

June 22, 1995
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Memorandum of Understanding
American Federation of Government Employees, National VA Council (VAC),
and Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

The following constitutes agreement between VBA and the American Federation of Government Employees NVAC concerning single agency qualification standards for the position of Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist (VRS), GS-1715, in VBA.

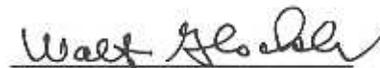
- 1.) Local Human Resources Managers will, upon receipt, provide a copy of the qualification standard and this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to the local union president.
- 2.) This qualification standard does not affect VRS positions within Veterans Health Administration.
- 3.) The new qualification standard will not prohibit advancement of current VRS employees. The Office of Personnel Management requires "grandfathering" all VBA employees currently in the occupational series of VRS. The grandfather clause recognizes all current VRS staff as meeting all requirements (including educational) of the new qualification standard. Present VRS staff will be able to complete existing career ladder positions and to qualify for supervisory positions in this series. Former VRS staff, now assigned to other occupational series must meet the new standards to reenter the occupational series.
- 4.) The approved qualification standard for Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists requires a Masters degree in rehabilitation counseling; or a Masters degree in counseling psychology or a related field with at least 30 semester hours of course work in certain areas. A Ph.D. is not required at any grade level in this series.
- 5.) Establishment of a positive academic requirement, i.e., a Masters degree in rehabilitation counseling; or a Master degree in counseling psychology or a related field with at least 30 semester hours of course work in certain areas does not eliminate this career field from an upward mobility program. Selection for an upward mobility program, through the use of bridge positions, may include payment for educational programs. Following completion of education an employee would meet all qualifications.

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- 6.) Experience may not be substituted for the academic requirements. Although related experience may be substituted for education in many occupations, it may not be substituted for education in the positions of Counseling Psychologist, Registered Nurse, Auditor, Medical Officer, Attorney, etc.
- 7.) Transfer opportunities will not to be affected. Current staff may be considered for transfer positions for which they qualify. Present VRS staff will be "grandfathered" and may be selected for employment opportunities at other VBA facilities.
- 8.) The determination as to whether the VRS is exempt or non-exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act and consequently in or out of the bargaining unit are issues yet to be resolved outside of this agreement. This issue shall be resolved as soon as possible.
- 9.) Contracting out for services is a temporary solution to cope with a burgeoning workload due to military downsizing activities. VR&C Service has not lost any positions due to contracting and are not slated to lose any positions in FY'96.
- 10.) The VRS standard does not alter the preferred staffing of Vocational Rehabilitation and Counseling (VR&C) Officers. Within recent years, all VR&C Officer positions within VBA have been occupied by Counseling Psychologist, classified in the occupational series of 180. Implementation of the VRS standard will not change the qualification requirements for Counseling Psychologist. Those VRS who did not meet the academic requirements of the Counseling Psychologist series were never able to become a Counseling Psychologist.
- 11.) No implementation of the qualification standards shall take place until the local labor management obligation has been fulfilled.


For Management

June 23, 1995
Date


For The NVAC