



Department of Veterans Affairs

# Diversity@Work

<http://www.diversity.va.gov>

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## Message from the DAS

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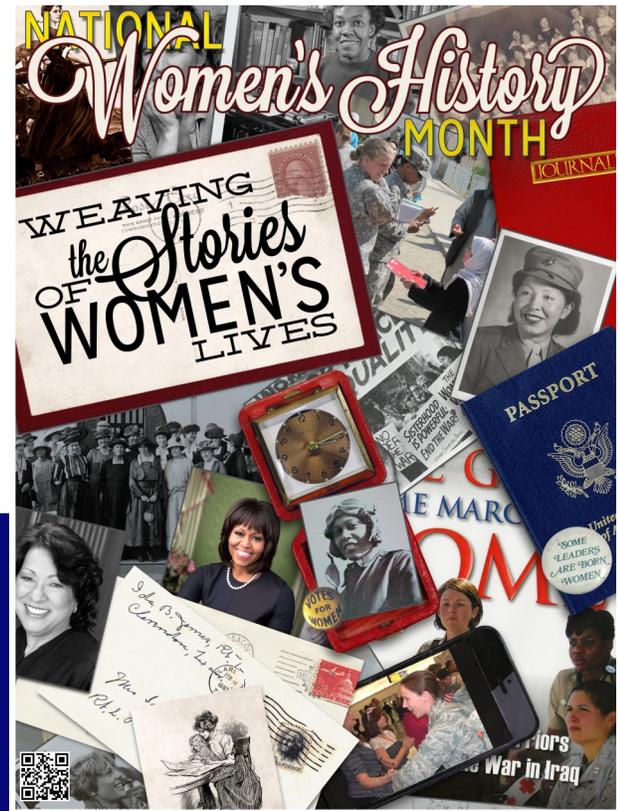
Have a dispute?  
VA's Alternative Dispute Resolution program can help:  
<http://www.va.gov/adr>.

Have an EEO complaint?  
Contact the Office of Resolution Management at (888) 737-3361 within 45 calendar days of the alleged incident:  
<http://www.va.gov/ORM/EEOcomplaint.asp>.

Please join me, our Department, and our Nation this March in proudly recognizing women's achievements as we commemorate Women's History Month. This observance gives us the opportunity to reflect on the challenges women have faced with regards to equality and on the progress we continue to make toward equal rights. For more information on this commemoration and on the VA Central Office event, read the article below.

Women currently represent nearly 60 percent of VA's workforce but only around 40 percent of the VA Senior Executive Service (SES). On that note, I am pleased to announce that the VA Learning University has recently reinstated the SES Candidate Development Program. As this program produces VA's future leaders, we should all ensure that diverse candidates are encouraged to apply. Qualified GS-14s, GS-15s, and Title 38 equivalents can read about how to submit their applications on [page 3](#).

During the month of March, we also commemorate Irish-American Heritage Month and recognize the contributions Irish Americans have made to our Nation. Read about this observance on [page 4](#).  
**Continued on page 3.**



Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute  
Special Observance Poster

## Commemorate

### Women's History Month

On March 19, 2015, the Federal Women's Program Committee will commemorate Women's History Month with a program at VA Central Office in the G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Veterans Conference Center from noon to 1:00 pm. This event is also scheduled to be broadcast live on the VA Knowledge Network. The theme this year is, "Weaving the Stories of Women's Lives."

For more information, contact Tynnetta Lee, Special Emphasis Observance Coordinator, ODI, at (202) 461-7968 or [Tynnetta.Lee@va.gov](mailto:Tynnetta.Lee@va.gov). **Continued on the next page.**

# Commemorate

## Women's History Month (Continued from the Previous Page)

VA joins our Nation in observing March as Women's History Month and pauses to recognize the contributions of women to history, the present, and the future. This year's theme, "Weaving the Stories of Women's Lives," provides the opportunity to interlace women's stories, both independently and jointly, into the dynamics of our Nation's history.

The National Women's History Project (NWHF) determines the theme for this annual observance. This year marks the 35th anniversary of the Women's History Movement and the NWHF. After decades of dedicated research and technological advances, the stories of American women from all cultures and classes are accessible and visible as never before. Numerous scholars and activists helped shape the Women's History Movement, and also provided the research and energy which created and sustains the NWHF and is now woven into the fabric of our National story.

During March, the NWHF will honor nine women from the past and present who exemplified this year's theme. Their list includes Delilah L. Beasley, the first African American woman to be regularly published in a major metropolitan newspaper and the first author to present the history of African Americans in early California; Gladys Tantaquidegon, a Mohegan Medicine woman, anthropologist, and Tribal Elder; Eleanor Flexner, author of the groundbreaking 1959 book, "Century of Struggle: The Women's Right Movement in the United States" which marked her as a pioneer in the field of women's studies; Polly Welts Kaufman, a writer, teacher, and above all an activist for equality; Judy Yung, best known for her groundbreaking work in documenting the immigration history of Angel Island and the life stories of Chinese American women; Holly Near, who has inspired generations with music that chronicles progressive activism of the late 20th and early 21st centuries; and Vicki L. Ruiz, the first in her family to receive any advanced degree by earning a PhD in History from Stanford in 1982. Two months later, Ruiz showed up for her first teaching position with a baby on her hip and another on the way. To see a complete list of honorees, visit the NWHF Web site at <http://www.nwhf.org>.

For more information about Women's History Month, contact your local EEO Manager or Mercedes N. Kirkland-Doyle, VA's National Federal Women's Program Manager, at (202) 461-4205 or [Mercedes.Kirkland-Doyle@va.gov](mailto:Mercedes.Kirkland-Doyle@va.gov).



Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute  
Special Observance Poster (2014)

## Policy Alert

### Title 38 Clarification of Reduction in Annual Salary Rate

VA Directive 5021 has been revised to provide clarification that a reduction in basic pay of a title 38 employee for cause (performance or conduct deficiencies), including a reduction due to a change to another annual salary table, is considered a major adverse action. For more information, contact Employee Relations and Performance Management Service (051) at [vaco051cacgohrm@va.gov](mailto:vaco051cacgohrm@va.gov).

# DAS Message

*Continued from Page 1*

March 7 marks the 50th anniversary of Selma. Two weeks after Bloody Sunday in 1965, marchers set out on a 54-mile trek from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. That march fueled the passage of the Voting Rights Act, landmark legislation that prohibited racial discrimination in voting. As we reflect on history, let us commemorate the bravery of those who were willing to take those steps that would ultimately guide our Nation to take a giant stride toward equality.



*Georgia Coffey*

This is a final call for applications for centralized funding for Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) interns. The WRP provides work experience opportunities for college students and recent graduates with disabilities who are seeking employment during the spring and summer months. Centralized funding covers the payroll costs of a WRP intern and is available VA-wide on a first-come, first-served basis. To get started, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx#WRP>. For questions, contact Aurelia Waters, VA WRP Program Manager, ODI, at [VAWRP@va.gov](mailto:VAWRP@va.gov). You are encouraged to use the WRP to hire qualified individuals with disabilities and further VA's efforts to ensure that we have a diverse workforce to best serve our Nation's Veterans. ~Georgia Coffey, VA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion

## SES Candidate Development Program

### *Senior Executive Service*

For the first time in several years, VA is offering the Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP) for GS-14s, GS-15s, and Title 38 equivalents. VA invites qualified individuals—those who have demonstrated through their performance and experience the potential to assume executive positions within VA—to apply to this prestigious program.

VA's SESCO is designed to train, develop, and create certified leaders who, upon completion of the program, can be non-competitively selected for SES positions. Specifically, the Program is designed to achieve the following goals:

- Identify individuals who have demonstrated strong potential for executive leadership and who possess the attributes necessary for becoming VA Senior Executives.
- Provide formal interagency training and development opportunities designed to enhance and augment candidates' executive leadership skills, competencies, and characteristics.
- Create a pool of well-developed, qualified, and diverse candidates eligible for SES positions to ensure continuity of operations within VA and provide support across the Federal Government, as needed.
- Develop, strengthen, and broaden the candidates' knowledge and understanding regarding the mission, structure, organizational issues, and operations of VA.

To learn more about the SESCO, visit <http://www.valu.va.gov/SlickSheet/View/62> or join in on an information meeting at 800-767-1750, access code 58363, online meeting link <https://meet.RTC.VA.GOV/patrick.manley3/C3H0MH8Z>, on March 13 or 27, 2015, from 11:00 am to noon (EST).

Interested SESCO applicants can apply by going to <https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/394376600?share=email>. For details on how to apply online, go to [https://help.usajobs.gov/index.php/How\\_do\\_I\\_apply\\_for\\_Federal\\_jobs%3F](https://help.usajobs.gov/index.php/How_do_I_apply_for_Federal_jobs%3F). The deadline for completing your application and all relevant materials is April 3, 2015; start your application today. For more information, email [SESCDP@va.gov](mailto:SESCDP@va.gov).

# Commemorate

## ***2014 Presidential Proclamation: Women's History Month***

Throughout our Nation's history, American women have led movements for social and economic justice, made groundbreaking scientific discoveries, enriched our culture with stunning works of art and literature, and charted bold directions in our foreign policy. They have served our country with valor, from the battlefields of the Revolutionary War to the deserts of Iraq and mountains of Afghanistan. During Women's History Month, we recognize the victories, struggles, and stories of the women who have made our country what it is today.

This month, we are reminded that even in America, freedom and justice have never come easily. As part of a centuries-old and ever-evolving movement, countless women have put their shoulder to the wheel of progress—activists who gathered at Seneca Falls and gave expression to a righteous cause; trailblazers who defied convention and shattered glass ceilings; millions who claimed control of their own bodies, voices, and lives. Together, they have pushed our Nation toward equality, liberation, and acceptance of women's right—not only to choose their own destinies—but also to shape the futures of peoples and nations.

Through the grit and sacrifice of generations, American women and girls have gained greater opportunities and more representation than ever before. Yet they continue to face workplace discrimination, a higher risk of sexual assault, and an earnings gap that will cost the average woman hundreds of thousands of dollars over the course of her working lifetime...

As we honor the many women who have shaped our history, let us also celebrate those who make progress in our time. Let us remember that when women succeed, America succeeds. And from Wall Street to Main Street, in the White House and on Capitol Hill—let us put our Nation on the path to success. *Article taken from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/01/presidential-proclamation-womens-history-month-2014>.*

## ***2014 Presidential Proclamation: Irish-American Heritage Month***

Centuries after America welcomed the first sons and daughters of the Emerald Isle to our shores, Irish heritage continues to enrich our Nation. This month, we reflect on proud traditions handed down through the generations, and we celebrate the many threads of green woven into the red, white, and blue.

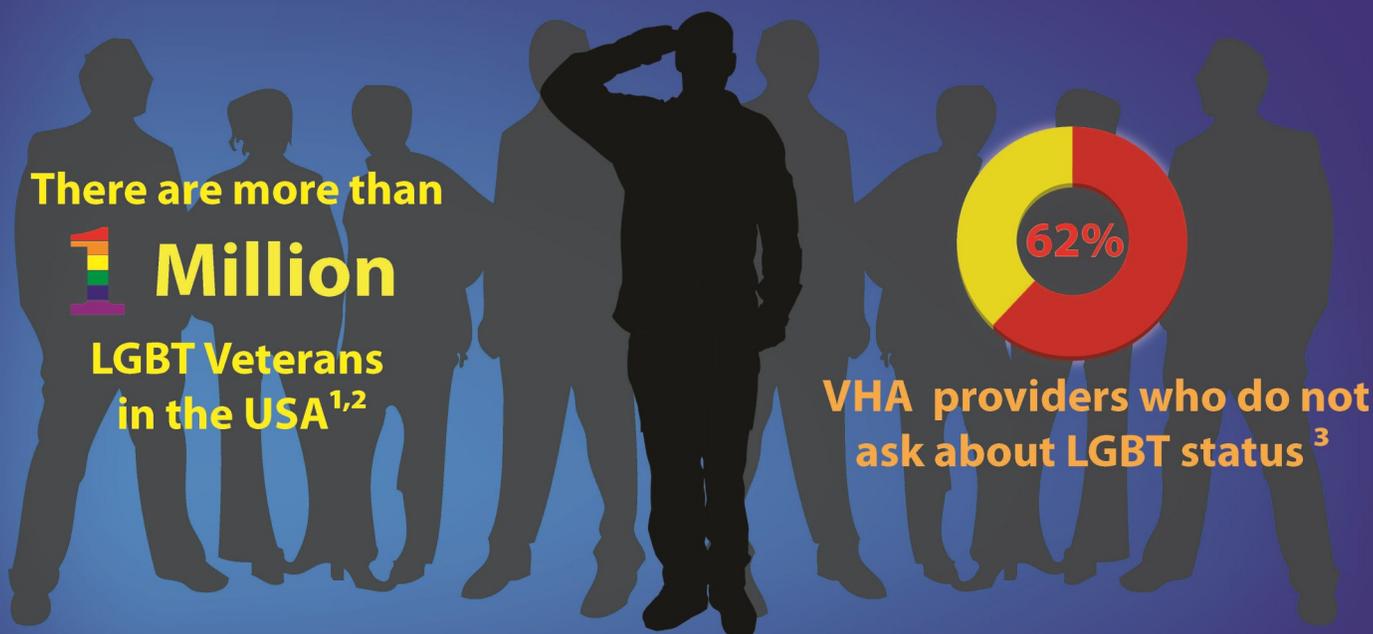
Irish Americans have defended our country through times of war, strengthened communities from coast to coast, and poured sweat and blood into building our infrastructure and raising our skyscrapers. Some endured hunger, hardship, and prejudice; many rose to be leaders of government, industry, or culture. Their journey is a testament to the resilience of the Irish character, a people who never stopped dreaming of a brighter future and never stopped striving to make that dream a reality. Today, Americans of all backgrounds can find common ground in the values of faith and perseverance, and we can all draw strength from the unshakable belief that through hard work and sacrifice, we can forge better lives for ourselves and our families.

The American and Irish peoples enjoy a friendship deepened by both shared heritage and shared ideals. On the international stage, we are proud to work in concert toward a freer, more just world. As we honor that enduring connection during Irish-American Heritage Month, let us look forward to many more generations of partnership. May the bond between our peoples only grow in the centuries to come. *Article taken from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/02/28/presidential-proclamation-irish-american-heritage-month-2014>.*

# Commemorate

LGBT Health Awareness Week

## Do Ask, Do Tell Good communication is good health care



Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT)  
**HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK**  
MARCH 23-27, 2015

For a list of resources, email  
LGBTProgam@va.gov

<sup>1</sup> Gates, 2004  
<sup>2</sup> Gates & Herman, 2014  
<sup>3</sup> Sherman, Kauth, Shipherd & Street, 2014



**VA** HEALTH CARE | Defining **EXCELLENCE** in the 21st Century

# Training

## Barrier Analysis

Barrier elimination is essential for VA to become a model employer. To achieve this status, VA must create a barrier-free environment where all applicants and employees have the opportunity to compete and work to their fullest potential.

The Barrier Analysis training course covers all aspects of the barrier analysis process under Management Directive 715 to include analysis and interpretation of workforce statistics, trigger identification, barrier analysis investigation, preparing action plans, and following up on the action plan. This training, in its entirety, will allow the participants to work through the majority of the process using VA specific workforce statistics.

The training will be held Thursday, April 23, 2015, from 1 to 4 pm. To register, visit [https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink\\_redirect.jsp?linkId=ITEM\\_DETAILS&componentID=3844925&componentTypeID=VA&revisionDate=136810680000](https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=ITEM_DETAILS&componentID=3844925&componentTypeID=VA&revisionDate=136810680000). For more information, contact Ryan Pugh at [Ryan.Pugh2@va.gov](mailto:Ryan.Pugh2@va.gov) or (202) 461-4155.

### Section 508

Let the VA Section 508 Program Office help you with your ICARE mission of access for everyone.

As the people who procure, create, edit, publish, or manage Electronic and Information Technology (E&IT) products and systems for VA, you are required to make sure that your E&IT meets Section 508 standards.

VA's Section 508 Program Office offers a variety of training available to anyone with a VA email address. The courses can also be found on TMS.

The VA Office of Information Technology Section 508 Program Office hosts a monthly call-in hour, "Ask the 508 Office." Feel free to openly ask any questions you may have regarding Section 508, the Self-Certification process, or accessible technology within VA.

For more information, email [Section508@va.gov](mailto:Section508@va.gov).

## Federal Asian Pacific American Council



The Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) 30th National Leadership Training Program (NLTP) will be held May 4–8, 2015, at the Rockville Hilton in Maryland. The theme for this year's program is "Many Cultures, One Voice: Promote Equality and Inclusion." The FAPAC NLTP qualifies as training in accordance with 5 U.S.C. Chapter 41 and is open to all Federal employees.

The FAPAC NLTP will deliver workshops on strategic leadership, science and technology, communications, language and cultures, supervisory essentials, and equal employment opportunity and diversity. Additionally, the program will have a Veterans forum.

ODI is planning a no-cost VA Forum for May 4, from 8 am to noon, designed to provide VA employees and Veterans with information on professional development, VA's Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) workforce demographics, leadership, and ODI workforce initiatives. Employees in the local commuting area are encouraged to attend the VA Forum, with supervisory approval. Attendees must follow appropriate conference attendance approval procedures established for their respective organizations. Costs associated with attending the VA Forum and/or NLTP must be authorized by each employee's organization.

To register for the VA Forum, visit [https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink\\_redirect.jsp?linkId=SCHEDULED\\_OFFERING\\_DETAILS&scheduleID=2682790](https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=SCHEDULED_OFFERING_DETAILS&scheduleID=2682790). Employees who plan to attend the VA Forum and/or the FAPAC NLTP must also pre-register through the VA Attendance and Cost Estimation system.

For the intranet link address, or more information, contact Andy Gonzalez, VA's National AAPI Employment Program Manager, ODI, at [Andy.Gonzalez@va.gov](mailto:Andy.Gonzalez@va.gov) or (202) 299-4320. Additional conference information including registration costs, course descriptions, and schedules is available online at <http://www.fapac.org>.

**Continued on the next page.**

# Training

## Federally Employed Women



Federally Employed Women (FEW) is a private membership organization working as an advocacy group to improve the status of women employed by the Federal Government and by the District of Columbia government. FEW works to end sex and gender discrimination, encourage diversity for inclusion and equity in the workplace, and for the advancement and professional growth of women in Federal service. Each year, FEW's direction is based on recommendations made by members at the Annual Membership Meeting held during the National Training Program (NTP) and adopted by the Board of Directors at the first meeting following the NTP.

The 46th Annual FEW NTP will be held in New Orleans, Louisiana, from July 13-16, 2015, at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside. The FEW NTP qualifies as training in accordance with 5 U.S.C. Chapter 41 and 5 CFR 410.404 and all sessions are mapped to OPM's Senior Executive Service Executive Core Qualifications (Leading Change, Leading People, Results Driven, Business Acumen, and Building Coalitions).

The program will also have a Veterans forum and ODI is planning a no-cost VA Forum designed to provide VA employees and Veterans with information on professional development, VA's Federal Women's Program, workforce demographics, leadership, and ODI workforce initiatives. Employees in the local commuting area are encouraged to attend the VA Forum, with supervisory approval. Attendees must follow appropriate conference attendance approval procedures established for their respective organizations. Costs associated with attending the VA Forum and/or the FEW NTP must be authorized by each employee's organization. Employees who plan to attend the VA Forum and/or the FEW NTP must also pre-register through VA Attendance and Cost Estimation System (ACES).

For the intranet link address or more information, contact Mercedes N. Kirkland-Doyle, VA's National Women's Employment Program Manager, ODI, at [Mercedes.Kirkland-Doyle@va.gov](mailto:Mercedes.Kirkland-Doyle@va.gov) or (202) 461-4205. Additional conference information including registration costs, course descriptions, and schedules is available online at <https://www.few.org/registration>.

## Society of American Indian Government Employees

The Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE) is a national 501(c)(3) non-profit organization representing American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Federal, Tribal, State, and local government employees. SAIGE will hold its 12th Annual National Training Program (NTP) on June 15-18, 2015, at the Treasure Island Resort and Casino in Welch, Minnesota. The SAIGE NTP qualifies as training in accordance with 5 U.S.C. Chapter 41 and is open to all Federal employees.

The SAIGE NTP offers workshops for professional and personal development where attendees will learn about current issues, opportunities, and challenges facing AI/AN. SAIGE will host a youth program to encourage college students to consider careers in Federal government. On June 18, there will be a no-cost Veterans' Track program designed to help Veterans navigate the Federal benefits and employment systems.

ODI is planning a no-cost VA Forum for June 15, from 9 am to noon, designed to provide VA employees with information on professional development, VA's AI/AN workforce demographics, and workforce initiatives. Employees in the local commuting area are encouraged to attend the VA Forum, with supervisory approval. Attendees must follow appropriate conference attendance approval procedures established for their respective organizations. Register for the VA Forum through VA's Talent Management System at [https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink\\_redirect.jsp?linkId=SCHEDULED\\_OFFERING\\_DETAILS&scheduleID=2687405](https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=SCHEDULED_OFFERING_DETAILS&scheduleID=2687405). Costs associated with attending the VA Forum and/or the SAIGE NTP must be authorized by each employee's organization. Employees who plan to attend the VA Forum and/or the SAIGE NTP must also pre-register through VA Attendance and Cost Estimation System (ACES).

For the intranet link address or more information, contact Ms. Aurelia Waters, Diversity Specialist, ODI, at [Aurelia.Waters@va.gov](mailto:Aurelia.Waters@va.gov) or (202) 461-4124. Additional conference information including registration costs, course descriptions, and schedules is available online at <http://www.saige.org>.





**VALU**  
VA LEARNING UNIVERSITY

**MyCareer@VA**

**MyCareer@VA**  
*Setting and Reaching Your Career Goals*

As VA ramps up to provide better service than ever before, wouldn't it feel good to contribute even more to the mission of serving our Veterans? With a few smart strategies and a solid plan of attack, you can. Regardless of where you are in your career, setting and achieving your career goals helps you give your best so VA can give Veterans and their families the care they deserve.

Here are a few tips for making your VA career goals a reality. (For help on setting goals to begin with, check out this guide to creating SMART goals [<http://go.usa.gov/h4rm>], which are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound.)

### **1. Make a step-by-step plan**

Breaking your goal into small steps makes it easier to conquer<sup>1</sup>. Athletes know this well; that's why a marathoner starts her training with just a mile or two. You might create daily tasks for yourself or develop monthly milestones—but whatever you decide, make sure your plan has specific steps that seem manageable to you.

There are many resources available to help you set and keep track of goals. Find step-by-step guidance for common VA career goals—including building new skills (<http://go.usa.gov/h2HQ>) and finding a different job at VA (<http://go.usa.gov/h2uP>)—using the Career Steps in MyCareer@VA's Career Hub. Or, you can build on a goal from your individual development plan (IDP) (<http://go.usa.gov/h2JR>). No matter how you do it, just be sure to break up your goal into clear steps.

### **2. Create good habits**

New York Times bestselling author Charles Duhigg has spent a lot of time studying the power of habits. Taking steps to create good habits, like those listed below, can help you reach your goals<sup>2</sup>.

**Make a routine.** Take a little time each day or week to work on your goal. Schedule this time on your calendar to make sure you don't forget. For example, if your goal is to meet more people in your field, you might book 30 minutes each Monday afternoon to create an elevator pitch (<http://go.usa.gov/h2SA>) to introduce yourself to new people at VA.

**Use simple cues.** A cue is something that reminds you to act. Cues can be activities or even objects. So, to remind yourself to take an online career development course (<http://go.usa.gov/h2SJ>), you might leave the headphones you'll need for that course on your keyboard before heading out for the day.

**Reward yourself.** Rewards encourage new habits. They can be short-term (like watching your favorite television show), long-term (like a promotion), or both. It can be as simple as reminding yourself of the Veterans who have sacrificed for us who will be better served by your new skills. Knowing a reward is coming makes it more likely that you'll stick to your plan.

### **3. Tell someone else**

Telling someone about your goal helps you hold yourself responsible for staying on task. Plus, when you feel discouraged, your friends can remind you why your goal was important to you in the first place.<sup>3</sup> **Continued on the next page.**

# MyCareer@VA

*Continued from the Previous Page*

The person you tell can be anyone you think will do a good job of holding you to your word—for instance, a friend, mentor (<http://go.usa.gov/hTCc>), family member, or coworker. Schedule regular check-ins to talk about the progress you've made. Then, ask your friend to be honest with you about where he or she sees room for improvement.

Need ideas for goals to set for your career? Browse a variety of career development topics and activities in the MyCareer@VA Library (<http://go.usa.gov/hTC5>). And, don't forget to use your personalized MyCareer@VA Career Hub to set and track all of your career goals in one place. And as always, visit the VA Learning University (<http://go.usa.gov/hTUJ>) for even more training and career development information. To stay up to date with career advice and articles like this one, sign up for MyCareer@VA email updates (<http://go.usa.gov/hTYR>).

Source(s):

<sup>1,3</sup>Knight, Rebecca. 2013. "Make Your Work Resolutions Stick." Harvard Business Review, December 29. Accessed January 13, 2015. <https://hbr.org/2014/12/make-your-work-resolutions-stick>

<sup>2</sup>Duhigg, Charles. 2012. The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business. New York: Random House.

## Field Notes

### ***Career Development Mentoring Program***

The Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) proudly announces its 2015 Career Development Mentoring Program (CDP) for High Performers, in support of Executive Order 13583 on establishing a coordinated government-wide initiative to promote diversity and inclusion in the Federal workforce.

The CDP is now accepting applications from Federal employees in the Washington DC metropolitan area who are interested in being mentored or serving as mentors.

Eligible mentees must be GS13 or below with permanent career status. Nonsupervisory GS14s will also be considered.

Eligible mentors must be GS14 or above and have at least eight years in Federal service. Mentors will serve as a resource for the self-improvement and professional development of mentees; offer opportunities to strengthen personal goals and career planning; provide a forum to discuss mentees' concerns in regard to becoming a high performer in Federal Government; and, most importantly, enrich individual readiness for hiring and career advancement opportunities via resume and interview practices.

A maximum of 20 mentors and 20 mentees will be selected for the program. The application form for both mentors and mentees is available online at <http://www.fapac.org/cdp>. For more information, contact program committee chair Aurea Franklin at [Aurea.Franklin@va.gov](mailto:Aurea.Franklin@va.gov) or 202-632-8210. Applications must be received by March 6, 2015.

**Continued on the next page.**

# Field Notes

## *Asian American Government Executives Network Scholarship Program*

Applications are being accepted for Asian American Government Executives Network's (AAGEN's) Scholarship Program for 2015. "The scholarship program has been designed for students in their continuing education to better prepare themselves for positions of leadership and trust in the Federal, State and Local governments." Two scholarships for \$1,500 and two scholarships for \$1,000 will be awarded in 2015. The AAGEN scholarship is a one-time award; former AAGEN scholarship winners are not eligible.

For more information about AAGEN's scholarship program, including eligibility requirements and the application form, visit <http://www.aagen.org> or contact Dr. Glenda Nogami, Scholarship Awards Committee Chair, at [Glenda.Nogami@streufert.net](mailto:Glenda.Nogami@streufert.net). Applications will be accepted until April 1, 2015. AAGEN is a 501(c)(3) non-profit and non-partisan organization whose mission is to promote, expand, and support Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) leadership in government. For more information, contact Andy Gonzalez, VA's National AAPI Program Manager, ODI, at [Andy.Gonzalez@va.gov](mailto:Andy.Gonzalez@va.gov) or (202) 299-4320.

## Work-Life Benefits

### *Tools for a Healthier Work-Life Balance*

Maintaining a healthy balance between your work life and your home life is important. It increases job satisfaction, fosters a healthy lifestyle and enables you to provide better service to Veterans. A good work-life balance means you have time for family, friends and personal interests—in addition to fulfilling your responsibilities at work.

VA recognizes the importance of a good work-life balance. That's why the Department offers numerous benefits to employees, including:

- **Wellness is Now:** This program helps you meet your health-related goals.
- **Childcare subsidies:** VA might share the cost of your childcare. Learn more on the program's website.
- **Worklife4You:** This program can help you better manage daily responsibilities and life events, including parenting, education and financial and legal concerns.
- **Employee Assistance Program:** The EAP program offers free and confidential assessments, counseling and follow-up services to employees who have personal- and/or work-related problems.
- **Telework:** While not every job is suitable for telework, you may be able to take advantage of this benefit and work from home.
- **Alternative work schedules:** If your position allows it, try an alternative work schedule.
- **Compressed work schedules:** Some positions allow you to meet the 80-hour biweekly requirement in less than 10 days.
- **Flexible work schedules:** Some positions offer the opportunity to split the workday into two distinct kinds of time: a core time band and a flexible time band:
  - Core time bands are the designated period(s) of the day when all employees must be at work.
  - Flexible hours are the part of the workday when employees may (within limits or "bands") choose their time of arrival and departure.

Visit the OHRM Work-Life Benefits Web site at <http://www.va.gov/OHRM/WorkLifeBenefits.asp> to learn more about these programs.

The Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication (OEDCA) often receives questions from complainants, their representatives, and management officials about how OEDCA arrives at its decisions. A sampling of questions is below. Please note the responses are for informational purposes only, and not for the purpose of providing legal advice. You should contact your attorney to obtain advice with respect to any particular issue or problem. Also, for further information about the equal employment opportunity (EEO) process, you may wish to consult the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC's) Web site at <http://www.eeoc.gov>. Use the "Federal" tab for information regarding the Federal sector complaint process.

*Does OEDCA provide complainants and their representatives with legal advice?* No. OEDCA is an independent office within VA charged with objectively adjudicating EEO complaints filed against the department. It is not part of the Office of General Counsel. By statute, OEDCA is precluded from having any discussions with either the complainant or VA management concerning the merits of a complaint.

*Who makes the decision? Is it one person or a panel of people?* The decision is prepared by a staff attorney. It is reviewed by the OEDCA Associate Director, and signed by the OEDCA Director.

*Who supplies OEDCA with the documents needed to make a decision?* OEDCA's decisions are based on the evidence of record, i.e., the Report of Investigation (ROI). The ROI is prepared by an investigator assigned by the VA Office of Resolution Management (ORM).

*After the complaint file is received by OEDCA, can additional information be submitted for consideration?* If after a review of the record, OEDCA determines that the record is insufficient to render a decision, it will order a supplemental investigation. The supplemental investigation is conducted by an ORM investigator. Supplemental investigations typically take 30 days to complete, but may make longer.

*And does OEDCA consider ONLY those documents, nothing else?* The decision is based on the materials contained in the investigative record (see above)—OEDCA does not conduct hearings. If a supplemental investigation was done, the decision will also be based on evidence from the supplemental investigation.

*If new or missed issues in the documents are identified, are those issues taken into consideration?* The complainant cannot amend his or her complaint at the final decision stage to include new issues. If there are records that were not included in the ROI, the complainant may forward those to ORM for possible inclusion in the record. Also, it is possible that OEDCA may, on its own, reframe a claim if it appears it was not properly identified. If the record evidence is adequate to address the re-framed claim, OEDCA will adjudicate it. If the record is not adequate, OEDCA will request a supplemental investigation.

*If a complainant wants to change his or her requested remedies, how does the complainant do that? Is there a generally accepted format for submission of remedies?* If OEDCA makes a finding of discrimination, it determines the appropriate remedies. Remedies may include back pay, promotion or reassignment. When discrimination is found, OEDCA will order a public posting acknowledging the discrimination at the responsible facility and training for the responsible management officials. The complainant will also have an opportunity to provide further documentation to support his or her request for compensatory damages and attorney fees, if a finding of discrimination is made.

*What happens once the decision is rendered? How long does VA have to abide by the decision?* If the decision results in a non-finding, the complainant may appeal the decision to either the EEOC or in Federal court. He may also have a right of appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board. If a finding is rendered, the agency has varying timeframes to comply with the remedies ordered by OEDCA, such as postings and training. The timeframes vary and may range from 30 to 90 days. The VA cannot appeal OEDCA's finding of discrimination. However, if a complainant is dissatisfied with an OEDCA finding and the ordered remedies, he can appeal the decision administratively or in Federal court.

~Maxanne R. Witkin, Director, VA's Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication

Diversity@Work is published by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), a program office within the Office of Human Resources and Administration (HR&A). To subscribe or unsubscribe, e-mail [odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov).

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#### GOT NEWS?

We want to hear from you! E-mail us at [odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov).

#### OTHER USEFUL LINKS

MyCareer@VA  
<http://www.mycareeratva.va.gov>

HR&A  
<http://www.va.gov/employee>

Office of Human Resources Management  
<http://www.va.gov/ohrm>

Office of Resolution Management  
<http://www.va.gov/orm>

Resolution Support Center  
<http://www.va.gov/ORM/RSC.asp>  
1-888-566-3982

VA Whistleblower Rights and Protections  
<http://www.diversity.va.gov/whistleblower.aspx>

VHA Diversity and Inclusion Community of Practice  
[David.Rabb@va.gov](mailto:David.Rabb@va.gov)

VA on Facebook  
<http://www.facebook.com/veteransaffairs>

VA on YouTube  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/DeptVetAffairs>

# D&I Online

The mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs' diversity and inclusion program is to develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated, and strategic focus on diversity and inclusion as key components of the Department's human resources strategies. Here's a sampling of online tools available at <http://www.diversity.va.gov> that can help leverage diversity and build inclusion:

- ▶ Women's History Month other observance resources.
- ▶ Training resources, guides, and reports.
- ▶ Links to professional and community organizations.
- ▶ Best practices for diversity management.



## D&I In Your E-mail Inbox

ODI sends out *NewsLink*, an e-mail message with annotated links to current news items and other information related to leveraging diversity and building inclusion. For a FREE subscription to this electronic news service, e-mail [odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov) with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWSLINK in the subject line. Find a sample of *NewsLink* at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/newslink.aspx>.

## D&I on Your TV or PC

Diversity News is a 15-minute bi-monthly video co-produced by ODI and the VA Central Office Broadcast Center for you. The December 2014/January 2015 edition focuses on the "Guidance on Religious Exercise and Expression in VA Facilities and Property Under the Charge and Control of VA". *Diversity News* follows VA News on the VA Knowledge Network, Content Distribution Network, channel 2. Programs are also available at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx>.

## March 2015 Calendar

<http://www.diversity.va.gov/calendar>

Irish-American Heritage Month  
National Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month  
National Professional Social Work Month  
Women's History Month

Telework Week  
March 2-6

International Women's Day  
March 8

Deaf History Month  
March 13-April 15

St. Patrick's Day  
March 17

VACO Women's History Month Program  
March 19, noon-1 pm, Room 230

LGBT Health Awareness Week  
March 23-27

Cesar Chavez Day  
March 31

Be sure to review the list of external affinity conferences approved for VA-wide participation for fiscal year 2015 now available online at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs>.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration will announce via all station memorandums each affinity conference with conference registration information.



Integrity  
Commitment  
Advocacy  
Respect  
Excellence