



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PERSONNEL AND LABOR RELATIONS
WASHINGTON DC 20420

FEB 07 1994

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT LETTER NO. 05-94-01

**STAFFING DECENTRALIZATION OF TITLE 5 POSITIONS
CENTRALIZED TO THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH**

1. **Purpose.** This Human Resources Management (HRM) Letter provides current information and guidance on the recent delegation of authority to facility Directors to staff specific positions previously centralized to the Under Secretary for Health (Ref: VHA Supplement to MP-5, Part I, Chapter 250) and formerly governed by the merit promotion requirements of VHA Supplement to MP-5, Part I, Chapter 335, Section C. This HRM Letter also further clarifies the revised roles of the Office of HRM (OHRM), Regional Director (RD), and the Program Director (PD) in the staffing process.

2. **Background.** On October 23, 1993, the Acting Under Secretary for Health approved a proposal to decentralize the position classification and staffing for Title 5 service chiefs and certain other positions to Regional and facility Directors, while at the same time providing the opportunity for PDs to participate in the process. Specific delegations and procedures for their implementation are contained in VHA Directive 10-94-008. The delegations, which are effective with receipt of the Directive include:

- Acquisition & Materiel Management (up through GS-2003-14)
- Audiology/Speech Pathology (up through GS-665-14)
- Biomedical Engineer (Chief positions) (up through GS-858-14)
- Blind Rehabilitation (up through GS-601-14)
- Chaplain (Chief positions) (up through GS-060-13)
- Dietetics (up through GS-630-14)
- Engineering (up through GS-801-14)
- Environmental Management (up through GS-673-13)
- Fiscal (up through GS-505-14)
- IRM (up through GS-334-14)
- Prosthetics (up through GS-672-13)
- Psychology (up through GS-180-14)
- Recreation Therapy (up through GS-638-12)
- Security (Supervisory Police Officer) (up through GS-083-11)
- Social Work (up through GS-185-14)
- Veterinary Medical Officer (up through GS-701-13)
- VIST Coordinator (up through GS-601-12)
- Voluntary (up through GS-301-12)

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Delegations to be effected at a later date include:

- Admin. Asst. to Assoc. COS for R&D (up through GS-341-13)
- Domiciliary (up through GS-670-13)
- HRM Officer (up through GS-201-14)
- MAS (up through GS-340-14)
- Security Officer (Chief positions) (up through GS-080-12)

All other previously centralized positions not listed above, such as Chaplain (Staff positions up through GS-060-12), are not affected by decentralization at this time and will continue to be staffed in accordance with the provisions of VHA Supplement to MP-5, Part I, Chapter 250 and Chapter 335, Section C.

3. Governing Merit Promotion Policy. The staffing of these positions through merit promotion procedures is now governed by MP-5, Part I, Chapter 335 and not the VHA Supplement thereto. Notwithstanding the provisions of the local merit promotion plan, when there are 10 or fewer qualified candidates, the provisions in MP-5, Part I, Chapter 335, paragraph C11a(5) [hereinafter referred to as MP-5 paragraph xxxx], as well as the operational guidelines provided below, are to be followed. If required, the local merit promotion plan should be modified to conform with the following operational guide only to the extent it applies to the positions defined in VHA Directive 10-94-008.

4. VA Operational Guidance. It is recommended that staffing decisions and actions be made in the following sequence:

a. **Determination of recruitment sources.** To start the process, the facility is to determine which single or multiple recruitment source(s) will be used. These recruitment sources may be either internal to VA (reassignment, merit promotion, change to lower grade) or external to VA (reinstatement, transfer from other agency, appointment). If multiple recruitment sources are used, recruitment timing should ensure that the closing dates for receipt of applications from all sources coincide. This is especially critical if action would involve a promotion for reinstatement and transfer candidates as these candidates must be ranked at the same time as merit promotion candidates (Ref MP-5 paragraph C11a(2)).

(1) If the initial determination is to fill the vacancy by either reassignment or change to lower grade, the facility Director may commit the selection five working days after notification of the proposed selection to the RD and PD. The date of notification is not included in calculating the five day period. If applicable, the gaining facility will negotiate and effect a release date directly with the losing facility.

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(2) If external recruitment sources are used, facilities must list the vacancy with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) as required by FPM Bulletin 337-85.

b. Job Analysis and Rating Guide Review

(1) A job analysis is required for all merit promotion actions and is the step at which the knowledges, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (KSAOs) necessary for successful performance in the position are identified. VA Manual PG 05-16 "*Program Guide on Personnel Assessment Part 1, Job Analysis and its Uses*" defines four alternate job analysis methods that may be used. Alternate Methods 3 and 4 are applicable to situations in which it is known that there will be few qualified candidates. Facilities may either locally develop the KSAOs and rating guide based on the results of the job analysis or utilize the resources available through the Managerial Placement Division, OHRM (054B) as described immediately below.

(2) To assist this decentralization effort, OHRM (054B) recently provided each medical center with an additional copy of Personnel Circular Letter (PCL) #85-3 "*CSS (Centralized Staffing System) Pre-Registration Notices*." The KSAOs/rating factors listed in PCL #85-3 may be used to recruit for the positions listed in the PCL. Except for the GS-080, GS-701, and GS-858 series, KSAOs and rating guides exist for all the occupations identified in paragraph 2 above, and in some instances for positions not listed. Facilities are invited to contact OHRM (054B) (202-535-8823/25) for information on these positions and if required, a copy of the rating guide.

(3) Facilities may modify the existing KSAOs and rating guides to fit local requirements upon completion of the job analysis step. Facilities are encouraged to discuss such proposed modifications with the PD.

(4) Facility Directors are responsible for the retention and security of rating guides.

c. Advertisement

(1) If external recruitment sources are used, facilities are responsible for listing the vacancy with the appropriate media (i.e., State Employment Service, OPM Service Center, Career America Connection bulletin board, Federal Career Opportunity publication, notice to other agencies in local area, etc.).

(2) If merit promotion recruitment is to be used, the initial area of consideration (AOC) for Fiscal, OA&MM, and HRM service chief positions will be VA-wide. The initial AOC for other positions will be VHA-wide with extension to VA-wide if needed. The recruitment request will be forwarded to OHRM (054B) by the facility with copies to the RD and PD and include the organizational and classification title, series and grade; KSAOs; AOC; comment as

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to payment of relocation expenses and relocation bonus; name and FTS number of point of contact; announcement number, closing date, and any pertinent additional information to be included in the announcement. OHRM (054B) will announce the vacancy in the *Department's Weekly Summary Bulletin*. Requests must be received in OHRM (054B) by noon on Monday (Tuesday when Monday is a holiday) in order to be published in the following Monday's weekly bulletin. The OHRM (054B) fax number is (202) 535-8866. To ensure consistency within VA, each announcement is to specify that applications must be received by the closing date of the announcement. Accordingly, the open period should be of sufficient duration (normally not less than 10 work days) to provide adequate time for candidates to apply.

(3) If determined necessary by the facility Director for substantive reasons comparable to those cited in MP-5 paragraph C7c, the AOC for individual vacancies may be smaller than VHA or VA-wide. Reasons for restricting the AOC will be documented and made part of the merit promotion file.

d. **Employee Application** With decentralization, the CSS application form will no longer be used for the above positions. Applicants must now apply directly to the recruiting facility. For merit promotion, VA applicants are to provide a complete SF-171, Supervisory Appraisal of Employee for Promotion Form (VAF 4667b), Employee Supplemental Qualifications Statement (VAF 4676a), and a copy of their most recent annual performance appraisal by the closing date of the announcement.

e. **Basic Rating**

(1) All applications received by the closing date of the vacancy announcement will be rated by the facility HRM Service using the appropriate OPM or VA qualification standard to determine the candidate's basic eligibility to compete further under merit promotion procedures. Facilities are to promptly inform those applicants rated not qualified. If other recruitment sources are used, the HRM Service will determine candidate eligibility and construct the separate recruitment source listings that would accompany the merit promotion certificate.

(2) A Qualified Applicants Database (QAD) will be established based on previously rated applications. To assist facilities avoid grievances caused by rating an applicant not qualified who was previously rated qualified for the same position, facilities are encouraged to confer with the PD before rating a VA applicant not qualified. There will be a transition period of several months before initial QADs for all of the occupations are communicated to the PD and become fully operational. Facilities will be notified of this date. As noted in paragraph 4f below, information concerning newly rated VA employees will be made known to the PD for updating of the QAD.

(3) Attachment A contains a current listing of the PDs as of the issue date of this HRM Letter. There is no plan for OHRM to update this listing.

f. Ranking Panels

(1) **Ranking 10 or fewer candidates.** If the rating process produces 10 or fewer qualified VA candidates, the candidates may be referred directly to the facility selecting official without convening a ranking panel. The facility is to provide a copy of the merit promotion certificate (including other recruitment source lists if applicable) to the PD and RD. VA and OPM policy both require that the selection be based on job related criteria. MP-5 paragraph C11a(5) and MP-5 Appendix A, paragraph 7b(1) establish this requirement within VA. FPM Letter 335-17 outlines OPM's policy on the minimum requirements to be met when there are 10 or fewer qualified candidates. Although VA policy permits the referral of 10 or fewer candidates to the selecting official without ranking, this provision should not be automatically applied. There may be situations in which the selecting official may prefer that a ranking panel be convened as provided in paragraph f(2), below. It is suggested by OPM that an HRM representative meet with the selecting official before issuance of a promotion certificate to review the applications and determine if a panel would be preferred. If a panel is not convened, the selecting official (normally the facility Director) must qualitatively evaluate the candidates to identify and document the "*well qualified*" determinations required by FPM Letter 335-17. If a panel is convened, identification of the "*best qualified*" candidates will be done by a group of subject matter experts. The facility HRM Service is responsible for ensuring that the selecting official is fully aware of the differences in his or her responsibilities under these two options.

(2) **Ranking more than 10 candidates.** When there are more than 10 qualified VA candidates, a ranking panel will be convened by the PD. The facility will provide the PD with the merit promotion package (including reinstatement and transfer applications if applicable). The facility, at its option and in concert with the PD, may designate a subject matter expert to participate in the ranking panel deliberations. The PD will convene a ranking panel and will return all material to the facility along with the best qualified list (BQL). The PD will simultaneously provide a copy of the BQL to the RD. Using the BQL, the facility will prepare the merit promotion certificate.

g. Selection Upon receipt of the merit promotion certificate, including other recruitment source listings if applicable, the facility Director may select from any source with notification of the selectee to the RD and PD. If selection is made of a candidate from outside VA, facilities are responsible for completion of all pre-employment processes, some of which may be unique to the occupation. For example, prior to selection for Security Chief positions, the applicant must be appropriately vouchered using VA Form 10-0120, *VA Police Officer Pre-Employment Screening Checklist*. PDs may be contacted if there is any question concerning such unique requirements.

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5. **Temporary Promotions.** The above provisions also apply to staffing the covered positions by temporary promotion.

6. Questions may be referred to Joseph Lefebvre, Title 5 Staffing Division (054C), on FTS (202) 535-8850 concerning merit promotion policy and FPM Letter 335-17 requirements or to Ed Cercone, Managerial Placement Division (054B), on FTS (202) 535 8823 concerning staffing operation matters.



Ronald E. Cowles

Attachment

Distribution: RPC 5227
SS (054C)

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Attachment A

PROGRAM DIRECTOR CONTACTS

<u>POSITION</u>	<u>CONTACTS</u>	<u>CORR. SYMBOL</u>	<u>PHONE NUMBERS</u>
Acquisition & Materiel Management	Gail Wegner	91B	202/273-6068
Admin. Asst to Assoc COS for R&D	Dennis Roth	12/2	202/535-7160
Audiology/Speech Pathology	Allen Boysen	117E	202/745-8578
Biomedical Engineer	Terry Gerigk	138A	202/273-6138
Blind Rehabilitation	Rosemary McMahan	117D	202/535-7488
Chaplain	Reverend Ron Phelps	111K	700/959-3180
Dietetics	Brenda Jenkins	111I	202/535-7485
Domiciliary	Dick Olson	114A	202/535-7530
Engineering	Terry Gerigk	138A	202/273-6138
Environmental Management	Edward Powell	161C	202/535-7373
Fiscal	J.P. Brakefield	10B	202/273-5878
HRM Officer	Janet Fields	054A	202/535-8809
IRM	Lafayette Thomas	162A	202/535-7779
MAS	Le Cossette	161B1	202/535-7375
Prosthetics & Sensory Aids	Bernadette Pessagno	117C	202/535-7292
Psychology	M. Rae Barnes, PhD.	111C	202/535-7316
Recreation Therapy	Larry Long	117G	202-535-7279
Security (GS-080 & 083)	Bill Harper	07B	202/273-5544
Social Work	Mary Bozeman	111J	202/535-7265
Veterinary Medical Officer	Dr. Conrad Richter	12/4	202/535-7162
VIST Coordinator	Rosemary McMahan	117D	202/535-7488
Voluntary	Jim Delgado	161A	202/535-7405

