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CHAPTER 5. ADVANCEMENTS AND CASH AND HONOR AWARDS**5.01 SCOPE**

This chapter contains instructions and procedures governing the advancement of physicians, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, registered nurses, nurse anesthetists, physician assistants and expanded-function dental auxiliaries appointed under authority of 38 U.S.C. 7401(1) or 7405(a); pharmacists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, certified respiratory therapy technicians, registered respiratory therapists, and licensed practical or vocational nurses appointed under authority of 38 U.S.C. 7401(3) or 7405(a); and residents appointed under authority of 38 U.S.C. 7406.

5.02 REFERENCES

- a. 38 U.S.C. Chaps. 73 and 74.
- b. MP-5, part I, chapter 534, section A.
- c. MP-5, part II, chapter 5.

5.03 AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

a. **Persons Authorized To Effect Advancements.** An advancement will be effected by an official having power by law or lawfully delegated authority to effect advancements of persons approved by the officials indicated in subparagraph b below. In the VA, those officials who may effect advancements for the Secretary are those who are authorized to sign the individual Standard Form 50-B, Notification of Personnel Action. Those officials are identified in MP-5, part I, chapter 250.

b. **Persons Authorized To Act on Recommendations of Boards for Advancements.** The following persons act on recommendations of Professional Standards Boards and Standards Boards for advancements of employees in the Veterans Health Administration appointed under authority of 38 U.S.C. 7401(1), 7401(3), and 7405(a)(1).

(1) **The Secretary.** All grade assignments of physicians and dentists to Director grade on recommendation of the Under Secretary for Health.

(2) **The Under Secretary for Health or a Designee. (See App. 5E)**

(3) **Health Care Facility Directors. (See App. 5E).** Advancements not included in subparagraphs (1) and (2) above.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304, 7403

5.04 PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BOARDS AND STANDARD BOARDS. (See par. 2.20 in the VHA Supplement to MP-5, part II, chapter 2)

5.05 PROMOTIONS-GENERAL

a. Promotion Consideration

(1) Full-time, part-time and intermittent employees are periodically considered for promotion to the next higher grade when they meet the requirements specified in MP-5, Part II, chapter 5, paragraph 6.

(2) Appointing officials may waive the time-in-grade requirements specified in MP-5, Part II, chapter 5, paragraph 6.

(3) Appointing officials may approve authorized deviations contained within applicable qualification standards.

(4) Appointing officials may direct that the grade of an employee be adjusted if it is not determined upon review that an employee has not been promoted in accordance with the promotion requirements.

b. General Criteria. To meet the criteria for promotion, the individual must have demonstrated potential for growth as well as demonstrated professional and/or administrative growth. Examination of the individual's total record must reveal evidence that the contribution to VA medical service is of sufficient value to warrant promotion. Potential for continuously greater contribution is also a prerequisite. Judgment and decisions of boards will be sufficient to ensure that promotion is fully merited and not recommended based on meeting administrative requirements alone. The individual's total record and professional stature will be carefully evaluated and supported by documentary evidence as necessary. These requirements contemplate the stimulation of career service and progression to positions of greater responsibility.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304; 7403

5.06 PROMOTION OF PHYSICIANS, DENTISTS, PODIATRISTS, OPTOMETRISTS, PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS, EXPANDED-FUNCTION DENTAL AUXILIARIES, PHARMACISTS, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS, PHYSICAL THERAPISTS, CERTIFIED RESPIRATORY THERAPY TECHNICIANS, REGISTERED RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS, AND LICENSED PRACTICAL OR VOCATIONAL NURSES

a. Requirements for Physicians and Dentists. Except for those in Chief grade and above, physicians and dentists will become eligible for periodic consideration for promotion to the next higher grade after they fully meet all the requirements specified below:

(1) Current proficiency rating of "Satisfactory."

(2) Served the required time-in-grade as stipulated in MP-5, part II, chapter 5, paragraph 6f.

(3) For promotion to Full and Intermediate grades, the physician or dentist must have demonstrated professional competence and performance which merit advancement through demonstrated skills and aptitudes in the direct care of patients. There must be evidence of professional growth with potential for assuming greater professional responsibility.

(4) For promotion to Senior grade, the physician or dentist must have shown professional attainment through recognized proficiency in the care and treatment of patients or completion of an approved residency with a demonstrated high level of performance. There must be evidence of professional growth and development.

(5) For promotion to Chief grade, the physician or dentist must demonstrated a sustained high level of professional performance with evidence of exceptional effort, ability and contribution in the care and treatment of patients. There must be evidence of professional and/or administrative development, along with sustained professional growth. In addition, they must meet either subparagraph (a) or (b) below:

(a) Actual assumption of substantial professional and/or administrative responsibilities; or,

(b) Outstanding professional attainment. Examples of such attainment are:

1. A faculty appointment (post residency) at professional rank.

2. Achievement of outstanding results in research.

3. Outstanding clinical development (including publications).

4. Notable recognition by national professional societies or groups.

b. Requirements for Podiatrists, Optometrists, Physician Assistants and Expanded Function Dental Auxiliaries. Before they can be considered for promotion, podiatrists, optometrists, physician assistants, and expanded-function dental auxiliaries must have a current proficiency rating of “Satisfactory” and must meet the time-in-grade requirements as specified in MP-5, part II, chapter 5, paragraph 6f. These employees must meet the same grade requirements, including the specified demonstrated accomplishments, as for appointment. Any deviation or exception to these requirements will be limited to those specified in the appropriate qualification standard.

c. Requirements for Pharmacists, Occupational and Physical Therapists, Certified Respiratory Therapy Technicians, Registered Respiratory Therapists, and Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses. See paragraph 6 of Chapter 5, this part.

d. Processing Promotions. (See app. 5F & 5G)**(1) Notification of Eligibility**

(a) Approximately 60 days prior to the date the employee meets the time-in-grade requirement for consideration for promotion, the health care facility will receive from the Austin Automation Center (AAC) VA form 5-97, Notice of Pending Personnel Action, in duplicate, identifying the employee and stating that the employee meets the time requirements for promotion as of the date specified. In addition, VA Form 5-97 will indicate if there is a satisfactory proficiency on record and the amount of LWOP (leave without pay) since the beginning of the waiting period to the date VA Form 5-97 is issued. (VA Form 5-97 will be received approximately 60 days prior to the anniversary date of grade for podiatrists and optometrists in Associate or Full grade, physician assistants in Associate grade and for expanded-function dental auxiliaries in Junior grade.)

(b) If the employee is not promoted, the AAC will continue to send the VA Form 5-97 annually until a change in grade occurs. The VA Form 5-97 will be forwarded to the appropriate supervisory official. An employee who is not promoted will be reconsidered on the next anniversary date of grade. A longer period for consideration, not to exceed 3 years, may be established by the approving authority when an expanded-function dental auxiliary does not meet the qualification standard grade requirements of education or required experience. In these cases, the Human Resources Management Office will tab the service control file and will destroy the VA Form 5-97 for the year(s) when the employee is not to receive consideration.

(2) Examinations

(a) The Professional Standards Board and Standards Boards may recommend that an appropriate examination be conducted. An examination will not be administered until after approval is received from the person authorized to act on board recommendations. If a health care facility board cannot be properly constituted for a particular examination (see par. 2.20 in the VHA Supplement to MP-5, part II, chapter 2), the file, consisting of VA Form 5-97, supervisory evaluations, the employee's official personnel folder, and other information will be sent to the appropriate Professional Standards Board or Standards Board, as applicable. After conducting the examination, the designated board will forward the results of the examination and the promotion file to the employee's facility.

(b) The character and scope of the examination will be appropriate for and will be such that the professional and administrative adequacy of the individual may be determined. Examinations ordinarily will be oral but may be prescribed in written form at the discretion of the board and will consist of discussions of professional and/or administrative subjects appropriate to the new grade, specialty, experience and assignment of the examinee.

(c) When travel to another facility is required for examination, the candidate may be detailed to that facility for temporary duty. Travel will be at Government expense. The board may develop a written examination to be administered at the candidate's facility, thereby reducing the need for travel. If written examination is used, it will be sufficiently comprehensive to indicate the capabilities of the candidate. The questions will be sent, marked "For Official Use Only," to

the Chief of Staff at the facility where the candidate is employed. This official will arrange for and monitor the examination. The answers will be returned to the board, which will evaluate the examination and enter the results on VA Form 10-2543. A copy of the questions and answers will be attached to the duplicate VA Form 10-2543.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304; 7403

5.07 PROMOTION AND ADVANCEMENT TO A HIGHER LEVEL WITHIN THE GRADE OF REGISTERED NURSES AND NURSE ANESTHETISTS

a. **Administrative Requirements.** Before they can be considered for promotion or advancement to a higher level within the grade, registered nurses and nurse anesthetists must have a current proficiency rating of "Satisfactory" ("Satisfactory" or better for nurse anesthetists) and meet the administrative and time-in-grade requirements specified in MP-5, part II, chapter 5, paragraph 6f and this paragraph. Registered nurses and nurse anesthetists considered for promotion or for advancement to a higher level within the grade based on possession of additional qualifications and/or placement in an enhanced assignment must meet the requirements in the applicable qualification standard. Any deviation or exception to these requirements will be limited to those specified in the qualification standard.

b. **Criteria for Consideration of Registered Nurses.** Registered nurses who meet the above administrative requirements become eligible for consideration for promotion or advancement to a higher level within the grade and must meet the following criteria:

(1) Have improved the effectiveness of patient care through the use of more complex skills and application of scholarly knowledge to practice.

(2) Have assumed greater responsibility for the improvement of patient care.

(3) Have made steady progress toward professional goals for the improvement of patient care.

(4) Have demonstrated the same level of professional nursing practice as required in the qualification standard for appointment to the grade to which the registered nurse is being considered for promotion or advancement to a higher level within the grade.

c. Criteria for Positions Other Than Chief, Nursing Service Which May Warrant Advancement of a Registered Nurse to Nurse IV or Nurse V

(1) Assignments such as Associate or Assistant Chief, Nursing Service; Associate Chief Nursing Service for Research; Associate Chief Nursing Service for Education; Supervisor, Nursing Home Care Unit; assignments in the Employee Education System; or Headquarters nursing positions are potentials for these grades. Assignments are typically located in organizational settings where there is a high rate of activity, where there is a broad program mission involving a great variety of specialty/subspecialty care in the more highly sophisticated medical center; and other special programs. These assignments are usually found at medical centers for which the Chief, Nursing Service Complexity Level has been assigned at Level 1 or 2

(see app. C to sec. A of ch. 3), VISN or Headquarters. Assignments of the scope and complexity contemplated for these grade levels may occur, on a limited basis, at other medical facilities.

(2) In considering the scope and complexity of the assignment, reviewers should look at those factors which specifically relate to the administrative, clinical, educational or research functions of the position:

(a) **Administrative Assignments.** The individual's responsibility for managing and supervising the total nursing program; planning, organizing, directing, controlling and evaluating programs and follow-up actions required by internal and external review organizations and/or accrediting bodies; giving daily attention to complex personnel management problems; participating in executive and decision making deliberations; and performing a full range of administrative duties.

(b) **Educational Assignments.** The individual's responsibility for developing broad educational and training programs involving a variety of nurse specialties in widely diversified nursing activities; providing nursing personnel with the vital link between nursing education and nursing practice; coordinating and maintaining close relationships with affiliated schools of nursing, professional organizations, certifying bodies, and program directors of students of other disciplines who rotate through the medical facility; and serving on Education and Training Committees and nursing advisory groups and special task force teams concerned with managing education and career development activities.

(c) **Research Assignments.** The individual's responsibility for (1) conducting merit-reviewed, approved research projects relative to nursing care and related specialty areas, performing independent research or serving as a primary contributing member of a research team, formulating the research proposal and protocol submission to Headquarters for merit review, and publishing in appropriate nursing and related professional journals or speaking to peer groups; or (2) serving as a mature, competent and productive researcher on problems of major scope, directing independent research of considerable interest and value to the nursing or related fields, where the research contributions can be reviewed as being highly productive and of such quality and originality as to have marked the nurse scientist as a significant contributor to advances in the practice of nursing.

(d) **Nursing Home Care Supervisor Assignments.** The individual's responsibility for supervising a large NHCU (Nursing Home Care Unit) characterized by a high degree of interdisciplinary involvement, significant involvement in rehabilitation and outplacement efforts, and nursing home care program planning, organizing, directing, controlling, and evaluating activities. The assignment includes significant personnel management responsibilities along with a full range of administrative duties.

(e) **Other Comparable Assignments.** The individual's responsibility for assignments comparable to any one or combination of those described in subparagraphs (a) through (d) above.

d. **Criteria for Consideration of Nurse Anesthetists.** Nurse anesthetists who meet the above administrative requirements become eligible for promotion and must meet the following criteria:

- (1) Supervisory evaluations clearly illustrate the significant contribution the candidate's accomplishments have made directly or indirectly to services to the patient.
- (2) There has been consistent and progressive professional and/or administrative growth.
- (3) There has been shown increasing professional responsibility for patient welfare.
- (4) There has been displayed the ability to communicate and work effectively with others.
- (5) There is demonstrated the potential for further development and professional attainment.
- (6) Their performance must show evidence of continuously greater contribution to the service.

e. **Processing Promotions and advancements to a higher level within the grade for Nurse Anesthetists (see app. 5F).** Promotions and advancements to a higher level within the grade for nurse anesthetists will be processed in the same manner as promotions of physicians and dentists. When possible, the physician chief of anesthesia, physician consultant in anesthesia or Chief, Surgical Service, shall be a member of the Physician Professional Standards Board in examining nurse anesthetists for promotion to higher grade.

f. **Processing Promotions and advancements to a higher level within the grade for Registered Nurses (see app. 5G)**

(1) **General.** Approximately 60 days prior to the date the registered nurse meets the time-in-grade requirement for consideration for promotion or advancement to a higher level within the grade, the facility will receive from the AAC VA Form 5-97, Notice of Pending Personnel Action, in duplicate, identifying the employee and stating that the employee meets the time requirement for promotion or advancement to a higher level within the grade as of the date specified. In addition, VA Form 5-97 will indicate if there is a satisfactory proficiency rating on record and the amount of LWOP since the beginning of the waiting period to the date VA Form 5-97 is issued.

(2) **Grade Advancements and advancements to a higher level within the grade for Chiefs, Nursing Service, Associate Directors of Nursing or Associate Directors for Patient Services, and Headquarters Nurses.** (See par. 2.20 in the VHA Supplement to chapter 2, this part.)

(a) The recommending official forwards the proposed functional description, employee's curriculum vitae and the latest two proficiency reports (or their equivalent) to the appropriate Nurse Professional Standards Board (NPSB) for review. VHA Headquarters NPSB is appropriate for VHA Headquarters and VISN staff. All other promotions and advancements are

to be reviewed by the field facility NPSB (where one can be constituted) or the NPSB for the VISN.

(b) The NPSB reviews the employee's qualifications and the scope of the position to determine whether the proposed grade and level are warranted and makes a recommendation regarding the employee's promotion or advancement to the approving official (facility Director or designee for Chiefs, Nursing Service, Associate Directors of Nursing, or Associate Directors for Patient Services; the Under Secretary for Health or designee for VISN and Headquarters staff).

(c) The approving official approves or disapproves the promotion or advancement

(d) VHA Headquarters NPSB is the appropriate NPSB for all advancements involving a waiver of facility complexity level.

(e) Notification of VISN and VHA Headquarters. When a selection is made for one of these positions, facility officials will notify the appropriate VISN Director and the Office of Nursing Programs (118) in VHA Headquarters.

(3) Grade Advancements and advancements to a higher level within the grade to Nurse IV and Nurse V for Registered Nurses Other Than Those Cited in Subparagraph (2) Above

(a) Procedures for advancement are the same as in paragraph 2 above, except subparagraphs (d) and (e) do not apply to those covered by this paragraph.

(b) Annually, approximately 120 days before the anniversary date of the registered nurse's assignment to Nurse IV, or Nurse V, or advancement to a higher level within these grades, the Austin Automation Center will send to the facility a VA Form 5-97, Notice of Pending Personnel Action, in duplicate. The servicing Human Resources Management Office will retain the duplicate copy of the form as a suspense copy and forward the original to the Chief, Nursing Service. The Chief, Nursing Service will review the registered nurse's assignment and compare it with the criteria in the VA Nurse Qualification Standard for the grade or level within the grade for which the registered nurse is being considered and in subparagraph c above. If the Chief, Nursing Service recommends advancement, the front of the VA Form 10-2543, Board Action, will be completed. If the Chief, Nursing Service determines that the most recent Proficiency Report does not accurately reflect the employee's current performance, a special report may be prepared. The recommendation, the Board Action, the registered nurse's OPF (Official Personnel Folder), and a description of the assignment's responsibilities will be forwarded for advancement consideration through the Chief of Staff to the facility Director. If the Chief, Nursing Service and Chief of Staff recommend advancement and the Director concurs, the Director will send the documents, along with the recommendations, to the appropriate NPSB as outlined in paragraph (2) above.

(c) Recommendations for advancement to one of these grades or advancements to a higher level within the grade will address the individual's personal qualifications as specified in the VA Nurse Qualification Standard and the scope and complexity of the assignment. NOTE: To recommend an action covered by this paragraph, the NPSB must find that the individual meets

the qualifications for the position and that the scope and complexity of the assignment are comparable to the corresponding Chief Nurse assignment. The corresponding Chief Nurse assignment means that:

- A Nurse IV, Level I, assignment must be comparable to a Chief Nurse assignment at a Level IV (complexity index) facility,
- A Nurse IV, Level II, assignment must be comparable to a Chief Nurse at a Level III (complexity index) facility,
- A Nurse V, Level I, assignment must be comparable to a Chief Nurse at a Level II (complexity index) facility, and
- A Nurse V, Level II, assignment must be comparable to a Chief Nurse assignment at a Level I (complexity index) facility.

(d) If advancement is not recommended at any level, the Board Action will be filed in the OPF, and the nurse will be informed of the decision.

(e) Once appropriate officials have determined that the scope and complexity level of the assignment do not warrant advancement to a higher grade or advancements to a higher level within the grade, a review of the registered nurse's qualification and performance is required only when there has been a significant change in the nature of assignment or a reassignment.

(f) Registered nurses who are not recommended or approved for assignment to these grades or advancements to a higher level within the grade are not entitled to higher level review.

(g) Grade assignments to Nurse IV or above are limited to the registered nurse's current position. Registered nurses who are reassigned will not retain Nurse IV or above unless a determination is made by the appropriate NPSB that the duties of the new position meet the scope and complexity criteria for the contemplated grade. Also, the position vacated will not be filled at the Nurse IV level or above without prior review of the qualifications of the individual registered nurse to be assigned to the position. Such recommendations will be forwarded to the appropriate NPSB.

(4) Promotion Consideration of Associate Chief, Nursing Service for Education; Supervisor, Nursing Home Care Unit; Assistant Chief, Nursing Service (Day); Associate Chief, Nursing Service; and Associate Chief, Nursing Service for Research—to Nurse III and Below.

(a) Upon receipt of VA Form 5-97, the Human Resources Management Office will retain the duplicate copy of the form as a suspense copy and forward the original to the Chief, Nursing Service. This individual will complete the face of VA Form 10-2543, Board Action. If the most recent proficiency report on file was prepared more than 6 months before the date of promotion consideration, narrative performance evaluations will be prepared by the Chief, Nursing Service and by the Chief of Staff. These evaluations may be in the form of a supplement to the latest

proficiency report. The registered nurse's file, including the Official Personnel Folder, will then be forwarded, through the health care facility Director, to the appropriate Nurse Professional Standards Board for consideration, after the Human Resources Management Officer has made an administrative review of the case.

(b) Following consideration by the appropriate Board, the file will be returned to the facility Director for approval or disapproval

(5) Promotions and Advancements to a Higher Level within the Grade to Nurse III and Below Other Than for Positions Identified in Subparagraph (4) Above. (Also see app. 5G for processing instructions.) In considering a registered nurse for promotion or advancements to a higher level within the grade, the local Nurse Professional Standards Board determines whether or not the individual meets the VA Nurse Qualification Standard requirements. If the board determines that requirements are met, the registered nurse is eligible for promotion or advancement consideration. Following consideration by the board, the file will be referred to the facility Director for appropriate action.

(6) Waiver of Experience and /or Degree Requirements. The appointing official may authorize a waiver of experience and/or the degree requirements for individuals whose professional accomplishments, performance, and qualifications warrant such consideration based on demonstrated ability to meet the requirements for promotion to the next higher grade or advancement to a higher level within the grade. (See the VA Nurse Qualification Standard) In considering a registered nurse for promotion to Nurse III or below, the appropriate Nurse Professional Standards Board will determine whether or not the individual should be recommended for promotion or advancement to a higher level within the grade with a waiver of the experience and/or degree requirements.

(7) Recommendations of Nurse Professional Standards Boards. If consideration of a registered nurse promotion or advancement to a higher level within the grade by the Under Secretary for Health or designee is requested, the Human Resources Management Officer will take necessary steps to ensure that the Chief, Nursing Service and the Chief of Staff are aware of the case and of the recommendation(s) of the appropriate Nurse Professional Standards Boards.

(8) Non-promotion. If the employee is not promoted, the AAC will continue to send the VA Form 5-97 annually until a change in grade occurs. The VA Form 5-97 will be forwarded to the appropriate supervisory official. An employee who is not promoted or advanced to a higher level within the grade will be considered for promotion or advancement to a higher level within the grade on the next anniversary date of grade. A longer period for consideration, not to exceed 3 years, may be established by the approving authority when a registered nurse does not meet the qualification standard grade requirements of education or required experience. In these cases, the Human Resources Management Office will tab the service control file and will destroy the VA Form 5-97 for the year(s) when the employee is not to receive consideration.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304; 7403

5.08 EFFECTUATION OF ADVANCEMENT AND PROMOTION ACTIONS

(1) **General.** Except as provided in subparagraphs (2) through (5), employees promoted or advanced to a higher level within the grade shall receive basic pay at the lowest rate of the higher grade which exceeds the employee's existing rate of basic pay by not less than 2 step increments of the grade from which promoted.

(2) **Promotion Simultaneous with Reassignment or Transfer to Another VA Facility.** Employees promoted or advanced to a higher level effective the same date that they are reassigned or transferred to another VA facility shall have their promotion or advancement calculated using the pay schedule of the losing facility.

(3) **Head Nurses**

(a) A head nurse promoted and simultaneously given a non-head nurse assignment receives the lowest step in the higher grade that equals or exceeds the employee's existing rate of basic pay (excluding head nurse pay) by not less than 2 steps of the grade from which promoted. For example, a head nurse promoted from Nurse II, step 7 (which includes the 2 additional steps for being a head nurse) would first have the 2 steps removed, then receive a two-step promotion and be placed in the lowest step in Nurse III that equals or exceeds Nurse II, step 7.

(b) The entitlement of head nurses promoted while remaining in a head nurse assignment shall be determined as follows:

1. Remove the additional 2 steps for the head nurse assignment. (These steps will be returned to the employee after calculating the promotion.)

2. Find the lowest step of the higher grade that exceeds the employee's rate of pay (excluding head nurse pay) by not less than 2 steps of the grade from which promoted.

3. To the step in subparagraph 2 above, add 2 additional step increments in the higher grade, to recognize the employee remaining in the head nurse assignment.

4. Example 1: A head nurse is at Nurse II, step 6, which includes the 2 additional steps for being a head nurse. To promote the head nurse to Nurse III, remove the additional 2 steps (step 4) and promote the head nurse to the step in Nurse III that exceeds the employee's step without head nurse pay by two steps of Nurse II (step 6). Then, add 2 steps onto that step in Nurse III. If, for example, Nurse III, step 2 is the lowest step of Nurse III that equals or exceeds Nurse II, step 6, the employee is promoted to Nurse III, step 4.

5. Example 2: A head nurse is on pay retention at Nurse II. The employee is receiving the dollar equivalent of two additional steps beyond their retained rate of pay for being a head nurse. To promote the head nurse to Nurse III, find the lowest step in Nurse III that exceeds the maximum authorized step rate for Nurse II plus two steps (this will be the rate for step 14 unless the rate range for Nurse II has been extended beyond the normal 12 steps). If the resulting rate is higher than the employee's retained rate (excluding head nurse pay), the employee is removed from pay retention and placed at that step. Then, add two steps onto that step in Nurse III for

head nurse pay. If, for example, Nurse II, step 14 is \$42,000 and the lowest step in Nurse III that exceeds that rate is step 9, \$42,800 (which also exceeds the employee's retained rate), the employee is removed from pay retention and placed at Nurse III, step 11. If the resulting rate is less than the employee's retained rate, the employee is placed at the first step of the grade that exceeds their retained rate (excluding head nurse pay). Then add two steps onto that step for head nurse pay. If there is no rate in the higher grade that exceeds the employee's retained rate (excluding head nurse pay), the employee remains on pay retention in the higher grade. The amount of the head nurse pay, however, must be adjusted to reflect the dollar equivalent of two additional steps in the higher grade.

(4) Employee With Specialized Skills

(a) **Promotion While Remaining in an Assignment Requiring Specialized Skills.** An employee promoted while remaining in an assignment requiring specialized skills receives the lowest step of the higher grade that equals or exceeds the employee's existing rate of basic pay (including the higher rate based on specialized skills) by not less than 2 step rates of the grade from which promoted. If the rate in the higher grade is less than the entry rate for specialized skills, the employee shall be advanced to the specialized skills entry rate in the higher grade. *Example:* An employee at Nurse II, step 5 based on possession of specialized skills shall receive the lowest step in Nurse III that equals or exceeds Nurse II, step 7.

(b) **Assignments Not Requiring Specialized Skills and Simultaneous Promotion.** An employee receiving a higher rate of basic pay for specialized skills, who accepts an assignment which does not require specialized skills and who is simultaneously promoted, shall receive the lowest step in the higher grade which equals or exceeds the employee's existing rate of basic pay (including the higher rate based on specialized skills) by not less than 1 step increment within the grade from which promoted. *Example:* An employee at Nurse I, step 5 based on possession of specialized skills receives the lowest step of Nurse II that equals or exceeds Nurse I, step 6.

NOTE: This par. also applies to employees going to Chief Nurse positions or other key nursing assignments. However, for such employees, the appropriate Professional Standards Board may set a higher step based on the complexity of the employee's assignment.

(5) **Employees Promoted to Level 1 of Nurse IV or V.** Employees promoted to Level I of Nurse IV or V may not exceed the maximum step authorized for the level unless the maximum rate for the level is lower than their existing rate of pay. In this event, the employee would be placed above the maximum rate for the level at the first step that equals or exceeds their existing rate of pay (not to exceed the maximum rate for the grade), and would be restricted from receiving future step adjustments for as long as the employee's step remains above the maximum step authorized for the level.

(6) **Employees on Pay Retention.** An employee on pay retention is entitled to receive the equivalent of two step rates above the maximum rate of the grade from which promoted. If the resulting rate is higher than the retained rate of pay, pay retention terminates. The computation regarding the promotion is to be completed prior to determining an employee's entitlement to higher rates of pay based on being a head nurse or being in an assignment requiring specialized skills.

(7) Effective Date

(a) The promotion will be placed into effect by the Human Resources Management Officer on the first day of the pay period following the date of administrative approval of the promotion by the officials designated in paragraph 5.03 or appendix 5C, as appropriate, but in no case earlier than the date on which all administrative requirements are met.

(b) If an employee becomes eligible for promotion while on LWOP for educational or other purposes, no action will be taken until the employee returns to duty. If the employee on return to duty meets all other requirements for promotion, an appropriate recommendation will be made. However, if promoted, the promotion will not be effected retroactively.

**NOTE: See paragraph 2.33 for effectuation of promotion actions upon return from military service.*

(8) Disposition of Forms. On completion of the promotion action, or disapproval of promotion, the original VA Form 10-2543 and any accompanying documents will be filed in a separate envelope in the employee's Official Personnel Folder.

b. Advancement of Registered Nurses and Nurse Anesthetists Upon Attainment of Additional Qualifications or Service as a Head Nurse

(1) Employees will be advanced 2 steps upon attainment of additional qualifications or to the first step of the appropriate level, if that step is greater. However, except as noted for head nurses in paragraph (2) below, no advancement may exceed the maximum authorized step of the grade. For example, an employee in level 1 of Nurse I who is at step 1 would be advanced 2 steps upon attaining the qualifications for Nurse I, level 2; however, the employee would be advanced to the beginning step of level 2 if the beginning step of level 2 is higher than step 3 of the grade.

(2) Assignment as a Head Nurse. A registered nurse serving in a head nurse assignment shall, while so serving, receive basic pay at a rate 2 steps above the rate that would otherwise be applicable. The adjustment is made even if it causes the registered nurse to exceed the maximum authorized step of the grade, even when the rate range is 175 percent. For example, a head nurse may receive a constructed step 13 or 14 if step 12 is the maximum authorized step of the grade of step 27 or 28 if step 26 is the maximum authorized step of the grade. Head nurses are eligible for periodic step increases (PSIs) until they reach 2 steps above the maximum authorized step of the grade, e.g., a head nurse at a constructed step 13 who meets the requirements for a periodic step increase is eligible for a PSI to step 14.

(3) Advancement based on the attainment of a higher level in Nurse I is an equivalent increase and will cause the employee to begin a new waiting period for a periodic step increase.

(4) Advancement Simultaneous with Reassignment or Transfer to Another VA Facility. Employees who are advanced to a higher level based upon attainment of additional qualifications effective the same date that they are reassigned or transferred to another VA facility shall have

their advancement calculated using the pay schedule of the losing location (i.e. advanced two steps or to the first step of the next higher level, whichever is greater).

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304, 7403, and 7451(a).

5.09 ADJUSTMENT OF PROMOTIONS OR ADVANCEMENTS TO A HIGHER LEVEL WITHIN THE GRADE

Appointing officials may adjust an employee's promotion or advancement to a higher level within the grade if it is determined that such action is consistent with applicable qualification requirements. Such decisions shall consider the recommendation of the appropriate Professional Standards Board or Standards Board. Actions taken under this paragraph will be effected as of the beginning of the next pay period following approval.

NOTE: Service in a lower grade prior to the grade adjustment will not be credited toward meeting the required time-in-grade for promotion.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304, 7403

5.10 SPECIAL ADVANCEMENT FOR ACHIEVEMENT

a. **Criteria for Physicians and Dentists.** Except for Chiefs of Staff and facility Directors, full-time, part-time, and intermittent physicians and dentists may be advanced within the grade from one to five steps on the basis of professional achievement above that expected for the grade level or assignment providing they have demonstrated a high level of performance and potential for assumption of greater responsibility. Such achievement may be demonstrated by professional attainments in health care management, education, research, or patient care worthy of national or international recognition.

b. **Criteria for Podiatrists and Optometrists.** Full-time, part-time, and intermittent podiatrist and optometrists may be advanced within the grade from one to five steps on the basis of professional achievement above that expected for the grade level or assignment providing they have demonstrated a high level of performance and potential for assumption of greater responsibility. Examples of professional achievement are:

(1) Outstanding and exceptional achievement as evidenced by receipt of official recognition from a recognized professional or academic organization.

(2) Significant professional attainment in research or contributions to podiatric or optometric science and patient care worthy of publication in a national or international journal of high regard within the respective professions.

c. **Criteria for Registered Nurses and Nurse Anesthetists.** Full-time, part-time and intermittent registered nurses and nurse anesthetists may be advanced within the grade from one to five steps on the basis of professional achievement provided they have demonstrated excellence in performance above that expected for the grade level or assignment and potential for assumption of greater responsibility. Such achievement may be demonstrated by:

(1) Recognition of professional groups such as certification by the appropriate national certifying body (except where such certification is required as a condition of employment) or election to an office in a national professional society; or

(2) Professional attainments in research or contributions to the advancement of health sciences and patient care worthy of national or international recognition; or

(3) Receipt of professional awards at the State or national level in recognition of significant and distinguished contributions to nursing, nurse anesthesia, or health care delivery.

d. Criteria for Physician Assistants. Full-time, part-time and intermittent physician assistants may be advanced within the grade from one to five steps on the basis of professional achievement above that expected for the grade level or assignment provided they have demonstrated excellence in performance and potential for assumption of greater responsibility. Examples of such achievements include, but are not limited to:

(1) A graduate level degree in a field related to the Department's health care mission;

(2) Appointment to a university faculty position;

(3) Significant contributions to the Department's health care mission. Such accomplishments may result from leadership or exceptional efforts on facility, regional or national task forces or committees, or by serving as a consultant on matters relating to education research, health care management, or quality of care issues;

(4) Recognition of outstanding and exceptional achievement by a professional or academic organization;

(5) Election to office in a professional organization at the State or national level;

(6) Independently producing or serving as a principal assistant or major contributing member on research producing publishable results that advance patient care or medical science; or

(7) Attainment of specialty certification within the occupation. This does not include certification as a physician assistant by the National Commission on Certification of Physician's Assistants, which is a condition of employment as a physician assistant in VHA.

e. Criteria for Expanded-Function Dental Auxiliaries. Full-time, part-time, and intermittent expanded-function dental auxiliaries may be advanced from one to five steps on the basis of professional achievement above that expected for the grade level or assignment provided they have demonstrated excellence in performance and potential for assumption of greater responsibility. Such achievement may be evidenced by:

(1) Completion of significant research in either the biomedical or health care delivery area and publication of these results in a recognized journal.

(2) Recognition of outstanding and exceptional achievement by receipt of an official award and publication of these results in a recognized journal.

(3) Academic achievement by completion of a postgraduate degree in a related health care field.

f. **Criteria for Pharmacists and Occupational Therapists.** Occupational therapists and pharmacists may be advanced within their grade from 1 to 5 steps for professional achievement provided they have exhibited a high level of performance (highly satisfactory or above) and show potential for assumption of greater responsibilities. To the extent possible, all employees should be encouraged to seek developmental opportunities that could enhance their personal qualifications and be afforded fair and equitable opportunity to accomplish such achievements. Such achievement may be evidenced by:

(1) **Professional or Academic Awards.** A professional or academic organization award which is generally recognized as indicative of exceptional competence as a pharmacist or occupational therapist. This includes board certification, provided that same board certification is not used as a basis for qualifying an individual for appointment or promotion.

(2) **Related Postgraduate Degrees.** Completion of a postgraduate degree or other advanced educational programs (e.g., certificates of advanced studies, Ed.D., Ph.D.) which will enhance the individual's ability to function as a pharmacist or OT.

(3) **Research and Publication.** Research or other contributions to the advancement of occupational therapy or pharmacy and patient care worthy of publication in a recognized professional journal.

(4) **Other Reasons.** Examples include appointment to a State licensing board, election to an office in a national professional organization, or appointment to a national certifying or accrediting body relating to the practice of occupational therapy or pharmacy.

g. **Criteria for Physical Therapists.** Physical therapists may be advanced within the grade from one to five steps for professional achievement provided they have performed excellently and show potential for assumption of greater responsibility. Examples of such achievement are:

(1) **Professional or Academic Awards.** A professional or academic organization award which is generally recognized as indicative of exceptional competence as a physical therapist.

(2) **Related Postgraduate Degrees.** Completion of a postgraduate degree in a related healthcare field.

(3) **Research and Publication.** Research or other contributions to the advancement of physical therapy and patient care worthy of publication in a recognized professional journal.

(4) **Other Reasons.** Election to an office in a national professional society.

h. Criteria for Certified Respiratory Therapy Technicians and Registered Respiratory Therapists. Certified respiratory therapy technicians and registered respiratory therapists may be advanced within the grade from one to three steps on the basis of professional achievement above that expected for the grade level or assignment provided they have demonstrated excellence in performance and potential for assumption of greater responsibility. Such achievement may be evidenced by:

(1) Completion of significant research in either the biomedical or health care delivery area and publication of these results in a recognized journal.

(2) Recognition of outstanding and exceptional achievement by receipt of an official award from a professional or academic organization.

(3) Academic achievement by completion of a postgraduate degree in a related health care field.

i. Criteria for Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses. Licensed practical/vocational nurses may be advanced within the grade one step provided they have excellence in performance and show potential for assumption of greater responsibility. Examples of such achievement are:

(1) An outstanding achievement or award which results from significant contribution(s) to the delivery of patient care and recognizes exceptional competence as an LPN/LVN.

(2) Completion of an academic degree, normally in a related health care field, which would enhance the employee's ability to provide better patient care.

(3) Election to an office in a national practical/vocational nursing society.

j. Processing. (See app. 5H.)

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304, 7403

5.11 SPECIAL ADVANCEMENT FOR PERFORMANCE

a. Consideration. Full-time, part-time and intermittent physicians (other than Chiefs of Staff), dentists, podiatrists, optometrists in Executive grade and below and registered nurses (other than Chiefs of Nursing Service), nurse anesthetists, physician assistants, and expanded-function dental auxiliaries who have demonstrated a sustained high level of performance and professional competence over and above that normally expected of employees in the particular grade and profession, or who have made noted contributions in some phase of their profession, may be considered for special advancements for performance. Pharmacists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, certified respiratory therapy technicians, registered respiratory therapists, and licensed practical or vocational nurses may be considered in accordance with paragraph f below.

b. Criteria for Physicians, Dentist, Podiatrists and Optometrists. There must have been demonstrated a sustained high level of performance as evidenced by the following examples:

(1) Demonstration of exceptional skills and aptitudes in the care and treatment of patients.

(2) Actual assumption of greater professional and/or administrative responsibility. Faculty appointment (post residency) at the rank of instructor or above may be considered as a greater responsibility.

(3) Significant research.

(4) Significant clinical contribution (including publication).

c. **Criteria for Registered Nurses and Nurse Anesthetists.** There must have been demonstrated a sustained high level of performance and ability over and above that normally expected of employees in the particular grade and profession or there must have been noted contributions in some phase of nursing or nurse anesthesia. In addition, one or more of the criteria listed in paragraph 5.07b must be met.

d. **Criteria for Physician Assistants.** There must have been demonstrated a sustained high level of performance and ability over and above that normally expected of employees in the particular grade and profession or there must have been noted contributions in some aspect of health care. Criteria for advancement will be demonstrated superior performance as evidenced by:

(1) Assumption of a major responsibility in administering a major patient care program.

(2) Significant accomplishments associated with an academic program conducted in affiliation with the facility where the physician assistant is employed.

e. **Criteria for Expanded-Function Dental Auxiliaries.** There must have been demonstrated a sustained high level of performance and ability over and above that normally expected of employees in the particular grade and profession or there must have been noted contributions in some phase of health care. Criteria for advancement will be demonstrated by superior performance as evidenced by:

(1) Demonstration of exception skills and aptitudes in the care and treatment of patients.

(2) Significant accomplishments associated with an academic program conducted in affiliation with the VA facility where the person is employed.

f. **Pharmacists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Certified Respiratory Therapy Technicians, Registered Respiratory Therapists, and Licensed Practical or Vocational Nurses.** Generally, the quality increase provisions VA Directive 5451 and Handbook will be used to grant 1-step special advancements for performance for employees in these occupations. However, the recommendations of supervisory officials will be referred to the appropriate Standards Board for review. Approval of such advancements shall be based on the findings and recommendations of the Board.

g. **Processing.** (See app. 5I.)

(1) **Physicians, Dentists, Podiatrists, and Optometrists.** Approximately 90 days prior to the employee's completing the waiting period for a periodic step increase or rate adjustment, the facility will receive from the AAC, VA Form 97, Notice of Pending Personnel Action, in duplicate, identifying the employee and stating that the employee is eligible for consideration for special advancement for performance. NOTE: *For Physicians and Dentists only: Local officials may approve a special advancement for performance retroactive to the date of the periodic step increase when, through administrative error, the advancement was not granted on the due date.*

(2) **Registered Nurses, Nurse Anesthetists, Physician Assistants, and Expanded-Function Dental Auxiliaries.** One advancement may be granted at any appropriate time within any period of 52 weeks.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304, 7403

5.12 PERIODIC STEP INCREASES AND RATE ADJUSTMENTS

a. **Physicians, Dentists, Podiatrists, Optometrists, Physician Assistants, Registered Nurses, Nurse Anesthetists and Expanded Function Dental Auxiliaries**

(1) **Requirements.** Full-time, part-time and intermittent employees will be considered for periodic step increases or rate adjustments when they complete the required waiting periods (see MP-5, pt. II, ch. 3) and their work meets all of the following conditions for acceptable level of competence:

(a) The total measure of the effectiveness and conduct of the employee is fully satisfactory, with any weaknesses balanced by strengths.

(b) A satisfactory current proficiency rating .

(c) No evidence or action is of record or in process which is contradictory to an overall judgment of current full satisfactory performance and conduct.

(2) **Processing Periodic Step Increases and Rate Adjustments**

(a) Five pay periods prior to the employee's completing the waiting period for a step increase or rate adjustment, the facility will receive SF 50-B, Notification of Personnel Action, from the DPC. The servicing Human Resources Management Office will forward it to the appropriate service chief.

(b) Step increases and rate adjustments may be approved by the rating official and disapproved by the approving official. Rating and approving officials will be the same as stipulated in appendix 6A, Chapter 6, "Proficiency Rating System." If the step rate is approved, the acceptable level of competence statement on SF 50-B will be signed by the rating official and the form returned to the Human Resources Management Office. If disapproval is recommended, the procedures in subparagraph (c) will apply.

(c) If disapproval is recommended, the rating official shall prepare a written justification and forward it, through the local Human Resources Management Office, to the approving official for decision. If disapproved:

1. The employee will be notified in writing of:
 - a. The reason(s) for disapproval;
 - b. The fact that the employee will be reconsidered within 52 weeks (time to be specified);
and
 - c. The right to ask for a review of this decision under the provisions of subparagraph (d).

2. The unsigned SF 50b will be returned to the Human Resources Management Office accompanied by a copy of the notice of disapproval. The Human Resources Management Office will take appropriate action to initiate reconsideration of the disapproved step increase or rate adjustment at the time specified in the notice of disapproval. A disapproved step increase or rate adjustment which is reconsidered at a later specified time and approved will be effected at the beginning of the next pay period following approval and a new waiting period for the next step increase or rate adjustment will be established.

(d) An employee may request reconsideration of a decision to deny a periodic step increase or rate of adjustment within 15 calendar days of receipt of the notification required under subparagraph (c). The reconsideration decision will be rendered by the next higher level professional-administrative supervisor at the health care facility, or, if there is no higher level professional-administrative supervisor at the facility, the file is to be submitted to the appropriate **VISN Director** for decision. All reconsideration decisions are final. If, on reconsideration, it is determined that an employee was performing at an acceptable level of competence, the employee shall be given the periodic step increase retroactive to the original due date.

b. Pharmacists, Occupational and Physical Therapists, Certified Respiratory Therapy Technicians, Registered Respiratory Therapists, and Licensed Practical or Vocational Nurses. These employees shall receive within-grade increases under the General Schedule salary system and the provisions of VA Manual MP-5, part I, chapter 531, section D and 430, section C. Service immediately prior to conversion to a title 38 appointment will be creditable for within-grade increase purposes as if it had been under 38 U.S.C. 7401(3) or 7405.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304, 7403

5.13 ADVANCEMENT OF RESIDENTS

Noncareer residents appointed under authority of 38 U.S.C. 7406 will be advanced in salary upon successful completion of each year of training provided the House Staff Review Committee recommends the increase and continuation of training. If the committee recommends the advancement, the effective date of promotion will be the first day following completion of each

year of training. The required training may have been obtained in part from sources outside VA. (See M-8, pt. II, ch. 1.)

5.14 TEMPORARY CHIEF OF STAFF ASSIGNMENTS (PROMOTIONS)

a. **General.** When the position of Chief of Staff is vacant, the health care facility Director may request the temporary reassignment and promotion of a physician as Chief of Staff. These reassignments will be for a period not to exceed 1 year, and may be terminated prior to the expiration date.

b. **Submission of Requests.** Requests for temporary reassignment to Chief of Staff or comparable positions in Executive grade for renewable periods not to exceed 1 year require approval of the appropriate VISN Director. Normally, these reassignments will be approved only after an employee has served in an acting capacity for at least 90 days. In exceptional circumstances, the appropriate VISN Director may approve a temporary reassignment when an employee has served less than 90 days in an acting capacity.

c. **Temporary Promotion.** An employee who is temporarily reassigned to a Chief of Staff position will be advanced to the Executive grade for the duration of the assignment. On expiration or termination of the assignment, the grade and salary of the employee will be adjusted in accordance with the provisions of MP-5, part II, chapter 3. In applying the provisions of chapter 3, the salary will be adjusted to the salary held previously, unless a higher rate is warranted by reason of periodic step increases. On assignment, the following statement will be placed in the "Remarks" item of the SF 50-B, Notification of Personnel Action: "Employee informed of conditions of temporary grade assignment." Any request submitted under this subparagraph is also to include a request to increase the employee's special pay, if applicable.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304, 7403

5.15 DETAILS, TEMPORARY REASSIGNMENTS, AND TEMPORARY PROMOTIONS FOR REGISTERED NURSES AND NURSE ANESTHETISTS

a. **Details.** When the position of Chief, Nursing Service, or a nurse anesthetist position at Nurse IV or Nurse V is vacant, the facility Director may detail an employee to that position. Generally, details will not exceed 90 days, and may be terminated prior to the expiration date. Under unusual circumstances, the facility Director may approve extensions of the detail in 90-day increments.

b. **Temporary Reassignments.** When a position at Nurse IV or V is vacant, the facility Director may approve the temporary reassignment of an individual into the position. Generally, temporary reassignments will be for a period not to exceed 1 year, and may be terminated prior to the expiration date. Under unusual circumstances, the facility Director may approve the extension of a temporary reassignment not to exceed 1 additional year. Normally, such temporary reassignments will be approved only after a registered nurse or nurse anesthetist has acted in the position for at least 90 days. In unusual circumstances, the approving official may approve a temporary reassignment when an employee has served less than 90 days in an acting capacity (e.g., when the position is expected to vacant for an extended period). On approval of

the temporary reassignment, the following statement will be placed in the "Remarks" section of the SF 50-B: "Employee informed of conditions of temporary assignment."

c. **Temporary Advancements and Promotions.** If a registered nurse is temporarily reassigned to a higher grade or from a level 1 to a level 2 assignment under subparagraph b above, the facility Director may temporarily promote or advance the individual. Such action will be taken only after the facility Director considers the recommendation of the appropriate VISN Nurse Professional Standards Board. The facility Director may similarly temporarily promote a nurse anesthetist to Nurse IV or V after considering the recommendation of the facility professional standards board for nurse anesthetists. On expiration or termination of the temporary promotion or advancement, the grade and salary of the employee will be adjusted in accordance with the provisions of MP-5, part II, chapter 3, section A, paragraph 7. The employee will be advised in writing of the conditions of the temporary promotion or assignment. In applying the provisions of chapter 3, the salary will be adjusted to the salary held previously, unless a higher step is warranted by reason of a periodic step increase, special advancement, or under the highest previous step rule.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304, 7403

5.16 Annual Step Rate Reviews

a. **Chiefs of Staff.** Step rate changes resulting from annual rate reviews are approved by the appropriate VISN Director.

b. **Chiefs of Pharmacy Service.**

(1) By 30 days before the anniversary date of appointment as service chief at that facility, the immediate supervisor will forward a recommendation concerning the amount of the proposed pay adjustment (0, 1 or 2 step increases) to the Regional Standards Board (VA Headquarters Standards Board for pharmacists at the GS-15 level).

(2) The recommendation is reviewed by the appropriate standards board and the board returns its recommendation to the facility Director.

(3) The facility Director approves or disapproves the action.

(4) The determination shall be effected on the first day of the first pay period on or after the anniversary date of appointment to the position.

(5) Material submitted to the Regional or Headquarters Standards Board shall include copies of all performance appraisals received at that facility and the recommendation of the rating official. All standards board members must also be at a grade which is equal to or above the grade of the employee being considered.

c. **Chiefs of Nursing Service and Nurses Assigned as Associate Directors for Nursing or Associate Directors for Patient Care Services.** Annual step rate reviews for Chiefs of Nursing

Service and nurses assigned as Associate Directors or Associate Directors for Patient Care Services will be processed as follows:

(1) When Facility Director is not immediate supervisor.

(a) Recommendation. The immediate supervisor must recommend the amount of the proposed pay adjustment (0, 1, or 2 steps) to the facility Director. The recommendation is to be received by the facility Director 30 days before the anniversary date of the individual's appointment to the current position.

(b) Action on Recommendation. The facility Director may approve, disapprove, or modify the recommendation. Regardless of the date of the action, any step increase will be effected on the first day of the first pay period on or after the anniversary date of appointment to the current position.

(c) Advise Employee. The employee will be provided a copy of the recommendation and final action.

(2) When Facility Director is immediate supervisor.

(a) Recommendation. At least 30 days before the anniversary date of the individual's appointment to the current position the facility Director will recommend the amount of the proposed pay adjustment (0, 1 or 2 steps) to the Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN) Director.

(b) Action on Recommendation. The VISN Director may approve, disapprove or modify the recommendation. Regardless of the date of the action, any step increase will be effected on the first day of the first pay period on or after the anniversary date of appointment to the current position.

(c) Advise Employee. The employee will be provided a copy of the recommendation and final action.

5.17 Promotion Reconsideration. VISN Directors are authorized to act upon requests for promotion reconsideration from employees at field facilities within the respective VISNs. This authority applies to all occupations except that of registered nurse. Requests from registered nurses and VHA Headquarters employees will continue to be acted upon by the Under Secretary for Health, or designee.

**PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BOARDS FOR ADVANCEMENT OF DENTISTS
 AND EXPANDED-FUNCTION DENTAL AUXILIARIES (EFDA’S)**

Facility Directors are to establish Dental Professional Standards Boards for the purpose of making recommendations on advancements. Any facility with the appropriate number of professionals may form a Board and existing Regional Boards may be used. Facilities unable to constitute a Board are to make arrangements to have their board actions reviewed at another location. As applicable, the following Professional Standards Boards will service facilities indicated and will act on advancements of dentists and EFDA’s requiring Professional Standards Board action.

NOTE: The facilities listed below are VA medical centers unless otherwise noted. Abbreviations used for other types of facilities are as follows:

*M&ROC-Medical & Regional Office Center
 OC-Outpatient Clinic (Independent)*

*D-Domiciliary
 OCRO-Regional Office With
 Outpatient Clinic*

Professional Standards Boards at Following Facilities	To Be Serviced (Including Outpatient Clinics Under Their Jurisdiction)		
Boston	Bedford Boston (OC) Brockton (M&ROC)	Manchester New York Providence	Togus(M&ROC) West Roxbury White River Junction
Albany	Buffalo Newington	Northampton	West Haven
Buffalo	Albany Batavia	Bath Canadaigua	Syracuse
New York	Boston Bronx Brooklyn Brooklyn (OC)	Castle Point East Orange Lyons Montrose	Northport San Juan (M&ROC)
Philadelphia	Coatesville Lebanon	Salisbury Wilkes-Barre	Wilmington (M&ROC)
Pittsburgh (University Drive C)	Altoona Butler	Clarksburg Cleveland	Erie
Washington	Baltimore Fort Howard	Martinsburg Perry Point	Richmond
Richmond	Beckley Hampton	Huntington Salem	Washington
Salisbury	Durham Fayetteville, NC	Mountain Home Asheville	Philadelphia
Decatur (Atlanta)	Augusta Charleston	Columbia, SC Dublin	Miami
Birmingham	Biloxi Jackson (M&ROC)	Lexington Montgomery	Tuscaloosa Tuskegee

Professional Standards Boards at Following Facilities	To Be Serviced (Including Outpatient Clinics Under Their Jurisdiction)		
Lexington	Birmingham Louisville	Memphis Murfreesboro	Nashville
Miami	Decatur (Atlanta)	Gainesville Lake City	Tampa Bay Pines
Cleveland	Chillicothe Cincinnati Columbus (OC)	Dayton Pittsburgh (University Drive C)	Pittsburgh (Highland Drive)
Allen Park	Ann Arbor Battle Creek	Indianapolis	Saginaw
Indianapolis	Allen Park Danville	Fort Wayne	Marion, IN
Wood	Hines Iron Mountain	Madison	Tomah
Hines	Chicago (Lakeside)	Chicago (West Side)	North Chicago Milwaukee
Minneapolis	Fargo (M&ROC) Iowa City	Sioux Falls (M&ROC)	St. Cloud
Little Rock	Fayetteville, AR	Muskogee	Oklahoma City
New Orleans	Alexandria Houston	Little Rock	Shreveport
Houston	Bonham Dallas New Orleans	Kerrville Marlin Waco	San Antonio Temple
St. Louis	Columbia, MO Kansas City	Marion, IL	Poplar Bluff
Kansas City	Leavenworth Topeka	St. Louis	Wichita (M&ROC)
Iowa City	Des Moines Fort Meade Grand Island	Hot Springs Knoxville Lincoln	Minneapolis Omaha
Denver	Cheyenne (M&ROC) Fort Harrison (M&ROC)	Fort Lyon Grand Junction Miles City	Phoenix Salt Lake City Sheridan
Phoenix	Albuquerque Amarillo Bring Spring	Denver El Paso Lubbock	Prescott Tucson
Long Beach	Henderson (OC) Loma Linda Los Angeles (Brentwood)	Los Angeles (OC) Los Angeles (Wadsworth)	San Diego San Francisco Sepulveda
San Francisco	Fresno Honolulu (OCRO) Livermore	Long Beach Martinez Palo Alto	Reno Seattle
Seattle	American Lake Boise Portland	Roseburg Spokane Vancouver	Walla Walla White City (D)

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304; 38 U.S.C. 7403

**NURSE PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS BOARDS FOR ADVANCEMENT OF
REGISTERED NURSES**

Each Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN) is assigned to a Nurse Professional Standards Board for Registered Nurses as follows:

- (1) New York NPSB: VISNs 1, 2, 3
- (2) Baltimore NPSB: VISNs 4, 5, 6
- (3) Gainesville NPSB: VISNs 7, 8, 9
- (4) Hines NPSB: VISNs 10, 11, 12
- (5) Minneapolis NPSB: VISNs 13, 14
- (6) Denver NPSB: VISNs 15, 19
- (7) Houston NPSB: VISNs 16, 17, 18
- (8) Portland NPSB: VISNs 20, 21, 22

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304; 38 U.S.C. 7403

**STANDARDS BOARDS FOR ADVANCEMENT OF PHARMACISTS, OCCUPATIONAL
AND
PHYSICAL THERAPISTS, CERTIFIED RESPIRATORY THERAPY TECHNICIANS,
REGISTERED RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS, AND
LICENSED PRACTICAL OR VOCATIONAL NURSES**

The following Standards Boards will service facilities indicated and will act on advancements of pharmacists, occupational and physical therapists, certified respiratory therapy technicians, registered respiratory therapists, and licensed practical or vocational nurses requiring Standards Board action

NOTE: The facilities listed below are VA medical centers unless otherwise noted.

Region	PHARMACIST		OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST	
	Regional Board	Alternate Board	Regional Board	Alternate Board
1	Pittsburgh (U Drive)	Boston	West Haven	Richmond
2	Hines	Kansas City	Ann Arbor	Minneapolis
3	Bay Pines	Little Rock	Houston	Tampa
4	West Los Angeles	Phoenix	Long Beach	Portland

Region	PHYSICAL THERAPIST		REGISTERED RESPIRATORY THERAPIST AND CERTIFIED RESPIRATORY THERAPY TECHNICIAN	
	Regional Board	Alternate Board	Regional Board	Alternate Board
1	Wilkes-Barre	Boston	Buffalo	Pittsburgh (U Drive)
2	Wood	Topeka	Indianapolis	Hines
3	Decatur	Temple	Miami	Jackson
4	Palo Alto	Long Beach	Salt Lake City	Seattle

Region	LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSE LICENSED VOCATIONAL NURSE	
	Regional Board	Alternate Board
1	East Orange	Hampton
	West Haven	New York, NY
2	Omaha	Topeka
	Milwaukee	
3	Mountain Home	New Orleans
	Gainesville	Dallas
4	Portland	San Diego
	Denver	Tucson

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304; 38 U.S.C. 7403

DOCUMENTATION OF ADVANCEMENTS ON SE 50-B, NOTIFICATION OF PERSONNEL ACTION

Category of Employee	Appointment Authority	Nature of Action	Legal Authority	VA Required Remarks
Physicians, Dentists, Podiatrists, Optometrists, Registered nurses, Physician Assistants, Expanded-Function dental Auxiliaries and nurse anesthetists	38 U.S.C. 7401(1)	<p>“Promotion”</p> <p>“Administrative Pay Increase”</p> <p>Promotion” or “Change to Lower Grade,” as appropriate</p> <p>“Change to Lower Grade”</p> <p>“Administrative Pay Increase”</p>	38 U.S.C. 7403	<p>“Special Advancement for Performance”</p> <p>“Grade Adjustment. For consistency with (promotion requirements).” will be shown for promotion grade adjustments.</p> <p>“Grade Adjustment. For consistency with (duty assignment).” Will be shown when employee changed from level of assignment where grade is based on both nature of assignment and personal qualifications.</p> <p>“Special Advancement for Achievement”</p>
Physicians, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, registered nurses, physician assistants expanded-function dental auxiliaries and nurse anesthetists	38 U.S.C. 7405(a)(1)	<p>“Promotion”</p> <p>“Administrative Pay Increase”</p> <p>“Promotion” or “Change to Lower Grade,” as appropriate</p> <p>“Change to Lower Grade”</p> <p>“Administrative Pay Increase”</p>	38 U. S. C. 7405(b)	<p>“Special Advancement for Performance”</p> <p>“Grade Adjustment. For consistency with (promotion requirements).” will be shown for promotion grade adjustments.</p> <p>“Grade Adjustment. For consistency with (duty assignment).” will be shown when employee changed from level of assignment where grade is based on both nature of assignment and personal qualifications.</p> <p>“Special Advancement for Achievement”</p>
Medical and dental residents	38 U.S.C. 7406	“Promotion”	38 U.S.C. 7406	
Career Residents	38 U.S.C. 7406	<p>“Promotion”</p> <p>“Administrative Pay Increase”</p>	38 U. S. C. 7406	<p>“Special Advancement for Performance” or</p> <p>“Special Advancement for Achievement”</p>

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304, 7401, 7403, 7404, 7405, 7406, and 7407.

DOCUMENTATION OF ADVANCEMENTS ON VA FORM 5-4650, NOTIFICATION OF PERSONNEL ACTION (CONTINUED)

Category of Employee	Appointment Authority	Nature of Action	Legal Authority	VA Required Remarks
Pharmacists, occupational and physical therapists, registered respiratory therapists, certified respiratory therapy technicians, and licensed practical or vocational nurses	38 U.S.C. 7401(3)	<p>“Promotion”</p> <p>“Administrative Pay Increase”</p> <p>“Promotion” or “Change to Lower Grade,” as appropriate</p> <p>“Change to Lower Grade”</p> <p>“Administrative Pay Increase”</p>	38 U.S.C. 7403	<p>“Special Advancement for Performance”</p> <p>“Grade Adjustment. For consistency with (promotion requirements).” will be shown for promotion grade adjustments.</p> <p>“Grade Adjustment. For consistency with (duty assignment).” Will be shown when employee changed from level of assignment where grade is based on both nature of assignment and personal qualifications.</p> <p>“Special Advancement for Achievement”</p>
Pharmacists, occupational and physical therapists, registered respiratory therapists, certified respiratory therapy technicians, and licensed practical or vocational nurses	38 U.S.C. 7405(a)(1)	<p>“Promotion”</p> <p>“Administrative Pay Increase”</p> <p>“Promotion” or “Change to Lower Grade,” as appropriate</p> <p>“Change to Lower Grade”</p> <p>“Administrative Pay Increase”</p>	38 U. S. C. 7405(b)(2)	<p>“Special Advancement for Performance”</p> <p>“Grade Adjustment. For consistency with (promotion requirements).” will be shown for promotion grade adjustments.</p> <p>“Grade Adjustment. For consistency with (duty assignment).” Will be shown when employee changed from level of assignment where grade is based on both nature of assignment and personal qualifications.</p> <p>“Special Advancement for Achievement”</p>

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304, 7401, 7403, 7404, 7405, 7406, and 7407

**ADVANCEMENTS APPROVED BY UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH OR A
DESIGNEE/ADVANCEMENTS APPROVED BY FACILITY DIRECTOR**

(Unless otherwise noted below, appointing officials may approve promotions and special advancements for achievement)

Under Secretary for Health

- Quality increases for physicians and dentists in Executive grade.

Under Secretary for Health or designee

- Annual rate reviews for facility Directors (Note: All actions affecting Directors of medical and regional office centers requiring approval of the Under Secretary for Health, or designee, will also require the concurrence of the Under Secretary for Benefits)
- Promotion reconsideration requests from registered nurses and VHA Headquarters employees.

VISN Directors

- Annual rate reviews for Chiefs of Staff
- Annual step rate reviews for Chiefs of Nursing Service and Nurses assigned as Associate Directors for Nursing or Associate Directors for Patient Care Services when facility Director is immediate supervisor.
- Promotion reconsideration requests from employees at field facilities within the respective VISNs. This applies to all occupations except that of registered nurse.
- Temporary promotions to Chief of Staff or comparable positions in Executive grade for renewable periods not to exceed 1 year.

Facility Directors

- Annual step rate reviews for Chiefs of Nursing Service and Nurses assigned **as Associate Directors for Nursing or Associate Directors for Patient Care Services When facility Director is not immediate supervisor.**
- Advancements of Pharmacists including annual rate reviews for Chiefs, Pharmacy Service. Facility Directors may also delegate to the Chief of Pharmacy Service the advancement of pharmacists in noncentralized assignments below GS-13 and Assistant Chiefs of Pharmacy Service at GS-13.

- Advancements of Occupational Therapists. Facility Directors may also delegate to Chief of Staffs the advancements of occupational therapists in noncentralized assignments below GS-13.
- Advancements of Optometrists.
- Advancements of Podiatrists.
- Advancements of Dentists (staff dentists, service chiefs and positions comparable to service chief) and Expanded-Function Dental Auxiliaries.
- Advancements of Physician Assistants.
- Advancements of Registered Respiratory Therapists. Facility Directors may also delegate to Chiefs of Staff the advancements of registered respiratory therapists.
- Advancements of Certified Respiratory Therapy Technicians. Facility Directors may also delegate to Chiefs of Staff the advancements of certified respiratory therapy technicians.
- Advancements of Licensed Practical or Vocational Nurses. Facility Directors may also delegate to Chiefs of Nursing Service the advancements of licensed practical or vocational nurses.
- Advancements of Physical Therapists. Facility Directors may also delegate to Chiefs of Staff the advancements of physical therapists.
- Advancements of Physicians.
- Advancements of Registered Nurses and Nurse Anesthetists.

Facility Directors or designees

Promotions of registered nurses to Nurse IV or Nurse V and Advancements from Level I to Level II within Nurse IV and Nurse V.

HOW TO PROCESS A PROMOTION FOR PHYSICIANS, DENTISTS, PODIATRISTS, OPTOMETRISTS, NURSE ANESTHETISTS, PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS, EXPANDED-FUNCTION DENTAL AUXILIARIES, PHARMACISTS, OCCUPATIONAL AND PHYSICAL THERAPISTS, CERTIFIED RESPIRATORY THERAPY TECHNICIANS, REGISTERED RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS, AND LICENSED PRACTICAL OR VOCATIONAL NURSES	
A	B
<p>S T E P S</p> <hr/> <p>1</p> <hr/> <p>2</p> <hr/> <p>3</p> <hr/> <p>4</p>	<p>If full-time, part-time, or intermittent employee meets the time-in-grade requirements specified in MP-5, part II, chapter 5, paragraph 6f, and is a</p> <hr/> <p>physician, dentist, podiatrist, optometrist, nurse anesthetist, pharmacist, occupational or physical therapist, registered respiratory therapist, certified respiratory therapy technician or licensed practical/vocational nurse</p> <hr/> <p>then take these steps</p> <hr/> <p>Upon receipt of VA Form 5-97, Notice of Pending Personnel Action, the HRM Office will forward the original copy to the employee's service chief through the Chief of Staff, as appropriate. The duplicate copy will be retained in the HRM Office as a suspense copy. (For processing promotions of nurse anesthetists, see also par. 5.07.)</p> <hr/> <p>The service will make appropriate recommendation to the Professional Standards Board or Standards Board (through the health care facility Director and Chief of Staff, when appropriate, such as for physicians and dentists), a concise evaluation based on paragraph 5.06. The Chief of Staff will make recommendation similarly for service chiefs. Significant changes in recent proficiency/performance ratings or unusually high or low elements will be evaluated in terms of promotion consideration. Each of these officials will indicate concurrence or non-concurrence, including specific reasons for such recommendation.</p> <hr/> <p>The Professional Standards Board or Standards Board will examine the personnel folder, supervisory evaluations, and all other information furnished. Additional information may be obtained at the direction of the board. Boards will report their findings and recommendations on VA Form 10-2543, Board Action. All members will sign the form. The board action and all related papers will then be forwarded to the appropriate promotion approving authority listed in appendix 5E. Action by the approving authority is required even though promotion is not recommended.</p> <hr/> <p>When the health care facility Director is the approving authority, this official will note the final decision on the Board's recommendation, sign VA Form 10-2543 and take appropriate action.</p>

HOW TO PROCESS A PROMOTION FOR PHYSICIANS, DENTISTS, PODIATRISTS, OPTOMETRISTS, NURSE ANESTHETISTS, PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS, EXPANDED-FUNCTION DENTAL AUXILIARIES, PHARMACISTS, OCCUPATIONAL AND PHYSICAL THERAPISTS, CERTIFIED RESPIRATORY THERAPY TECHNICIANS, REGISTERED RESPIRATORY THERAPISTS, AND LICENSED PRACTICAL/VOCATIONAL NURSES (Continued)	
A	B
5	<p>When the Under Secretary for Health, or a designee, is the approving authority, the official will review the findings and recommendations of the board, and may require a professional examination even though one was not recommended by the board. The promotion may be approved or disapproved without a professional examination even though one was recommended by the board. If no professional examination is to be required, the approving authority will notify the health care facility concerned of the approval or disapproval of the promotion. If a professional examination is authorized, the approving authority will not take action on the promotion until notified of the results of the examination. (See par. 5.06.)</p>
6	<p>The health care facility Director or a designee will notify the employee of the results of promotion consideration. If the employee is not promoted, the appropriate official will discuss with the employee the reasons for nonpromotion and what the employee should do to meet the promotion requirements. If an employee who has acquired permanent status or an employee serving on a probational appointment believes that the action taken to deny a promotion not requiring a waiver by the Under Secretary for Health or a designee was improper, the provisions of MP-5, part II, chapter 5, paragraph 6i, will apply.</p>
7	<p>physician assistant or expanded-function dental auxiliary</p> <p>See step 1 (above).</p>
8	<p>The service chief should make an appropriate recommendation to the Professional Standards Board through the Chief of Staff and the health care facility Director, including a concise evaluation which will clearly indicate specific professional or administrative strengths and weaknesses and will cite substantiating examples of accomplishments or lack thereof. Significant changes in recent proficiency ratings or unusually high or low elements will be evaluated in terms of promotion consideration. Each official will indicate concurrence or non-concurrence, including specific reasons for such recommendation.</p>
9	<p>See steps 3 through 6 (above).</p>

HOW TO PROCESS A PROMOTION FOR REGISTERED NURSES	
A	B
<p>S T E P S</p> <p>If full-time, part-time, or intermittent employee meets the time-in-grade requirements specified in MP-5, part II, chapter 5, paragraph 6f, and is a</p>	<p>then take these steps</p>
<p>1</p> <p>Registered Nurse (not a nurse anesthetist)</p>	<p>Upon receipt of VA Form 5-97, Notice of Pending Personnel Action the HRM Office will retain the duplicate copy of the form as a suspense copy and forward the original to the Chairperson, Nurse Professional Standards Board, through the Chief, Nursing Service. (see par. 5.07 for processing promotions of the Assistant Chief, Nursing Service (Day); Associate Chief, Nursing Service; Associate Chief, Nursing Service for Education; Associate Chief, Nursing Service for Research, and Supervisor, Nursing Home Care Unit and for processing promotions of other registered nurses to Nurse III and below.)</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>The Nurse Professional Standards Board will obtain the candidate's official personnel folder, including VA Form 10-2623, Proficiency Report, rendered during the period under consideration, and official transcripts or other documentation of advanced educational credits.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>If the most recent proficiency report on file was prepared more than 6 months before the date of promotion consideration, narrative performance evaluations will be obtained from at least two professional nurses or appropriate others who have supervised the candidate during the period under consideration. Ordinarily, one of these evaluations will be prepared by the immediate supervisor. Evaluations may be in the form of a supplement to the latest proficiency report. The information specified in step 4, below, should be included in the evaluations for consideration by the board.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Evaluations of registered nurses will clearly indicate specific professional or administrative strengths and weaknesses and will cite substantiating examples of accomplishments or lack thereof. Examples of areas to be emphasized are skill in human relationships; application of knowledge and experience in recognizing nursing needs of patients; technical skills; leadership ability in planning, directing, and supervising the actions of others; contributions to the profession and community; acceptance of organizational and personal responsibility. Attention should be given to the requirements specified in the "Nurse VA Qualification Standard" and in chapter 5, paragraph 5.07b, "Criteria for Consideration."</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>If a supervisory evaluation reflects information concerning performance which has been previously discussed with the employee, an informal conference will be conducted to discuss the evaluation.</p>
<p>6</p>	<p>The Professional Standards Board will analyze the registered nurse's qualifications based on the above data. Additional information may be obtained at the discretion of the board. Boards may recommend that a professional examination be conducted if, after review of the record, such an examination is indicated. In conducting examinations, the provisions of paragraph 5.06 will be followed.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p>The board will report its findings and recommendations on VA Form 10-2543, Board Action. If the registered nurse does not fully meet the experience or education requirements, the board will state that the registered nurse is ineligible for promotion consideration and specify the reasons for this finding. If the registered nurse is eligible for promotion consideration, the board will make a recommendation that the registered nurse either be promoted or not promoted and specify reasons for its recommendation. All board members</p>

HOW TO PROCESS A PROMOTION FOR REGISTERED NURSES (Continued)	
A	B
7 Cont	will sign the board action which will then be authority for action. Action by the approving authority is required even if promotion is not recommended.
8	When the facility Director is the approving authority, this official will note the final decision on the Board's recommendation, sign VA Form 10-2543 and take appropriate action.
9	When the Under Secretary for Health or designee is the approving authority, the findings and recommendations of the board will be reviewed. The approving authority may require a professional examination even though one was not recommended by the board. The approving authority may approve or disapprove the promotion without a professional examination even though one was recommended by the board. If no professional examination is to be required, the approving authority will notify the health care facility concerned of the approval of the promotion. If a professional examination is authorized, the approving authority will not take action on the promotion until notified of the results of the examination. (See par. 5.06.)
10	The Chief, Nursing Service, or designee, will notify the registered nurse of the results of promotion consideration. If the employee is not promoted, the appropriate official will discuss with the employee the reasons for non-promotion and what the employee should do to meet the requirements. If an employee who has acquired permanent status or an employee serving on a probational appointment, believes that the action taken to deny a promotion not requiring a waiver by the Under Secretary for Health or a designee was improper, the provisions of paragraph 6I, chapter 5, this part and will apply.

Authority: 38 U.S.C.7304; 38 U.S.C. 7403

HOW TO PROCESS A SPECIAL ADVANCEMENT FOR ACHIEVEMENT	
A	B
<p>S T E P S</p>	<p>If an employee meets criteria specified in paragraph 5.10 and is</p>
<p>1</p>	<p>then take the following steps</p> <hr/> <p>At the time of the achievement, the employee may be recommended for advancement. Recommendations will be made to the Professional Standards Board or Standards Board by the chief of service or Chief of Staff as appropriate</p>
<p>2</p>	<p>The Professional Standards Board or Standards Board will make specific recommendation as to the appropriate number of steps to be granted. The board action with supporting justification will be forwarded to the HRM Office.</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>The HRM Office will forward the file through channels to the appropriate approving authority listed in appendix 5E. Facility Directors will add their comments and recommendations when they are not the approving authorities.</p>
<p>4</p>	<p>Special advancements for achievement will be made effective on the first day of the pay period following administrative approval of the advancement.</p>

Authority: 38 U.S.C.7304; 38 U.S.C. 7403

HOW TO PROCESS A SPECIAL ADVANCEMENT FOR PERFORMANCE	
A	B
<p>S T E P S</p>	<p>If employee meets the criteria specified in paragraph 5.11 and is a</p> <p>then take the following steps</p>
1	<p>Upon receipt of VA Form 5-97, Notice of Pending Personnel Action, the HRM Office will forward the original VA Form 5-97 to the employee's service chief through the Chief of Staff, or to the Chief of Staff, as appropriate. The duplicate copy of the notice will be placed in the pending file in the HRM Office.</p>
2	<p>Upon receipt of the advance SF 50-B, for the periodic step increase or rate adjustment, the HRM Office will remove the duplicate VA Form 5-97 from the pending file. This will be sent with SF 50-B to the service chief through the Chief of Staff, or to the Chief of Staff, as appropriate.</p>
3	<p>If the employee is recommended for advancement, recommendation will be submitted to the Professional Standards Board.</p>
4	<p>The Professional Standards Board will submit its recommendation on VA Form 10-2543, Board Action, to the HRM Office through the Chief of Staff.</p>
5	<p>The HRM Office will forward the board action through channels to the appropriate approving authority listed in appendix 5E. Facility Directors will add their comments and recommendations when they are not the approving authorities.</p>
6	<p>In the absence of recommendation for advancement, or if the recommendation for special advancement for performance is disapproved, the normal procedures for periodic step increases or rate adjustments will be followed.</p>

HOW TO PROCESS A SPECIAL ADVANCEMENT FOR PERFORMANCE (continued)	
A	B
7	If the recommendation is approved, Standard Form 52, Request for Personnel Action, will be initiated by the operation official. The effective date will be the same as the due date for the periodic step increase or rate adjustment.
8	If the employee is recommended for advancement, the recommendation will be submitted to the appropriate Professional Standards Board or Standards Board by the chief of service or Chief of Staff , as appropriate
9	See steps 4 and 5 above.
10	If the recommendation is approved, Standard Form 52, Request for Personnel Action, will be initiated by the operating official. The effective date will be the first day of the pay period following administrative approval.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304; 38 U.S.C. 7403.