

STAFFING

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical), GS-0640, appointed under 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3) and 38 U.S.C. § 7405(a)(1)(B).
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This handbook contains mandatory procedures on staffing. This revision establishes the Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical) occupation under VA's Title 38 Hybrid excepted service employment system in accordance with the authority established under the "Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010" (Public Law 111-163). Authority is given to the Secretary of the VA under 38 U.S.C. § 7402 to prescribe qualifications for occupations identified in or established under 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3) and 38 U.S.C. § 7405(a)(1)(B). The new standards are effective on the date of this publication, however no action may be taken to convert or promote employees until training and guidance is received. This new qualification standard will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005 that is maintained on the Office of Human Resources Management Web site.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management.
- 4. RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VA Directive 5005, Staffing.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** None.

CERTIFIED BY:

/s/
Melissa S. Glynn,
Ph.D Assistant
Secretary for
Enterprise
Integration

BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:

/s/
Peter J. Shelby
Assistant Secretary for
Human Resources and
Administration

ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTION 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.

VA FORMER HANDBOOK REFERENCE: PART II APPENDIX G50
EFFECTIVE DATE: February 7, 2018

**HEALTH TECHNICIAN (TELEHEALTH CLINICAL)
QUALIFICATION STANDARD
GS-0640
Veterans Health Administration**

1. COVERAGE. The following are requirements for appointment of a Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical) in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). These requirements apply to all VHA Health Technicians (Telehealth Clinical) in the General Schedule (GS)-0640 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;](#)
- f. [38 U.S.C. § 7407, Administrative provisions for section 7405 and 7406 appointments.](#)

3. DEFINITIONS

a. **Appointing Official.** The Human Resources Management 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 (VISN) Director, Facility Director, or designee is the approving official and will determine whether to approve or disapprove the appointment of employees in the hybrid occupations.

c. **Journey Level.** The full performance level for this qualification standard is at the GS-6 grade level.

d. **Creditable Experience.** Candidates need to have knowledge of current Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical) Practice. To be creditable, experience must demonstrate the

knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) associated with a health care field or knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the current occupation. Experience satisfying this requirement may be paid or non-paid employment in the health care field.

e. **Quality of Experience.** Qualifying experience must be at a level comparable to the Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical) 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 (difficulty) 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.

f. **Part-Time Experience.** Part-time experience is creditable according to its relationship to the full-time work week. For example, one week of full-time credit is equivalent to two weeks of part-time work.

4. BASIC REQUIREMENTS

a. **Citizenship.** Citizen of the United States. After a determination is made that it is not possible to recruit qualified citizens, non-citizen personnel may be appointed on a temporary basis under authority of 38 U.S.C. 7405, without regard to the citizenship requirements of 38 U.S.C. 7402 or any other law prohibiting the employment of or payment of compensation to a person who is not a citizen of the United States. Candidates must meet all other requirements for the grade and position concerned.

b. **Experience and Education.**

(1) **Experience.** One year of experience in a health care field that demonstrates the applicant's ability to perform the work or provides an understanding of the work such as but not limited to a medical or clinical assistant (or technician) or health technician.

OR

(2) **Education.** Four academic years above high school leading to a bachelor's degree with courses related to the occupation.

OR

(3) **Experience/Education Combination.** Equivalent combination of experience and education are qualifying for entry level for which both education and experience are acceptable. Examples are listed below:

(a) Six months of experience in the health care field and two years of education above high school that included at least six semester hours in health care related courses such as, biological science, surgical technician courses, nursing assistant or other courses related to the position; or an associate's degree in a health care related field; or

(b) Six months of experience in the health care field and successful completion of a course for health care technicians, hospital corpsmen, or medical service specialists given by the U.S. Armed Forces.

c. **Certification.** None

d. **Grandfathering Provision.** All Health Technicians (Telehealth Clinical) employed in VHA in this occupation on the effective date of this qualification standard are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the title, series, and grade held. 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) Such employees may be reassigned, promoted up to and including the full performance (journeyman) level, or changed to lower grade within the occupation, but may not be promoted beyond the journeyman level or placed in supervisory or managerial positions.

(2) Employees who are appointed on a temporary basis 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.

(3) If an employee who was retained (grandfathered) under this provision leaves that occupation, the employee loses protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of re-entry to the occupation.

e. **Physical Requirements.** See VA Directive and Handbook 5019.

f. **English Language Proficiency.** A candidate will not be appointed under authority of 38 U.S.C. chapters 73 or 74, to serve in a direct patient-care capacity in VHA who is not proficient in written and spoken English. See chapter 2, section D, paragraph 5a, this part.

5. GRADE DETERMINATIONS. In addition to the basic requirements for employment, the following criteria must be met when determining the grade of candidates.

a. **Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical), GS-5 (Entry Level)**

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

(2) **Assignment.** This is an entry level Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical) position. It is expected that the Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical) receive guidance from more experienced staff members and require frequent and direct supervision. Assignments associated with this position include, but are not limited to, schedule telehealth appointments using an electronic scheduling system; obtain and document patient history and pertinent clinical information in electronic medical records; prepares the telehealth room where the

Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical) readies the equipment for examination, establishes video conferencing connection, makes introductions between patient site and provider site; monitors and maintains electronic schedule of rooms, patients, technologies, and presenters; administers the patient satisfaction survey; cleans and performs minor routine maintenance of assigned telehealth technology.

b. Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical), GS-6 (Full Performance Level)

- (1) **Experience.** One year of experience equivalent to the next lower grade level
- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA).** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs.
 - (a) Comprehensive knowledge of computer systems and programs to perform a variety of tasks.
 - (b) Ability to communicate, consult, and interact with other members of the healthcare team, external relations, customer service and patient education.
 - (c) Ability to provide and receive guidance and technical direction.
 - (d) Ability to plan, organize, set priorities, work as a team member, and effectively complete assignments.
 - (e) Ability to read, interpret, and apply complex written instructions.
 - (f) Knowledge of general clinical policies and procedures in a healthcare environment.
 - (g) Skilled in the use of telehealth technologies for the facilitation of telehealth clinical encounters.
- (3) **Assignment.** This is considered the full performance level for this assignment. The Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical) performs a full range of duties and is responsible for day-to-day operation of the Connected Care Services. Assignments at this level include, but are not limited to, screening patients for Telehealth modality and referring patients that do not meet established criteria to appropriate care; communicating effectively with administrative and professional staff, and obtaining assistance for issues that may arise or backlogs that cannot be resolved in a timely manner. Responsible for performing imaging duties in accordance with VHA national telehealth guidelines such as: capture and transmission of clinical images and/or data, obtains consent as necessary, generates consults according to established procedures for each telehealth specialty, transmits images or clinical data to the electronic medical record, provides patient education regarding general anatomy, disease processes and prevention as appropriate, and takes appropriate action based on the providers' findings and recommendations. Responsible for facilitation of real-time Telehealth encounters by providing hands on assistance and reporting clinical observations under the direction of a licensed independent Practitioner or clinical specialist; schedules, confirms and coordinates Telehealth

services between internal and external VA and non-VA sites; analyzes own work flow to determine potential problem areas and recommends corrective action to improve coordination between various units/facilities; has regular contact with the Facility Telehealth Coordinator to work out process issues, equipment needs, problems, data collection and any other logistical issues; responsible for conducting routine inventories and consistently tracking location/status of Telehealth technology located at assigned site; and communicates with National Telehealth Technology Help Desk to facilitate troubleshooting, repair, and coordination of replacement equipment as necessary.

c. Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical), GS-7 (Advanced)

(1) **Experience.** One year of experience equivalent to the next lower grade level.

(2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs.

(a) Ability to use independent technical judgment to analyze, evaluate and resolve problems.

(b) Knowledge of quality control and assurance procedures and principles of performance improvement.

(c) Ability to function effectively between competing priorities.

(d) Knowledge of proper maintenance and troubleshooting of telehealth equipment.

(e) Ability to work with a team to provide technical guidance, plan, organize and coordinate activities of a health technician in order to effectively complete job duties of assignment such as distributing workload, monitoring the status and progress of work, monitoring accuracy of work.

(f) Ability to assist in Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical) development, outcome management and strategic planning.

(g) Ability to perform successful knowledge transfer regarding the use of telehealth technologies.

(3) **Assignment.** At the Advanced Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical) level, the incumbent will monitor and capture workload credit, develop reporting procedures and participate in performance improvement activities aimed at improving patient care access and Telehealth processes. This would include; sampling techniques, taking measurements at various points in the telehealth process; and develop and provide reporting procedures that identifies and analyzes inherent weaknesses in work and telehealth procedures. The incumbent will coordinate and work with Biomed and IT staff for the installation and upgrade of hardware and software for all telehealth technologies; will be responsible for advanced telehealth technical support to patients, staff and providers; provides technical consultation

and support for staff and patients via phone, web chat, social media and face to face sessions; provides instruction, training and resources on the use of advanced telehealth technologies to patients, staff and providers alike for the delivery of care using telehealth technologies. 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.

d. Lead Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical), GS-8

(1) **Experience.** One year of experience equivalent to the next lower grade level.

(2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs.

(a) Ability to work with a team to provide technical guidance, plan, organize and coordinate activities of a Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical) in order to effectively complete job duties of assignment such as distributing workload, monitoring the status and progress of work, monitoring accuracy of work.

(b) Skill in leadership and interpersonal relations and conflict resolution to deal with employees, team leaders, providers, and managers.

(c) Ability to communicate effectively in order to meet program objectives. This may include preparing reports in various formats and presenting data to various organizational levels.

(d) Knowledge of quality control and assurance procedures and principles of performance improvement.

(e) Skill in the assessment and resolution of complex workload capture issues using multiple data sources.

(f) Ability to develop and compose complex written instructions.

(g) Knowledge of analytical and evaluative processes to independently resolve complex issues.

(3) **Assignment.** The Lead Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical) provides an array of complex and specialized duties related to leadership, staff education, technology management, as well as project and program management related duties for all dimensions of virtual care and telehealth initiatives. Duties include: serves as an official team lead for telehealth staff; monitors and reports on the status of work to ensure that the supervisor's instructions on work priorities, methods, deadlines and quality have been met; works with the supervisor to develop assignments for team members and distributes workload and tasks among employees in accordance with established workflows and specialized requirements, and provides information to the supervisor regarding all conduct and performance related

achievements or concerns. The Lead Telehealth Clinical Technician is responsible for independently reviewing performance metrics to ensure telehealth operations are timely, effective and efficient. This includes the assessment and analysis of the impact, demand and utilization of telehealth services, the coordination of establishing telehealth clinics according to the Decision Support System and VHA guidelines, the monitoring of workload credit for interfacility workload credit and specialized encounters; responsible for the development or revision of diverse and complex standard operating procedures, and assisting stakeholders to develop new telehealth programs based on patient needs; serves in an official capacity as a telehealth preceptor and provides standardized training related to patient care, telehealth technology and quality assurance. This includes the facilitation of interactive simulations and referential documents, the assessment of competency of all clinical staff participating in telehealth programs and maintaining compliance with national VA standards established by the Office of Connected Care regarding training and operations. 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.

e. Supervisory Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical), GS-9

(1) **Experience.** One year of experience equivalent to the next lower grade level.

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

(a) Ability to perform the full range of supervisory duties which includes responsibility for assignment of work to be performed, performance evaluations, selection of qualified staff, and recommendations of awards, advancements, and when appropriate disciplinary actions.

(b) Ability to plan, organize, and coordinate clinical workflow and set short and long-term goals for the program.

(c) Ability to work independently, to set priorities, delegate tasks, meet multiple deadlines, analyze organizational problems, and develop and implement effective solutions to optimize quality, efficiency, performance, and productivity within the service.

(d) Ability to develop policy, manage equipment requests, and provide workload analysis.

(e) Knowledge of all Connected Care programs and operations.

(3) **Assignment.** At the supervisory level, in addition to the regular clinical and administrative duties of a Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical), the incumbent performs a full range of supervisory duties to include complex assignments and program management in the direct oversight of a team of Health Technicians (Telehealth Clinical). Supervisory duties will include: interviewing and selecting staff; assigning, amending or rejecting work; ensuring production and accuracy requirements are met; the development of performance plans including recommending performance standards and ratings, and conducting regular performance

appraisals of staff. Additionally, the incumbent will respond to questions or matters not covered by standards and problems in meeting performance standards and effect corrective and disciplinary measures to address conduct and performance issues; responsible for the creation and modification of work schedules to meet anticipated and unanticipated changes in the workload and to oversee attendance and review and approve leave requests of direct reports ensuring adequate staff is available to perform all needed telehealth duties; involved in the development of policies and standard operating procedures, analyzing program workload, the acquisition and deployment of telehealth equipment. The incumbent will work independently to set priorities, delegate tasks, meet multiple deadlines, analyze organizational problems, and develop and implement effective solutions to optimize quality, efficiency, performance, and productivity. 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.

6. DEVIATIONS

a. The approving official may, under unusual circumstances, approve reasonable deviations to the grade determination requirements for an employee Health Technician (Telehealth Clinical) in VHA whose composite record of accomplishments, performance, and qualifications, as well as current assignments, warrant such action based on demonstrated competence to meet the requirements on the proposed grade.

b. The placement of individuals in grade levels not described in this standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health, or designee, in VHA Central Office prior to placement in the position.

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)