

**EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AND AWARDS**

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To issue Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy regarding employee recognition and awards.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This directive brings VA's recognition and awards policy into alignment with the performance appraisal system. It emphasizes timely recognition of individuals and groups of employees who make contributions in support of organizational goals and objectives. In addition, the directive incorporates policy on special advancements and cash awards for title 38 employees.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Human Resources Management Programs and Policies Service (051), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources.
- 4. RELATED HANDBOOK:** VA Handbook 5017, "Employee Recognition and Awards."
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** Refer to the Transmittal Sheet for VA Directive 5001, "General Introduction and Administration."

**CERTIFIED BY:**

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

/s/John A. Gauss  
Assistant Secretary for  
Information and Technology

/s/Jacob Lozada, Ph.D.  
Assistant Secretary for Human  
Resources and Administration



## EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AND AWARDS

**1. PURPOSE.** This directive establishes VA's policy on employee recognition and awards. It also establishes policy for special advancements for achievement and performance for title 38 employees as well as cash awards for registered nurses and nurse anesthetists. Procedures for implementing the policies in this directive are found in VA Handbook 5017, Employee Recognition and Awards.

### 2. POLICY

a. It is the policy of the Department to recognize individual employees who make contributions in support of the mission, organizational goals and objectives, and VA's Strategic Plan.

b. The Department shall also provide advancement opportunities for physicians, dentists, podiatrists, optometrists, registered nurses, nurse anesthetists, physician assistants and expanded-function dental auxiliaries appointed under authority of 38 U.S.C. 7401(1) or 7405(a)(1)(A); pharmacists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, certified respiratory therapists, registered respiratory therapists, and licensed practical or vocational nurses appointed under authority of 38 U.S.C. 7401(3) or 7405(a)(1)(B). Such advancement opportunities shall be predicated on the recognition of quality service rendered, additional experience and professional attainment as determined by an examination of the employee's individual record. Advancement opportunities shall include Special Advancements for Achievement and Performance. In addition, advancement opportunities shall include cash awards for full time, part time, and intermittent registered nurses and nurse anesthetists appointed under 38 U.S.C. 7306, 7401(1) and 7405.

c. VA's recognition and awards programs will be administered using the following principles and practices:

(1) Recognition has its greatest impact when it is provided as soon as possible following the contribution or achievement.

(2) The views of employees and employee representatives are critical to the program's effectiveness in motivating employees.

(3) The form of recognition used should be appropriate to the contribution that was made.

(4) When a desired outcome results from a group or team effort, all contributing members of the team should be recognized. The amount of recognition per team member may vary depending on the level of contribution.

(5) Appropriate presentation and adequate publicity are important to the program.

(6) Employee representatives should be involved in the development, implementation, and review of specific recognition programs.

### 3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Secretary of Veterans Affairs.** The Secretary of Veterans Affairs has overall responsibility for providing leadership in the Department's Employee Recognition and Awards Program.

b. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health, or a designee, shall approve advancements of title 38 employees covered under the scope of this directive.

c. **Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration.** The Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration is responsible for the overall implementation and administration of VA's Employee Recognition and Awards Program. Included in this delegation is authority to approve all honorary awards granted by the Secretary.

d. **Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management (DAS/HRM).** The DAS/HRM is responsible for:

(1) Providing program policy and guidance.

(2) Consulting with VA organizations on the appropriate use of awards and the development and implementation of organizational awards programs.

e. **Administration Heads, Assistant Secretaries, Other Key Officials, and Field Facility Directors.** Administration Heads, Assistant Secretaries, Other Key Officials and field facility directors will provide leadership to VA's employee recognition and awards program by:

(1) Providing maximum support by designating adequate resources for program administration and training.

(2) Ensuring that the latest concepts in recognition are integrated when implementing organizational award programs.

(3) Delegating to lower level officials appropriate authority to develop recognition programs and to act on awards recommendations.

(4) Evaluating the employee recognition and awards program periodically to identify specific strengths and weaknesses, develop improved procedures, and establish goals and objectives to direct future program efforts.

(5) Giving due weight to an award granted under this program in qualifying and selecting a title 5 employee for promotion as required in title 5, United States Code, section 3362 and part II of VA Handbook 5005, Staffing.

(6) Designating (an) awards liaison(s) who will provide advice, assistance and other support to ensure the effective administration of organizational awards and recognition programs.

f. **Managers, Supervisors and Group and Team Leaders.** Being in the best position to identify achievements and improvements in customer service, managers, supervisors and group and team leaders are responsible for:

(1) Being knowledgeable about the employee recognition and awards program and sharing this knowledge with employees to support the achievement of organizational goals.

(2) Identifying and recommending awards promptly for employees whose performance, contributions or ideas merit formal recognition.

(3) Supporting the employee recognition and awards program by utilizing awards in a consistent and equitable manner.

(4) Encouraging employees to submit suggestions and assisting in the development and testing of ideas when requested.

#### 4. REFERENCES

- a. 5 U.S.C., chapter 45
- b. 5 CFR, part 451
- c. 5 U.S.C. 5336
- d. 5 CFR, part 531, subpart E
- e. 5 U.S.C. 5307
- f. 5 CFR, part 530, subpart B
- g. 38 U.S.C. 7304, 7306, 7401, 7403, 7405 and 7452