

Office of Personnel Management Approval – Restriction of Consideration to One Sex for Peer Support Apprentice/Peer Specialist Positions, GS-0102 at Grade Levels 5 through 9 Within the Veterans Health Administration, Office of Mental Health Suicide Prevention

1. PURPOSE.

- a. This notice revises VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Chapter 2 – Title 5 Appointments, Section D and Part II, Appendix F3 – Qualification Standards. The revision allows the restriction of recruitment to one sex of the female gender for Peer Support Apprentice/Peer Specialist positions, GS-0102 at grade levels 5 through 9 within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Office of Mental Health Suicide Prevention.
- b. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has authorized an exception to 5 CFR 332.407, Restriction of Consideration to One Sex for Peer Specialist positions within VHA. Paragraph (d) of Section 506 of the VA MISSION Act of 2018 requires the Secretary of the VA to ensure that (1) the needs of female Veterans are specifically considered and addressed; and (2) female Peer Specialists are made available to female Veterans who are treated at each location. In addition, Section 8051 (4)(A) of Public Law 115-271, requires the Secretary to seek to recruit female Peer Support Apprentice/Peer Specialists with expertise in (1) female gender-specific issues and services; (2) the provision of information about services and benefits provided under laws administered by the Secretary; or (3) employment mentoring.

2. POLICY.

This exemption, allowing the restriction of recruitment to one sex, covers female-only Peer Support Apprentice/Specialists, GS-0102, grades 5/6/7/8/9. When it is necessary to fill a Peer Specialist position using this exemption, the following gender specific position descriptions (PDs) must be used for vacancy tracking and reporting purposes. These PDs may be found on the [VHA Mental Health Services SharePoint site](#).

- a. Gender specific PDs include:

(1) Peer Support Apprentice, GS-0102-5	#S0020-A
(2) Peer Specialist, GS-0102-6	#S0016-A
(3) Peer Specialist, GS-0102-7	#S0017-A
(4) Peer Specialist, GS-0102-8	#S0018-A
(5) Peer Specialist, GS-0102-9	#S0019-A

- b. USA Staffing Job Opportunity Announcements (JOAs) are required to indicate that the position is restricted to a specific gender (female) and must provide the reason for restricting the position to the specific gender. JOA templates have been created in USA Staffing for the conditions of employment, duties, and position requirements sections of the JOA. Required language includes the following: ***“In accordance with the VA MISSION Act of 2018 and Public Law 115-271, in order to meet the needs of female Veterans, the Office of Personnel Management has authorized this recruitment as gender specific, and therefore, restricted to female applicants.”***
- c. Within one year from the publication date of this notice, this revision will be incorporated into VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Chapter 2 – Title 5 Appointments, Section D and Part II, Appendix F3 – Qualification Standards.

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE. Questions regarding this may be directed to the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer, Recruitment and Placement Policy Service at vatitle5staffingpoli@va.gov.

CERTIFIED BY:

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

/s/

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