

VHA CONSTITUTION ON SHARED LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Preamble

We, as leaders, in order to better serve America's veterans, commit to shared leadership and accountability. We recognize all employees as leaders. Together we embrace the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) being the nation's premier health care organization.

I. Principles:

Leadership is a responsibility of every person in VHA. Leadership is more than formal roles and titles; every role is important. Those who set direction must serve those whom they ask to follow. Those asked to follow must do so with the enthusiasm they would seek from others were they leading. Leaders in VHA support each other's success in the common purpose of serving veterans.

Leaders embrace honest and inclusive communication and decision-making. Leaders value diversity of both people and ideas. Leaders are curious about the work of VHA, and their curiosity drives innovation. Leaders foster collaboration and recognize and celebrate achievement.

Shared accountability means that leaders are accountable not only to themselves, but to the others with whom they work. Successes and failures are shared because we acknowledge that we work through each other. We agree to be direct in communicating the help we need and the help we can provide. We will constantly assess the effectiveness of our contributions to shared responsibilities.

Balancing multiple interests and difficult choices in serving veterans requires courage. We place the common good of organizational goals above local or programmatic concerns. We acknowledge that we will face challenges that can divide our leadership community. Leaders understand the need and effort required to balance paradoxes, such as: competition vs. cooperation; status quo vs. innovation; and decentralization vs. centralization.

Conflict resolution will be addressed through communication by the individuals directly involved in the issue. Only when issues cannot be resolved by the individuals involved will they jointly seek assistance in resolving the issue.

II. Roles and Responsibilities:

The Under Secretary for Health defines direction of VHA in service to America's veterans and communicates that vision to the nation. In order to fulfill VHA's mission, the Under Secretary for Health is committed to shared leadership and accountability. The Under Secretary for Health is responsible and accountable for the health of veterans.

Senior executives in the field and headquarters are delegated specific responsibilities and authorities, but share accountability. Program leaders have responsibility for guiding policy development in collaboration with field leadership. Field leadership has responsibility for operationalizing policy in collaboration with program leadership.

A council of headquarters and field senior executives deliberates and advises the Under Secretary for Health on significant national policy. The council exemplifies the principles of this constitution, sharing leadership and accountability.

We recognize all employees as leaders. All employees have specific roles and responsibilities. We share accountability for the successful accomplishment of VHA's mission. All employees share a common bond as leaders in service to America's veterans.

III. Ratification:

The benefit of this constitution is in the hearts and minds of all of VHA and will be continuously examined and ratified.

Ratification consists of input being solicited from the field and headquarters, with review and ratification by the council of headquarters and field senior executives.

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