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RESCISSIONS

The following material is rescinded:

Circulars

10-79-172

10-80-256

10-82-101

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## CHAPTER 2. ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

### 2.01 POLICY

It is VA (Department of Veterans Affairs) policy that Readjustment Counseling Service is an organizational element within VHA (Veterans Health Administration) having administrative responsibility for all Vet Center operations.

### 2.02 VA CENTRAL OFFICE

a. Vet Centers are an organizational element of VHA, and are administered by the Readjustment Counseling Service, which is an organizational element of the Office of the ADCMD (Associate Deputy Chief Medical Director), for Clinical Programs.

(1) The Director, Readjustment Counseling Service, reports to the ADCMD for Clinical Programs, and is responsible for all administration and supervision of services in the field including:

- (a) Policies,
- (b) Funding,
- (c) Personnel,
- (d) Training, and
- (e) General management.

(2) The Readjustment Counseling Service Director, Deputy Director, and Associate Director are responsible for:

(a) Setting policy guidance and objectives for Readjustment Counseling Service Regional Managers, and through them, for all Vet Centers;

(b) Direct supervision, including selection and evaluation, of Regional Managers;

(c) General oversight of Vet Center clinical and administrative operations;

(d) Overall direction of training activities;

(e) Establishing adequate reporting mechanisms from Vet Centers through Regional Managers to VA Central Office;

(f) Making recommendations to the ADCMD for Clinical Programs based on performance data for the allocation of funds and FTEE (Full-time Employee Equivalent) to and from Vet Centers (this includes operating, travel, and training funds); and

(g) Administering the FEE/Contract Program.

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b. In VA Central Office, the Director, Readjustment Counseling Service, participates in regular staff operational meetings with the Directors Field Support and staffs, Associate Chief Medical Directors and staffs and other VHA officials, including the Under Secretary for Health, in order to ensure integration of the Vet Center operations with all VHA functions.

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c. Communications for all Vet Center operations are from the Vet Center Team Leader to the Readjustment Counseling Service Regional Manager to the Director, Readjustment Counseling Service, in VA Central Office. Operational communications dealing with administrative support from local VHA facilities are through the medical center Director to the Regional Director to the Associate Chief Medical Director for Operations (13).

## 2.03 REGIONAL MANAGERS

(1) Under the supervision of Director, Readjustment Counseling Service, VA Central Office, the Regional Managers, Deputies, Associate and Assistant Regional Managers of the seven Readjustment Counseling Service regions, perform the following duties:

(a) Selection, supervision, and evaluation of all Vet Center Team Leaders, in close consultation with the Vet Center Liaison Officer at each supporting VA medical facility.

(b) Oversight of all Vet Center service delivery and operations in their region.

(c) Planning all training of Readjustment Counseling Service personnel.

(d) Assessment of Vet Center performance.

(e) Ensuring adequacy of Vet Center clinical training, and clinical collaboration with VA medical centers.

(f) Promoting close collaboration between Vet Center and local VA medical center support facility in all areas.

(2) Readjustment Counseling Service Regional Managers and their staffs maintain close consultation and collaboration with Regional Directors and their staffs (both in the field and in VA Central Office).

(3) In general, Readjustment Counseling Service Regional Managers and their staffs are delegated major responsibility for day-to-day oversight of administrative and clinical functioning of the Vet Centers.

(a) Usually, the Readjustment Counseling Service Regional Manager's work is assisted by a Deputy Regional Manager, an ARM/C (Associate Regional Manager for Counseling) Services, an ARM/A (Associate Regional Manager for Administration), plus support staff.

(b) In addition, the Regional Manager's staff includes an ARM/CS (Assistant Regional Manager for Contract Services), who is tasked with oversight of the Contracts Program within the region.

(4) A field official may be assigned duties for supervision and oversight of ARM/C supervision and clinical services in one or more regions, and thereby designated as Chief Clinical Field Manager.

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2.04 VET CENTER STAFF

a. Team Leaders. Each Vet Center is directed by a Team Leader who may be a social worker, clinical or counseling psychologist, nurse, or other qualified counselor. Team Leader position titles include:

- (1) Supervisory Readjustment Counseling Therapist,

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- (2) Supervisory Readjustment Counseling Specialist,
- (3) Clinical Psychologist,
- (4) Supervisory Social Worker, or
- (5) Readjustment Counseling Team Leader/Nurse.

b. The Team Leader performs the following duties:

- (1) Directly supervises Vet Center staff in the provision of outreach, counseling, and referral services;
- (2) Oversees performance of staff and ensures proper record keeping, timekeeping, personnel and other reporting procedures required by the agency;
- (3) Selects and evaluates counselors and office managers in consultation with the Vet Center Liaison Officer at the supporting VA medical facility;
- (4) Ensures proper and timely preparation of budget plans, additional funding requests, and obligations of all authorized funds;
- (5) Carries out a wide variety of activities in collaboration with both the administrative and clinical staffs of the supporting VA medical facility;
- (6) Oversees the operation of any Vet Center satellite assigned to their center; and
- (7) Provides direct client services.

c. Other Staff

- (1) Vet Centers are small service units, usually with a total of three to five staff members. Satellites, which function as a Vet Center in all respects except that they are under the administrative and professional supervision of a nearby Vet Center, are staffed with two or three persons.
  - (a) Under special circumstances, where appropriate to the needs of the local veteran population, a Vet Center may establish a one or two-person outstation.
  - (b) The outstation staff members operate as regular members of the Vet Center team.
- (2) Usually, a Vet Center or satellite will include two or three counselors, with one of the following job titles:
  - (a) Social worker,
  - (b) Clinical psychologist,

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- (c) Clinical nurse specialist,
- (d) Readjustment counseling Nurse,
- (e) Readjustment counseling therapist,

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(f) Readjustment counseling specialist, or

(g) Readjustment counseling technician.

(3) Each Vet Center includes an Office Manager, with one of the following job titles:

(a) Secretary,

(b) Program Assistant, or

(c) Readjustment Counseling Assistant.

(4) The following diagram summarizes lines of supervision and authority.

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0	Team Members	0	Team Leader	0	Liaison Officer	0	Counseling Service	0		0
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0		0	Readjustment	0		0	Director,	0		0
0	Team Leader	0	Counseling Service	0	Liaison officer	0	Readjustment	0		0
0		0	Regional Manager	0		0	Counseling Service	0		0
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0	Regional	0	Readjustment	0	Liaison Officer	0	Director,	0		0
0	Manager	0	Counseling Service	0	and Regional	0	Readjustment	0		0
0	Staff	0	Regional Manager	0	Director	0	Counseling Service	0		0
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0	Readjustment	0		0		0		0		0
0	Counseling	0	Director	0	Regional	0	Associate Deputy	0		0
0	Service	0	Readjustment	0	Director	0	Chief Medical	0		0

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## 2.05 ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL

a. Volunteers. Most Vet Centers receive community assistance in the form of volunteers; who may provide either professional or non-professional services.

(1) Utilization of volunteers is advantageous at most Vet Centers because of the number of clients and complexity of services. Volunteers may include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Employment counselors,
- (b) Veterans services specialists,
- (c) Psychologists,
- (d) Psychiatrists,
- (e) Social workers,
- (f) Nurses, and
- (g) Others whose skills contribute to meeting eligible veterans' needs.

(2) The Volunteer Program should contribute to the Vet Center's network of community referral sources.

b. Students and Trainees. Vet Centers accept placement of professional trainees in several categories. In addition, work-study students (veterans receiving educational or vocational benefits) may be utilized to perform duties for which they are qualified.

c. DVOP (Disabled Veterans Outreach Program) Counselors. Counselors may be placed in Vet Centers under the DVOP administered from the Department of Labor through State employment services. All Vet Centers endeavor to obtain at least one full-time DVOP counselor placed at the Vet Center.

### d. Supervision

(1) All volunteers, students, trainees, work-study students, and DVOPs must be reviewed, prior to placement, by the Team Leader.

(2) All volunteers must be registered with VA medical center Voluntary Service; and

(3) All such ancillary personnel should be appropriately supervised by the Team Leader or designee, in order to ensure the ancillary personnel:

- (a) Are assigned tasks consistent with their abilities; and
- (b) Contribute to the mission of the Vet Center.

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2.06 SUPPORTING VA MEDICAL FACILITY

a. Vet Centers are a key VA service delivery structure for Vietnam and post-Vietnam conflict veterans in the readjustment counseling area. They are an innovative multiservice delivery system provided by VHA in flexible community-based centers. As an integral part of VHA services, each Vet Center is attached to a supporting VA medical center or VA outpatient clinic.

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(1) The supporting facility provides needed medical administrative, acquisition, personnel, fiscal, and engineering support.

(2) Operating with a discrete line of authority, Vet Centers function as a fully-integrated partner in the services of the VA medical center or VA outpatient clinic, and function within all relevant VA regulations and policies.

b. The Vet Center provides to the VA medical center or VA outpatient clinic:

(1) A broad range of consultation, mutual referral and professional collaboration,

(2) Specific expertise concerning readjustment of war veterans, and

(3) Provision of psychosocial services.

c. Vet Center staff, and the psychiatry, psychology, social work and other professional services of the VA medical center or VA outpatient clinic collaborate closely as determined by local needs; this may include:

(1) Joint clinical conferences,

(2) Joint educational exercises, and

(3) Integrated case management.

d. In consultation with the Readjustment Counseling Service Regional Manager and the Vet Center Team Leader, the Director of each supporting VA medical center, or VA outpatient clinic, designates one or more Vet Center liaison officers with responsibilities for VA medical center/VA outpatient clinic Vet Center collaboration.

(1) Suitable officials for designation as Liaison Officer include, but are not limited to:

(a) Associate Director,

(b) Assistant Director,

(c) Chief of Staff,

(d) Chief of Psychiatry,

(e) Chief of Psychology, or

(f) Chief of Social Work.

(2) The Liaison Officer should be quite familiar with services provided at the Vet Center. Tasks for the Liaison Officer include:

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(a) Ensuring timely and effective Vet Center administrative support;

(b) Ensuring close professional collaboration between Vet Center and VA medical center professional staff members, including mutual exchange of skills, talents, and insights concerning readjustment counseling and related psychological treatment;

(c) Attention to cooperation in the provision of services to eligible veterans at the Vet Center and VA medical center/VA outpatient clinic including admission issues, referrals, etc.; and

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(d) Providing consultation to Vet Center staff and Readjustment Counseling Service Regional Managers concerning the performance of staff duties, professional development, improvement of services to veterans, management, and selection of staff.

e. The Liaison Officer at the VA medical center, where the Readjustment Counseling Service Regional Manager's office is located, oversees the provision of administrative support to the management official(s). At all sites, the Liaison Officer coordinates or assists the Readjustment Counseling Service supervisor in coordinating adequate orientation to all relevant VA medical center/VA outpatient clinic elements for all newly hired Readjustment Counseling Service personnel.

## 2.07 APPOINTMENTS

a. Vet Center staff appointments, and Readjustment Counseling Service Regional Manager's staff appointments, include any of the following:

- (1) Career and/or career conditional,
- (2) Term appointment,
- (3) Schedule A appointment,
- (4) Other time-limited appointments, and
- (5) Noncompetitive special appointments, as authorized.

b. Career/career conditional appointments are to be utilized to enable recruitment of personnel required to maintain adequate expertise in staffing to maintain adequate quality of services, and to maintain minimum necessary stability of staffing.

## 2.08 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

a. Recruitment and selection of Readjustment Counseling Service personnel is through established personnel procedures. Recruitment is at the initiative of the supervisor, who is the selecting official.

b. The following additional guidelines apply:

(1) Training or experience in working with Vietnam era veterans and other eligible veterans, should be established by Personnel officers as an important rating factor. Such experience need not have been gained with VA. Because of the highly specialized mission of Readjustment Counseling Service, officials are encouraged to work closely with Personnel services to ensure that position openings are communicated to Vietnam and post-era war veterans through the appropriate channels and organizations.

(2) Note should be taken of Section 505 of Public Law 102- 568, which the President signed on October 29, 1992. It restores eligibility of VRA (Veterans' Readjustment Appointments) to Vietnam era veterans, permitting VA

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to give preference to Vietnam era veterans both for new hires and promotions in staffing Readjustment Counseling Service.

(3) In selecting Team Leaders, Readjustment Counseling Service Regional Managers and the supporting VA facility Liaison Officer should consult actively, so that the Liaison Officer provides detailed assistance to the assessment and selection process. Similar consultation is required when Team Leaders are assessing and selecting Vet Center counselors and office managers.

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## 2.09 TEAM COMPOSITION

a. The experience, training, and skills of Vet Center teams are unusually critical because of the small size of the service unit.

(1) Team composition will be tailored to the needs of the particular veteran community which is being served. Teams should include familiarity with the Vietnam and post-Vietnam war experience, an understanding of special needs of ethnic minority, disabled, and women veterans, etc. At least one position on each Vet Center and Vet Center Satellite staff should be staffed with a fully-VHA qualified mental health professional (clinical or counseling Ph.D. psychologist, social worker, or psychiatric nurse clinical specialist).

(2) Fulfillment of the mission is contingent on the presence of Vietnam veterans and/or post-Vietnam war/conflict veterans on Vet Center teams, and selecting officials should strive to recruit in such fashion that Vietnam and post-Vietnam conflict veterans will be well represented in candidates.

(3) The composition of Vet Center teams and the overall atmosphere of the Vet Center should be congenial to all eligible veterans of varying socioeconomic levels, educational backgrounds, and military experience.

b. As the key staffer in the Vet Center, the Team Leader should have demonstrated:

(1) Commitment, knowledge, and expertise regarding the Vietnam and Persian Gulf wars, post-Vietnam era conflicts, and veterans' readjustment from these experiences.

(2) Management skills necessary to oversee the range of operations of a Vet Center; i.e., skills in:

- (a) Leadership,
- (b) Organizing,
- (c) Facilitating,
- (d) Team building and cohesion,
- (e) Accountability, and
- (f) Problem solving.

(3) The interpersonal skills necessary to effectively serve Vet Center staff, clientele, community groups, and VA staff.

c. Team Counselors should demonstrate:

(1) Commitment, knowledge, and expertise regarding the war experience and readjustment from the experience;

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- (2) The provision of readjustment counseling and outreach; and
  - (3) Knowledge of community networking.
- d. Office Managers should:

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- (1) Possess skills in:
  - (a) Typing,
  - (b) ADP (automated data processing),
  - (c) Administration,
  - (d) Record keeping, and
  - (e) Other related skills.

(2) Possess such receptionist skills to relate appropriately to a wide range of veterans seeking services, and to the wide range of family members, community and VA medical center persons who interact with the Vet Center.

(3) Be able to communicate effectively with veterans who may be in a situation of acute stress until a counselor is available.

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