

VHA'S VETERAN CUSTOMER SERVICE PROGRAM

- 1. PURPOSE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive outlines the elements and provides the philosophy, expectations, requirements, and accountability for a comprehensive Veteran Customer Service Program. *NOTE: This Directive builds on and integrates these and other VHA guidance, Handbooks, and Directives to create a system-wide approach to Veteran service. Veteran Service is the process of how health care is delivered to Veterans.*
- 2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES:** This is a new issuance; however, it introduces Service Recovery (SR) as a new, unique, and vital element of a comprehensive service to the Veteran Customer Service Program.
- 3. RELATED ISSUES:** VHA Handbooks 1003.1, 1003.2, and 1003.3.
- 4. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY:** The Office of the Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Operations and Management (10N) is responsible for the content of this Directive. Questions may be referred to the Director, National Veteran Service and Advocacy Program, at 518-626-5673.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** None.
- 6. RECERTIFICATION:** This VHA Directive is scheduled for re-certification on or before the last working day of August 2008.

S/ Nevin M. Weaver for
Robert H. Roswell, M.D.
Under Secretary for Health

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VHA'S VETERAN CUSTOMER SERVICE PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE. This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive outlines the elements of and provides the philosophy, expectations, requirements, and accountability for a comprehensive Veteran Customer Service Program. It introduces Service Recovery (SR) as a new, unique and vital element of a comprehensive service program. *NOTE: This Directive builds on and integrates these and other VHA guidance, Handbooks, and Directives to create a system-wide approach to Veteran service.*

2. BACKGROUND

a. VHA is committed to providing world-class service to veterans within a patient-focused culture, and embraces the Baldrige Health Care Criteria for Performance Excellence, the Joint Commission for Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations standards and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities standards. These criteria support a planned approach to patient, family, and employee satisfaction.

b. SR is a critical process in organizations that excel in service to their customers. It identifies a service failure, effectively resolves a service problem, classifies its root cause(s), and yields data that can be integrated with other sources of performance measurement to assess and improve the service system.

c. The establishment of a comprehensive Veteran Customer Service Program is consistent with Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) strategic objectives. The foundation of the program is VHA's Veterans Health Care Service Standards.

NOTE: VHA Handbook 1003.2 has been developed to include information on various aspects of implementing a successful SR effort.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that all levels of the organization (i.e., VHA Central Office Program Offices, the Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs), VHA facilities, etc.) must implement an effective Veteran Customer Service Program.

4. ACTIONS

a. **VISN Director.** Each VISN Director is responsible for ensuring that, by January 1, 2004, a consistent and comprehensive Veteran Customer Service Program is implemented in the VISN and at each facility. The following key elements must be incorporated in the Veteran Customer Service Program and can be found in detail in Handbook 1003.1.

- (1) Leadership and infrastructure.
- (2) Communication.
- (3) SR.
- (4) Patient advocacy.
- (5) Information and analysis.

(6) Staff focus.

b. **Employees.** All employees must meet Veteran Customer Service Program expectations by providing excellent service, recovering from service failures, and improving organizational performance, whether working in direct patient care or in a support capacity.

5. REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- a. Veterans Health Care Service Standards:
<http://vaww.vsscportal.med.va.gov/PatientAdvocate/Documents/CustomerService/SvcStdsDirective.doc>. *NOTE: This is an internal VA web site not available to the public.*
- b. VHA Directive 1050.2, Patient Advocacy Program.
- c. Veteran Service and Service Recovery Commitment:
<http://vaww.va.gov/publ/direc/health/infolet/102000001.htm>. *NOTE: This is an internal VA web site not available to the public.*
- d. Veteran-Customer Service Sourcebook, produced by VISN Support Service Center (VSSC), Healthcare Analysis and Information Group (HAIG).
- e. Performance Based Interview Questions: <http://www.va.gov/pbi/PBIQuestI-III.htm>.
http://vaww.va.gov/ohrm/Staffing/PBI/PBI_Web.doc. *NOTE: This is an internal VA web site not available to the public.*