

Contents

CHAPTER 250. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN THE VA

PARAGRAPH	PAGE
1. Scope	1
2. Policy	1
3. References	1
4. Human Resources Management Objectives and Human Resources Management Program Goals	2
5. Position Management.....	3
6. The Role of Line Officials in Human Resources Management.....	3
7. Role of Human Resources Management Officials	3
8. Management and Direction of the Human Resources Management Program.....	4
9. Delegations of Authority	5
10. Delegations of Appointing Authority	6
11. Delegations of Authority To Evaluate and Classify Positions	7
12. Authority To Fix Rates of Pay for Positions Exempted From the General Schedule (5 U.S.C. ch. 51)	7
13. Authority To Administer Oaths	8
14. Authority To Recommend Retirement for Physical Disability.....	9
15. Effecting Personnel Actions	9

APPENDIX

A. Positions for Which the Secretary Retains Prior Approval Authority	App.A-1
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CHAPTER 250. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN THE VA

1. SCOPE

This chapter outlines basic agency-wide policies and principles to assure a sound, progressive, and integrated program for human resources management (HRM) in the VA. It sets forth the major HRM program goals, states the respective roles of management and HRM officials, outlines the VA organization for HRM, and delegates specific HRM authorities. Although the basic policies and objectives of this chapter apply agency-wide, the specific delegations of authority do not apply to the Office of Inspector General. Specific authorities are vested in the Inspector General by Public Law 95-452 and will be contained in a supplement to this chapter.

2. POLICY

a. HRM is an integral part of overall management. It is carried on within the framework established by statutes, Executive orders, regulations and directives, and without discrimination for reason of race, religion, color, sex, national origin, age, non-disqualifying physical or mental handicap, lawful political affiliation or any other irrelevant factors. HRM will be conducted in keeping with the highest public trust, interest and public policy objectives.

b. The VA HRM program exists to help management accomplish the agency missions and programs by assisting directly and effectively in the acquisition, development, utilization, and management of human resources.

c. HRM officials advise and assist management on all aspects of HRM, labor relations and the regulatory and technical considerations of HRM programs. Assistance to management will be planned and carried out on a continuing basis as an essential part of the HRM program at each installation.

d. Authority for HRM matters is decentralized to the level of management where HRM operations are performed, except as limited for control purposes.

e. Uniform practices and procedures will be established for human resources administration throughout VA to the extent necessary and practicable with flexibility to meet HRM goals in the most effective manner possible.

3. REFERENCES

- a. Executive Order 9830, February 24, 1947.
- b. Title 5, United States Code.
- c. Title 38, United States Code.
- d. Inspector General Act of 1978 (PL 95-452).
- e. Veterans' Health Care Amendments of 1979 (PL 96-22).

f. 5 CFR, Ch. I, Parts 230 & 250

4. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM GOALS

a. It is essential that management practices support and facilitate achievement of overall HRM objectives. The HRM program should ensure:

(1) Selection of the best available persons and their placement in positions where their talent and abilities can be most effectively utilized.

(2) Equal opportunity in all aspects of employment and positive action to promote progressive employment practices and maximum utilization of skills and training to further equal employment opportunities for all employees, and to provide, wherever practicable, job opportunities and work experience for the economically or educationally disadvantaged.

(3) Current and timely classification of positions and evaluation of jobs, consistent with approved standards, to provide equitable compensation for employees and facilitate sound organization.

(4) Sound pay administration policies and procedures and the effective and equitable administration of laws, regulations and policies relating to the hours of work and pay.

(5) Effective training and supervision which will result in the development and maintenance of an efficient and productive work force and create a positive climate for the career development of employees.

(6) Advancement of employees in accordance with their qualifications, potential, and merit.

(7) Improvement of the level of performance of employees whose work is marginal or substandard or assignment to work for which they are better fitted.

(8) Separation of employees whose work performance or conduct is unsatisfactory, and who fail to improve after a reasonable opportunity has been given them to do so.

(9) Prompt, fair and equitable consideration of employee complaints.

(10) Constructive relationships between management and recognized labor organizations.

(11) Exchange of information with employees concerning the goals of the organization and their career objectives, as well as their rights, benefits, privileges, responsibilities, and obligations as Federal employees.

(12) Promotion of an effective flow of information and ideas for work improvement between and among management and employees.

(13) Stimulation and recognition of employee accomplishments.

b. The HRM program will be implemented locally, consistent with agency policy and standards, to achieve these goals. Management and direction of the HRM program will assure the full development and proper balance of all HRM functions. Programs will be carried out on a planned basis as effectively and economically as possible.

5. POSITION MANAGEMENT

Line managers shall implement effective position management practices to assure that the work is organized and assigned among positions in a manner which will serve the needs of the organization most effectively and economically. Position management will include the evaluation of the need for positions, the skills and knowledges required, and the organization, grouping and assignment of duties and responsibilities among all positions. Such actions will be integrated with related programs of budget formulation and review, organization and procedures, and the annual position classification review.

6. THE ROLE OF LINE OFFICIALS IN HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

a. HRM is a continuing responsibility of all who plan, direct or supervise the work of others.

b. The line official or supervisor who has responsibility for the work of a group must determine the number and skills of employees needed to do the job. The supervisor at the appropriate level determines the organization of the work unit, the composition of positions, selects employees, makes initial decisions in grievance and disciplinary matters, determines training needs, and provides necessary training. The supervisor places employees in jobs where their skills, knowledge, and potential can be best utilized. The supervisor appraises the performance of employees, counsels and advises them on performance improvement and plans for self-development, and recommends their promotion or retention. These HRM responsibilities are a fundamental part of overall management. Effective HRM cannot be accomplished without recognition of this responsibility by both line and HRM officials.

c. The influence of the line official on each employee supervised is a significant factor in HRM. It is the line official who has continuous day-to-day contact with individual employees, and who, therefore, is most familiar with employees and their jobs. The line official exercises an important influence on the attitudes of employees toward their jobs and their organization and, consequently, upon the volume and quality of their work. The line official must be aware of the needs and aspirations of employees and must have the necessary skill and knowledge to deal with HRM matters affecting employees. The line official must assure that effective HRM policies and practices are considered in management's decisions affecting employees and applied in day-to-day operations.

7. ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS

a. HRM officials function in a staff capacity to the organization head and to the management officials in the organization. Through knowledge of program objectives, productive HRM practices, regulatory requirements, and skill in the application of techniques, HRM officials provide the leadership which significantly contributes to the quality and direction of HRM in VA.

b. As a staff arm, HRM officials have certain functional responsibilities. They are responsible for advising management officials of actions which should be taken to achieve HRM objectives as well as for insuring that all phases of the HRM program meet statutory and regulatory requirements and agency policy and standards. This entails furnishing assistance to management on the technical as well as the employee-supervisory aspects of management's HRM responsibilities. In addition, HRM officials perform a variety of HRM operations as an auxiliary service to management--a service which can be more effectively and economically provided by a central service unit.

c. HRM officials are responsible for exercising classification and employment authorities, assuring compliance with appropriate standards and VA policy and making certain that personnel actions are taken in accordance with pertinent legal and regulatory requirements. In carrying out these functions HRM officials are expected to consider the judgments and recommendations of operating officials, and to do everything practicable to meet their operating requirements. The exercise of delegated authority and compliance with regulations and requirements, however, are but one aspect of the role of HRM officials. The primary role of HRM officials is to assist management to accomplish the work of the organization in the most efficient manner through effective HRM.

d. HRM officials also have a responsibility to employees for fostering and promoting their fair and equitable consideration and treatment in employment matters. In carrying out their responsibilities to employees, HRM officials must make sure that employees are informed of and receive the rights and benefits to which they are entitled under law and regulations.

e. HRM officials furnishing HRM support services to another VA facility (i.e., national cemeteries) are responsible for providing the same level of service as is provided at their own facility.]

8. MANAGEMENT AND DIRECTION OF THE HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

a. Ultimate responsibility for effective HRM in the VA is retained by the Secretary. As the top HRM advisor to the Secretary, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management plans and formulates Departmentwide HRM policies, programs, and requirements for HRM throughout VA; advises key executives in their application; and appraises for the Secretary the HRM program of the Department.

b. Administration heads, Assistant Secretaries, and other key officials have authority and responsibility for the conduct of the field HRM program for their respective elements. The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management advises and assists these officials in carrying out this responsibility.

c. VA's organization for HRM provides that most HRM functions are to be performed at the facility level. Consistent with this concept, field facility heads have the authority and the responsibility for the management of the HRM program in their respective facilities. For certain key field positions, approval of employment and classification actions affecting such positions is retained by the Secretary, administration heads, Assistant Secretaries, or other key officials.

d. The HRM functions at the field facilities are administered for the field facility director by the Human Resources Management Officer (HRMO). Specific responsibilities include:

- (1) Advising management and operating officials on HRM policies, practices, and functions.
- (2) Providing leadership in maintaining effective relations with labor organizations, community relations and contacts with schools and universities regarding employment matters.
- (3) Keeping management advised on changing concepts in HRM which tend to make employees more effective and productive members of the organization.
- (4) Planning, organizing and conducting the HRM program within the framework of applicable laws, regulations, instructions, and agency policies and standards.

9. DELEGATIONS OF AUTHORITY

a. General

- (1) Specific delegations of HRM authority are set forth in paragraphs 10 through 14 below. Other delegations of authority not included in this chapter are contained in the respective subject matter chapters of this manual.
- (2) Delegations of authority contained in this chapter do not divest a higher line official of overall responsibility in accordance with the VA plan of organization.
- (3) In exercising delegated authority, officials concerned will be governed by applicable provisions of law, rules and regulations, and VA policies and procedures with particular reference to the instructions and procedures set forth in this manual.
- (4) Officials to whom HRM authority is delegated may temporarily place such further conditions or limitations on the exercise of the authorities delegated to subordinates as appropriate. Any official invoking this authority will immediately request confirmation of the action from the next higher level of supervision. Such requests will indicate the nature and extent of the limitation and full justification therefor.
- (5) Officers and employees to whom authority is delegated shall not re-delegate any part of such authority to other officers or employees except as specifically provided.
- (6) All HRM authorities, whether specifically contained in this chapter or other parts of this manual, delegated to a Deputy Assistant Secretary/other key official under the jurisdiction of an Assistant Secretary may be assumed by the Assistant Secretary. Specific HRM authorities (i.e., selections, discipline and adverse actions, incentive awards, etc.) may be centralized to the Assistant Secretaries for elements under their jurisdiction through appropriate issuances.

b. Prior Approval Authority for Centralized Positions

- (1) Personnel actions involving positions listed in appendix A require the prior approval of the Secretary or Deputy Secretary.

(2) Personnel actions involving positions centralized to an administration head, Assistant Secretary, or other key official require the prior approval of that official or designee. Personnel actions involving Canteen Service positions centralized to a Field Director, Veterans Canteen Service, require the prior approval of the Field Director.

(3) In accordance with Department policy of maximum decentralization of authority and responsibility consistent with efficient and economical operations, positions centralized to an administration, Assistant Secretary, or other key official will be limited to those key positions which, in the judgment of the administration head, Assistant Secretary, or other key official, must receive top level consideration. Administration heads, Assistant Secretaries, and other key officials will issue lists of all such positions centralized to the administration, Assistant Secretary, or other key official in appropriate supplements to this chapter. Excepted Canteen Service positions which are centralized will be listed in Veterans Canteen Service Operating Procedures, VCS-1.

10. DELEGATIONS OF APPOINTING AUTHORITY

Except as limited by paragraph 9b above, authority is delegated to officials occupying the positions listed below, and persons properly acting in such positions, to effect appointments, separations (including removals), and other personnel actions for VA positions as specified.

a. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management and Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management. All Headquarters positions; field positions not under the jurisdiction of a field facility director; and any field position at the request of a responsible official.

NOTE: Responsible officials, as used in this chapter, include the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, administration heads, Assistant Secretaries, other key officials, and persons properly acting in such positions.

b. Team Leader, Headquarters and Executive Resources Team. All Headquarters positions and other positions when requested by the responsible official.

c. Administration Heads, Assistant Secretaries, and other key officials. All field positions under their respective jurisdiction.

d. Field Facility Directors and HRM Officers. All field positions under the jurisdiction of the Director, and Headquarters or other positions located at field facilities when requested by the responsible official.

e. Director, Field Directors and Canteen Officers, Veterans Canteen Service and HRM Officers. Excepted Canteen Service positions in VA field facilities.

f. Directors, Prosthetic Distribution Center, National Acquisition Center, and other Acquisition & Materiel Management facilities, and HRM Officers. All field positions in the facilities or centers under the jurisdiction of the Director.

g. Directors, National Cemetery Area Offices; Directors National Cemeteries; and Servicing HRM Officers. All positions in National Cemeteries and National Cemetery Area Offices under their jurisdiction.

11. DELEGATIONS OF AUTHORITY TO CLASSIFY POSITIONS AND GRADE JOBS

Authority is delegated to officials occupying the positions listed below, and persons properly acting in such positions, to classify positions under the General Schedule (5 U.S.C. ch. 51) and to grade jobs covered by the Federal Wage System.

a. Deputy Assistant Secretary for HRM; Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for HRM; and Classification Specialists GS-12 and Above in Customer Advisory and Consulting Group. All Headquarters positions; all positions listed in appendix A; field positions not under the jurisdiction of a field facility head; field positions centralized to an administration; Assistant Secretary; or other key official; any field position at the request of a responsible official.

b. Team Leader, Headquarters and Executive Resources, and classification specialists, GS-11 and Above in Headquarters & Executive Resources Team. Positions through GS-14 in all Headquarters elements; and other positions when requested by the responsible official.

c. Administration Heads, Assistant Secretaries, and other key officials. All field positions under their respective jurisdictions except positions listed in appendix A.]

d. Field Facility Directors, HRM Officers and HRM Staff Members, GS-9 and Above, Assigned Classification Duties. All positions under the jurisdiction of the Director except those specified in subparagraph a above.

e. Servicing HRM Officers and HRM Staff Members, GS-9 and Above, Assigned Classification Duties. All positions serviced by the facility HRM activity except those specified in subparagraph a above.

f. Directors, Prosthetic Distribution Center, National Acquisition Center, and other Acquisition & Materiel Management field facilities and HRM Officers. All positions in the facilities under the jurisdiction of the Directors except those specified in subparagraph a above.

12. AUTHORITY TO FIX RATES OF PAY FOR POSITIONS EXEMPTED FROM THE GENERAL SCHEDULE (5 U.S.C. Ch. 51)

a. The Under Secretary for Health is delegated authority to approve and authorize salaries, wage rates and wage schedules for positions exempted from coverage under 5 U.S.C. ch. 51, as follows:

(1) Except as otherwise provided for in subparagraphs b and e below, those occupied by Federal Wage System employees exempted from coverage by 5 U.S.C. 5102(c)(7).

(2) Those occupied by students, interns, and residents whose compensation is set in accordance with the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 5351-5356.

(3) Those occupied by residents, interns, or by temporary full-time, part-time, intermittent, or fee-basis employees of the Veterans Health Administration whose compensation is set in accordance with provisions of 38 U.S.C. 7405 and 7406.

b. The Under Secretary for Health and Directors of field facilities at which such positions are located are delegated authority to approve local wage rates for temporary craft, trade, and labor positions required for a particular purchase and hire project. These positions are exempted from the General Schedule by 5 U.S.C. 5102(c)(7).

c. The Under Secretary for Health; the Director, Veterans Canteen Service; and Field Directors, Veterans Canteen Service, are delegated authority to approve and authorize wage rates and pay schedules for canteen employees exempted from coverage under the General Schedule by 5 U.S.C. 5102(c)(14).

d. The Under Secretary for Benefits is authorized to approve pay schedules for non-U.S. citizen positions exempted from coverage under the General Schedule by 5 U.S.C. 5102(c)(11).

e. The Deputy Assistant Secretary for HRM and Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for HRM are authorized to approve wage rates for wage administration positions associated with lithographic printing and related processes (5 U.S.C. 5102(c)(7)).

13. AUTHORITY TO ADMINISTER OATHS

In accordance with 5 U.S.C. ch. 29, authority to administer, without charge or fee, the oath required for entrance into the executive branch of the Federal Government or any other oath required by law in connection with employment is delegated to officials occupying positions listed below and persons properly acting in such positions:

- a. General Counsel.
- b. Inspector General.
- c. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management
- d. Associate Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management
- e. Team Leader, Headquarters and Executive Resources Team
- f. Chief, Assistant Chief, and personnel clerks of the Headquarters & Executive Resources Team, Processing and Records.
- g. HRM Officer, HRM specialists, processing and records supervisors, and personnel clerks of field facility HRM offices.
- h. Director, National Cemetery Administration

14. AUTHORITY TO RECOMMEND RETIREMENT FOR DISABILITY

5 CFR Part 831, Subpart L prescribes the procedures to be followed when an agency files an application for disability retirement in the course of removing an employee. When the criteria in section 831.1203 are met:

(a) Administration heads, Assistant Secretaries, and other key officials are authorized to recommend disability retirement for all employees occupying positions under their respective jurisdictions except those for which the Secretary retains prior approval authority.

(b) Heads of field facilities are authorized to recommend disability retirement for all employees occupying positions under their respective jurisdictions, except prior approval is required for positions centralized to an administration, Assistant Secretary, or other key official.

(c) Where prior approval of the Secretary is necessary, it will be obtained through the Deputy Assistant Secretary for HRM.

15. EFFECTING PERSONNEL ACTIONS

a. Personnel actions required by FPM 296-33, Guide to Processing Personnel Actions, will be effected by the issuance of SF 50-B, Notification of Personnel Action, or such other documents as have been prescribed by the Secretary. The SF 50-B or other equivalent document will be authenticated by the appropriate official to whom authority has been delegated in paragraph 10. The official's signature (including facsimile) attests to the fact that the action is accurate and meets all legal and regulatory requirements.

b. Upon official notification appropriate officials to whom authority has been delegated in paragraph 10 are authorized to authenticate the notification of personnel action to effect approved employment actions for Directors or other centralized positions. Prior approval is not required to effect personnel actions for resignations, separations-military service, death actions, name changes, and retirements at the employees' request. The appropriate official shall also authenticate the notification of personnel action or other equivalent document for within-grade increases for persons in such positions after all required conditions, including the certification of acceptable level of competence, have been met.

**APPENDIX A. POSITIONS FOR WHICH THE SECRETARY
RETAINS PRIOR APPROVAL AUTHORITY**

1. The Secretary retains prior approval for all actions involving the following positions unless otherwise delegated in the appropriate subject matter chapters of this manual:

- a. All positions in the Secretary's immediate office.
- b. Assistant Secretaries, Deputy Assistant Secretaries, and administration heads.
- c. General Counsel and other key officials.
- d. The Chairpersons of the Board of Veterans Appeals and the Board of Contract Appeals.
- e. Directors, Associate Directors, and Assistant Directors of field facilities; Directors, Veterans Integrated Services Networks; and Directors, National Cemetery Area Offices.
- f. Any field position, regardless of its title, whose preponderant duties are designed primarily to train prospective Directors, Associate Directors or Assistant Directors.
- g. All officials listed in 38 U.S.C. 7306.
- h. Positions of director of service and equivalent in Headquarters.
- i. Positions of Distinguished Physician and members of the Special Medical Advisory Group appointed under 38 U.S.C. 7405; and executive grade positions paid under 38 U.S.C. 7404 except the position of Chief of Staff at a medical facility, medical and regional office center or outpatient clinic (independent) and Headquarters positions staffed in accordance with criteria approved by the Secretary.
- j. All other Headquarters and field positions in the Senior Executive Service and those positions at grade GS-15 and above.

2. When it is known that one of the field positions specified in paragraph 1 above is to be vacated or has been vacated, the field facility head will promptly notify the Secretary through proper channels of the name and position of the employee concerned, nature and date of the action, and other pertinent data.

3. Officials in the normal line of supervision for the above positions may approve such recurring actions as within grade increases, resignations, name changes, voluntary retirements, separations by transfer without reemployment rights and voluntary releases from centralized positions.

4. Candidates who are nominated for centralized positions are not to be informed of their nomination until the Secretary has approved their selection. Except where critical duties must be performed, candidates will not be detailed or assigned to positions in an acting capacity prior to approval of the Secretary.