



## Library Orientation Program

The Library Orientation Program is designed to assist librarians assuming their first position as Library managers at a VA health care facility.

### PURPOSE

The goal of this program is to help new library managers acquire the skills and knowledge needed to be effective VA managers. To be successful, new library managers must learn to operate within an administrative structure and assume managerial responsibilities which are unique to the VA system. A series of performance objectives has been identified with accompanying modules to support each objective. The program is designed to be flexible because the new managers come from a variety of backgrounds.

### MENTORS

Assigning a mentor to each new Library manager is core to the program. Mentors are experienced VA library managers who have been selected and trained. Among other criteria, they are chosen for their communication skills, technical proficiency, management capabilities, and ability to work with others. The mentor's role is to assist new managers in meeting the performance objectives.

The mentor is an information source for the new manager during the first transitional months, and guides him/her through the management orientation modules. This one-on-one, colleague-to-colleague approach provides great flexibility. Within its established guidelines, the program adapts to meet the varying backgrounds and unique needs of each new library manager. Mentors neither evaluate nor judge the site, the service, nor the new manager.

### ORIENTATION PROGRAM

The Network Librarian initiates the orientation program with a letter from the Director, VHA Office of Information, Communications Service, welcoming the new manager. The letter is followed by a telephone contact initiated by the Program Field Coordinator who welcomes the new manager, explains the orientation program in greater detail, and tells the manager who has been assigned as mentor. Within one week, the mentor contacts the new manager to introduce herself. Contact is then maintained between the new manager and the mentor until the orientation is complete. During this period, the mentor assists the new manager with any identified problems and provides advice on any activities, e.g., reports, requiring immediate attention.

Formal orientation is provided through a two to three day visit by the assigned mentor to the new manager's medical center. All the modules are reviewed and training is completed during this visit. The mentor and new manager are encouraged to remain in contact through telephone and email. An on-site visit provides increased opportunities for the mentor to tailor the orientation process to the specific needs of the facility, library, and new manager. During the orientation process, the mentor and new manager concentrate on meeting the performance objectives listed below. Once all of the objectives have been met, formal contact is suspended. Further telephone or email contact after the orientation is at the discretion of the mentor and new manager.

## PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of the Orientation Program, the new manager will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the following areas:

1. The Department of Veterans Affairs organizational structure.
2. The structure, function, products and services offered by the VA Library Network (VALNET).
3. VA fiscal structure including planning, requesting, and tracking resources to exercise fiscal accountability.
4. VA Acquisition & Material Management regulations including technical processing and contracting.
5. VA human resources policies and procedures.
6. Required reports, evaluative bodies, and criteria including establishing and maintaining management information systems.
7. Educational resources available for library staff and also those materials available for medical center staff through the library.
8. The role of library staff in healthcare information management.
9. The medical center management team including participating in all phases from planning through evaluation with an emphasis on change.
10. The operation of a VA Library.

## EVALUATION

Individual Library Orientation Programs have functioned successfully since the 1980s. New managers complete evaluations of the programs through surveys or other measurement tools, while mentors continuously monitor the program's effectiveness on monthly teleconferences. A recent assessment of participants concluded that new library managers considered the orientation experience to be extremely helpful. Flexibility and timeliness are the cornerstones of the program's success.

In addition to the benefits gained by the new managers, VA Central Office Library Program Office, and the individual health care facility profit from this program. The program produces a cadre of managers who use and contribute to the combined resources of a national network. At the same time, VALNET is strengthened as each member becomes more effective.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about the Library Orientation Program contact:

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