



# HR Highlights

February 1, 2001 \*\*\* Issue 1

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## Dear Colleagues:

Welcome to HR Highlights, a monthly publication of HR news you can use!

As you know, I recently accepted the challenge of leading the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) into and beyond 2001. Our challenges for 2001 include transitioning to the new administration as well as signing and implementing Workforce Planning, VA's Child Care Subsidy program, the One-VA Survey, Worklife Programs for the Department, HR competencies, an HR Intern Program, and legislative initiatives designed to reform certain Title 5 provisions.

OHRM's challenge for FY 2001 and beyond is to provide Headquarters and the Administrations with HR flexible policies and systems necessary to recruit, train, manage, and retain employees and that readily adapt to workplace needs of the future – a future that will change in ways and speed unimaginable.

OHRM will improve our service to YOU in 2001! We believe that customer service is no accident and providing top-notch service is one of our greatest challenges. We are committed to customer service. This means you can count on us for answers to your *HR questions and solutions to your HR problems*. Through the spirit of cooperation and teamwork, open communication and competence at all levels, OHRM is dedicated to discovering and eradicating obstacles to improving service delivery to you, our veterans and their families.

Today's human resources professional is a valued partner in helping the organization's mission. Together, we will meet the challenges of the present and the future on behalf of our Nation's veterans, whom we proudly serve. Together, we WILL make a difference!

**Ventris C. Gibson**  
**Deputy Assistant Secretary**  
**for Human Resources Management**



## Workforce Planning Service Team Established

The Office of Workforce Planning was recently established and reports directly to the Deputy Assistant Secretary, OHRM. The team consists of Mel Sessa, Director, Michael Watson, Laura Shugrue, John Uphal, Ernestine Blakemore and Franz Tuppard. In conjunction with VA's Administrations and staff offices, OHRM has been developing the framework and infrastructure for a *One VA* collaborative approach to workforce planning. This approach will be aligned with the Department's mission and allow VA to successfully compete for, and retain outstanding people to serve our Nation's veterans and their families. OHRM has coordinated the establishment of the Workforce Planning Executive Steering Committee which is chaired by the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, vice chaired by the Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning, and includes Executives from the Administrations and Departmental staff offices. The Team has every hope that partnering together, the VA will be able to effectively address its workforce issues, and will become a model in workforce planning government-wide.

**For additional service, call  
Laura Shugrue, 202-273-9925**

## Staffing Initiative

The first of the seven staffing initiative work products was distributed to the VA HR community via e-mail on January 22nd. This consisted of a bank of performance based interview questions that can be used in the selection process. The bank will also be placed on the OHRM website, where it will be continually updated and enhanced.

**For additional service, call  
Joanna Hartis, 202-273-9839**

## MILITARY LEAVE

Effective December 21, 2000, the minimum charge for military leave is 1 hour. Additional charges for military leave are in multiples of one hour (Section 101(a)(3) of Public Law 106-554). An employee may be charged military leave only for hours during which he/she would otherwise have worked and received pay. Members of the Reserves and/or National Guard will no longer be charged military leave for non-duty days (typically weekends and holidays) that occur within the period of military service. Employees who request military leave for inactive duty training (generally 2, 4, or 6 hours in length) will be charged only the amount of military leave necessary to cover the period of training and necessary travel.

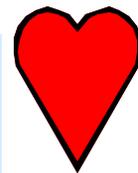
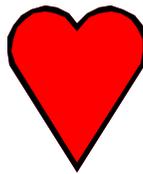
**For additional service, call  
Linda Settle, 202-273-9838**

## SES Performance Plans Revised

SES performance appraisals of all Senior Executives are in the process of being revised to assure compliance with OPM regulations on "Balanced Measures." OPM published new SES performance regulations effective November 13, 2000, that require SES performance plans to reflect an executive's accomplishments using Balanced Measures. Balanced Measures are defined as high performance in the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), customer satisfaction, and employee perspectives. Executive Resources will be meeting with the Administrations to ensure VA's senior executive performance plans are in compliance with the new regulations.

**For additional service, call  
Angel Wolfrey, 202-273-4940**

Join the **OHRM Conference Call** - Wednesday, February 14th at 3 PM. Call-in number is 1-800-767-1750. For additional service, call Tish Pryor, 202-273-4927



## Tuition Assistance Program?

In January 1, 2001, the One VA Child Care Tuition Assistance Pilot Program was successfully implemented. *The program is an important resource tool for VA to attract, recruit, and retain highly skilled and competent workforce.* The program provides affordable child care for eligible lower-income employees under the authority of Section 643, Public Law 106-58.

Distribution of over 300 handbooks and 1,500 applications packages, posters, and flyers was made to field human resources offices and by the close of business on January 25th, 750

applications for the subsidy were received; 437 applications were approved and 525+ calls were completed through the toll-free automated information systems network in English, Spanish and TTY; and the website [www.va.gov/vachildcare](http://www.va.gov/vachildcare) received over 2500 visitors. This pilot will be effective through September 30, 2001. Applications are still being accepted and the program is on a first-come, first-serve basis.



**For additional service, call  
Linda Settle at 202-273-9838**

## One-VA Employee Survey Update

The One-VA Employee Survey Senior-Manager Working Group continues to meet regularly. They have reached consensus on a common base of approximately 80 questions that will gather employee satisfaction data, and sets of supplemental questions that are specific to the

Administrations. The survey will be administered to all VA employees. VBA plans to utilize an electronic delivery method, but will offer a paper-and-pencil alternative to employees, which is the preferred method of the other Administrations and staff offices. A subgroup has drafted Statements of Work for the purpose of contracting out the survey administration, marketing, and gaining executive commitment for taking action on the survey results. The Group's goal is to administer the survey as soon as possible.

**For additional service, call  
Kent Cseplo, 202-273-4971**

## BUYOUTS!

HRM is working with the Administrations to develop and coordinate VA's Buyout Report and amended Buyout Plan for submission to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). VA was authorized 4,700 buyouts under P.L. 106-117, enacted November 30, 1998 and ending December 31, 2000. OMB is interested in how VA used these buyouts, what types of positions were affected, and what cost savings resulted from their use. After reviewing our report, OMB will consider our newly amended Buyout Plan to use the additional buyouts authorized in P.L. 106-419 enacted November 1, 2000. This Act increased our authorized buyouts to 7,734 and extended the authority through December 31, 2002. OMB must approve the amended plan before VA can begin using these new buyouts.

**For additional service, call  
Carol Mellen, 202-273-9754**

## Publisher's Note . . .

Welcome to the first issue of [HR Highlights!](#) Our goal is to provide you with the most timely and accurate information. I hope you find our articles informative and helpful.

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The Office of Human Resources Management  
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