



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT  
WASHINGTON DC 20420

APR 2 1999

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT LETTER NO. 05-99-3

**Update to Internal Placement and  
Merit Promotion Staffing Policies and Procedures**

1. **Purpose.** This Human Resources Management Letter (HRML) provides updated guidance on existing policy pertaining to recruitment activity involving internal placement and merit promotion. Each VA field installation should review existing policy documents for the items mentioned below and incorporate those changes necessary to comply with sound recruitment and merit promotion practices and principles.

2. **Background.** In 1997, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) conducted a series of personnel management evaluations at various VA field installations. In their summary report, OPM indicated that VA needed to address certain issues pertaining to recruitment and merit promotion. In particular, OPM focused on *rating and ranking small numbers of candidates* and *giving due weight to performance appraisals and incentive awards when evaluating candidates for selection*. In OPM's view, VA was not consistently following prescribed policies and practices as outlined in 5 U.S.C. 2301(b) (1) **Use fair, open, and competitive recruitment methods**, and 5 CFR 335.103 (a), 335.103(b)(4) and 300.103. 5 CFR 335.103(a) discusses the requirement that methods of evaluation for promotion and placement be based on thorough job analysis. 5 CFR 335.103(b)(3) addresses the issue of giving due weight to performance appraisals and incentive awards when evaluating candidates for selection.

3. **Guidance.**

a. **Rating and Ranking Small Numbers of Candidates.**

(1) In a previously issued Human Resources Management Letter, No. 05-94-01, dated 02/07/94 (copy attached), information was provided relative to referral of 10 or fewer candidates (see paragraph f. Ranking Panels). Language in this paragraph states that the referral of less than 10 candidates does not require a ranking process however "this provision should not be automatically applied." Information in HRML 05-94-01 was directed to Title 5 positions centralized to the Under Secretary for Health. OPM wants VA to extend the current guidance to cover all Title 5 positions, VA-wide.

(2) In addition, OPM does not agree that VA is in compliance with 5 CFR Parts 335.103 and 300.103. These regulations state that methods of evaluation for promotion and placement be based on thorough job analysis. This is consistent

with the merit system principle at 5 U.S.C. 2301 (b) (1) which states that "...selection and advancement should be determined solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge, and skills, after fair and open competition...." Therefore, local merit promotion plans should be modified to conform with the following guidance:

All candidates must be screened to determine which candidates are to be placed in the best qualified category. This process must take place regardless of the number of candidates, using an evaluation procedure that is job-related and applied fairly and consistently. This does not mean that you must rate and rank when there are 10 or fewer candidates. However, a rating guide or position description should be used to assist the evaluator in distinguishing between candidates. Once this initial screening is completed, a certificate may be issued for review. A sample certificate is attached for your use. At a minimum, certificates should state who determined which candidates are best-qualified. The selecting official should uniformly consider each of the best-qualified candidates and document on the certificate the basis for his/her selection. All processes used in making the selection determination must be job-related, appropriate to the position being filled, and consistent with merit principles.

b. **Giving due weight to performance appraisals and awards.** When considering candidates for promotion, all application materials should be evaluated on an equal basis. When references to outstanding performance or performance awards are included, these references should be given due consideration. As mentioned in 5 CFR 335.103(b)(3), evaluation materials should include acknowledgement of outstanding performance and incentive awards. This may be accomplished by incorporating language in the rating guide that gives credit for consistently outstanding performance and/or awards which are directly related to the work of the position to be filled.

4. Any questions relative to this policy may be referred to Jan Stanley, Customer Advisory and Consulting Group (051A2) or e-mail to [janet.stanley@mail.va.gov](mailto:janet.stanley@mail.va.gov), (202) 273-5938.



Ronald E. Cowles

Attachment

Distribution: RPC 5227  
SS (051A)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
MERIT PROMOTION CERTIFICATE

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Part 1 – To Be Completed By Human Resources Office

1. To:

2. Announcement No.

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3. POSITION TO BE FILLED (Title, series, grade, organization and location)

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4. BEST QUALIFIED CANDIDATES DETERMINED BY (Check applicable box):

Human Resources Specialist & Subject-Matter Expert

Rating & Ranking Panel

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5. BEST QUALIFIED CANDIDATES:

In accordance with the procedures of the Merit Promotion Plan, the following candidates, listed in alphabetical order, have been determined to be the best qualified for consideration for this position:

Name(s)

Grade Level(s) For  
Which Referred

Name(s)

Grade Level(s) For  
Which Referred

SF-171s, OP-612 and/or Professional/Technical Resumes (as appropriate), Supervisory Reference and Qualifications Analysis Forms, & Narrative Qualification Statements for KASOs for each of the best qualified candidates are furnished for your review and consideration. You are requested to carefully evaluate the credentials of each of the best qualified candidates. Please indicate the name of the candidate you have selected in Part II below.

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Human Resources Specialist (Name, Title and Telephone Number)

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Signature and Date

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Part II – To Be Completed By Selecting Official

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6. TO THE HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICE:

I have considered each of the best qualified candidates and evaluated their credentials relative to the quality ranking and/or selective placement factors specified in the Vacancy Announcement. Based upon this review:

I have selected \_\_\_\_\_ for the following specific reasons:

I did not make a selection (state reasons for non-selection and, if applicable, the further recruitment action(s) desired.)

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Selecting Official (Name, Title and Signature)

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Signature and Date