

## STAFFING

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for the occupation of Recreation Assistant (Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor), GS-0189, appointed under the authority of 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3), Appointments in Veterans Health Administration and 38 U.S.C. § 7405 (a)(1)(B), Temporary full-time appointments, part-time appointments and without-compensation appointments.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This handbook contains mandatory procedures on staffing. This establishes the Recreation Assistant (Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor) occupation under VA's title 38 hybrid excepted service employment system in accordance with the authority established under P.L. 111-163, Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010. The Secretary of Veterans Affairs has authority under 38 U.S.C. § 7402 to prescribe qualifications for occupations identified in or established under 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3), Appointments in Veterans Health Administration and 38 U.S.C. § 7405(a)(1)(B), Temporary full-time appointments, part-time appointments and without-compensation appointments. The new standard is effective on the date of this publication. This qualification standard will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, that is maintained on the [Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer website](#) and [VA Publications website](#).
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of Human Resources and Administration/ Operations, Security and Preparedness (006), Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (05), Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059).
- 4. RELATED DIRECTIVES:** VA Directive 5005, Staffing, dated April 15, 2002.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** Not applicable.

**CERTIFIED BY:**

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY  
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/  
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**DISTRIBUTION:** Electronic only

**NOTE:** This transmittal page accompanied the former VA Handbook 5005, Staffing publication. It is provided for reference to the establishment of this qualification standard.

**RECREATION ASSISTANT (TAI CHI/QIGONG INSTRUCTOR)**  
**QUALIFICATION STANDARD**  
**GS-0189**

**Veterans Health Administration**

1. **COVERAGE.** The following are the requirements for appointment as a Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). The Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor is responsible for conducting tai chi/qigong well-being classes (in-person or virtually), either for groups or individuals, to promote, preserve, or restore health and well-being. These requirements apply to all VHA Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors in the GS-0189 series.
2. **AUTHORITIES.**
  - a. [P.L. 111-163, Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010;](#)
  - b. [38 U.S.C. § 7401, Appointments in Veterans Health Administration;](#)
  - c. [38 U.S.C. § 7402, Qualifications of appointees;](#)
  - d. [38 U.S.C. § 7403, Period of appointments; promotions;](#)
  - e. [38 U.S.C. § 7405, Temporary full-time appointments, part-time appointments and without-compensation appointments;](#) and
  - f. [38 U.S.C. § 7407, Administrative provisions for section 7405 and 7406 appointments.](#)
3. **DEFINITIONS.**
  - a. **Appointing Official.** The Human Resources (HR) Officer is delegated appointing authority to process and authenticate notifications of personnel actions and authority to effect management-approved employment actions on behalf of officials, employees and facilities for which service is provided.
  - b. **Approving Official.** The Veterans Integrated Service Network Director, Facility Director, or Under Secretary for Health or designee (for VHA central office appointments) is the approving official and determines whether to approve or disapprove the appointment of employees in the hybrid occupations.
  - c. **Experience.**
    - (1) **Creditable Experience.** To be creditable, the experience must have required knowledge, skills and abilities associated with current professional Tai

Chi/Qigong Instructor practice. Experience satisfying this requirement may be paid or non-paid employment as a Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor.

**(2) Part-Time Experience.** Part-time experience is creditable according to its relationship to a full-time workweek. For example, an individual employed 20 hours per week or on a half-time basis would receive one full-time work week of credit for each 2 weeks of service.

**(3) Quality of Experience.** Qualifying experience must be comparable to Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor experience at the next lower grade level of the position being filled. For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, administrative independence, complexity and range of variety as described in this standard at the specified grade level and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time.

**4. BASIC REQUIREMENTS.** To qualify for appointment to this position, all applicants must possess the following:

- a. **Citizenship.** Be a citizen of the United States. Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified citizens in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 7407(a).
- b. **Experience/Supervised Practice.** Applicants must have a minimum of 50 hours of supervised tai chi or qigong instruction.
- c. **Education.** The individual must have accumulated a minimum of 150 hours of formal Tai Chi or Qigong Instructor education. The 150-hour requirement may include the 50 hours of supervised instruction under 4(b) and any time spent in a formal educational program leading to certification under 4(d).
- d. **Certification.** Candidates must be currently certified to provide tai chi or qigong instruction. Acceptable certifications must have required successful completion of a minimum 30-hour tai chi or qigong instruction program.

**(1) Exception for Non-Certified/Non-Registered Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors.**

- (a) Non-certified applicants who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for certification may be temporarily appointed as a Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor under the authority of [38 U.S.C. § 7405\(c\)\(2\)](#).
- (b) Non-certified individuals shall only provide care under the supervision of a certified Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor at or above the full performance level.
- (c) Non-certified individuals may only be appointed at the entry-level and may not be promoted/converted until certification is obtained.

(d) Temporary appointments of non-certified Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors may not be extended beyond 2 years or converted to a new temporary appointment.

**(2) Failure to Obtain Certification/Registration.** In all cases, Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors must actively pursue meeting requirements for certification starting from the date of their appointment. At the time of appointment, the Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor supervisor provides the Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor with the written requirements for certification/registration, including the time the certification/registration must be obtained and the consequences for not becoming certified by the deadline. Failure to obtain certification/registration during this period may result in termination of employment.

**(3) Loss of Credential.** In collaboration with HR staff, management officials must immediately relieve employees of the duties and responsibilities associated with this occupation who fail to maintain the required certification/registration, which may also result in separation from employment.

e. **Grandfathering Provision.** All individuals employed in VHA in this occupational series or in another occupational series performing the duties described in the qualification standard on the effective date of the qualification standard are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the grade held, including education and registration/certification. For employees who do not meet all the basic requirements required in this standard but who met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed to it, the following provisions apply:

**(1)** Employees may be reassigned, promoted up to and including the full performance (journey) level, or changed to a lower grade within the occupation but may not be promoted beyond the journeyman level or placed in supervisory or managerial positions.

**(2)** Employees in an occupation requiring a certification/registration only at higher grade levels must meet the certification/registration requirement before being promoted to those higher grade levels.

**(3)** Employees appointed temporarily prior to the effective date of the qualification standard may not have their temporary appointment extended or be reappointed, on a temporary or permanent basis until they fully meet the basic requirements of the standard.

**(4)** Employees who are converted to title 38 hybrid status under this provision and subsequently leave the occupation lose protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of re-entry to the occupation.

(5) Employees initially grandfathered into this occupation who subsequently obtain additional education and/or certification/registration that meet all the basic requirements of this qualification standard must maintain the required credentials as a condition of employment.

f. **Physical Requirements.** See [VA Directive and Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service](#) for requirements.

g. **English Language Proficiency.** Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor candidates must be proficient in spoken and written English in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 7403(f).

**5. OFFICIAL POSITION TITLES.** All official documents relating to a position (e.g., functional statements and personnel actions) must use the approved official title and grade level as described below. HR Offices use the Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor organizational title for recruitment purposes in the job opportunity announcement. See VA Handbook 5003, Part I, for information on the use of official titles and organizational titles.

a. Recreation Assistant (Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor), GS-04.

b. Recreation Assistant (Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor), GS-05.

c. Recreation Assistant (Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor), GS-06.

d. Recreation Assistant (Advanced Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor), GS-07.

e. Lead Recreation Assistant (Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor), GS-07.

f. Supervisory Recreation Assistant (Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor), GS-08.

**6. GRADE DETERMINATIONS.** In addition to the basic requirements outlined in paragraph 4., the following criteria must be met when determining the grade of candidates.

a. **Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor, GS-04.**

(1) **Experience.** None beyond the basic requirements.

(2) **Assignment.** Employees at this grade level serve in a Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor entry-level position. Under close supervision, employees at this grade perform basic tai chi/qigong instruction. Deviations from regular procedures, unanticipated problems and unfamiliar situations are referred to the supervisor for a decision or assistance. Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors at this level instruct participants on the foundational guidelines of tai chi/qigong (basic principles of Chinese medicine, including the theoretical background of internal Qi trajectories, primary meridians, Qi cultivation principles and utilization of the Dantians) focusing on relieving pain, stress,

poor circulation and enhancing strength, flexibility, balance and cardiovascular health. They are responsible for communicating effectively with class participants (knowing participants' names, motivating participants, answering questions, use tact when addressing concerns and problems) to inspire a fun, enjoyable and positive environment while fostering wellness and engagement. Any unusual patient interactions are noted and immediately reported to the supervisor. Some assignments at this level include developmental duties involving more progressive instruction designed to prepare the Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor for promotion to higher grades. Such duties would be performed under close supervision.

**b. Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor, GS-05.**

- (1) **Experience.** One year of creditable experience is equivalent to the next lower grade.
- (2) **Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate the following KSAs:
  - (a) Knowledge of anatomy, physiology and pathology relevant to tai chi/qigong.
  - (b) Knowledge of the therapeutic effects and evidence-based practice of tai chi/qigong.
  - (c) Ability to work on a team.
  - (d) Ability to complete a non-clinical assessment of a patient's physical and mental status (including history and physical assessment) and interpret the appropriate information to identify each patient's needs.
  - (e) Ability to effectively communicate in writing through a variety of modalities.
- (3) **Assignment.** Employees at this grade level serve as developmental Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors. They are responsible for instructing patients using verbal, kinaesthetic, or visual cues in a full range of tai chi/qigong techniques and exercises that use breathing, posture, meditation/relaxation, imagery and movement, along with focused awareness, attention and intention to stimulate the sensations of Qi (energy) to facilitate in-class/formal and home practice or virtual sessions. At this level, Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors may need to adapt Tai Chi/Qigong protocols (using walking, seated, wheelchair, etc. and/or the safe use of tai chi/qigong equipment) to match patient physical and mental abilities to enable and accelerate maximum health benefits. This requires communicating potential contraindications for every pose and practice. Tai

Chi/Qigong Instructors must discuss potential limitations with the patient and/or caregiver and collaborate with pertinent health care providers regarding the participant's ability to practice tai chi and/or qigong. They independently complete necessary patient documentation in the medical record to include date and time of class, attendance, resources provided to the patient, course description, precautions, clinically relevant outcomes, etc. Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors are closely supervised at this level and their supervisor monitors their competency in progressively complex tasks.

**c. Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor, GS-06.**

- (1) Experience.** One year of creditable experience is equivalent to the next lower grade.
- (2) Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate the following KSAs:
  - (a) Skill in providing and modifying tai chi (e.g., seated tai chi, bedside instruction, etc.) and/or qigong as part of the complementary and integrative health approaches to meet the needs of individuals of all abilities.
  - (b) Skill in applying tai chi/qigong modalities to patients with physical or psycho-social challenges.
  - (c) Skill in developing marketing tools (flyers, advertisements, web invites, etc.).
  - (d) Ability to develop a calendar or schedule of classes for participants.
  - (e) Ability to assess inventory for the purposes of developing a budget and ordering supplies.
- (3) Assignment.** Employees at this grade level serve as full performance level Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors. At the full performance level, Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors are responsible for independently conducting tai chi and qigong well-being classes. Duties that are performed are generally at a higher complexity than those performed at the developmental level. Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors develop and share educational information, including written instruction for 'at home' and 'self-care' practices, with class participants. They prepare and set up tai chi and/or qigong equipment to support scheduled events and activities, ensuring that class areas are clean, safe and set according to procedures. They are responsible for planning and coordinating the details of tai chi/qigong activities with other staff members to make maximum use of facilities, services and other resources (for example, maintaining a calendar of

events). Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors conduct regular inventories and ensure that all supply and equipment requirements are identified/justified and requested through proper channels and that any equipment/facility problems are reported to the management team. At this level, Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors develop promotional material based on current research that informs health care providers and patients about the benefits of tai chi and/or qigong to encourage participation. They are also responsible for identifying and sharing with patients the tai chi and/or qigong resources available in the local community. Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors mentor Tai Chi and/or Qigong Instructor trainees and new employees. They effectively communicate to leadership issues surrounding tai chi and/or qigong and discuss program progress related to utilization, patient outcomes, satisfaction, etc. Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors evaluate the effectiveness of ongoing tai chi/qigong programs from participant response, resources, unforeseen developments and program objectives to develop best practices. Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors perform these duties with limited supervision and seek assistance from the supervisor only in urgent or emergent circumstances.

**d. Advanced Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor, GS-07.**

- (1) Experience.** One year of creditable experience is equivalent to the next lower grade.
- (2) Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to meeting the experience or educational requirements for this grade level, the candidate must fully demonstrate the following KSAs:
  - (a) Skill in reviewing and monitoring data to ensure all records and reports are complete and accurate.
  - (b) Ability to apply tai chi/qigong principles and techniques to effectively address a wide variety of highly complex patient conditions.
  - (c) Knowledge of data analysis strategies used to optimize quality, efficiency, performance and productivity.
  - (d) Ability to develop tai chi/qigong course curriculum and associated education materials.
- (3) Assignment.** Employees at this grade level serve as advanced-level Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors. For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty) and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors practicing at this level serve as subject matter experts concerning tai chi/qigong principles and their



application to address a wide variety of complex patient conditions. They collaborate with and inform/educate other medical staff on the appropriate tai chi/qigong referral for patients with complex health conditions. They create standards and protocols for tai chi and/or qigong teachers. Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors develop curriculum for full-length courses in well-established fundamentals of tai chi/qigong to include the development of toolkits, videos, manuals and online training programs, taking into account the Veteran's needs and available resources. They evaluate the effectiveness of ongoing tai chi/qigong programs from the standpoint of participant response, resources, unforeseen developments and program objectives to develop best practices. They effectively communicate to leadership issues surrounding tai chi and/or qigong and discuss program progress related to utilization, patient outcomes, satisfaction, etc.

**e. Lead Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor, GS-07.**

- (1) Experience.** One year of creditable experience equivalent to the next lower grade.
- (2) Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to meeting the experience or educational requirements for this grade level, the candidate must fully demonstrate the following KSAs:
  - (a) Ability to assign, coordinate and oversee Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor daily duties, tasks and other responsibilities as appropriate.
  - (b) Ability to provide and/or monitor staff education and training activities, including interdisciplinary training, as necessary.
  - (c) Skill in addressing and effectively resolving patient complaints and/or concerns.
  - (d) Ability to develop and train Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors to ensure competency in the performance of tai chi and/or qigong-related duties, activities and tasks.
- (3) Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty) and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Lead Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors monitor workload, provide input on performance, resolve daily workplace issues and maintain efficient workflow. Duties performed at this level include but are not limited to ensuring coverage of all areas of responsibility; conducting clinical reviews to assess the quality of work; providing input to staff that includes changes in policies and procedures; creating and maintaining employee work schedules; orienting and providing on-the-job training for new and current

Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors; and ensuring all training requirements are met. Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors review and analyze aggregate patient care data to ensure safety and quality of care.

**f. Supervisory Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor, GS-08.**

- (1) Experience.** One year of creditable experience is equivalent to the next lower grade.
- (2) Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to meeting the experience or educational requirements for this grade level, the candidate must fully demonstrate the following KSAs:
  - (a) Knowledge of the principles and practices of tai chi/qigong for treating complex cases in clinical settings to develop, implement and coordinate best practices and supervise Tai Chi/Qigong Instructor staff.
  - (b) Knowledge of interdisciplinary issues and organizational structure to serve as a liaison between Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors and other programs that would affect coordination of care, health care access, program evaluation, assessment and planning for future needs.
  - (c) Interpersonal relations and conflict resolution skills, effectively communicating with employees, team leaders and managers.
  - (d) Ability to perform the full range of supervisory duties, including responsibility for assignment of work to be performed, competency assessments, performance evaluations, selection of staff and recommendation of awards, advancements and when appropriate, disciplinary actions.
- (3) Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty) and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Supervisory Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors are responsible for supervising, administering and directing Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors and other subordinate staff. Supervisory Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors have full administrative and professional responsibility for planning and directing the activities for the service or equivalent unit. Typical duties include making work assignments, monitoring the staff's performance, conducting performance appraisals and other clinical and administrative responsibilities, as assigned, to ensure that the mission of the service and the medical center has been satisfied. Supervisory Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors develop policies and procedures for the work unit and contribute to promoting tai chi/qigong and other whole health services. Supervisory

Tai Chi/Qigong Instructors are responsible for reviewing aggregate patient care data and taking appropriate actions to ensure the safety, efficiency and quality of care. They work independently when addressing a variety of tai chi and/or qigong-related administrative problems or situations and develop program plans using supporting data to provide input to higher-level annual budget requirements and overall program objectives.

## **7. DEVIATIONS.**

- a. An approving official may, under unusual circumstances, approve reasonable deviations to the grade determination requirements for an employee whose composite record of accomplishments, performance and qualifications, as well as current assignment, warrants such action based on demonstrated competence to meet the requirements of the proposed grade and/or assignment.
- b. Prior to the placement in the position, the Under Secretary for Health must approve the placement of individuals in grade levels or assignments not described in this standard.
- c. Under no circumstances will the educational or credential requirement be waived for those occupations with a positive education requirement or when specific credentials are identified as necessary to meet minimum requirements unless an exception is annotated in the qualification standard.]

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Human Resources and Administration/Operations, Security and Preparedness (HRA/OSP) (006), Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) (05), Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059)