

## VHA REQUIRED HUMAN RESOURCES TRAINING

**1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive establishes:

a. Annual required recruitment and retention training for all VHA Human Resources (HR) Specialists in the General Schedule (GS)-201 occupational series.

b. One time only required training for all HR Specialists new to VHA or new to the GS-201 occupational series for grades 13 and below.

**2. SUMMARY OF CONTENT:** This new VHA directive creates policy for annual recruitment and retention training for all VHA HR Specialists, in addition to a one-time-only required training for all VHA HR Specialists new to VHA or new to the GS-201 occupational series in VHA.

**3. RELATED ISSUES:** None.

**4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Office of Workforce Management and Consulting, Human Resource Development (10A2A1D) is responsible for the contents of this directive. Questions specifically about the annual required recruitment and retention training may be referred to the Director, Human Resource Development, at [vhawmchrdconsultants@va.gov](mailto:vhawmchrdconsultants@va.gov). Questions specifically about the 201 Jump Start (JS) program may be referred to [201JumpStart@va.gov](mailto:201JumpStart@va.gov). Questions specifically about the New Talent Development Program (NTDP) may be referred to [NTDP@va.gov](mailto:NTDP@va.gov).

**5. RESCISSIONS:** VHA Notice 2019-25, Mandatory Annual Human Resources Recruitment and Retention Training for All VHA Human Resources Professionals, dated November 11, 2019; and VHA Notice 2019-14, Mandatory 201 Jump Start and New Talent Development Program Training for All New VHA Human Resource Specialists, GS-201-13 and Below, dated August 08, 2019, are rescinded.

**6. RECERTIFICATION:** This VHA directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of July 2025. This VHA directive will continue to serve as national VHA policy until it is recertified or rescinded.

July 29, 2020

VHA DIRECTIVE 5014

**BY DIRECTION OF THE OFFICE OF  
THE UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH:**

/s/ Steven L. Lieberman, MD, MBA, FACHE  
Deputy Under Secretary for Health

***NOTE:*** All references herein to Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and VHA documents incorporate by reference subsequent VA and VHA documents on the same or similar subject matter.

**DISTRIBUTION:** Emailed to the VHA Publication Distribution List on July 30, 2020.

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## VHA REQUIRED HUMAN RESOURCES TRAINING

### 1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive sets new policy for implementation of required training for all Human Resource (HR) Specialists as follows.

**AUTHORITY:** Public Law (P.L.) 115-46, section 209.

### 2. BACKGROUND

a. HR professionals are hired by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) under Office of Personnel Management series General Schedule (GS)-201. Section 209 of P.L. 115-46 requires VHA to provide virtual training to new HR professionals on how to best recruit and retain employees, including any recruitment and retention matters that are unique to VHA. Training is required annually thereafter. The 201 Jump Start (JS) training and the New Talent Development Program Training (NTDP) is in addition to the training required under the public law, but also satisfies the initial annual recruitment and retention training requirement for new HR Specialists.

b. The 201 JS program is an orientation to and overview of HR information in accordance with this law. It is also the first phase of the training for new HR specialists.

c. NTDP is the second phase of the training and development program that not only introduces these issues but provides the foundational competencies to function as HR professionals in VHA. This program was widely requested given the lack of consistency and quality of HR services. Several internal and external audits, including the Government Accountability Office and the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Workforce Planning Cycle Shortage Occupation Report, consistently reveal the need for better standardization of the delivery of HR operations across VA.

d. The objectives of the training requirements are to:

(1) Establish a baseline of HR knowledge for all participants as they start their VHA career in HR.

(2) Provide participants with core knowledge and skills needed of all VHA HR professionals.

(3) Support the development of high-performing, talented HR professionals.

(4) Provide consistency and standardization of the delivery of HR operations.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

a. **Core Level.** Core level is a foundational set of learning models for new VHA HR Specialists with less than 1 year of experience in the GS-201 occupational series or are new to VHA.

**b. New VHA Human Resource Specialist.**

(1) For purposes of P.L. 115-46, VHA defines an HR Specialist as a full-time, part-time or intermittent employee newly appointed to VHA, as an HR Specialist in the GS-201 occupation or new to the GS-201 occupational series in VHA at any grade level.

**NOTE:** *P.L. 115-46 establishes required training and training requirements for Human Resources Professionals on an annual basis.*

(2) For the purposes of the 201 JS and NTDP, VHA defines an HR Specialist as a full-time, part-time or intermittent employee newly appointed to VHA, as a HR Specialist in the GS-201 occupation or new to the 201-occupational series in VHA, at the GS-13 grade level and below. This defines a subset of GS-201s that need foundational level training.

**4. POLICY**

It is VHA policy that all VHA HR Specialists must complete a virtual required recruitment and retention training as soon as practicable after appointment into their position and then annually thereafter. The 201 JS and NTDP program satisfies the initial training requirement for new HR Specialists up to and including, the GS-13 grade level. The virtual training session assigned in VA's Talent Management System (TMS) satisfies this initial requirement for HR Professionals above the GS-13 level. HR Specialists who are new to VHA or new to the GS-201 occupational series on or after October 1, 2018, are required to complete the following trainings: (1) the 201 JS training within 6 months of their start date and (2) the NTDP training within their first 18 months of assignment into VHA as a new HR Specialist. **NOTE:** *This requirement applies not only to VHA employees who are moving to the 201-occupational series, but also to Federal employees already in the 201 occupational series at another Federal agency, who are new to VHA.*

**5. RESPONSIBILITIES**

a. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health is responsible for ensuring overall VHA compliance with this directive.

b. **Deputy Under Secretary for Health.** The Deputy Under Secretary for Health is responsible for overseeing VHA implementation of the HR training programs mentioned in this directive.

c. **Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations.** The Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations is responsible for:

(1) Communicating the contents of this directive to each of the Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs).

(2) Providing assistance to VISN Directors to resolve implementation and compliance challenges in all VA medical facilities within that VISN.

(3) Providing oversight of VISNs to assure compliance with this directive, relevant standards and applicable regulations.

d. **Chief Officer, Workforce Management and Consulting.** The Chief Officer, Workforce Management and Consulting (WMC) is responsible for:

(1) Providing programmatic oversight of VHA Human Resources Development training programs via the Director of Human Resource Development (HRD), including 201 JS and NTDP.

(2) Compiling an annual report to Congress on the training described in this directive. The report must include the number of HR professionals trained during the reporting year and the associated cost.

(3) Ensuring HR Specialist new hires within the WMC comply with the training benchmark established in paragraph 7.

(4) Supporting each WMC HR Specialist new hire with funding for travel required for the face-to-face component of the NTDP training.

e. **Director, Human Resource Development.** The Director, HRD is responsible for:

(1) Implementing consistent training programs for VHA HR professionals.

(2) Maintaining records and sending out monthly reports of annual required recruitment and retention training compliance via monthly reports to VISN Chief Human Resource Officers (HROs), VISN Directors and the Chief Consultant, WMC.

(3) Reviewing and approving extension and exemption requests for the 201 JS and NTDP from the Chief HROs. ***NOTE: The extension and exemption request forms are located in Appendix A and B respectively; reasons for exemptions are included on the Appendix B form.***

(4) Ensuring that all content for the HR training in this directive is maintained and updated as appropriate.

f. **Program Manager, 201 Jump Start Program.** The Program Manager, 201 JS Program is responsible for:

(1) Registering participants into a 201 JS class and establishing the class in the Blackboard online learning platform.

(2) Registering participants in TMS.

(3) Informing the NTDP Program Director of those who have successfully completed the 201 JS program.

(4) Making recommendations to the Director, HRD on requests received from the Chief HROs for extensions and exemptions from 201 JS.

g. **Program Director, New Talent Development Program.** The NTDP Program Director is responsible for:

(1) Notifying the immediate supervisor of record and the Chief HRO when a student has completed 201 JS and is eligible for enrollment in NTDP.

(2) Registering participants in designated NTDP cohort upon receipt of NTDP enrollment nomination.

(3) Following up with Chief HROs monthly for missing NTDP enrollment nominations, which is tracked via the JS-NTDP Student Management System.

(4) Making recommendations to the Director, HRD on requests received from the Chief HROs for extensions and exemptions from NTDP.

(5) Registering NTDP participants in TMS upon assignment in a designated NTDP cohort.

(6) Distributing information to participants pertaining to instructions to access learning/class information and travel instructions.

(7) Maintaining records of student progress towards completion of NTDP.

(8) Maintaining records and sending out monthly reports of training compliance for 201 JS and NTDP to VISN Chief HROs and the Chief Consultant, WMC.

(9) Providing monthly guidance, instruction and collaboration to Chief HROs to address any opportunities for improvement with compliance with HR training requirements.

(10) Planning and coordinating training space for the NTDP face-to-face trainings.

h. **Veterans Integrated Service Network Director.** The VISN Director is responsible for:

(1) Supporting VA medical facilities within the VISN with funding for the one week of travel for the face-to-face component of the NTDP training.

(2) Ensuring that each HR Specialist new hire within the VISN is compliant with the training benchmark established in paragraph 7.

(3) Communicating the contents of this directive to all VA medical facilities across the VISN.

(4) Ensuring that all VA medical facilities in the VISN comply with this directive and have the resources to implement this directive and informing leadership when barriers to compliance are identified.

i. **Veterans Integrated Service Network Chief Human Resource Officer.** The VISN Chief HRO is responsible for:

(1) Ensuring the training required by this directive is part of the onboarding plans for all new HR Specialists, when hired.

(2) Monitoring and ensuring all HR Specialists are completing the annual required recruitment and retention training via monthly reports from the Director, HRD.

(3) Collaborating with HRD program office staff to address opportunities for improvement for VISN participation in required annual HR training.

(4) Monitoring and ensuring new HR Specialists are nominated, timely enrolled in and successfully complete all components of the 201 JS and NTDP program requirement via monthly reports from the NTDP Program Director.

(5) Collaborating with HR Supervisors and new HR Specialists within their respective VISN and with the HRD program office staff to address opportunities for improvement for VISN participation in 201 JS and NTDP where the VISN is not meeting the benchmark established in paragraph 7.

(6) Sending extension and exemption requests for 201 JS and NTDP training to the Director, HRD for approval.

## **6. PROGRAM STRUCTURE**

### **a. Annual VHA HR Recruitment & Retention Training.**

(1) This training is delivered via the TMS Program as a self-paced virtual platform. The duration is approximately 1 hour (or less). The training must be introduced with the initial appointment into the occupational series and annually thereafter. It provides an overview of the VA and Federal HR laws, regulations and flexibilities with recruitment and retainment of staff, as well as tools, resources and job aids that are necessary to serve as well-versed HR professionals and consultants.

(2) The training is designed to provide and enhance skill in VA specific rules and practices for HR Specialists in the primary competency area of staffing. However, it is relevant to all HR professionals in the discussion of recruitment and retention of VHA employees. The training is set up as a systematic progression of introducing the employee through a progression of information that is pertinent to their daily duties.

(3) **Course Format.** The course will provide HR Specialists the tools to:



- (a) Explain Title 5, 38 and 38 Hybrid personnel systems and the differences in recruitment and retention.
- (b) Recognize the importance of Veterans Preference in recruitment.
- (c) Determine appropriate recruitment strategies, sources and aids that can address VHA's unique needs.
- (d) Differentiate between recruitment, relocation and retention incentives.
- (e) Describe the requirements for monitoring licensure through the credentialing process and throughout employment, for employees providing patient care.
- (f) Describe how performance and conduct issues can impact the hiring process.

**NOTE:** *The training will be assigned by the employee's TMS Administrator (TMS Course ID 38044) upon appointment to the above defined Occupational Series.*

(4) HR Specialists need only to be assigned this training once annually to meet this mandatory requirement.

b. **201 Jump Start.** The 201 JS program is set up with a live welcome virtual session followed by a web-based, self-paced virtual Blackboard classroom. 201 JS is introduced within the first 90 to 120 days of hire and consists of approximately 98 hours of formal instruction and self-paced learning over a 6-week period requiring 2-3 hours of self-paced learning each week. 201 JS serves as the initial welcome and orientation for new HR Specialists and provides an overview of VA and Federal HR in addition to navigating the new HR Specialist to the tools, resources and job aids that are necessary to begin a VA career.

c. **The New Talent Development Program.** All HR Specialists, GS-201-13 and below, new to VHA or new to the GS-201 occupational series on or after October 1, 2018, are required to complete 201 JS and the NTDP within 18 months of assignment into VHA. 201 JS must be completed first and within 6 months of start date followed by NTDP which must be completed thereafter within 18 months of start date to VHA.

Course	Must complete within
1. 201 Jump Start	6 months of start date
2. NTDP	18 months of start date

(1) New HR Specialists, as defined, need only to be assigned to one of the two training tracks identified below (see paragraph 6.d.(1)-(2)) to meet this mandatory requirement, based on their assigned occupation specialty. If the HR Specialist does not fit into a specific specialty identified, their supervisor may choose which track would be most beneficial to the organization and the employee.

(2) Extensions may be granted on a case by case basis based on unusual, extenuating circumstances as determined by the Director, HRD. A participant's

supervisor may request the approval for an extension through their Chief HRO to the Director, HRD. Workload, funding, prior training or experience will not be approved as extenuating. **NOTE:** *The form for requesting an extension can be found in Appendix A.*

(3) Exemptions may be granted on a case by case basis for highly unusual and extenuating circumstances as determined by the Director, HRD. A participant's supervisor may request the approval for an exemption through their Chief HRO to the Director, HRD. Workload, funding, prior training or experience outside of VHA will not be approved as extenuating. **NOTE:** *The form for requesting an exemption can be found in Appendix B.*

(4) If for any reason, the Director, HRD is unable to deliver on training as specified above, due to extenuating circumstances, the Chief HROs will be notified as soon as practical with an alternative plan to deliver training.

(5) For all applicable learning events, TMS numbers will be provided to participants and facilitators, and will be used for tracking purposes.

d. The NTDP is designed to ensure and enhance skill in VA specific rules and practices for HR Specialists in six competency areas of Classification, Staffing, Compensation, Employee Relations, Labor Relations and Performance Management. These six competencies are divided into two primary tracks, described below. The tracks focus on the assigned specialties over a period of approximately 3-4 months. Training is set up as a systematic progression of self-paced monitored components in Blackboard, virtual sessions through a virtual platform, and a final face-to-face workshop. The two primary tracks are as follows:

(1) **Track 1.** Classification, Staffing & Compensation (CSC).

(2) **Track 2.** Employee/Labor Relations & Performance Management (ELP).

e. New Talent Development Program Course Format:

(1) Welcome/Orientation (2 hours).

(2) Self-paced virtual pre-work and preparation modules (approximately 2-3 weeks; 12 hours total).

(3) Virtual Instructor Led Training (VILT) sessions (3 days; 12 hours total).

(4) Comprehensive face-to-face workshop (3 full days – travel on Monday & Friday). **NOTE:** *If participants do not complete the required pre-work, they will not advance to the VILT portion of the training. If the participant does not attend or participate in the VILT, they will not advance to the face-to-face and they will be removed from the training and reported as incomplete. NOTE: The training schedule is mapped out 12-18 months in advance with a face-to-face scheduled approximately once every 6-8 weeks. HR Specialists will be assigned to the next available track upon completion of the 201 JS component.*

f. If for any reason the Director, HRD is unable to deliver training as specified above, due to extenuating circumstances, the Chief HROs will be notified as soon as practical with an alternative plan to deliver training. For all applicable learning events, TMS numbers will be provided to participants and facilitators, and will be used for tracking purposes.

## 7. REPORTING AND COMPLIANCE

a. Monthly reports of status and compliance will be provided by the NTDP Program Manager to the Chief Officer, WMC; VISN Directors; and VISN Chief HROs.

b. A benchmark of 80% compliance is established. Each HR Program Office or VISN will have met the benchmark if 80% of all VHA new HR Specialists hired within the FY, within their area of responsibility, complete the training within the 18 months of assignment into the 201 occupational series. The data is tracked by the FY and the month, based upon entry on duty date. For example, VISN XX hired 42 new HR Specialists in FY19. 80% of 42 equals 34. For VISN XX to meet the benchmark, at least 34 new HR Specialists hired in FY19 must complete 201 JS & NTDP within 18 months. A complete picture for all new HR Specialists hired FY19 will not be visible until March 2021 (18 months from September 30, 2019). However, tracking and monitoring is ongoing and status updates are provided monthly.

## 8. TRAINING

Training requirements associated with this directive are established in paragraph 6.

## 9. RECORDS MANAGEMENT

All records regardless of format (paper, electronic, electronic systems) created by this directive shall be managed per the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) approved records schedules found in VA Records Control Schedule 10-1. Questions regarding any aspect of records management should be addressed to the appropriate Records Manager or Records Liaison.

## 10. REFERENCES

a. P.L. 115-46.

b. Press Release on Commission on Care Report, 2016, available at: <https://s3.amazonaws.com/sitesusa/wp-content/uploads/sites/912/2016/07/2016.7.5-Press-Release.pdf>. **NOTE:** This linked document is outside VA control and may not conform to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

c. Commission on Care Report, 2015, available at: [https://s3.amazonaws.com/sitesusa/wp-content/uploads/sites/912/2015/12/Commission-on-Care\\_Interim-Report\\_2015-11-23\\_FINAL.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/sitesusa/wp-content/uploads/sites/912/2015/12/Commission-on-Care_Interim-Report_2015-11-23_FINAL.pdf). **NOTE:** This linked document is outside VA control and may not conform to Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

d. Independent Assessment of the Health Care Delivery Systems and Management Processes of the Department of Veterans Affairs, available at:

[https://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/documents/assessments/Integrated\\_Report.pdf](https://www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/documents/assessments/Integrated_Report.pdf).

e. Government Accounting Office (GAO) 2016 Report, VHA Management Attention Is Needed to Address Systemic, Long-standing Human Capital Challenges, available at:

<https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/682451.pdf>.

f. 2016 VA OIG Report, OIG Determination of VHA Occupational Staffing Shortages, available at: <https://www.va.gov/oig/pubs/VAOIG-16-00351-453.pdf>.

g. VA's 2018-2019 Human Capital Operations Report.

h. Workforce Planning Cycle Shortage Occupation Report, VHA FY18, available at:

<https://dvagov.sharepoint.com/sites/vhawmcWFP/SiteCollectionDocuments/2018%20VHA%20Shortage%20Occupation%20Identification%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>. **NOTE:**

*This is an internal VA Web site that is not available to the public.*

**REQUEST FOR AN EXTENSION**

1. An extension beyond the 18-month timeline for completion from the subject mandated training is requested for the following:

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

HR General Schedule (GS)-201 assigned specialty: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level: GS-201-\_\_\_\_\_

VISN/Station Number/Facility: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of entry (MM/YYYY) into the GS-201 occupational series: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Entry into Veterans Health Administration (VHA) as a GS-201: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Reason an extension is being requested:

**NOTE:** *Workload, funding, prior training or non VHA experience will not be approved.*

3. For additional information please contact:

\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor Name/Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Chief, Human Resource Officer Name/Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Approve/Disapprove

Director, Human Resource Development Name/Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

**REQUEST FOR AN EXEMPTION**

1. An exemption from the subject mandated training is requested for the following:

Employee Name: \_\_\_\_\_

HR General Schedule (GS)-201 assigned specialty: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level: GS-201-\_\_\_\_\_

VISN/Station Number/Facility: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of entry (MM/YYYY) into the GS-201 occupational series: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Entry into Veterans Health Administration (VHA) as a GS-201: \_\_\_\_\_

Dates of prior VHA experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Prior VHA GS-201 assigned specialty: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Reason an exemption is being requested:

a. Employee has several years of prior VHA HR experience requiring minimal to no training.

b. Formally approved reasonable accommodation preventing travel in the line of duty.

c. Other (explain):

**NOTE:** *Workload, funding, prior training or non VHA experience will not be approved.*

3. For additional information please contact:

Supervisor Name/Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Chief, Human Resource Officer Name/Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Approve/Disapprove

Director, Human Resource Development Name/Signature

\_\_\_\_\_