

August 4, 2008

**CERTIFICATION OF VHA CLINICIANS TREATING
FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR (FPOW)**

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive outlines policy for the implementation of an education and certification program for designated clinician members of the Special Former Prisoners of War (FPOW) Care and Benefits Team. *NOTE: This program must be continued and accelerated to ensure new clinicians are trained and that those previously certified maintain currency.*

2. BACKGROUND

a. Since 1997, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Employee Education System (EES) has presented national workshops to address the experiences of being a captive of the enemy during any of our nation's wars with emphasis on World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. These workshops address the unique aspects of the POW experience in each war, each theater, and in different camps. Hundreds of VHA clinicians and Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) staff have attended these programs.

b. As a result of these workshops, VA Medical Centers and VA Regional Offices have developed highly effective and efficient teams dedicated to outreach and identification of FPOW, processing their disability claims, and providing them with needed clinical services.

c. The certification program for designated clinicians who care for FPOW patients is based on specified educational requirements. EES, in collaboration with VA Central Office and field experts in FPOW clinical and benefits issues, provide educational opportunities specifically designed to certify designated members of the Special FPOW Care and Benefits Teams.

d. Requirements for certification include:

(1) Designation by the facility Director as a member of the Special FPOW Care and Benefits Team,

(2) Participation in EES "FPOW Case Management Training" course, and

(3) Completion of the self study module, "Veterans Health Initiative: American Ex-Prisoners of War" found in VA's Learning Management System.

e. Special FPOW Care and Benefits Teams, based on workload requirements, generally include no more than two clinicians at a medical center.

THIS VHA DIRECTIVE EXPIRES AUGUST 31, 2013

VHA DIRECTIVE 2008-040

August 4, 2008

f. Completion of the certification process is tied to performance in efficiency of claims processing, customer satisfaction, and quality of care. In recognition of this performance, VHA physicians and other medical care providers who are certified members of the Special FPOW Care and Benefits Team may receive a one-time cash award.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that Special FPOW Care and Benefit Teams are certified at appropriate sites across the VA health care system.

4. ACTION

a. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, is responsible for establishing the FPOW Care and Benefits Oversight Group (CBOG), which includes members from EES, VHA, VBA Compensation and Pension (C&P) Division, and the FPOW Advisory Committee.

b. **FPOW CBOG.** FPOW CBOG is responsible for coordinating the certification and learning activities for the Special FPOW Care and Benefits Team.

c. **EES.** EES is responsible for:

(1) Leading the collaboration of VHA and VBA C&P staff to develop learning opportunities for Special FPOW Care and Benefits Teams.

(2) Maintaining and up-dating the Veterans Health Initiative (VHI) FPOW module "VHI: American Ex-Prisoner of War."

d. **Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director.** The VISN Director is responsible for ensuring certification of medical care providers who are members of the Special FPOW Care and Benefits Team.

e. **Facility Director.** The facility Director is responsible for:

(1) Designating medical care providers as members of the Special FPOW Care and Benefits Team,

(2) Ensuring participation tracking employees' completion of the EES "FPOW Case Management Training" Course, and

(3) Ensuring participation and tracking completion of the self-study module, "VHI: American Ex-Prisoners of War."

5. REFERENCES: "Veterans Health Initiative: American Ex-Prisoners of War," VA EES, 2001.

August 4, 2008

6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY: The Associate Chief Consultant for Mental Health Post-deployment Activities and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (116) and EES FPOW Program Manager are responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be directed to (202) 461-7364 or (205) 731-1812, extension 206.

7. RESCISSIONS: VHA Directive 2003-033 is rescinded. This VHA Directive expires on the August 31, 2013.

Michael J. Kussman, MD, MS, MACP
Under Secretary for Health

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