monthly Performance Review meetings.

In October FY14 VA’s Human Capital Analysis Report recorded 40,596 disabled Veterans in permanent positions and 1,723 disabled Veterans in temporary positions; totaling 42,319 or 12.15 percent of VA’s total workforce, compared to 11.16 percent in October FY 2013.
PROGRAM EXECUTION

Veterans Health Administration

VHA Field facilities employed 5,952 individuals with targeted disabilities, which is 2.07 percent of the total VHA workforce of 288,063 for FY 2014. This is in comparison to the employment of 5,246 individuals with targeted disabilities for FY 2013, which was 1.89 percent of the total VHA workforce of 277,218. VHA’s workforce data was downloaded from the (VSSC), HR Reports, VHA Annual EEO Program Status Report, Table 1B, and Total VHA Workforce by Disability and Workforce Planning, Targeted Disabilities employment data. In FY 2014, the total populations of VHA's permanent workforce and disabled permanent employees increased; however, these two populations did not increase at the same rate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>On-Board Disabled Veterans</th>
<th>Percent of Disabled Veterans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 2014</td>
<td>29,800</td>
<td>10.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2013</td>
<td>26,042</td>
<td>9.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2012</td>
<td>23,161</td>
<td>8.72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 OEF / 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 VSO 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 2014, the VHA Employees with Targeted Disabilities Report was sent to the VISN Network Directors on a quarterly basis. The FY 2014 fourth quarter report included a reference to VHA historically achieving for the first time the 2.00 percent on-board goal for individuals with targeted disabilities for a complete fiscal year. The quarterly 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); and

• Accessing the Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

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

In FY 2014, VHA initiated the process of automating the OPM, Standard Form 256, Revised July 2010, “Self-Identification of Disability.” In his memorandum dated September 7, 2010, the former 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, July 26, 2010, for “Increasing Federal Employment of Individuals with Disabilities.” It will further the position of 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 was used only in the production of reports and not for any purpose that would affect them individually. The only exception is that records may have been used for selective placement purposes and selecting special populations for mailing of voluntary personnel research surveys. In addition, every precaution was taken to ensure that the information provided by each employee was kept in the strictest confidence. For the first time, VHA achieved the 2 percent on-board goal for individuals with targeted disabilities for a complete fiscal year. The VHA national on-board percentage at the end of FY 2014 was 2.07 percent. Eleven VHA VISNs achieved the 2 percent on-board goal. Twelve VHA VISNs achieved the 3 percent hiring goal and the VHA national hires percentage was 3.54 percent.

Veterans Benefits Administration

VBA regional offices have effectively used special hiring authorities and practices to recruit and hire Veterans and disabled Veterans. In FY 2014, 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. 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 2014 DVAAP Report:

- **Oakland Regional Office** – The Oakland Regional Office has a strong representation of Veterans and disabled Veterans. Veterans comprise 57 percent of the total workforce with 60.2 percent of the Veterans with self-identified disabilities.

  The continued to promote Veteran employment opportunities and awareness by aggressively targeting all available resources that manage Veterans job candidates with disabilities. Primary source of job-ready candidates for employment continued to be through the Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment offices, USAJOB website and career centers on local area campuses. During (FY) 2014 took advantage of OPM’s 30 percent or more disabled provisional appointments to hire 12 disabled Veterans non-competitively. Additionally, during this time the hired a total of 14 additional Veterans, 4 of whom identified as having a disability of less than 30 percent.

  In FY 14, promoted four Veterans to supervisory positions, two identified were 30 percent or more disabled and one Veteran had a disability rating of less than 30 percent. Additionally, promoted 30 percent -percent disabled Veterans to the positions of Claims Assistant, Veteran Service Representative, and Program Support Assistant.

  Continued to oversee a locally developed leadership training program entitled Leadership Achievement Program (LAP) designed to develop interested employees into leaders. During FY 2014, selected three candidates from LAP.

- **Cleveland Regional Office** – The Cleveland VA Regional Office (VARO) engaged in targeted recruitment activities in the surrounding area thru job fairs and various Veteran outreach events throughout the community. For FY 2014, Cleveland staff attended the “Hiring Our Heroes” job fair and posted VA career opportunities at colleges with high Veteran populations. The Cleveland VARO continued to use referrals from local Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Division, the Ohio Bureau of Employment Services and the Cuyahoga County Employment Services. Additionally, Cleveland VARO used the (VRA) appointment authority to assist in hiring several employees. During FY 2014, Cleveland VARO continued to hire disabled Veterans utilizing Chapter 31 benefits.

  The Cleveland VARO used several different methods to improve and promote advancement opportunities for disabled Veterans. The Cleveland VARO conducted several Lunch and Learn series on Applying for Vacancy Announcements through USAJOBS and Writing Your Federal Resume. The Cleveland VARO encouraged disabled Veteran employees to apply for internal positions which extended Veteran
preference in an internal Merit Promotion Program. These opportunities have been most notable within the 0996 occupational category for Veterans Service Representative and Rating Veterans Service Representative positions. An increase in the number of positions within the Veterans Service Center, the Regional Loan Center and National Call Center has facilitated many opportunities for upward mobility as well.

Currently, the Cleveland VARO has 559 employees, 220 (39.36 percent) are Veterans, and 123 (22 percent) are disabled Veterans. Compared to FY 2013, this represents an increase of Veterans by 1.1% and an increase of disabled Veterans by 1.06 percent. Of the 45 newly employed (hires & transfers) 31.11 percent were disabled Veterans and 71.11 percent of new hires were Veterans.

- **San Diego Regional Office** – The San Diego (VARO) continued to primarily recruit from within the San Diego commuting area, thereby targeting the large military and Veteran population. HR and the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment offices worked together to attend numerous annual diversity-focused career fairs, as well as maintained continued rapport with local colleges and Veteran Success program coordinators at San Diego State University and Mira Costa College. During FY 2014, San Diego (VARO) was tasked with hiring 25 temporary Veterans Service Representatives to support a National Non-Rating initiative. HR worked diligently with the Vocational Rehabilitation program to directly hire 20 Temporary positions.

The San Diego VARO continued to maintain a robust Veteran Outreach program with employees located at five military bases throughout San Diego County. These outreach programs include transition briefings to more than 38,000 service members. During these transition briefings, employees provided information and recruitment and job opportunities. San Diego VARO outreach team was involved in attending local community events such as the Annual Veterans Stand down. This annual event was developed to assist homeless Veterans with job opportunities, housing, disability claims, legal issues and various other forms of assistance.

HR continued to provide a copy of all external vacancy announcements to external partners, and the Officer in Charge at each military out-based office. This external partnership included Family Service Officers on Military bases, various local military organizations, local colleges and community Veteran organizations.

Director discussed employment opportunities at monthly meetings with the United Veterans Council made up of local Veterans groups. The San Diego VARO also maintains working relations with various community boards to include the VA Community Advisory Board, United Veterans Council, and the San Diego Military Advisory Council. San Diego VARO supported Veterans Coalition meetings, American EX-POW meetings and ad hoc Outreach events at the Regional Office.
During FY 14, San Diego (VARO) conducted an analysis of Veteran employees. The analysis revealed that the Veteran workforce comprised 82.80 percent of which 59.38 percent were disabled. This reflects a 5 percent increase over FY 2013.

**Providence Regional Office** - During FY 2014, Providence VARO successfully hired 19 Chapter 31 Veterans (30 percent or more disabled) as Veterans Service Representatives and one Program Support Assistant. This number is significantly higher than in previous fiscal years due to a national hiring authority in FY 2014.

Providence VARO partnered with several community agencies inviting job ready disabled Veterans, Student Veterans of America (SVA) organization, the Veterans Representative from the Rhode Island (RI) Department of Employment and Training, local Chambers of Commerce, as well as other Veteran and minority groups throughout the State of RI. In FY 2014, Providence participated in five of these job fairs.

During FY 2014, Providence VA filled thirty one (31) vacancies specifically using the Veteran hiring authorities. These vacancies were filled using the VRA and VEOA.

Providence VA provides job opportunity information and flyers which solicit resumes for future job opportunities to our OEF/OIF Coordinator, Woman Veterans Coordinator, Minority Veterans Coordinator and Homeless Veterans Coordinator. This information is also provided at TAP/DTAP sessions, demobilization activities, Welcome Home Veterans Events at the VA Medical Center, Operation Stand Down Rhode Island, and to the OEF/OIF Team at the Providence VA Medical Center. The HRM Liaison works closely with employees who perform outreach activities.

Providence VARO ensured actions were taken to ensure disabled Veterans are offered and included in career development and leadership programs. Further, the Providence VARO ensured promotion opportunities were provided to disabled Veterans.

Qualified Veterans were given special Veterans preference, as authorized by 38 U.S.C. 2104(g), for employment in certain positions such as Veterans Service Representatives for in-service action under our merit promotion plan. Thirty percent plus disabled Veterans and Veterans who are disabled less than 30 percent were identified on registers for Veteran Service Representative positions provided by the HRC in Baltimore.

During FY 2014, the Providence VARO had 195 employees on board. 51 percent were Veterans, 25 percent were disabled Veterans and 25 percent were 30 percent or more disabled Veterans.

Between FY 2013 and FY 2014, Providence VARO had an unprecedented growth. During the reporting period, the office hired 31 employees. All of these employees were Veterans and (20) of the employees were disabled Veterans. In April of 2014,
Providence VARO was presented the Disabled American Veterans of Rhode Island Large Employer of the Year Award.

- **Seattle Regional Office** – The Seattle VARO works in close cooperation with Veterans Employment Services Office staff and has accompanied them to various career events. A majority of the Seattle VARO’s internal and external job announcements specifically seek VRA and/or VEOA applicants in an effort to expand the presence of Veterans on candidate referral certificates. Notifications of external job announcements are typically shared with the Wounded Warrior Project, the Port of Seattle and local military base career centers. HR Staff regularly accept referrals from the VR&E department. During FY14, 65 percent of the applicants hired from external and DEU certificates were Veterans (50 percent disabled Veterans).

During FY14, the Seattle VARO effected 41 internal merit promotion selections, of which 41.4 percent were Veterans and 39 percent, were disabled Veterans. All internal job announcements solicit for applicants with VRA eligibility. This process typically widens the applicant pool for positions. Seattle VARO promoted Veteran participation in a number of career advancement programs, including LEAD, the Federal Executive Board Associates Program and the Seattle VARO local leadership program. HR staff ensured selecting officials were aware of their responsibility to provide consideration to qualified disabled Veterans.

Seattle VARO has approximately 602 employees, of which 53.4 percent are Veterans and 36.9 percent are disabled Veterans. In FY 2013 employment data reflected that 53.28 percent were Veterans and 35.25 percent were disabled Veterans. However, During FY14 Veterans comprised of 65 percent new accessions, compared to only 50 percent in FY13. Employees with targeted disabilities comprised 3.06 percent of the RO workforce in FY14. While this represents a slight decrease from FY 2013, this decrease remains well above the national goal of 2 percent.

- **Huntington Regional Office** – The Huntington Regional Office (HRO) continued to coordinate recruiting efforts with our servicing HRC for targeted recruitment to include Veteran candidates. HRO invited applications from eligible Veterans through VR&E Division hiring chapter 31 Veterans as well as 30 percent or more disabled Veterans.

During FY 2014 the HRO attended 12 job/career fairs and 20 outreach events throughout the state of West Virginia in order to reach as many Veterans as possible.

- HRO uses DVB Circular 20-83-12, dated May 26, 1983, to improve internal advancement opportunities for special disabled Veterans. HRO also announced internal
actions as career ladder opportunities to provide advancement opportunities for qualified individuals, including Veteran employees.

Multiple lunch-n-learns were offered to employees throughout FY14 in order to help employees with writing resumes & KSA’s and interviewing skills. The HRO offered employees the opportunity to participate in the local HRO Leadership Enrichment Program (LEP). This program offered non-management employees the opportunity to experience how the management side of the office works. Currently the Support Services Division has been realigned to provide employees the opportunities to move through the career ladder from entry level to management.

Of the total FTE, 56 percent are Veterans, 68 percent are disabled Veterans, of the disabled Veterans 76 percent received at least 30 percent compensation. HRO has made great strides to make Disabled Veterans a major priority.

- **Atlanta Regional Office** - The Atlanta Regional Office (ARO) actively used a variety of hiring flexibilities, i.e., VRA, VEOA, Pathways, and Schedule A throughout the year to recruit and select disabled Veterans for permanent and temporary positions in the facility.

The Regional Office participated in three (3) recruitment fairs during this fiscal year to attract Veteran applicants. The facility recruitment effort included Veterans Job Fairs sponsored by Congressman John Barrow in Statesboro, Georgia; Congressman David Scott in Atlanta, Georgia; and Georgia State -Andrew Young School of Policy, Atlanta, Georgia. We are scheduled to participate in a MENA Career Job Fair in Decatur, Georgia for individuals with disabilities on October 3, 2014.

The HR Office implemented an initiative to contact colleges and universities within the local commuting area with high populations of Veteran students to network with Career Placement officials. This initiative affords our office an opportunity to notify Veterans of available positions, establish VA recruitment fairs outside of regularly scheduled school job fairs, identify qualified Veteran applicants, and network with students and school officials regarding employment with our Agency. This is an on-going initiative that entails periodic on-site visits by HR Specialists with school career placement officials.

Approximately 61.1 percent of the ARO work-force are Veterans and 39 percent are disabled Veterans. A total of 63 percent of the Veterans at this facility are service-connected disabled. The Veteran population at the ARO remained fairly constant during FY 14 above 60 percent. During FY 14, ARO had 48 gains. Of the 48 new hires, 30 hires were disabled. Recent significant Veteran hires reflected an increase in overall percentage for the upcoming fiscal year. The organizational workforce profile of
Veterans and disabled Veterans exceed the 35 percent goal established by the Secretary of the Agency.

- **Progress Report:**

VBA’s Office of Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity 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 throughout the year. Based on the extracted data from COIN PAI (as of 09/30/2014), there is an increase in Veterans and disabled Veterans. The data from COIN PAI 204 is summarized in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>FY 2014</th>
<th>FY 2013</th>
<th>Increase/Decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Employees</td>
<td>21,524</td>
<td>21,288</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Veterans</td>
<td>10,534</td>
<td>49.48%</td>
<td>10,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Disabled Veterans including 30% or more</td>
<td>5,471</td>
<td>25.70%</td>
<td>4,917</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Extracted from COIN PAI 204 from 10/01/2013 to 09/30/2014

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 49.48 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.

- Most Regional Offices use the VR&E Staff to identify qualified disabled Veterans for announced vacancies. The VEOA, 30 percent or more disabled Veterans, and VRA appointment authorities were used. In most Regional Offices, disabled Veterans were often hired after having been encouraged to apply for vacancies upon completion of vocational rehabilitation.

- Through contacts with local colleges and business schools, as well as the Veteran student work study and student employment programs, Regional Offices have been successful in identifying potential disabled veteran employees while still in training; and, in the case of the work study and student employment programs.

- 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 use their human resources management staff and employees of
the VR&E Division to provide periodic training on special appointment authorities.

• Staff members are in regular contact with and regularly attend the Veterans Leadership
Program Advisory Board meetings. One of the important thrusts of this program is the
employment of disabled Veterans.

National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

In FY 2014, NCA continued employing very successful strategies to increase the number of
Veterans and disabled Veterans in the workforce. Even as OIF and OEF operations have abated,
NCA was able to hire 88 OIF/OEF Veterans in FY14 by committing to DVA ICARE core values.
In FY 2014, NCA continued executing the DVAAP plan demonstrated by:

- Maintaining the highest Veterans workforce employment ratio of any Federal Agency
- Increasing employment for disabled Veterans, highest at VA
- Increasing Schedule A Hires
- Increasing Veterans in leadership positions
- Increasing the employment of individuals with targeted disabilities
- Committing to VA’s Veterans First Contracting Program by obligating almost
  $240million in contracts to VOSBs and SDVOSBs in FY 2014.

Throughout the fiscal year, NCA HR and management collaborated at every opportunity to employ
qualified Veterans and disabled Veterans. NCA continues to adhere by the VEOA of 1998, strictly
following its policy and guidelines, making it possible for eligible Veterans to apply for positions
announced under the merit promotion procedures when the agency is recruiting from outside its
own workforce.

In FY 2014, NCA continued to employ Veterans at the highest rate of any other agency in the
Federal workforce. Of the 1,738 NCA employees, 1,312 were Veterans. Additionally, 27.12
percent of the workforce are disabled Veterans.

Veterans Affairs Central Office

The boost in Veteran hiring in 2014 continues to represent an achievement for the Department that
can be attributed in part to VESO’s efforts and the effective program promotion conducted by
Regional Veteran Employment Coordinators (RVECs). Additionally, attending both live and
virtual hiring events combined with HR process improvements have likely supported the boost as
well.

In FY 2014, the Department has 113,906 Veterans currently employed 32.70 percent of VA’s total
workforce, including a significant number of service-connected disabled Veterans returning from
OEF/OIF.
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 as compared to the government-wide time to hire competitive process.

AGENCY CHALLENGES

Almost one half of VA positions are Title 38 (health care) positions. VA must compete for talented Veteran health care providers (doctors, nurses, pharmacists, psychiatrists, etc.) in an environment where these skills are in high demand and other health care organizations may be able to offer better compensation.

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.

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 recruit and retain a larger pool of Veteran talent.
Veterans Health Administration VHA – FY 2015 Plan

In FY 2015, VHA will continue to support the recruitment, retention, and advancement of disabled Veterans. Field facilities will continue to have the overall responsibility for administering the DVAAP and insuring the allocation of resources needed to carry out an effective program. The responsibility for follow-up activities and for recommendation of appropriate action to ensure accomplishment of program objectives will be assigned to HR Managers. Responsibility for the annual reporting of accomplishment reports as provided by Human Resource Services will be that of the EEO Program Managers. The supervisors at all levels will be responsible for administering the DVAAP within their respective services to ensure accomplishment of program objectives and goals. Executive Order 13518 – Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government will be emphasized to VHA field facilities in order to
support the SECVA’s initiative of a 35 percent Veteran employment goals by 2017 through the use of VESO’s website and Veterans Employment Specialists. VA for Vets is a comprehensive career development program designed to help Veterans launch or advance their civilian careers. It is anticipated this program will also positively impact the employment, retention, and advancement of VHA disabled Veterans.

- The 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).

- The 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 and Operation Enduring Freedom (OIF/OEF) Coordinators will continue to address the employment and career advancement barriers to improve the recruitment, advancement, and retention of returning disabled Veterans.

- The VHA (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, VRA and the 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.

- The 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 will provide developmental opportunities for the preparation in applying for executive vacancies. The Health Care Leadership Development Program 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 VHA New Executive Training Program is a one year, first time executive orientation program. New health care executives are introduced to an improved on-boarding process by receiving guidance
from an assigned certified VHA mentor, participating in a multidisciplinary coaching
team, attending the NExT orientation among peers and joining a new discipline specific
Community of Practice group. Four health care executive groups are represented within
this program: Associate Directors of Patient Care Services/Nurse Executives, Chiefs of
Staff, Assistant Directors and Deputy Network Directors. 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 Program is VHA’s
integrated process of identifying, assessing, and developing high potential leaders. The
Technical Career Field Program is to be 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, a
component of the EISP, provides education scholarships to registered nurses. The VA
Nursing Education for Employees Program (VANEED) 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.

- The 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 HR Offices to monitor program efforts. Special
Emphasis Committees will work with the HR 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’ HR 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 – FY 2015 Plan

The 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 2015:

- Will continue to use various sources to recruit disabled Veterans. One key source will be soliciting assistance from the Women Veterans Coordinator and the Homeless Veterans Coordinator, by providing them with job opportunity information and flyers soliciting resumes for future job opportunities at the Regional Offices. Provide information at TAP/DTAP sessions, demobilization activities, and Welcome Home Veterans.

- Will continue to encourage full identification of disabled Veterans on the Regional Office rolls by keeping personnel records up to date each year and publish reminders to Veterans to keep their personnel records current, including disability status.

- The activities for the Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program Plan will continue to be monitored, reviewed and evaluated on an annual basis as part of the preparation of the annual accomplishment report. An annual assessment of the station’s program status in relation to each of the action items listed in the National Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program will be made.

- Will continue to use special hiring authorities to employ Veterans and disabled Veterans, such as the VEOA, VRA, and Schedule A. Selecting officials will be encouraged to make full and appropriate use of these special appointing authorities.

- The VBA Regional offices (ROs) will continue to participate in military briefings, the monthly Transition Assistance Program, 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 (OPM) website, www.USAGOBSS.opm.gov, regional office intranet sites, and listed with state Veterans service offices, military family support centers, and the Vet Success program. The VBA vacancy announcements will also be posted for registered Veterans on VA’s e-Benefits website.

- Will continue to take assertive action to increase recruitment of applicants with targeted disabilities by networking with disability affinity groups and greater use of special hiring authorities under Schedule A and other provisions.

- Will continue to use 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 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 Report, HRIS, and the VSCC, which monitors gains and losses of Veteran employees.

National Cemetery Administration (NCA) – FY 2015 Plan

In FY 2015, NCA will continue using Veterans and disabled Veterans hiring procedures that have proven successful in previous years. To ensure NCA’s high levels of Veterans employment remains intact, NCA will make every effort to improve current methods and implement new programs and practices listed below:

• Continue to conduct commemorative month programs that increase workforce awareness and inclusion of both Veteran employees and applicants.

• To seek opportunities to provide memorial benefit information to all segments of the Veteran population.

• Engage in collaborative efforts with organizations such as: the National Guard and Reserve, “Heroes Hire Heroes,” Civilian-Military.com, Transition Assignment Program employment centers, and Hispanic affinity groups in the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA) family. Under this effort, all NCA and Federal employment opportunities will be shared by utilizing these organizations to promote outreach awareness among their constituents.

• In FY 2015, NCA is planning to charter Employee Resource Groups (ERG) including a Veterans ERG. These teams will focus on recruitment and engagement; diversity training; mentoring; and other inclusion based activities.

• Better use social media such as Facebook and Twitter to reach targeted audiences internally, in addition to other social media tools; share information and conduct training webinars; and use Share Point pages to make available career opportunities and other information to all segments of the workforce.

• In accordance with the FY 2014 DVAAP, expand the Apprenticeship Program in FY 2015, with the initial class of Cemetery Representatives; evaluate the first two apprenticeship classes and make adjustments as required to better benefit the participants and NCA.
• Continue conducting quarterly Executive Diversity Committee Meetings to discuss and do work on a variety of topics including: ERGs; National Programs for Historically Excluded Groups (HEG) heritage month programs; workforce and barrier analysis; MD 715 reporting, regional workforce analysis; exit interview survey data; targeted recruitment; and employee engagement;

• Continue linking NCA Special Emphasis Program & Minority Veteran Program. Coordinators (MVPC) activities to include emphasis on targeted outreach activities, educational and informational forums and utilization of targeted community networks to increase minority Veteran participation in benefits programs and employment at VA.

• Continue to link active involvement in outreach and inclusion initiatives to Senior Executive Service performance.

• Continue utilizing Small, Disadvantaged, and Veteran-Owned Businesses for the majority of services needed at national cemeteries nationwide.

• Conduct targeted recruitment webinars to market and recruit Veterans and disabled Veterans for NCA’s Cemetery Director Intern Program.

Veterans Affairs Central Office – FY 2015 Plan

In FY 2015, VACO will continue to build on the success of the VESO to help 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 FY 2015:

• VACO/VESO will help VA accomplish milestones noted in the 2015 Eliminate Veteran Homelessness Operation Plan.

• VESO will support the recruitment, retention, and advancement of disabled Veterans throughout VA in addition to the overall responsibility for administering the DVAAP Reports and to ensure that the allocations of resources are available to carry out an effective program.

• VESO will expand public outreach resources and other social media (VA for Vets website, Facebook, Twitter, publications, outreach activities/events) to reach Veteran audiences internally and externally.

• Continue to develop other online services 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 e-Benefits, MyHealthe Vet, wellness checks, survivor assistance, burial information and vocational rehabilitation.

• Continue to develop a mentoring program to provide mentoring from creditable VA Veterans to newly hired Veterans and service members on transitioning from the military to a federal civilian workforce.

• Continue to use 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 stress the importance of writing Individual Development Plans and utilizing MyCareers@VA, VA Learning University, HR Academy, and VA’s Talent Management System as successful tools to assists Veteran employees in career and personal development and improving job performance.

• Use the DVAAP and VAMs Program to provide confidential guidance to mentees and assist with career development.

• Continue to use VESO’s Data Cell to monitor progress, collect Veteran data, identify challenges, and evaluate effectiveness.

• Continue to use VA’s Human Capital Monthly Reports to analyze the employment of disabled Veterans throughout VA’s entire workforce.
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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C. Plan Last Amended: October 30, 2014
   Date

D. Date Effective: October 30, 2014
   Date

CERTIFYING OFFICIAL SIGNATURE

Assistant Secretary for
Human Resources and Administration

Date 7/1/15