

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To issue Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy regarding employee benefits.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This directive establishes VA's policy to utilize issuances of the Office of Personnel Management and the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board to carry out VA's responsibility to provide employee benefit program information.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Human Resources Management Programs and Policies Service (051), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources.
- 4. RELATED HANDBOOK:** None.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** None.

CERTIFIED BY:

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

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

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

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

1. PURPOSE. The purpose of this directive is to issue Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policy on employee benefits.

2. POLICY

a. Retirement Programs

(1) The VA will utilize OPM's Operating Manual, "The Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) and the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) Handbook for Personnel and Payroll Offices", which contains instructions for agency personnel and payroll offices for carrying out their responsibilities for basic benefits under the CSRS and FERS.

(2) 5 CFR, part 831, subpart L prescribes the procedures to be followed when an agency files an application for disability retirement in the course of removing an employee. When the criteria in Section 831.1203 are met:

(a) Administration Heads, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials are authorized to recommend disability retirement for all employees occupying positions under their respective jurisdictions except for those which the Secretary retains prior approval authority.

(b) Heads of field facilities are authorized to recommend disability retirement for all employees occupying positions under their respective jurisdictions, except prior approval is required for positions centralized to an administration, assistant secretary, or other key official.

(c) Where prior approval of the Secretary is necessary, it will be obtained through the Deputy Assistant Secretary for HRM.

b. Special Retirement Provisions for Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters

(1) Facility directors are authorized to issue determinations denying special retirement coverage.

(2) The Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration approves special retirement coverage. If a facility director determines that coverage may be appropriate, all relevant information including the rationale for concluding that coverage may be appropriate will be forwarded to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management (05) or designee for review and recommendation. If it is determined that coverage is not appropriate, the case will be returned to the facility Director for completion as a denial.

(3) Coverage decisions will be based on the guidance contained in Chapter 46 of the OPM Civil Service Retirement System and Federal Employees Retirement System Handbook. The Handbook provides a Statement of Authority listing the statutory and regulatory provisions covering the special retirement coverage rules.

c. **Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program.** VA will utilize the FEHB policies, procedures, and guidance contained in the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Operating Manual, "The Federal Employees Health Benefits Program Handbook: A Handbook for Enrollees and Employing Offices".

d. **Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Program.** The VA will utilize the FEGLI policies, procedures, and guidance contained in the OPM Operating Manual, "The Federal Employees Group Life Insurance Handbook: A Handbook for Employees, Annuitants, Compensationers and Employing Offices".

e. **Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Program.** The VA will utilize the TSP policies contained in the TSP Booklet, "Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan for Federal Employees".

f. **Death Gratuity Payment**

(1) The Department will make a payment of \$10,000 minus any payments authorized under 5 U.S.C. 8133(f), 8134(a) and section 312 of Public Law 103-332 to the personal representative of any employee who dies from an injury in the line of duty. This payment also covers an employee no longer on the rolls if the death is the result of an injury sustained in the line of duty. Any other payments, to include other benefits payable under the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) do not affect the \$10,000 limit.

(2) The above payment authorization will not be paid if the Department determines that the employee's death was the result of willful misconduct.

(3) A personal representative will generally be the formally designated executor or administrator of the employee's estate under State law. The Secretary will determine who is the personal representative in any particular case.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. Responsibilities are contained in each of the Program Operating Manuals mentioned in the Policy section. The TSP responsibilities are contained in the TSP Booklet, "Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan for Federal Employees".

b. In addition to the responsibilities listed in the Manuals and TSP Booklet, field facilities staff must also follow the standard operation procedures or other guidance that has been or will be established by the VA Shared Service Center. If there are any concerns regarding matters involving field facility staff responsibilities, facility staff should consult with the Shared Service Center for resolution.

4. REFERENCES

a. **Retirement**

(1) OPM Operating Manual, "CSRS and FERS Handbook for Personnel and Payroll Offices";

(2) OPM Benefits Administration Letters;

- (3) 5 CFR, parts 831, 835, 837, 838, 841, 842, 843, 844, 845, 846, and, 847;
- (4) 5 U.S.C., chapters 83 and 84; and

b. FEHB

- (1) OPM Operating Manual, “The Federal Employees Health Benefits Program Handbook: A Handbook for Enrollees and Employing Offices”;
- (2) OPM Benefits Administration Letters;
- (3) 5 CFR, part 890; and
- (4) 5 U.S.C., chapter 89.

c. FEGLI

- (1) OPM Operating Manual, “The Federal Employees Group Life Insurance Handbook: A Handbook for Employees, Annuitants, Compensationers and Employing Offices”;
- (2) OPM Benefits Administration Letters;
- (3) 5 CFR, part 870; and
- (4) 5 U.S.C., chapter 87.

d. TSP

- (1) TSP Booklet, “Summary of the Thrift Savings Plan for Federal Employees”;
- (2) 5 CFR, part 1600;
- (3) 5 U.S.C., chapter 84; and
- (4) TSP Bulletins.