March 24, 1995

l. Transmitted is a revision to Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration manual M-2, "Clinical Programs," Part III, "Nutrition and Food Service," formerly entitled "Dietetic Service," Chapter 4, "Human Resource Management," formerly entitled "Personnel".

2. Principal changes are:

a. **Paragraph 4.01**: Describes organization with sound management principles for efficient operation.

b. **Paragraph 4.02:** Outlines effective communication within the service.

c. **Paragraph 4.03**: Describes the organizational structure for Nutrition and Food Service operations.

d. **Paragraph 4.04**: Provides references for recommended dietitian staffing levels in specific medical program areas.

e. **Paragraph 4.05**: Outlines requirements for employee education, training, and staff development programs.

f. **Paragraph 4.06**: Outlines requirements and health precautions for food handlers.

g. **Paragraph 4.07**: Establishes uniform policy and employee practices.

h. **Paragraph 4.08:** Establishes policy for patient work therapy assignments in Nutrition and Food Service areas.

i. **Paragraph 4.09:** Establishes a Nutrition and Food Service Advisory Council.

3. **Filing Instructions**

Remove pages	**Insert pages**
iii through iv	iii through iv
4-i	4-i through 4-ii
4-1 through 4-2	4-1 through 4-6

4. **RESCISSIONS:** M-2, Part III, Chapter 4, dated October 21, 1981, and VHA Directive 10-94-050.

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Under Secretary for Health

Distribution: **RPC: 1057 is assigned.**
FD

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RESCISSIONS

The following material is rescinded:

1. **Manuals**

   M-2, Part III, dated December 1, 1966, and changes 1 through 14.
   M10-4, Part II, dated September 1, 1947.
   M-2, Part II, Chapter 1, and change 1, dated March 8, 1992.
   M-2, Part III, Chapters 2, 3, and 4, dated October 21, 1981.

2. **Interim Issues**

   II 10-88-3
   II 10-87-7

3. **VHA Circulars/Directives**

   10-94-050

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RESCISSIONS

The following material is rescinded:

1. **Manuals**

   M-2, Part III, Chapter 4, dated October 21, 1981.

2. **VHA Directives**

   10-94-050

CHAPTER 4. HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

4.0l PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to ensure that good organizational planning and sound management principles are applied to maintain efficient use of human resources of Nutrition and Food Service.

4.02 POLICY

It is Veterans Health Administration (VHA) policy that Nutrition and Food Service be designed to ensure that work is planned and assigned to accomplish the mission of the service in the most effective and economical manner. Work simplification will be continuously exercised to increase efficiency and to reduce operating costs.

a. In order to maintain good working relations and a healthy management climate, employees are kept well informed, given an opportunity to contribute ideas and participate in planning. Changes in personnel policies, practices and working conditions are addressed preferably in compliance with Executive Order (E.O.)12871, Labor-Management Partnerships, or in traditional labor-management bargaining. **NOTE:** *Nutrition and Food Service regularly provides its employees with current information. One useful means of communication is the regularly scheduled conference/meeting.*

b. Nutrition and Food Service adheres to personnel administration policies in the management of program activities. The Chief, Nutrition and Food Service, must have easy access to various sections of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Personnel Manual, MP-5, Part I, which refer to specific personnel issues such as:

(l) Performance evaluation,

(2) Incentive awards,

(3) Hours of duty,

(4) Absence and leave,

(5) Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO),

(6) Employee responsibilities and conduct,

(7) Discipline and adverse actions, and

(8) Employee grievances and administrative appeals.

4.03 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

a. Organization and functional charts represent the overall staffing pattern, the operational units and their functions, as well as the lines of authority.

b. A current organization chart, reflecting the approval of local management, must be available in the Office of the Chief, Nutrition and Food Service, outlining the staffing pattern of each section and

functional unit. The organization chart serves as a guide and should have the flexibility to allow for changes in Nutrition and Food Service operations and functions.

4.04 STAFFING

a. The Chief, Nutrition and Food Service, determines the number of professional, non-professional, and clerical positions, in the appropriate occupations and grade levels, to provide essential components of nutritional care and food service to clients. VA Manual MP-5, Part I, Chapter 332, provides suggestions for employee recruitment. VHA Manual M-9, "Strategic Planning," Chapter 9, "Criteria and Standards and Program Planning Factors," identifies recommended dietitian staffing for specific medical program specialty areas. Canteen food service and/or production employees, where legally or regulatory permissible, will be a primary source of candidates for similar duty positions in Nutrition and Food Service.

b. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) position classification and job grading standards for various Nutrition and Food Service occupations are used as guides in classifying positions. The General Schedule (GS)-630 series outlines grade criteria for various dietitian positions. The Federal Wage System (FWS) job grading standards describe wage grade levels of work performed by cooks and food service workers.

c. There will be written position descriptions and performance standards for each position in Nutrition and Food Service. These identify the key tasks and requirements of the position and the functions performed.

4.05 EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

a. Nutrition and Food Service will conduct on-going training programs, formal orientations, continuous on-the-job training, and group classes, designed to maintain and improve the knowledge and skills of employees, volunteers, Incentive Therapy (IT) and other work therapy patients. **NOTE:** *Participation by Canteen Service employees is encouraged.*

b. Training subjects covered include all the topics required by the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations (JCAHO), as well as those required by VHA and local medical facilities, such as:

(1) Food safety,

(2) Sanitation, and

(3) Infection control techniques.

c. The learning objectives for staff are based on the competencies required to maintain and improve job performance, and address the knowledge, skills, and abilities appropriate to an individual's job responsibilities.

d. The effectiveness of orientation, training, and education provided is evaluated through quality assessment and improvement techniques.

e. Establishment and maintenance of clinical education activities affiliated with undergraduate and graduate educational programs, i.e., Coordinated Undergraduate Programs (CUP), and Dietetic Internships, approved pre-professional practice programs (AP-4), etc., will be conducted at approved facilities according to VA Manual M-8, Part I, Chapter 2, and M-8, Part II, Chapter 2. **NOTE:** *Adequate, qualified staff, a full range of nutrition care programs, appropriate space and*

facilities and an efficient, cost-effective food service management program are prerequisites to initiating a request for approval to provide such training programs.

4.06 EMPLOYEE HEALTH

a. Physical examinations of food handlers (employees and work therapy patients) will be accomplished according to the procedures contained in VA Manual MP-5, Part II, Chapter 792.

b. Precautions are taken by all supervisory personnel in Nutrition and Food Service to ensure that employees and work therapy patients with gastrointestinal upsets, respiratory infections (common colds) or infections of exposed skin surfaces, etc., are referred to the Employee Health Physician to determine whether the employee can safely continue to work as a food handler.

4.07 UNIFORMS AND PERSONAL APPEARANCE

a. **Personal hygiene.** Nutrition and Food Service employees and work therapy patients assigned to Nutrition and Food Service are expected to practice good personal hygiene.

b. **Uniforms.** Uniforms are worn by all dietetic personnel and work therapy patients assigned to Nutrition and Food Service. VA uniform policy as outlined in M-I, Part VII, Chapter 8, provides for the distribution of uniforms in sufficient quantity, so a clean outfit can be worn daily.

c. **Hair restraints.** Hair restraints are worn in the food production and service areas. The restraints will entirely cover the hair and effectively prevent hair from falling into the food during periods of preparation and service.

d. **Beard Covering.** If a beard, long mustache or wide sideburns are worn, they must be covered by a beard covering.

e. **Hands.** Food production and food service personnel must keep fingernails short and clean to prevent contamination of food and food surfaces.

f. **Jewelry.** Jewelry is not appropriate to wear since it can get caught in equipment, harbor bacteria, and may fall into food. Jewelry which may be permitted includes plain style wedding and engagement rings, watches, and small earrings.

g. **Shoes.** Employees must wear safe, clean, comfortable, and enclosed shoes with nonskid soles. Sandals, canvas or platform shoes, which may be a potential safety hazard, will not be permitted.

4.08 PATIENT WORK THERAPY ASSIGNMENTS

a. As prescribed by the physician, the overall treatment plan for certain work therapy patients may include assignments to specific tasks in Nutrition and Food Service. Work therapy patients are assigned to those dietetic employees who are qualified to provide effective guidance.

b. When performing duties such as cooking and serving food, the ratio of assignment will be one work therapy patient to one qualified employee. **NOTE:** *In instances of medically approved research projects, deviation from the ratio will be approved by the medical center Director, or designee.*

c. Supervised work therapy patient groups may be used in other dietetic activities.

4.09 NUTRITION AND FOOD SERVICE ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Nutrition and Food Service Advisory Council provides guidance, advice, and assistance to the Director, Nutrition and Food Service, on matters relating to policy formulation and program development. The Council is comprised of selected Chiefs of Nutrition and Food Service who act as liaison between Nutrition and Food Service Chiefs in the field and the Office of the Director, Nutrition and Food Service, VA Central Office. The Council serves at the direction of, and reports directly to the Director, Nutrition and Food Service.

a. **Composition.** The Council is composed of nine voting members, each of whom will be a Chief, Nutrition and Food Service, from a VA medical center. Council members are chosen from each representative geographic and/or regional veteran service area of VHA. A chairperson of the Council will be selected by the Director, Nutrition and Food Service.

b. **Functions.** The functions of the Council are to:

(1) Act in an advisory capacity to the Director, Nutrition and Food Service, on all matters relating to Nutrition and Food Service policy and new program development;

(2) Furnish the Director, Nutrition and Food Service, with information on issues of concern related to the operation of Nutrition and Food Service;

(3) Improve communications between the field and Nutrition and Food Service, VA Central Office; and

(4) Develop initiatives and formulate recommendations for action on issues and problems of concern to Nutrition and Food Service.

c. **Council Members**

(1) All regional council members are selected by the Director, Nutrition and Food Service, VA Central Office. Regional members will be selected from the geographic regional area which they represent, and will be replaced if they transfer out of the veteran service area.

(2) Council members are appointed to serve a 2-year term, and are eligible for additional 1-year extensions, subject to the discretion of the Director, Nutrition and Food Service, and needs of the service. Selection requires the concurrence of the respective medical center Director.

(3) Appointments are made at the beginning of the appropriate fiscal year. **NOTE:** *The Director, Nutrition and Food Service, may appoint an interim member to fill any unexpected vacancy.*

d. **Chairperson.** A Council Chairperson is selected by the Director, Nutrition and Food Service. The Chairperson will assist in the preparation of the agenda and provide coordination of projects, Council meetings, conference calls, and action plans.

e. **Council Meetings**

(1) The Council meets annually at the call of the chairperson, with the concurrence of the Director, Nutrition and Food Service, or at the call of the Director, Nutrition and Food Service.

(2) Only Council members may attend as voting members, no alternates will be designated.

f. **Council Committees**

(1) Committees chaired by Council members may be established. The Council may establish teams for specific work assignments. These will be of limited duration and require the concurrence of the Director.

(2) Committee chairpersons may recommend field personnel to serve on their committees. The final selection of committee members is made by the Director, Nutrition and Food Service, VA Central Office, with the concurrence of the respective medical center Director.

g. **Council Member Responsibilities.** The following duties and responsibilities are representative of those of a Nutrition and Food Service Advisory Council member and should be included as an addendum to the Chief, Nutrition and Food Service's position description:

(1) Performs on a regular and recurring basis, assignments (which collectively may occupy a minimum of 25 percent of the incumbent's time) which are delegated to the incumbent by Nutrition and Food Service, VA Central Office.

(2) Serves as liaison with all medical centers in their assigned geographic area.

(3) Oversees the planning and coordination of education and training programs within that geographic area, representing Nutrition and Food Service, VA Central Office.

(4) Performs Nutrition and Food Service program evaluations at other VA facilities, as assigned by Nutrition and Food Service, VA Central Office; identifying problems and recommending solutions.

(5) Conducts special studies and surveys in the respective geographic area, or on a nationwide basis as assigned.

(6) Provides advice and assistance to VHA and Nutrition and Food Service in identifying problems and recommending solutions.

(7) Provides advice and assistance to Nutrition and Food Service Chiefs within the geographic area on the completion of VA Central Office demonstration projects and in the preparation for JCAHO, the Inspector General (IG), and the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) evaluations.

(8) Represents VA Central Office at national meetings within the geographic area as assigned by VA Central Office.

(9) Serves as advisor to VA facilities within the geographic area in identifying solutions to special program needs at facilities.

(10) Serves as preceptor of VA Nutrition and Food Service Mentor Program for the geographic area at the discretion of the Director, Nutrition and Food Service.

(11) Attends special meetings called by Nutrition and Food Service, VA Central Office, to assist in program development projects and leading task groups. This includes:

(a) Assigning projects to members of the group,

(b) Overseeing completion of the project, and

(c) Analyzing, evaluating, revising and submitting in final form to Nutrition and Food Service, VA Central Office, proposals for changes in policy and procedures and development of goals and objectives.

(12) Submits, individually, in final form, proposals for changes in policy and procedures, as assigned.