

## VA ENTRANCE, EXIT AND TRANSFER SURVEYS

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To implement procedures to meet the requirements outlined in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Directive 5004, VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Surveys.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:** This handbook sets forth standardized procedures for the administration, data collection, analysis, distribution, action planning and reporting requirements for the VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Surveys. This handbook is maintained on the [Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer website](#) and the [VA Publications website](#).
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer, Strategic Human Capital Planning Service (053).
- 4. RELATED HANDBOOK/DIRECTIVE:** Directive 5004, VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Surveys dated May 11, 2021.
- 5. RESCISSION:** None.

**CERTIFIED BY:**

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

/s/  
Guy T. Kiyokawa  
Assistant Secretary for  
Enterprise Integration

/s/  
Gina M. Grosso  
Assistant Secretary for  
Human Resources and Administration/  
Operations, Security and Preparedness

**DISTRIBUTION:** Electronic only

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## VA ENTRANCE, EXIT AND TRANSFER SURVEYS

1. **PURPOSE.** To implement procedures to meet requirements in VA Directive 5004 for the VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Surveys.
2. **SCOPE.** The scope of the VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Surveys are Department-wide, covering human resources management and supervisor/ management processes and responsibilities for:
  - a. **New Hires:** This includes employees with a first appointment to VA, transferring from another Federal agency to VA, and employees who separated and are returning to VA under a new appointment;
  - b. **Voluntary Separations:** This includes voluntary retirements, resignations and transfers to other Federal agencies. This does not include performance-based actions such as removals or terminations, involuntary separations such as medical retirements, terminations and expirations of temporary and time-limited term appointments and internal movements; and
  - c. **Internal Transfers:** This includes internal movements within VA (transfers to another Administration, Staff Office, field facility or program office within VA such as voluntary reassignments, promotions and changes to lower grades to another position in another VA organization). It does not include temporary details, management directed reassignments, reduction in force personnel actions, employees separating from VA or transferring to another Federal agency or reassignments in the Senior Executive Service, which are at the agency's discretion.
3. **RESPONSIBILITIES.**
  - a. The **Secretary of VA** is the final approving authority for the annual report to Congress: Exit Surveys at Department of Veterans Affairs ([VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017 \(the Choice Act\), Pub. L.115-46](#)).
  - b. The **Chief Human Capital Officer (CHCO)** is the approving official for VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Survey activities and initiatives.
  - c. **Under Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries** shall:
    - (1) Approve organization's input into the annual VA Exit Survey Report, ad-hoc data calls and requests for information for all three surveys; and
    - (2) Establish action plans and an evaluation methodology to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of strategies to improve hiring and employee retention.

- d. **VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Survey Governance Work Group** shall: review and recommend changes to all aspects of the VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer surveys, including content, implementation, communication and marketing and national access to the data survey.
- e. **Director, Strategic Human Capital Planning Service (SHCPS)** within the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) shall:
- (1) Develop Department-level policy, guidance and the contents of this handbook;
  - (2) Serve as the Chairperson on the VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Survey Governance Work Group;
  - (3) Develop and disseminate communications and marketing artifacts and ensure consistency in messaging across the Department;
  - (4) Respond to inquiries regarding survey administration and policy;
  - (5) Assess the effectiveness of the VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Surveys administration and using the results to make improvements;
  - (6) Update and maintain the [VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Survey SharePoint site](#), and
  - (7) Prepare the annual VA Exit Survey report:
    - (a) Solicit input from Administrations and Staff Offices on the actions taken or to be taken to address employee retention;
    - (b) Review Administration and Staff Offices report submissions for adequacy and obtain additional information, as needed; and
    - (c) Consolidate submissions into one Department level report and submit the report for departmentwide concurrence and the Secretary's approval.
  - (8) Coordinate responses to Department level ad-hoc data calls and requests for information.
- f. In addition to the responsibilities listed for Under Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries, the **Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Human Capital Management Workforce Management and Consulting (WMC) office** shall:
- (1) Resolve technical difficulties completing the VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Surveys. Technical difficulties completing the surveys should be sent via email at [vhawmcsurveyhelpdesk@va.gov](mailto:vhawmcsurveyhelpdesk@va.gov);

- (2) Distribute free text/narrative responses; and
  - (3) Coordinate with the VHA Support Services Center (VSSC) on the update and maintenance of survey data cubes.
- g. **Human Resources Offices (HROs)** are responsible for compliance with and implementing the procedures in this handbook. To ensure consistency, HROs shall:
- (1) Ensure communications about the surveys are provided to managers and employees;
  - (2) Establish and maintain a current list of points of contacts who will receive and distribute narrative/free text survey responses to respective managers;
  - (3) Ensure local communication messaging, social media, print, email and marketing artifacts are aligned with key messages in the VA Entrance, Exit, and Transfer Survey Marketing and Communications Strategy;
  - (4) Ensure the most current version of the VA Entrance, Exit, and Transfer Surveys are offered to employees; and
  - (5) Share copies of local communications messages and artifacts with SHCPS in developing and sharing best practices.
- h. **Managers and supervisors** shall:
- (1) Encourage employees to participate in the VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Surveys;
  - (2) Use survey results and narrative responses to identify challenges to recruitment and/or employee retention which can impact the employee experience;
  - (3) Develop and implement action plans to address recruitment and employee retention challenges;
  - (4) Monitor and track progress in meeting performance targets in the action plan(s); and
  - (5) Evaluate the effectiveness of strategies and adjust actions where needed to meet performance goals and objectives.

**4. PROCEDURES.** This handbook is divided into five parts and covers procedures for the following policy requirements:

Part I – Survey Administration Procedures;

Part II – Data Collection and Analysis Procedures;

Part III – Procedures for the Distribution of Survey Results;

Part IV – Action Planning Procedures; and

Part V – Reporting Requirement Procedures.

Questions regarding the procedures in this handbook should be directed to the SHCPS via email at [VAEntranceExitSurvey@va.gov](mailto:VAEntranceExitSurvey@va.gov).

## PART I – SURVEY ADMINISTRATION PROCEDURES

1. **PURPOSE.** To establish standardized procedures to ensure the VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Surveys are administered consistently across the Department.
2. **PROCEDURE.**
  - a. VA Entrance Survey. Creating a positive first impression and enhancing employee engagement in the first year of employment improves the employee experience. Normally an employee's first impression begins with the hiring and on-boarding processes. The VA Entrance Survey was designed to capture employee's perceptions about their recruitment and on-boarding experiences and to help identify what worked well and where improvements can be made. Therefore, all eligible employees must be offered the opportunity to take the VA Entrance Survey. The HRO or designated official must use the following procedures to ensure consistency in the administration of this survey.
    - (1) Hiring/On-boarding Process. The hiring process consists of some very definitive steps based on legal and regulatory requirements and clearly described merit principles. The VA Entrance Survey includes questions on the applicant's overall hiring and on-boarding experience including satisfaction, communications/notifications, and timeliness. Capturing this information is essential because it helps identify what is working well and where improvements can be made.
    - (2) New Employee Orientation (NEO). New employee orientation is the process used for welcoming a new employee into your organization. The goal of new employee orientation is to help the new employee feel welcomed, integrated into the organization, and able to perform the new job successfully as quickly as possible. At NEO, employees receive a NEO packet. The packet includes a variety of forms and information and a NEO checklist. The VA Entrance Survey must be included in the NEO checklist with the link to the survey [VA Entrance Survey](#). Employees may take the survey on duty time.
    - (3) When NEO includes a presentation on the VA Entrance Survey, the content must align with the key employee messages in the VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Survey Marketing and Communications Plan. For more information about the communications plan, please visit the [VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Survey Community of Practice SharePoint](#).
    - (4) The HRO or designee should also send a welcome email to the employee and remind them to take the survey. The email should include the survey link and instructions to access the website and for completing the survey. Sample welcome messages are located on the [VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Survey Community SharePoint Site](#).

- b. VA Exit Surveys. Off-boarding is the opposite of on-boarding, and it is the process used when an employee voluntarily separates from VA (transfers to another Federal agency, retires or resigns). HROs must use the following procedures in the off-boarding process:
- (1) Upon notification of an employee voluntarily separating from VA, the supervisor shall offer the employee the opportunity to take the VA Exit Survey.
  - (2) The HRO or designee shall send a farewell email to the employee in advance of their departure date when advance notice is provided, and before their computer access is removed, with the link to the survey and instructions to complete the [VA Exit Survey](#).
  - (3) The official [VA Form 3248](#), Employee's Clearance from Indebtedness, must be used in the separation clearance process. The form may be customized to meet local needs.
  - (4) The VA Exit Survey must be incorporated into all VA clearance forms, with the link to the survey.
  - (5) The survey is on the VA Intranet and must be taken online at the VA website except as provided in paragraph (6) below.
  - (6) To ensure separating employees are given ample opportunity to take the survey, the HRO or designated official shall offer the separating employee the opportunity to privately complete the survey at the time of clearance, if they have not already taken it and/or with the opportunity to provide HR with a private email address to which the Exit Survey link can be sent and accessed on their personal computer outside the firewall. Employees may take the survey on duty time.
  - (7) The HRO or designated official should sign on the human resources line on VA Form 3248 to confirm the employee was given the opportunity to take the VA Exit Survey.
- c. VA Transfer Survey. The HRO or designated official shall use the following procedures to administer the VA Transfer Survey.
- (1) Employees who transfer to another program office, facility, region or Administration and/or Staff Office but stay within VA must be offered the opportunity to take the [VA Transfer Survey](#).
  - (2) The Transfer Survey must also be incorporated into all VA clearance forms, with a link to the survey.
  - (3) Annotate on the clearance form that the employee was given the opportunity to take the VA Transfer Survey.



## PART II – DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

**1. PURPOSE.** To provide procedures for the collection and instruction for the analysis of VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Survey data.

**2. PROCEDURE.**

a. Data Collection.

- (1) Survey data is contained in electronic survey cubes and consists of various questions and response options that, when extracted and analyzed, can be used to identify potential areas that are working well or may need improvement.
- (2) The surveys are voluntary, and when responses are provided, they include:
  - (a) Workforce demographics (i.e., grade or pay level, years at VA, years in the Federal Government; supervisory level (non-supervisory; first level supervisor, manager, senior executive), age, gender; sexual orientation, race, national origin and ethnicity, Veterans status, employees with disabilities, duty basis (work schedule (i.e., part-time, full-time, intermittent); and employee type (permanent, temporary, term time-limited appointment, trainee, medical resident and contractor));
  - (b) Organizational components with drill-down capability to the facility or program office level;
  - (c) Occupational family and series;
  - (d) Recruitment Programs;
  - (e) Branching questions for specific occupational series;
  - (f) Reasons for choosing or returning to VA (i.e., mission, career opportunity, pay, work-life balance) and perceptions on the hiring and on-boarding processes;
  - (g) Reasons for leaving (i.e., nature of the loss – retirement, internal transfer, or resignation);
  - (h) Internal movements and the reasons for transferring from one organization but staying within VA (i.e., moving from one Administration/Staff Office to another Administration/Staff Office, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN)/District Office to VISN/District Office, facility to facility or from a program office to another program office);

- (i) What VA could have offered or done to convince the employee to stay; and
    - (j) If the supervisor discussed the employee's reasons to leave and did anything to try to get the employee to change their mind.
  - (3) Free text/narrative responses are also voluntary but do not include workforce demographics. They are collected verbatim and shared with the designated supervisor that can act on the information. Because they are shared verbatim, they may contain identifying information.
- b. Access to the VA Entrance, Exit, and Transfer Survey Cubes.
  - (1) The survey cubes are maintained in Pyramid Analytics, a Microsoft application. All employees can access Pyramid by registering to use the Pyramid Analytics. Employees can also find more information about the application by visiting the Pyramid Analytics Support Site at [BISL PA Support](#).
  - (2) Send an email to [VAEntranceExitSurvey@va.gov](mailto:VAEntranceExitSurvey@va.gov), if you need additional assistance in obtaining survey data from the survey cubes.
- c. Data Analysis. VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer survey data must be used in workforce and succession planning. The analysis of the survey data is part of the comprehensive workforce analysis required for strategic human capital planning and is also used in various reports such as the annual report: Exit Surveys at Department of Veterans Affairs ([VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017, Pub. L. 115-46](#)).
  - (1) Data analysis is used to understand, interpret and to derive conclusions/ insights based on requirements and the need for useful information, informing conclusions and supporting decision-making. Various data analysis techniques and tools are available, but the person conducting the analysis should always analyze the dimensions in the survey cube.
  - (2) The surveys were revised to provide more actionable information to leaders for action planning. By utilizing various data analytic techniques, the analysis should help to identify strengths and areas for improvement, trends, anomalies and outliers, and other indicators.
  - (3) Coupled with analysis of other data and information, the results of the analysis of the survey data should help to inform actionable strategies for action planning to improve recruitment/on-boarding and employee retention processes, policies, and programs.

- d. The Talent Management System (TMS) offers various data analysis courses that range from beginner to advanced techniques. For more information about training offerings, visit the [Talent Management System \(TMS\) Portal](#) to find the right courses to fit staff training needs.
- e. Reporting Findings. After analyzing the data and summarizing the results, share the results with managers and/or senior leaders. Depending on the nature and scope of your data inquiry, the analyst may also include recommendations to inform decision making to address any challenges or areas for improvement.

### **PART III – PROCEDURES FOR THE DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY RESULTS**

- 1. PURPOSE.** To provide procedures for the distribution of VA Entrance, Exit and Survey results.
- 2. PROCEDURE.**
  - a. VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Survey results.
    - (1) All VA employees can access the survey data cubes to extract and analyze data, except free text/narrative responses. However, HROs and workforce planners should extract, analyze and share survey results for their facility/office with their respective leadership to help inform decisions around action planning to improve recruitment and employee retention challenges.
    - (2) Survey results are updated monthly and are normally available 10 calendar days after the last day of the month. Results are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, except for narrative/free text/narrative responses.
    - (3) Survey results will not be available when there are less than five respondents within the selected parameters (e.g., organization, occupation, race, gender, etc.).
  - b. Free Text/Narrative Responses.
    - (1) VHA's Workforce Management and Consulting Office (WMC) will distribute free text/narrative responses every quarter to the designated point of contact (POCs). Designated POCs are listed on the official list of approved recipients from the local HRO or designated official.
    - (2) The HROs or designated official shall:
      - (a) Maintain the list of designated managers authorized to receive free text/narrative responses;
      - (b) Distribute free text/narrative responses to the designated managers at the facility or program office on a quarterly basis; and
      - (c) Send an updated list of the names and email addresses of designated HROs or designated officials who will receive the free text/narrative reports to WMC every quarter at [vha106awmcwssurveyhelpdesk@va.gov](mailto:vha106awmcwssurveyhelpdesk@va.gov).

## PART IV – ACTION PLANNING PROCEDURES

1. **PURPOSE.** To implement a standardized approach to VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Survey action planning.
2. **PROCEDURE.**
  - a. Administrations and Staff Offices must use VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Survey data and other data and information as part of the comprehensive workforce planning and analysis required under 5 C.F.R. 250, Subpart b, Strategic Human Capital Management. The workforce analysis helps identify human capital challenges and inform the actions to be taken to address recruitment and retention problems and concerns.
  - b. Action planning documents must outline what steps will be taken to achieve the desired outcomes (i.e., improved hiring/on-boarding processes, increased employee retention and engagement). It also clarifies what resources are required to reach the goal, formulates a timeline for when specific tasks need to be completed, uses metrics to monitor and track progress and identifies the action owners responsible for the action's completion and results.
  - c. The actions to be taken should be incorporated in the organizational-level strategic workforce plans, which reduces the need for separate action plans.
  - d. For consistency purposes, SHCPS recommends using the Strategic Workforce Planning Action Planning Template to document the actions you are taking or planning to take to improve recruitment and/or retention. The template contains components for effective action planning and can be used to monitor, track and report progress in meeting survey outcomes. More information on the template and procedures for action planning can be found in the VA Handbook 5002, Strategic Workforce and Succession Planning, Parts 1 and 3. Additional resources and tools for action planning are available on the [VA Entrance, Exit, and Transfer Survey SharePoint Site](#).

## PART V – REPORTING REQUIREMENT PROCEDURES

1. **PURPOSE.** To implement procedures to meet reporting requirements in Directive 5004, VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Surveys.
2. **PROCEDURE.**
  - a. Annual VA Exit Survey Report. Section 211 (e) of the [VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017 \(Pub. L. 115-46\)](#) requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report containing the aggregate results of the exit survey covering the year prior to the report. Each report submitted shall include, for the period covered by the report:
    - (1) An analysis of the most common reasons employees chose to leave the Department;
    - (2) The steps the Secretary is taking to improve retention, particularly for mission-critical occupations;
    - (3) The demographic characteristics of employees choosing to leave the Department;
    - (4) Any legislative barriers to improving employee retention; and
    - (5) The total number of employees who voluntarily separated from the Department and the number and percentage of whom took the exit survey.
  - b. To meet the annual reporting requirements in Section 211 (e), VA Choice and Quality Employment Act of 2017, the following procedures will be used.
    - (1) Conduct a comprehensive analysis of the survey results for the year covering the report. The analysis must include all the data requirements in the legislation.
    - (2) In addition to the analysis of the survey results, Administrations and Staff Offices must provide SHCPS with a written narrative on the steps they are taking or plan to take to improve retention, specifically in mission-critical occupations to include:
      - (a) A description of the issue, challenge, or barrier faced (especially within mission-critical occupation(s));
      - (b) The desired outcome to include a specific goal to be achieved;
      - (c) A description of the action(s) taken within the past year or to be taken;

- (d) A description of the progress made toward achieving the goal; and
    - (e) Any legislative barriers to improving employee retention.
  - (3) Review Administration and Staff Offices report submissions for adequacy and obtain additional information, as needed. This information will be consolidated and incorporated into the final report.
  - (4) This is a congressional mandated report. The written content shall be formatted in accordance with the guidance [in VA Executive Secretariat Style Guide](#) to include capitalization, punctuation, abbreviation, numerals and word usages for VA documents.
  - (5) The report must be reviewed and receive concurrence from each Administration and Staff Office to include coordination and concurrences from the Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs (OCLA) and the assigned Executive Senior Advisor prior to submission to the Assistant Secretary for review and concurrence so the report may be submitted to the Office of the Executive Secretary for Secretary for approval and signature. The concurrence package must be uploaded into the Department's correspondence tracking system in accordance with VA timelines for congressionally mandated reports and include:
    - (a) VA Form 0907, Strategic Communications Review
    - (b) VA Form 4265, Summary and Concurrence Sheet;
    - (c) A copy of the legislation;
    - (d) A Microsoft word version of the report;
    - (e) Transmittal letters to Congress (for OCLA review/approval); and
    - (f) Cost estimates for preparing the report (Microsoft excel versions).
- c. Congressional Inquiries. Responses to Congressional data calls and requests for information on VA Entrance, Exit and Transfer Surveys, policies, activities and/or initiatives must be:
- (1) Coordinated through and approved by the VA Chief Human Capital Officer;
  - (2) Prepared in accordance with VA Congressional correspondence guidelines; and
  - (3) As applicable, coordinated through the department's formal concurrence process.

d. Department-Level Ad-hoc Data Calls and Requests for Information.

- (1) These requests can vary in nature and scope, and when required, SHCPS will coordinate with and send the request to the appropriate Administration/ Staff Office for input to the response with instructions and due dates.
- (2) Administrations/Staff Offices are required to provide the information requested, and
- (3) Obtain senior leadership approval before submitting report input to SHCPS.

Questions regarding the processes and/or reporting requirements in this handbook should be directed to the SHCPS at [vacoshcps@va.gov](mailto:vacoshcps@va.gov).