



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20420

DIVERSITY@WORK

A PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT & EEO, WWW.VA.GOV/DMEEO

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 6

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2003

Q&A

A Woman's Perspective

Part three of our interview with Dr. Irene Trowell-Harris, Director of the Center for Women Veterans. In this issue, she shares career success tips.

Q: You retired from the Air Force in 2001 as a major general. How challenging was the transition to VA?

Dr. Trowell-Harris: I actually transitioned to VA when I joined the Office of Inspector General's Office of Healthcare Inspections as Director for Patient Care Inspections & Program Evaluation in 1993. I was performing similar duties in the Air Force and VA, so the transition was easy.

Q: What recommendations do you have

for women interested in getting ahead in the Federal workplace?

Dr. Trowell-Harris: I recommend first that women pursue a college education, including graduate studies. They should also take on progressively responsible work and model professional behavior with a focus on mission and work accomplishments. It's vital to have a dedicated mentor who's willing to share, network, and mentor others as well. Women should always strive for excellence and a superb quality of work. A willingness to partner with others as part of a team for a common goal is also important, as are good interpersonal skills and a positive attitude. ■

CELEBRATE!

National Hispanic Heritage Month

VA proudly joins the Nation in celebrating National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 through October 15.

This year's theme is "Hispanic Americans: One Culture, Many Races." Hispanic Americans have fought valiantly in every war in U.S. history. And the Medal of Honor, the highest U.S. military distinction, has been awarded to 42 of them for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life above and beyond the call of duty." Hispanic Americans are the largest ethnic group to earn this award in proportion to the number who served.

To learn about VA's Hispanic Employment Program, contact Lead EEO Manager Noemi Pizarro-Hyman at noemi.hyman@mail.va.gov.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

National Disability Employment Awareness Month is celebrated throughout October. This year's theme is "America Works Best When All Americans Work."

VA is committed to recruiting and hiring people with disabilities. The Department employed 18,769 last year, which is 9.24 percent of its workforce. People with disabilities can be hired through a traditional competitive hiring process or—if qualified—noncompetitively through excepted service appointing authorities, which were developed to provide performance opportunities and help overcome workplace barriers.

For more resources, visit the People With Disabilities Employment Program Web page at www.va.gov/dmeeo/ndeam.htm. ■

In this issue:

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| FIELD NOTES News You Can Use | 2 |
| WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT National Organization on Disability | 2 |
| SPECIAL EMPHASIS Special Appointing Authorities for Veterans | 3 |
| INSIDE STORY VA's Most Underrepresented Groups | 3 |
| DM&EEO ONLINE | 4 |
| CALENDAR | 4 |

Bookmarks

- **Javits-Wagner-O'Day Program**
www.jwod.gov
- **Code Talkers Exhibit**
www.nsa.gov/museum/talkers.html
- **Black Archives**
www.blackarchives.org
- **Women in Military Service for America Memorial**
www.womensmemorial.org
- **Asian American Government Executives Network**
www.aagen.org
- **National Alliance for Hispanic Health**
www.hispanichealth.org



FIELD NOTES

News You Can Use

To join *NewsLink*, our free, weekly electronic news service, send an e-mail to dmeeo@mail.va.gov with SUBSCRIBE NEWS in the subject line. Thanks to our *NewsLink* content partners:

- Asian Diversity Magazine
- Black MBA Magazine
- Business & Legal Reports
- DiversityCareers.com
- Federal Employees News
- FedNews Online
- FindLaw
- Government Executive
- HireDiversity.com
- Hispanic Business
- HR Executive Magazine
- Indian Country Today
- Newsweek
- Journal of Issues in Nursing
- Pew Hispanic Center
- SHRM
- The Access Board
- USAToday.com
- Washingtonpost.com
- Workforce magazine
- Workindex.com



For More Info

For special observance theme information and diversity-related events, visit our Web site and select the Calendar link.

MD-715 Update

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has issued new guidance for Federal EEO programs. Management Directive 715-which supersedes MD 712, 713, and 714-goes into effect October 1. The new Directive provides a "practical roadmap" for ensuring access and inclusion for Federal workers, as required by law.

Among other provisions, MD-715 establishes the following six essential elements for structuring Federal EEO programs:

- ▶ demonstrated commitment from agency leadership
- ▶ integration of EEO into the agency's strategic mission
- ▶ management and program accountability
- ▶ proactive prevention of unlawful discrimination
- ▶ efficiency
- ▶ responsiveness and legal compliance.

MD-715 requires that agencies conduct periodic self-assessments of EEO policies and practices and track recruitment activities for analysis, among numerous other provisions. The new directive will affect activities and resources VA-wide. EEOC will issue additional guidance and instructions for implementation by year's end.

LVA Reminder

The deadline for LVA 2004 is approaching. VA employees in GS-13 and higher positions (including Title 38 equivalents) are eligible to apply. In keeping with the Department's strong commitment to EEO, qualified minority, female, and disabled employees are encouraged to apply.

For eligibility requirements, forms, and further information, visit http://vaww.va.gov/valu_lrn/page.cfm?pg=11 (intranet access only). The closing date for applications is October 8, 2003.

WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT

National Organization on Disability

www.nod.org

Content: The National Organization on Disability has established a one-stop Web site that supports our Nation's 54 million people with disabilities.

The site is organized into three areas: community involvement, economic participation, and access to independence, and it offers useful information on such topics as emergency preparedness, job hunting, and health care access. The site also offers special content for business and community leaders, media members, and partners.

Must-see feature: The Finding Good Employees page contains employment statistics, hiring resources, workplace accessibility information, fact sheets, and tax credit data. It also offers success stories and organizational links.

Contact info: Address, phone, fax, TTY, and e-mail contact information is found at the bottom of every page.

Accessibility: The site exceeds accessibility standards, as detailed on the Site Accessibility page.

SPECIAL EMPHASIS

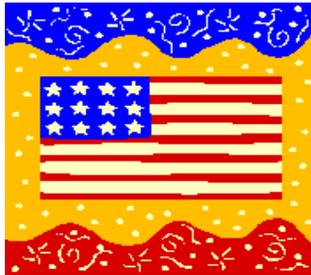
Special Appointing Authorities for Veterans

Several special programs give agencies flexibilities when hiring veterans for civil service jobs. Here's a quick overview, adapted from OPM's VetGuide.

Since the Civil War, U.S. veterans have been given preference in Federal job appointments. Congress enacted laws to prevent vets from being penalized for their military service time when applying for government jobs. "Veterans preference" recognizes the economic loss suffered by citizens who have served their country in uniform, and it restores veterans to a favorable competitive position for government employment. Veterans preference also acknowledges the larger obligation owed to disabled veterans.

In addition to 5- and 10-point preference privileges available to qualified vets, agencies can use special appointing authorities to hire those who "have borne the battle."

The **Veterans' Readjustment Appointment** can be used to hire eligible veterans without competition. Candidates do not have to be on a list of eligibles but must meet basic qualifications for the position. Note that use of this authority is discretionary, however, and no one is *entitled* to VRA.



Service requirements for this authority include 180 days active duty and receipt of other than a dishonorable discharge. Veterans must be appointed within 10 years of their last discharge and agree to training if they have less than 15 years of education. Agencies can use the VRA authority to fill white-collar positions up through GS-11 and equivalent jobs under other pay systems.

Federal agencies also have the authority to give noncompetitive appointments to any veteran who has a DoD- or VA-documented, service-connected disability of 30 percent or more. Like the VRA, the **30 Percent or More Disabled Veteran Program** is discretionary and requires that appointees meet all position qualifications. This authority covers all grade levels and occupations.

Veterans may also apply for jobs open only to "status" candidates through the **Veterans' Employment Opportunities Act**. In other words, veterans can compete for civil service jobs equally alongside current Federal workers.

For more information, contact OPM or visit its Web site at www.opm.gov. ■

INSIDE STORY

VA's Most Underrepresented Groups

While every group by race, national origin, and gender is underrepresented in some VA occupations, only two groups are underrepresented in total: White women and Hispanic women.

These two groups have been underrepresented for many years at VA. In Fiscal Year (FY) 1996, the representation of White and Hispanic women decreased by about two-tenths of a percent. The representation losses didn't stop for White women until FY 2000 and for Hispanic women until FY 2002. In FY 2003, the two most underrepresented groups made progress for the first time.

If the FY03 rates remain constant, Hispanic

women at VA will reach parity in about 5 years. But White women will not reach parity at this rate for more than 200 years.

In the last few years, Departmental diversity has increased by about one-third of one percent a year, largely driven by retirements of White men. In a nutshell, we have been hiring more of what we already have. But VA has a long way to go in developing targeted recruitment for our most underrepresented groups.

► To see this data charted, visit www.va.gov/dmeeo/trends.htm. ■

Diversity@Work

Newsletter published bimonthly by the National Office of Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity. To subscribe or unsubscribe, send an e-mail request to dmeeo@mail.va.gov.

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OTHER USEFUL LINKS

Department of Veterans
Affairs Web site
www.va.gov

Center for Women Veterans
www.va.gov/womenvet

Office of Resolution
Management
www.va.gov/orm

DM&EEO ONLINE

The mission of the Office of DM&EEO is to provide leadership in creating and sustaining a diverse workplace free of discrimination at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Here's a sampling of new online tools that can help *you* promote the employment of veterans, women, minorities, and people with disabilities:



- ▶ Best of *Training Media Review*
 - ▶ Diversity News lineup
 - ▶ American Indian Heritage Month resources
- Bookmark our site; we're here to serve you.



2003 DIVERSITY CALENDAR



HBCU Week

September 14-20

www.nafeo.org/hbcu.html

National Hispanic Heritage Month

September 15-October 15

www.hispaniconline.com/hh02/education_celeb_hisp_heritage.html

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

October

www.va.gov/dmeeeo/nde.htm

Polish American Heritage Month

October

National Veterans Creative Arts Festival

October 6-12

Oklahoma City, OK

www.va.gov/vetevent/caf

Columbus Day

October 13 (observed)

Coming soon:

National American Indian Heritage Month

November

Veterans Day

November 11

Working for America Diversity Recruitment Fair

November 14

Denver, CO

AISES Annual National Conference

November 20-23

Albuquerque, NM

For more events, visit our Web site and select the Calendar link.