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Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Washington, DC 20420

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1. Transmitted is a change to VHA (Veterans Health Administration) Supplement to VA (Department of Veterans Affairs) Manual, MP-5, "VA Personnel Policy," Part II, Chapter 5, "Advancements."

2. Principal changes include:

a. Changed references to 38 U.S.C. (United States Code), reflecting the reorganization of title 38, which was approved under the Department of Veterans Affairs Health-Care Personnel Act of 1991, Public Law 102-40, dated May 7, 1991.

b. Paragraph 5.08a and b: New procedures for advancement of employees to assignments requiring enhanced qualifications or assignments; advancement or promotion of head nurses and employees with specialized skills; and promotion of employees on pay retention. (NOTE: The General Counsel has issued a formal opinion concerning the determination of pay for head nurses upon promotion to a higher grade. The opinion provides that head nurses are only entitled to a two-step increase upon promotion. The revised policy is to be effected immediately. However, the pay of any head nurse promoted prior to the receipt of this change is not affected.)

c. Paragraph 5.08c: Deletion of requirement to send to Central Office copies of board actions for inclusion in the board action folder.

d. Paragraph 5.09: A provision which allows the Under Secretary for Health or designee to adjust the promotion or advancement of a nurse or nurse anesthetist to EQA (enhanced qualifications or assignment) if it is determined that such action is consistent with applicable qualification requirements.

e. Paragraph 5.10a: Authorization of special advancements for achievement for physicians and dentists in Executive grade, and deletion of certification by an American Specialty Board as a criterion for special advancements for achievement changed.

f. Paragraph 5.10c: A provision making all nurses and nurse anesthetists eligible for special advancements for achievement. Eligibility was previously restricted to nurses and nurse anesthetists in Senior grade EQA and below.

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g. Paragraph 5.10d and 5.11d: Revised criteria regarding special advancements for achievement and performance for physician assistants.

h. Paragraph 5.11: Expansion of eligibility for special advancements for performance to physicians (other than Chiefs of Staff) and dentists in Executive grade and below, podiatrists, optometrists, nurses (other than Chiefs of Nursing Service), nurse anesthetists, physician assistants, and expanded-function dental auxiliaries.

i. Paragraph 5.12b: Revised procedures for granting or denying periodic step increases or rate adjustments.

j. Old Paragraph 5.13: Deleted. Deletion of all material related to periodic step increases for nonphysician health care facility Directors. Such individuals are now

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appointed under the Senior Executive Service. (Note: Par. 5.13 deleted; pars. 5.14 and 5.15 redesignated pars. 5.13 and 5.14, respectively.)

k. Paragraph 5.13: (old par. 5.14) Deletion of all material related to the advancement of career residents.

l. New Paragraph 5.15: New policies on detail, temporary reassignment, and temporary promotion of nurses and nurse anesthetists.

3. A change to MP-5, part II, chapter 2, which incorporates a revised qualification standard for physician assistants into the chapter, and a change to VHA Supplement, MP-5, part II, chapter 2, which authorizes the appointment of graduate physician assistants, are being issued simultaneously.

4. Filing Instructions

Remove Pages	Insert Pages
5-i through 5-ii	5-i through 5-ii
5-5 through 5-10	5-5 through 5-13

5. RESCISSIONS: VHA Supplement to MP-5, part II, chapter 5, dated May 14, 1979; and paragraphs 3b(1), 3c(1), and 3c(4) of Attachment B, and paragraph 5 of Attachment K; Circular 00-91-07, "Locality Pay System," dated April 1, 1991.

James W. Holsinger, Jr., M.D.  
Under Secretary for Health

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RESCISSIONS

The following material is rescinded:

1. COMPLETE RESCISSIONS

a. Manuals

DM&S Supplement, MP-5, chapter 5, chapter 16B.

DM&S Supplement, MP-5, part II, chapter 5, dated June 1, 1964 (Transmittal Letter "D"), and change 1 thereto.

DM&S Supplement, MP-5, part II, chapter 5, dated February 29, 1968, and changes 1 through 7 thereto.

b. Interim Issues

II 10-65-8

II 10-66-11

II 10-66-49

II 10-67-4

II 10-67-36

II 10-67-49

II 10-72-2

II 10-76-6

II 10-78-10

II 10-80-38

b. Circulars

10-63-248

10-64-2

2. PARTIAL RESCISSIONS. The following material is rescinded insofar as it pertains to this chapter.

a. Interim Issues

II 10-66-3

b. Circulars

10-78-262

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5.08 EFFECTUATION OF [ADVANCEMENT AND] PROMOTION ACTIONS

a. [Promotion

(1) General. Except as provided in subparagraphs (2) through (4), employees promoted shall receive basic pay at the lowest rate of the higher grade which exceeds the employee's existing rate of basic pay by not less than 2 step increments of the grade from which promoted.

(2) Head Nurses

(a) A head nurse promoted and simultaneously given a non-head nurse assignment receives the lowest step in the higher grade that equals or exceeds the employee's existing rate of basic pay (excluding head nurse pay) by not less than 2 steps of the grade from which promoted. Example: A head nurse promoted from Intermediate grade step 5, who is receiving 2 additional steps for being a head nurse (i.e., step 7), receives the lowest step in Senior grade that equals or exceeds Intermediate grade step 7.

(b) The entitlement of head nurses promoted while remaining in a head nurse assignment shall be determined as follows:

1. Find the lowest step of the higher grade that equals or exceeds the employee's existing pay (excluding head nurse pay) by not less than 2 step rates within the grade from which promoted.

2. To the amount in subparagraph 1, add 2 additional step increments in the higher grade.

3. Example: For a head nurse at Intermediate grade step 5 receiving 2 additional steps for being a head nurse (i.e., step 7), find the lowest step in Senior grade that equals or exceeds Intermediate grade step 7. The employee then receives 2 additional steps in Senior grade for continuing to serve as a head nurse. If, for illustration purposes, Senior grade step 3 is the lowest step of Senior grade that equals or exceeds Intermediate grade step 7, the employee is placed at step 3 of the grade, but receives an additional 2 step rates (i.e., step 5 of Senior grade) as a result of being a head nurse.

(3) Employee With Specialized Skills

(a) Promotion While Remaining in an Assignment Requiring Specialized Skills. An employee promoted while remaining in an assignment requiring specialized skills receives the lowest step of the higher grade that equals or exceeds the employee's existing rate of basic pay (including the higher rate based on specialized skills) by not less than 2 step rates of the grade from which promoted. If the rate in the higher grade is less than the entry rate

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for specialized skills, the employee shall be advanced to the specialized skills entry rate in the higher grade. Example: An employee at Entry grade EQA step 5 based on possession of specialized skills receives the lowest step in Intermediate grade that equals or exceeds Entry grade step 7.

(b) Assignments Not Requiring Specialized Skills and Simultaneous Promotion. An employee receiving a higher rate of basic pay for specialized skills, who accepts an assignment which does not require specialized skills and who is simultaneously promoted, shall receive the lowest step in the higher grade which equals or exceeds the employee's existing rate of basic pay (including the higher rate based on specialized skills)

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by not less than 2 step increments within the grade from which promoted. Example: An employee at Entry grade EQA step 5 based on possession of specialized skills receives the lowest step of Intermediate grade that equals or exceeds Entry grade step 6. NOTE: This paragraph also applies to employees going to Chief Nurse positions or other key nursing assignments.

(4) Employees on Pay Retention. An employee on pay retention is entitled to receive the equivalent of two step rates above the maximum rate of the grade from which promoted. If the resulting rate is higher than the retained rate of pay, pay retention terminates. The computation regarding the promotion is to be completed prior to determining an employee's entitlement to higher rates of pay based on being a head nurse or being in an assignment requiring specialized skills.

(5) Effective Date

(a)] The promotion will be placed into effect by the Personnel Officer on the [first] day of the pay period following the date of administrative approval of the promotion by the officials designated in paragraph 5.03 or appendix 5C, as appropriate, but in no case earlier than the date on which all administrative requirements are met.

[(b)] If an employee becomes eligible for promotion while on LWOP for educational or other purposes, no action will be taken until the employee returns to duty. If the employee on return to duty meets all other requirements for promotion, an appropriate recommendation will be made. However, if promoted, the promotion will not be effected retroactively.

NOTE: See paragraph [2.33] for effectuation of promotion actions upon return from military service.

[(6)] Disposition of Forms. On completion of the promotion action, or disapproval of promotion, the original VA Form 10-2543 and any accompanying documents will be filed [in a separate envelope] in the employee's [Official Personnel Folder.]

b. [Advancements of Nurses and Nurse Anesthetists Upon Attainment of EQA (Enhanced Qualifications or Assignment)]

(1) General. Except as provided in the following subparagraphs (2) and (3), employees will be advanced 2 steps upon attainment of EQA or to the first EQA step if that step is greater. However, except as noted for head nurses, no advancement may exceed the maximum authorized step of the grade. Example: An employee without EQA who is at step 1 of Intermediate grade would be advanced 2 steps upon attainment of EQA; however, the employee would be

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advanced to the beginning step of EQA if the rate at the beginning EQA step is higher than that at step 3 of the grade.

(2) Head Nurses. The advancement of head nurses to EQA will be computed as follows:

(a) Employees remaining in head nurse assignments will be advanced as described in subparagraph (1); however, the advancement will be computed without regard to head nurse pay. After this amount is determined, the head nurse is given 2 additional steps for serving in the head nurse assignment even if that causes the head nurse's rate of basic pay to exceed the maximum authorized rate of the grade. An example of an

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advancement to EQA of a head nurse who is at Intermediate grade step 1 and receiving 2 additional step increments would be computed as follows:

1. Add to the head nurse's basic rate of pay (excluding head nurse pay, i.e., Intermediate grade step 1) 2 steps, ensuring that the step received is at least the minimum step for EQA employees; and

2. Add 2 step increments (i.e., head nurse pay) to the amount found in subparagraph 1. In the example, the employee receives Intermediate grade step 5, assuming the minimum Intermediate EQA step rate is step 3.

(b) Employees who are advanced and simultaneously go to non-head nurse assignments shall have their advancements computed in accordance with subparagraph (1); however, head nurse pay will not continue upon acceptance of the non-head nurse assignment.

(3) Employees Receiving Higher Rates Based on Specialized Skills. The advancement to EQA of employees receiving a higher rate of basic pay as a result of specialized skills shall be computed as follows:

(a) Employees remaining in assignments requiring specialized skills shall be advanced in accordance with the previous subparagraph (1).

(b) Employees who are advanced and simultaneously go to an assignment which does not require specialized skills shall have their advancement computed in accordance with subparagraph (1); however, the advancement shall be based on a reconstructed rate of basic pay.]

Authority: 38 U.S.C. [7304, 7403, and 7451(a).]

5.09 [ADJUSTMENT OF PROMOTIONS OR ADVANCEMENTS TO EQA

The Under Secretary for Health or designee may adjust an employee's promotion or advancement to EQA if it is determined that such action is consistent with applicable qualification requirements. Such decisions shall consider the recommendation of the appropriate Professional Standards Board or Standards Board. Actions taken under this paragraph] will be effected as of the beginning of the next pay period following approval.

NOTE: Service in a lower grade prior to the grade adjustment will not be credited toward meeting the required time-in-grade for promotion.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. [7304, 7403]

5.10 SPECIAL ADVANCEMENT FOR ACHIEVEMENT

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a. Criteria for Physicians and Dentists. Except for [Chiefs of Staff and facility Directors,] full-time, part-time, and intermittent physicians and dentists may be advanced within the grade from one to five steps on the basis of professional achievement [above that expected for the grade level or assignment] providing they have demonstrated a high level of performance and potential for assumption of greater responsibility. Such achievement may be demonstrated by [professional attainments in health care management, education, research, or] patient care worthy of national or international recognition.

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b. Criteria for Podiatrists and Optometrists. Full-time, part-time, and intermittent podiatrists and optometrists may be advanced within the grade from one to five steps on the basis of professional achievement [above that expected for the grade level or assignment] providing they have demonstrated a high level of performance and potential for assumption of greater responsibility. Examples of professional achievement are:

(1) Outstanding and exceptional achievement as evidenced by receipt of official recognition from a recognized professional or academic organization.

(2) Significant professional attainment in research or contributions to podiatric or optometric science and patient care worthy of publication in a national or international journal of high regard within the respective professions.

c. Criteria for Nurses [and Nurse Anesthetists]. Full-time, part-time and intermittent nurses [and nurse anesthetists] may be advanced within the grade from one to five steps on the basis of professional achievement provided they have demonstrated excellence in performance [above that expected for the grade level or assignment] and potential for assumption of greater responsibility. Such achievement may be demonstrated by:

(1) Recognition of professional groups such as certification by the appropriate national certifying body [(except where such certification is required as a condition of employment)] or election to an office in a national professional society; or

(2) Professional attainments in research or contributions to the advancement of health sciences and patient care worthy of national or international recognition; or

(3) Receipt of professional awards at the State or national level in recognition of significant and distinguished contributions to nursing[, nurse anesthesia,] or health care delivery.

d. Criteria for Physician Assistants. Full-time, part-time and intermittent physician assistants may be advanced within the grade from one to [five] steps on the basis of professional achievement [above that expected for the grade level or assignment] provided they have demonstrated excellence in performance and potential for assumption of greater responsibility. [Examples of such achievements include, but are not limited to:

(1) A graduate level degree in a field related to the Department's health care mission;

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(2) Appointment to a university faculty position;

(3) Significant contributions to the Department's health care mission. Such accomplishments may result from leadership or exceptional efforts on facility, regional or national task forces or committees, or by serving as a consultant on matters relating to education, research, health care management, or quality of care issues;

(4) Recognition of outstanding and exceptional achievement by a professional or academic organization;

(5) Election to office in a professional organization at the State or national level;

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(6) Independently producing or serving as a principal assistant or major contributing member on research producing publishable results that advance patient care or medical science; or

(7) Attainment of specialty certification within the occupation. This does not include certification as a physician assistant by the National Commission on Certification of Physician's Assistants, which is a condition of employment as a physician assistant in VHA.]

e. Criteria for Expanded-Function Dental Auxiliaries. Full-time, part-time, and intermittent expanded-function dental auxiliaries may be advanced from one to [five] steps on the basis of professional achievement [above that expected for the grade level or assignment] provided they have demonstrated excellence in performance and potential for assumption of greater responsibility. Such achievement may be evidenced by:

(1) Completion of significant research in either the biomedical or health care delivery area and publication of these results in a recognized journal.

(2) Recognition of outstanding and exceptional achievement by receipt of an official award from a professional or academic organization.

(3) Academic achievement by completion of a postgraduate degree in a related health care field.

f. Processing. (See app. 5E.)

Authority: 38 U.S.C. [7304, 7403]

5.11 SPECIAL ADVANCEMENT FOR PERFORMANCE

a. Consideration. Full-time, part-time and intermittent physicians [(other than Chiefs of Staff)], dentists, podiatrists, optometrists in [Executive] grade and below and nurses [(other than Chiefs of Nursing Service), nurse anesthetists,] physician assistants, and expanded-function dental auxiliaries who have demonstrated a sustained high level of performance and professional competence over and above that normally expected of employees in the particular grade and profession, or who have made noted contributions in some phase of their profession, may be considered for special advancements for performance.

b. Criteria for Physicians, Dentists, Podiatrists and Optometrists. There must have been demonstrated a sustained high level of performance as evidenced by the following examples:

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(1) Demonstration of exceptional skills and aptitudes in the care and treatment of patients.

(2) Actual assumption of greater professional and/or administrative responsibility. Faculty appointment (post residency) at the rank of instructor or above may be considered as a greater responsibility.

(3) Significant research.

(4) Significant clinical contribution (including publication).

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c. Criteria for Nurses and Nurse Anesthetists. There must have been demonstrated a sustained high level of performance and ability over and above that normally expected of employees in the particular grade and profession or there must have been noted contributions in some phase of nursing [or nurse anesthesia]. In addition, one or more of the criteria listed in paragraph 5.07b must be met.

d. Criteria for Physician Assistants. There must have been demonstrated a sustained high level of performance and ability over and above that normally expected of employees in the particular grade and profession or there must have been noted contributions in some aspect of health care. Criteria for advancement will be demonstrated superior performance as evidenced by:

(1) Assumption of a major responsibility in administering a major patient care program.

(2) Significant accomplishments associated with an academic program conducted in affiliation with the facility where the physician assistant is employed.

e. Criteria for Expanded-Function Dental Auxiliaries. There must have been demonstrated a sustained high level of performance and ability over and above that normally expected of employees in the particular grade and profession or there must have been noted contributions in some phase of health care. Criteria for advancement will be demonstrated by superior performance as evidenced by:

(1) Demonstration of exceptional skills and aptitudes in the care and treatment of patients.

(2) Significant accomplishments associated with an academic program conducted in affiliation with the VA facility where the person is employed.

f. Processing. (See app. 5F.)

(1) Physicians, Dentists, Podiatrists, and Optometrists. Approximately 90 days prior to the employee's completing the waiting period for a periodic step increase or rate adjustment, the facility will receive from the DPC, VA Form [97,] Notice of Pending Personnel Action, in duplicate, identifying the employee and stating that the employee is eligible for consideration for special advancement for performance. [NOTE: For Physicians and Dentists only: Local officials may approve a special advancement for performance retroactive to the date of the periodic step increase when, through administrative error, the advancement was not granted on the due date.]]

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(2) Nurses, Nurse Anesthetists, Physician Assistants, and Expanded-Function Dental Auxiliaries. [One advancement may be granted at any appropriate time within any period of 52 weeks.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. [7304, 7403]

#### 5.12 PERIODIC STEP INCREASES AND RATE ADJUSTMENTS

a. Requirements. Full-time, part-time and intermittent employees will be considered for periodic step increases or rate adjustments when they complete the required waiting periods (see MP-5, pt. II, ch. 3) and their work meets all of the following conditions for acceptable level of competence:

(1) The total measure of the effectiveness and conduct of the employee is fully satisfactory, with any weaknesses balanced by strengths.

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(2) A satisfactory current proficiency rating[.]

(3) No evidence or action is of record or in process which is contradictory to an overall judgment of current full satisfactory performance and conduct.

b. Processing Periodic Step Increases and Rate Adjustments

(1) Five pay periods prior to the employee's completing the waiting period for a step increase or rate adjustment, the facility will receive [SF 50-B,] Notification of Personnel Action, from the DPC. The servicing personnel office will forward it to the appropriate service chief.

(2) [Step increases and rate adjustments may be approved by the rating official and disapproved by the approving official.] Rating and approving officials will be the same as stipulated in appendix 6A, Chapter 6, "Proficiency Rating System." [ ]If [the] step rate is approved, the acceptable level of competence statement on [SF 50-B] will be signed by the [rating] official and the form returned to the personnel office. If disapproval is recommended, the procedures in subparagraph [(3)] will apply.

[(3)] If disapproval is recommended, the rating official shall prepare a written justification and forward it[, through the local Personnel Service,] to the approving official for decision. If disapproved:

(a) The employee will be notified in writing of:

1. The reason(s) for disapproval;

2. The fact that the employee will be reconsidered within 52 weeks (time to be specified); and

3. The [right] to ask for a review of this decision [ ] under the provisions of subparagraph [(4)].

(b) The unsigned [SF 50-B] will be returned to the personnel office accompanied by a copy of the notice of disapproval. The personnel office will take appropriate action to initiate reconsideration of the disapproved step increase or rate adjustment at the time specified in the notice of disapproval. A disapproved step increase or rate adjustment which is reconsidered at a later specified time and approved will be effected at the beginning of the next pay period following approval and a new waiting period for the next step increase or rate adjustment will be established.

(4) [An employee may request reconsideration of a decision to deny a periodic step increase or rate adjustment within 15 calendar days of receipt of the notification required under subparagraph (3). The reconsideration

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decision will be rendered by the next higher level professional-administrative supervisor at the health care facility, or, if there is no higher level professional-administrative supervisor at the facility, the file is to be submitted to the appropriate Regional Director (13\_) for decision. All reconsideration decisions are final. If, on reconsideration, it is determined that an employee was performing at an acceptable level of competence, the employee shall be given the periodic step increase retroactive to the original due date.]

Authority: 38 U.S.C. [7304, 7403]

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[5.13] ADVANCEMENT OF RESIDENTS

[ ] Noncareer residents appointed under authority of 38 U.S.C. [7406] will be advanced in salary upon successful completion of each year of training provided the House Staff Review Committee recommends the increase and continuation of training. If the committee recommends the advancement, the effective date of promotion will be the first day following completion of each year of training. The required training may have been obtained in part from sources outside VA. (See M-8, pt. II, ch. 1.)

[5.14] TEMPORARY CHIEF OF STAFF ASSIGNMENTS (PROMOTIONS)

a. [General.] When the position of Chief of Staff is vacant, the health care facility Director may request the temporary reassignment and promotion of a physician [ ] as Chief of Staff. These reassignments will be for a period not to exceed 1 year, and may be terminated prior to the expiration date.

b. [Submission of Requests.] Requests for temporary reassignment require approval of the [Under Secretary for Health] on recommendation of the Associate Deputy Chief Medical Director [for Clinical Programs.] Normally, these reassignments will be approved only after an employee has served in an acting capacity for at least 90 days. In exceptional circumstances, the [Under Secretary for Health] may approve a temporary reassignment when an employee has served less than 90 days in an acting capacity.

c. [Temporary Promotion.] An employee who is temporarily reassigned to a Chief of Staff position will be advanced to the Executive grade for the duration of the assignment. On expiration or termination of the assignment, the grade and salary of the employee will be adjusted in accordance with the provisions of MP-5, part II, chapter 3. In applying the provisions of chapter 3, the salary will be adjusted to the salary held previously, unless a higher rate is warranted by reason of periodic step increases. On assignment, the following statement will be placed in the "Remarks" item of the [SF 50-B,] Notification of Personnel Action: "Employee informed of conditions of temporary grade assignment." [Any request submitted under this subparagraph is also to include a request to increase the employee's special pay, if applicable.]

Authority: 38 U.S.C. [7304, 7403]

5.15 DETAILS, TEMPORARY REASSIGNMENTS, AND TEMPORARY PROMOTIONS FOR NURSES AND NURSE ANESTHETISTS

a. Details. When the position of Chief, Nursing Service, or a nurse anesthetist position at Director grade is vacant, the facility Director may detail an employee to that position as outlined in VHA Supplement, MP-5, part

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II, chapter 11. Generally, details will not exceed 90 days, and may be terminated prior to the expiration date. Under unusual circumstances, the facility Director may approve extensions of the detail in 90-day increments up to a total of 360 days.

b. Temporary Reassignments. When a nurse position at Senior grade EQA or above is vacant, the facility Director may request the temporary reassignment of an individual into the position. Such requests are to be sent to the Director, Field Support (13\_/054D) for consideration. Generally, temporary reassignments will be for a period not to exceed 1 year, and may be terminated prior to the expiration date. Under unusual circumstances, the facility Director may request extension of a temporary reassignment

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not to exceed 1 additional year for a total of up to 2 years. Normally, such temporary reassignments will be approved only after a nurse or nurse anesthetist has acted in the position for at least 90 days. In unusual circumstances, the approving official may approve a temporary reassignment when an employee has served less than 90 days in an acting capacity (e.g., when the position is expected to be vacant for an extended period). On approval of the temporary reassignment, the following statement will be placed in the "Remarks" section of the SF 50-B: "Employee informed of conditions of temporary assignment."

c. Temporary Advancements and Promotions. If an individual is temporarily reassigned to a higher grade or to an enhanced assignment under subparagraph b, the Assistant Chief Medical Director for Nursing Programs may temporarily promote or advance the individual. On expiration of the temporary promotion or advancement, the grade and/or salary of the employee will be adjusted in accordance with the provisions of MP-5, part II, chapter 3, section A, paragraph 7. The employee will be advised in writing of the conditions of the temporary promotion or assignment. In applying the provisions of chapter 3, the salary will be adjusted to the salary held previously, unless a higher step is warranted by reason of a periodic step increase or under the highest previous step rule.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. 7304, 7403]