

**READJUSTMENT COUNSELING SERVICE (RCS)
VET CENTER PROGRAM**

- 1. PURPOSE.** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive defines policy for the provision of readjustment counseling to eligible Veterans and for the administration of the Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS) as an organizational element within VHA.
- 2. MAJOR CHANGES.** This is a new Directive establishing VHA policy.
- 3. RELATED ISSUES.** VHA Handbook 1500.01.
- 4. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILIY.** The Office of the Chief Readjustment Counseling Officer (15) is responsible for the content of this Directive. Questions may be directed to (202) 461-6525.
- 5. RESCISSIONS.** None.
- 6. RECERTIFICATION.** This VHA Directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of September 2015.

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READJUSTMENT COUNSELING SERVICE (RCS) VET CENTER PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive defines policy for the provision of readjustment counseling to eligible Veterans and for the administration of the Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS) as an organizational element within VHA.

2. BACKGROUND: The Vet Center Program is recognized as the first program designed to address the psychological and social sequelae of combat related problems, before the recognition of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder by the American Psychiatric Association in 1980. Authority for readjustment counseling originates from Public Law 96-22 and subsequent legislation amending the eligibility for readjustment counseling services. Current law authorizing readjustment counseling is contained in title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.), § 1712A. Under current law, eligibility for Vet Center services includes any Veteran who served in a combat theater of operations, and Veterans who served in an area of hostilities. VA is drafting the regulations required to implement this authority.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy to provide readjustment counseling to eligible Veterans requesting services for psychological trauma and/or other psychosocial readjustment problems stemming from their military service in a combat theater of operations, or in an area of armed hostilities. Pursuant to Public Law 111-163, § 401, eligibility for readjustment counseling under 38 U.S.C. § 1712A is extended to any member of the active military armed forces, including a member of the Federally-activated National Guard or Reserve, who serves on active duty in Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi freedom.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, is responsible for administration of the:

(1) National Vet Center Program that serves Veterans and their families by providing quality care that adds value for Veterans, families and communities. Care includes professional readjustment counseling, community education, outreach to special populations, the brokering of services with community agencies, and provides a key access link between the Veteran and other services in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

(2) RCS as an organizational element within VHA having direct line authority for administering the Vet Center Program and the provision of readjustment counseling.

b. **Chief Officer, RCS.** The Chief Officer, RCS, is responsible for formulating Vet Center Program policy and providing direct line supervision, through the seven RCS Regional Managers, for all clinical and administrative functions of the community-based Vet Centers. The Chief Officer, RCS, reports to the Principle Deputy Under Secretary for Health in VA Central Office, and functions as the steward for the Vet Center Program through strategic planning activities with senior level VA officials and ensures the appropriate coordination of readjustment

counseling services with other VA service functions. The Chief Officer, RCS, serves as the primary policy expert for the Veterans Health Administration on combat trauma and readjustment counseling issues.

c. **RCS Regional Manager.** Each RCS Regional Manager is responsible for supervising the day-to-day fiscal, human resources, and clinical service delivery functions for the Vet Centers in their respective geographical areas. The RCS Regional Manager is the first-line supervisor for the Vet Center Team Leaders (TLs) and the second-level supervisors for the other subordinate Vet Center staff.

d. **Vet Center TLs.** Vet Center TLs are responsible for:

(1) Planning and executing the day-to-day fiscal, human resources, and direct service delivery operations for their respective Vet Centers;

(2) Hiring staff; and

(3) First-line supervision of subordinate team members.

5. **REFERENCES:** Title 38 U.S.C., § 1712A.

6. DEFINITIONS

a. **Vet Center.** VA Vet Centers are the service delivery sites for readjustment counseling. Vet Centers are community-based facilities, located outside of the larger VA medical facilities, in easily accessible locations. Vet Centers are relatively small service units staffed by multidisciplinary teams.

b. **Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS).** The RCS is an organizational element within VHA having direct line responsibility for the Vet Centers and the provision of readjustment counseling.