

STAFFING

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** To revise the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT), GS-0640, appointed 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.
2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This handbook contains mandatory procedures on staffing. The pages in this handbook replaces the existing Certified Respiratory Therapists qualification standard in VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Appendix G10, in its entirety. The new standard is effective on the date of publication. These changes 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 the [VA Publications website](#). Significant changes include:
 - a. Applies this standard to staff currently on Veterans Health Administration (VHA) rolls as a CRT, GS-0640 as of the date of this revised qualification standard. Positions as a CRT, GS-0640 will no longer be permitted within VA/VHA.
 - b. Clarifies CRT duties and responsibilities.
 - c. Clarifies knowledge, skills and abilities for each assignment.
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer, Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059).
4. **RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VA Directive 5005, Staffing.
5. **RESCISSIONS:** VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Appendix G10, dated April 15, 2002.

CERTIFIED BY:

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

/s/
John P. Medve
Acting Assistant Secretary
for Enterprise Integration

/s/
Paula Molloy, Ph.D.,
Assistant Secretary for Human
Resources and Administration/
Operations, Security and Preparedness

DISTRIBUTION: Electronic Only

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

FORMER VA HANDBOOK REFERENCE: PART II APPENDIX G10
EFFECTIVE DATE: March 12, 2021

**CERTIFIED RESPIRATORY THERAPIST
QUALIFICATION STANDARD
GS-0640**

Veterans Health Administration (VHA)

1. **COVERAGE.** The following are the requirements for Certified Respiratory Therapists (CRT), GS-0640, [] who are employed in VHA as of the date of this publication and who perform [] technical work administering respiratory care and life support to patients with cardiopulmonary deficiencies and abnormalities.
 - a. [As of the date of this qualification standard, new appointments or reassignments to this standard are prohibited. Employees currently employed in VHA as CRTs will remain CRTs in the GS-0640 occupational series and perform the duties defined in this qualification standard, unless “registration” credential is received. See Registered Respiratory Therapist qualification standard.]
 - b. 38 U.S.C. Chapters 73 and 74 refer to “certified or registered respiratory therapists.” Since the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC), the certifying body for respiratory therapists, distinguishes between “certified respiratory therapist” and “registered respiratory therapists,” VA is adopting “certified respiratory therapist” titling for this qualification standard.
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;](#)
 - f. [38 U.S.C. § 7407, Administrative provisions for section 7405 and 7406 appointments.](#)
3. **[BACKGROUND.** P.L. 98-160, The Veterans’ Health Care Amendments of 1983. authorized full-time, permanent CRT appointments under the authority of 38 U.S.C. § 4104(3). Information and guidance on converting from title 5 to hybrid title 38 was provided in Circular 00-85-9, Employment of Certified or Registered Respiratory Therapist, Licensed Physical Therapist and Licensed Practical or

Vocational Nurses under 38 U.S.C. Chapter 73, dated March 12, 1985 with amendments issued in 1987 and 1988 and supplemental circulars issued. A supplemental circular issued on April 26, 1988 provided notification that Respiratory Therapists would no longer be hired under title 5 and implemented the requirement for therapists to be certified and/or registered. As a result, respiratory therapists are no longer hired under the GS-0651 series since that series does not include the requirement to be certified or registered. The circulars and supplements provided guidance and processes for converting employees who provided evidence of certification and/or registration.]

4. DEFINITIONS.

- a. **Journey Level.** The full performance level for this qualification standard is the GS-07 grade level.
- b. **Creditable Experience.** Experience is only creditable if credentialed as a CRT and the experience is in respiratory care and directly related to the position being filled. To be creditable, the candidate's experience must demonstrate the use of knowledge, skills and abilities associated with current practice in paid employment as a CRT.
- c. **Part-Time Experience.** Part-time experience is credited according to the relationship it bears to the full-time workweek (e.g., a CRT who worked 20 hours a week would receive one full-time workweek of credit for each two weeks of service).
- d. **Clinical Supervision.** Clinical supervision is between a credentialed and non-credentialed clinician or trainee in which the clinical work is reviewed and reflected upon with the aims of improving her/his work with clients, ensuring client welfare and supporting his/her work and professional development. This includes co-signing clinical notes and supervising an individual as she/he are working towards his/her credential.
- e. **National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC).** NBRC is the credentialing body to vet and administer tests and awards the credentials to become a CRT and Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT).
- f. **Certified Respiratory Therapist (CRT).** Upon graduation from an accredited program, Respiratory Therapists are eligible to take a national examination and, upon passing, are granted the CRT credential by the NBRC. CRTs are limited in duties and responsibilities and differ from those who hold an RRT credential.]

5. BASIC REQUIREMENTS.

- a. **Citizenship.** Individuals must be a citizen of the United States. Noncitizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified citizens in accordance with Chapter 3, Section A, paragraph 3g of this part. See 38 U.S.C. § 7407(a) for more information.

b. Certification. Individuals must hold a certificate as a CRT by the NBRC or a certificate from another body which the NBRC recognizes as its credentialing equivalent. This includes certification based on either:

(1) [Successfully completing a 2-year degree in respiratory care];

OR

(2) Holding a certificate as a respiratory therapist [] based on passing an entrance examination administered by the NBRC. []

c. Physical Requirements. See VA Directive and Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service for requirements.

d. English Language Proficiency. CRTs appointed to direct patient-care positions must be proficient in spoken and written English as required by 38 U.S.C. § 7403(f).

6. GRANDFATHERING PROVISIONS. There are no grandfathering provisions under this qualification standard.

7. GRADE REQUIREMENTS. In addition to meeting the basic requirements stated in paragraph 4, the following qualifications criteria must be met to determine the grade assignments.

a. Certified Respiratory Therapist, GS-05.

(1) **Education, Licensure and Experience.** None beyond the basic requirements.

(2) **[Assignments.** This is the developmental entry level position for this qualification standard. CRTs at this level perform basic therapeutic modalities in all areas of respiratory care environment under close clinical supervision by an RRT at the full performance level or higher. They deliver medication related to respiratory care; initiate and monitor oxygen therapy and assist with cardiopulmonary resuscitation, suctioning of artificial airway. They evaluate and perform aerosol humidification therapy. CRTs participate in care team rounds.]

b. Certified Respiratory Therapist, GS-06.

(1) **Education, Licensure and Experience.** Candidates must have successfully completed one of the following:

(a) A minimum two years accredited educational program of study in respiratory care;

OR

(b) At least one year of experience comparable to [] the GS-05 grade level in

respiratory care.

(2) [Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities. In addition to the requirements above, the candidate must demonstrate all the following KSAs:

- (a) Knowledge of commonly used respiratory equipment, procedures and techniques.
- (b) Knowledge of basic medical sciences and how they relate to the respiratory and cardiovascular systems.
- (c) Skill in the assessment of oxygenation.
- (d) Ability to perform basic therapeutic modalities related to respiratory care.
- (e) Ability to collaboratively consult with physicians and other healthcare professionals for respiratory care to help provide favorable patient outcomes.]

(3) Assignment. CRTs at this developmental grade level perform basic therapeutic modalities in all areas of respiratory care environment under close clinical supervision by an RRT at the full performance level or higher. They deliver medication related to respiratory care. They initiate and monitor oxygen therapy. CRTs assist with cardiopulmonary resuscitation and suctioning of artificial airway. They evaluate and perform aerosol humidification therapy. CRTs participate in care team rounds.

c. Certified Respiratory Therapist, GS-07.

(1) Education, License and Experience. Candidates must have successfully completed at least one of the following:

- (a) A four years or more accredited program of study leading to a bachelors or higher degree in respiratory care;

OR

- (b) At least one year of experience comparable to [] the GS-06 grade level in respiratory care.

(2) [Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities. In addition to the requirements above, the candidate must demonstrate all the following KSAs:

- (a) Knowledge of the full range of equipment, procedures and techniques used in respiratory care including the operating characteristics, capabilities and limitations of the complex equipment and anatomy, and physiology of the respiratory system.
- (b) Skill in collaboratively consulting with physicians and other healthcare

professionals for respiratory care to help provide favorable patient outcomes.

(c) Skill in management of oxygenation.

(d) Ability to perform therapeutic modalities related to respiratory care.

(3) Assignment. This assignment is the full performance level for CRTs. CRTs at this grade level are responsible for the majority of the following, dependent on facility structure and facility complexity level, with minimal supervision from an RRT at the full performance level in both inpatient and/or outpatient. CRTs complete patient assessment through direct contact, chart review and other means, as appropriate, and share the information with health care team members. They place nasal and oropharyngeal airway; perform nasal and tracheal suctioning; and assist in placing artificial airways into patient's trachea. They perform duties in the critical area with close clinical supervision to include in-line suctioning, re-positioning and securing Endo Tracheal tube, Bag Valve Mask ventilation and assisting in patient transport and performing patient ventilator assessment. CRTs provide outpatient services such as positive airway pressure therapy and oxygen therapy.]

8. DEVIATIONS. There are no deviations under this 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)