

Diversity@Work

October 2024

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

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Upcoming Events

October 2024

Breast Cancer Awareness Month
Disability Employment Awareness Month
Domestic Violence Awareness Month
Global Diversity Awareness Month
Italian American Heritage Month
Polish American Heritage Month
Work and Family Month

CX Day

October 1

German-American Day

October 6

Leif Erikson Day

October 9

General Pulaski Memorial Day

October 11

Columbus Day

Indigenous Peoples' Day

October 14

White Cane Safety Day

October 15

DIVAC Quarterly Meeting

October 16



Access to Good Jobs for All

National Disability Employment Awareness Month



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Commemorate

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

VA is proud to join the Nation in commemorating National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) this October. Let us stand together as we continue celebrating the value and talent workers with disabilities add to America's workplaces and economy. While NDEAM takes place annually each October, its ongoing purpose is to confirm our commitment to ensuring that disabled workers have access to good jobs. The 2024 NDEAM theme announced by the **Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy**, is: "Access to Good Jobs for All."

As a matter of monitoring, VA should consider sharing diversity of thoughts and inclusion of perspectives with a focus on the goals from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Management Directive (MD) 715, Part J - Special Plan for the Recruitment, Hiring, Advancement, and Retention of Persons with Disabilities. Specifically, agencies should establish specific numerical goals to increase the participation of persons with reportable and targeted disabilities.

As of August 2024, Persons with Disabilities (PWD) in grade cluster GS-1 to GS-10 were 14.75% of VA's permanent workforce in fiscal year (FY) 2023, meeting the 12% target. PWD in grade cluster GS-11 to Senior Executive Service (SES) were 10.41%, below the 12% target. **Continued on the next page.**

ORMDI

Steps Toward Conflict Resolution

You can contact ORMDI toll-free at 1-888-566-3982 (TDD/TTY, dial 711 before providing this number) and speak with a specialist regarding equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaint processing or harassment prevention. You must initiate contact with an EEO counselor within 45 days of the date of the alleged act of discrimination by calling 1-888-566-3982 or visiting your local ORMDI Field Office. The harassment prevention procedures do not affect rights under the EEO complaint process. Harassment should be reported immediately to a manager or supervisor, **Harassment Prevention Coordinator**, or the **ORMDI Harassment Prevention Program**. For Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) services, email the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer **ADR team**.

Commemorate

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Persons with Targeted Disabilities (PWTD) in grade cluster GS-1 to GS-10 were 3.52% of VA's permanent workforce in FY 2023, meeting the 2% target. PWTD in grade cluster GS-11 to SES were 1.95%, below the 2% target.

While VA has done a good job with accomplishing the PWD and PWTD GS-1 to GS-10 goals, with exerted effort, the same success can be matched for the PWD and PWTD GS-11 to SES goals in adherence to EEOC's MD 715, Part J. This can be done by implementing annual campaigns for Self-Identification of Disability via the HRSmart's Employee Self Service (ESS). Upon login, locate the "Personal Action Items" partition followed by the "Update My Disability Information" link and then select the "Additional Links" where the "Self-Identification of Disability" option is located.

Visit [VA's Individuals with Disabilities Employment Program webpage](#) or contact Mr. Roberto Rojo, VA's National Individuals with Disabilities Special Emphasis Program Manager, for more information.

Message from the DAS

Mr. Dennis McGuire, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Resolution Management, Diversity and Inclusion

With the holiday season approaching, this is a reminder that it is VA policy to provide timely and effective religious accommodation to employees and applicants in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and directives. For additional information on hours of duty, leave, and compensatory overtime refer to [VA Directive 5011, Hours of Duty and Leave](#).

Celebrate CX Day on October 1

Prioritizing Customer and Employee Experience at VA

The first Tuesday in October is recognized as Customer Experience (CX) Day and is dedicated to celebrating both customers and the CX professionals who enhance their experiences.

Initially launched with the 1992 establishment of Customer Service Week, CX Day highlights the importance of ensuring meaningful interactions with customers across industries. This year, October 1 marks an important day focused on advancing the experience of not only the Nation's Veterans but also VA's valued employees.

One of VA's most important goals is outlined in the 2022-28 Strategic Plan: enhancing customer experience to build trust. This aligns with Presidential Executive Order 14058, Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government.

Employees are encouraged to adopt a CX mindset, ensuring that every touchpoint fosters trust and connection. In the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-11, OMB expanded the definition of "customers" to include Federal employees, highlighting the need to focus equally on employee experience (EX) at the VA. After all, the care and support VA provides to Veterans starts with the experiences of the Department's 400,000 employees.

ORMDI's Customer Experience Strategy Office (CXSO) is spearheading these efforts, with a focus on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (IDEA). Initiatives like the EX Purpose & Belonging Project and Identity Insights Initiative, in collaboration with the Veterans Experience Office (VEO), help elevate employee engagement and leadership development. Employees of all backgrounds and levels can benefit from programs like VA Executive Women in Motion, which delivers Executive Core Qualifications and leadership education.

CXSO also encourages employees to engage with the I*DEA Influencer Network, a program that promotes cultural health, access to opportunities, and a more inclusive work environment. I*DEA Influencers actively drive change within VA.

Access more CX tools and resources on the [VEO website](#) to strengthen relationships and promote a culture of belonging across the Department. For questions, email the [ORMDI CXSO team](#).

Suicide Prevention Month

VA Recognizes the Vital Role of Caregivers

VA joined the Nation in observing Suicide Prevention Month this past September. VA prioritizes preventing suicide among all Veterans including those who may never seek care within the VA health care system. Life can present challenges for both Veterans and their caregivers, but you don't have to face them alone.

Suicide prevention involves various efforts to reduce the risk of suicide. These efforts can take place at the individual, relational, and community levels. VA recognizes the vital role caregivers play as partners in the care of Veterans but also recognizes that caregivers may experience thoughts of suicide and prevention efforts must include caregivers. VA Suicide Prevention is built upon 3 core tenants: suicide is preventable, suicide prevention requires a public health approach, and everyone plays a role (**VA Caregiver Support Program, VA CSP**).

Benefits of suicide prevention education include:

- **Guidance on Saving Lives:** Learn practical strategies to help prevent suicide.
- **Tools for Recognizing Risk and Protective Factors and Warning Signs:** Equip yourself to identify when you might need to have a conversation with a loved one about suicide.
- **Support for Clinical Suicide Prevention Needs:** Provide assistance to those who need acute and long-term care.

To learn more about the support that is available to you as a caregiver, visit the **VA CSP website**, explore the **VA CSP Caregiver Sheet**, or call VA's Caregiver Support Line at 1-855-260-3274 for assistance connecting with the **Caregiver Support Team/Coordinator** at your local VA Medical Center.

If you're a Veteran in crisis or concerned about one, contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive 24/7 confidential support. You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to connect. To reach responders, Dial 988 then Press 1, chat online at **VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat**, or text 838255.

Affinity Conferences

VA employees who plan to attend should follow appropriate conference attendance approval procedures established for their respective organizations. Costs associated with attending must be authorized by each employee's organization. No centralized funding is available to pay for registration:

Out & Equal Workplace Summit

The Out & Equal Workplace Summit will be held in Orlando, Florida, October 7-10, 2024. This year's theme is: "Illuminating Truth, Community, and the Path Forward." The largest LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion event in the world, the Summit brings together a global community of thought leaders and changemakers to knowledge share, exchange promising and/or best practices for making measurable and lasting change, and to network in ways that build important relationships that last a lifetime. Following supervisory and budget approval, attendees must also register on the **Out & Equal website**. For more information, contact Mr. Sterling Akins, VA's Departmental LGBTQ+ Program Manager, ORMDI.



HACU Annual Conference

The **Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) 38th Annual Conference** will be held November 1-3, 2024, at the Gaylord Rockies Resort & Convention Center in Aurora, Colorado. This year's theme is, "Championing Hispanic Higher Education Success: Reaching New Heights of Excellence and Equity." The conference will include plenaries, luncheons, and networking opportunities, and it will provide a unique forum to share information and ideas for the most promising practices in the education of Hispanics. For more information, contact Ms. Karen M. Basnight, VA's Acting Departmental Hispanic Employment Program Manager, ORMDI.



Training

EEO Data & Analytics Training

The ORMDI EEO Data & Analytics Team will conduct virtual Management Directive 715: Barrier Analysis Training on October 2, October 17, and November 13 from noon to 3 p.m. (ET). The purpose of the training is to educate participants on how to conduct a barrier analysis by following four steps: identify triggers, investigate potential barrier, create and implement an action plan and conduct follow-up. This training is not only intended for EEO program managers responsible for conducting barrier analysis but also Human Resources Personnel, Diversity Specialists, Special Emphasis Program Managers, and management. [Register for course 3844925 in the Talent Management System](#) (TMS).

The ORMDI EEO Data & Analytics Team will also conduct virtual VHA Support Service Center (VSSC) Training on October 17 from 10 to 11 a.m. (ET). The purpose of the training is to educate participants on how to use VSSC to extract workforce diversity data in HR Smart, VA's human resources information system. This training is open to all. The class is limited to 30 participants and registration is first come, first serve. [Register for TMS course 3823179](#).

Harassment Prevention Training

ORMDI will host a virtual "Overview of the Harassment Prevention Program (HPP)" class on October 2 and November 6 from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. (ET). All employees and supervisors are welcome. To participate, [register for TMS course 4563938](#), and choose a date and time to register.

ORMDI will also host "Overview of VA Handbook 5979 - Harassment Prevention Program Procedures" on October 16, November 20, and December 18 from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. (ET). Executives, managers, and supervisors are encouraged to attend. To participate, [register for TMS course 4627175](#), and choose a date and time.

Workplace Civility and Root Causes of Workplace Disputes for Managers and Non-Managers

The Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program will be offering the virtual version of their "Workplace Civility and Root Causes of Workplace Disputes for Managers and Non-Managers" training. The training will be held on the last Wednesday of each month. Each training will host up to 40 participants. Register in TMS for VA Supervisors/Managers (VA 4559059), 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. (ET), or for VA Employees (VA 4562623), 1 to 2 p.m. (ET). For more information and guidance pertaining to this training, contact Mr. Leroy Hill, ADR Specialist, OCHCO.

Other VA Resources

C20: Take Your 20 for Veteran Health

C20 is a 20-minute live, interactive webinar hosted by Dr. "Chai" Chad Kessler, VA's National Director for Emergency Medicine. It brings together the VA community through discussions about clinical and health care issues facing Veterans and topics related to VA employee wellness, growth and retention. Join C20 every Tuesday and Thursday at 12 p.m. ET (recast Tuesdays and Thursdays at 4:30 p.m. ET). **Past C20 episodes** are available online.

The Audacity to Fail Podcast

A supportive culture is the cornerstone of a workplace where people can fully engage and contribute – it's central to any thriving team. It takes a delicate balance of both leaders and team members working together to create a culture where everyone feels supported and empowered. On this episode of the **Audacity to Fail Podcast: misStepping Into Success**, Dr. Shari Dade is joined by Dr. Alyshia Smith to discuss the idea of trust and authenticity—not just as a one-way street but as a dynamic relationship between leaders and their teams. Dr. Smith is the Executive Director of the Durham VA Health Care System and is responsible for setting the strategic and operational direction for the entire health care system. Through her role, Dr. Smith engages with employees, Veterans, Veteran service organizations, Veteran service officers, academicians, and the broader community to accomplish the VA's overall mission. The series is also available on the **Talent Management System**.



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