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## CHAPTER 3. FACILITIES

### 3.01 POLICY

It is VA (Department of Veterans Affairs) policy that Vet Centers are strategically sited in the community to maximize veterans' access to readjustment counseling, and to consider relocation of a Vet Center when changes in the character of the leased space, or the adjacent neighborhood threatens the quality of, or the veterans' ability to obtain services.

### 3.02 LOCATION AND RELOCATION

a. The guiding principal regarding site locations include that:

(1) The Vet Center is located so as to serve the largest number of veterans with the least possible distances to travel to the Vet Center.

(2) There is access to public transportation. Access to public transportation is a critical factor, and is included as a site selection criterion.

(3) The distance to other VA facilities and other non-VA organizations (clinics, agencies, veterans organizations, etc.) is considered.

(4) Any relevant data concerning the specific service needs of the local veteran population are taken into consideration.

(5) The specific location of a Vet Center in or near a city maximizes accessibility to the Vet Center on the part of different population subgroups within the eligible veteran population.

(6) The Vet Center be located in a neighborhood which is experienced as comfortable by all veterans and family members.

b. Site should conform to Federal laws and regulations governing Federal leases, site renovations, construction and fire codes.

c. Vet Centers may also be located at a VA medical facility; i.e., co-located with a VA outpatient clinic, or at a VA medical center. Regarding co-located Vet Centers, available space at the VA medical facility must be suitable for Vet Center operations in accordance with established VHA criteria. NOTE: Any such co-location of a Vet Center after January 1988, must be reported to Congress as a revision of the Vet Center National Plan pursuant to 38 U.S.C. (United States Code) Section 1712A as amended by Public Law 100-322.

d. Vet Centers are designed to provide a welcoming, noninstitutional environment oriented by location, design, and decor to all eligible veterans. In particular, there is an emphasis on space and design conducive to communication between staff and clients, and among clients. All space aspects

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should encourage veterans and family members to feel a sense of belonging and welcome at the Vet Center.

e. All Vet Centers proposed for relocation by Readjustment Counseling Service Regional Managers will be submitted to the Director, Readjustment Counseling Service, VA Central Office, for approval regarding operational suitability and feasibility.

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(1) All relocations require notification to Congress and a statutorily defined waiting period. All Vet Centers proposed for relocation must be evaluated and provide justification in relation to the criteria stipulated in 38 U.S.C. Section 1712A as amended by Public Law 100-322 and Public Law 100-687.

(2) Subsequent VA management of Vet Center relocations should be implemented in the most expeditious manner feasible to preclude undue delay or disruption to veteran services. Effective management of Vet Center moves requires close collaboration among the following VA elements:

(a) Director, Readjustment Counseling Service;

(b) Regional Manager and staffs with particular reference to the Vet Center Team Leader;

(c) The medical center Director and staff with particular reference to the Chief A&MM (Acquisition and Materiel Management), and

(d) The Project and Property Management Staff Director in VA Central Office.

### 3.03 LEASING

a. Readjustment Counseling Service Vet Center leasing requests should be considered an operational priority and processed under the most expeditious means feasible.

(1) Following preliminary programmatic approval by the Readjustment Counseling Service Regional Manager and the Director, Readjustment Counseling Service (115), the request is submitted to A&MM Service at the support facility for acquisition action.

(2) Leasing proposal requests are submitted by Acquisition and Materiel Management Service through the medical center Director, and Regional Director to the Director, Project and Property Management Service (084B) for leasing authority. After concurrence from the Director, Readjustment Counseling Service, the Director, Project and Property Management Service will delegate authority to lease space to the medical center's Contracting Officer.

(3) The Contracting Officer is responsible for all negotiations and transaction forms.

(4) Prior to signing, all leases must be reviewed by the Readjustment Counseling Service Regional Manager for programmatic issues and to provide certification of availability of funding. No lease may be executed without this certification.

(5) Copies of all executed leases must be submitted to the Director, Real Property Program Management Service (084A).

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b. All leases must include within paragraph 4 of SF (Standard Form) 2, U.S. Government Lease for Real Property, termination rights upon 90-day notice. Although infrequently exercised, the provision enables VA the option of readily moving a Vet Center when local environmental contingencies (such as major demographic or socioeconomic changes) result in barriers to veterans' access to the facility.

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### 3.04 SPACE

a. Space requirements should be consistent with the Office of Construction Handbook H-08-1, Master Specifications, to include handicap accessibility. The design of space must be appropriate to provide both visual and sound confidentiality for individual interviews, group counseling and staffing conferences. Space should be adequate to provide for client reception, counseling staff, clerical support, records, equipment and supplies.

b. Interior decorating should focus on the creation of a generally comfortable and noninstitutional environment in order to promote maximum client comfort and receptivity to available services. The creation of an environment interesting and useful to veterans may include the use of memorabilia, maps, photos, etc., pertaining to the war experience in Vietnam, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, and the Persian Gulf.

### 3.05 EQUIPMENT

Equipment should include all items which permit staff to deliver effective services.

a. Equipment should include (but is not limited to):

- (1) Telephones with both commercial and FTS capability;
- (2) Video system;
- (3) Audio tape recorder;
- (4) Copier;
- (5) Computers;
- (6) Typewriters;
- (7) FAX machine; and
- (8) Other necessary clerical equipment.

b. Equipment may include other additional specialized items determined to be useful, to maximize effectiveness of services in the professional judgment of the Team Leader, within the guidelines for approved equipment.

c. Each Vet Center should have full use of at least one GSA (General Services Administration) vehicle. NOTE: Additional vehicle(s) may be authorized in cases of extraordinary need due to geography, unusual needs for outreach, etc.

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