

WOMEN VETERANS PROGRAM

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Directive establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs Women Veterans Program.
2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:** This Directive establishes requirements and responsibilities for managing and implementing the Women Veterans Program.
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Director, Center for Women Veterans (00W).
4. **RELATED HANDBOOK:** None.
5. **RESCISSIONS:** None.

Certified By:

/s/

Roger W. Baker
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**By Direction of the
Secretary of Veterans Affairs:**

/s/

John R. Gingrich
Chief of Staff

Distribution: Electronic Only

WOMEN VETERANS PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE:

a. This Directive establishes the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Women Veterans Program (WVP).

b. It also establishes requirements and responsibilities for managing and implementing the WVP.

2. **POLICY:** It is VA policy that the WVP monitors and provides coordination of VA's administration of health care, benefits, services and programs for women Veterans.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. **The Director, Center for Women Veterans (CWV)** shall:

(1) Serve as principal advisor to the Secretary on the adoption and implementation of policies and programs affecting women Veterans.

(2) Make recommendations to the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, the Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and other key Department officials for the establishment or improvement of programs in the Department for which women Veterans are eligible.

(3) Promote the use of benefits and the conduct of outreach activities to women Veterans.

(4) Disseminate information and serve as a resource center for the exchange of information regarding innovative and successful programs which improve the services available to women Veterans.

(5) Conduct and sponsor appropriate social and demographic research on the needs of women Veterans and the extent to which programs meet the needs of those Veterans, without regard to any law concerning the collection of information from the public.

(6) Analyze and evaluate complaints made by or on behalf of women Veterans about the adequacy and timeliness of services provided by the Department and advise the appropriate official of the Department of the results of such analysis or evaluation.

(7) Consult with and provide assistance and information to officials responsible for administering Federal, State, local, and private programs that assist Veterans, to encourage those officials to adopt policies which promote the use of those programs by women Veterans.

(8) Advise the Secretary when laws or policies have the effect of discouraging the use of benefits by women Veterans.

(9) Publicize the results of medical research which are of particular significance to women Veterans.

(10) Advise the Secretary and other appropriate officials on the effectiveness of the Department's efforts to accomplish the goals of section 492B of the Public Health

Service Act (relating to the inclusion of women and minorities in clinical research) and of particular health conditions affecting women's health which should be studied as part of the Department's medical research program and promote cooperation between the Department and other sponsors of medical research of potential benefits to women Veterans.

(11) Provide support and administrative services to the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans.

(12) Promote and lead effective collaboration with Administrations and Staff Offices to maintain visibility of the current state of the Department's policies and programs affecting women Veterans.

(13) Monitor and evaluate the performance of the WVP, and provide direction, oversight, assistance, and information to the Administrations and Staff Offices to improve program performance.

(14) Advocate on behalf of the Administrations and Staff Offices for resources and other support, when required and justified, for effective and efficient operation and management of programs related to women Veterans.

(15) Monitor the Department's outreach efforts to women Veterans and other stakeholders, to increase knowledge of VA's initiatives, benefits, and services for women Veterans.

(16) Collaborate with Administrations and Staff Offices to enhance training products and materials promoting VA initiatives, in an effort to ensure inclusion of women Veterans representation.

(17) Coordinate developing of women Veterans outreach products between VHA, VBA, NCA, OPIA, and Staff Offices.

b. The Under Secretary for Health shall:

(1) Establish and maintain internal, organizationally specific policies, procedures, guidelines, and training for employees that support the WVP.

(2) Designate and provide authority for a WVP Lead to:

(a) Serve as the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) representative for their internal women Veterans programs.

(b) Collaborate with the CWV and other Administrations and Staff Offices on issues, policies, and programs related to women Veterans.

(c) Lead VHA's execution of the WVP operating plan.

(d) Monitor and assess the successful implementation of women Veterans programs within VHA, and facilitate VHA's compliance with this Directive.

(e) Report directly to the Under Secretary for Health on issues and programs related to women Veterans.

(3) Ensure support for the WVP and cooperation with the program's organizational structure throughout VHA's programs and offices.

(4) In coordination with CWV, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA), and the Office of Policy and Planning (OPP), conduct and sponsor appropriate social and demographic research identifying the needs of women Veterans and evaluate women Veteran program performance.

(5) Publicize the results of medical research of significance to women Veterans.

(6) Ensure VA compliance with the goals of section 492B of the Public Health Service Act, which mandates the inclusion of women as subjects in clinical research.

c. The Under Secretary for Benefits shall:

(1) Establish and maintain internal, organizationally specific policies, procedures, guidelines and training for employees that support the WVP.

(2) Designate and provide authority for a WVP Lead to:

(a) Serve as VBA's representative for their internal women Veterans programs.

(b) Collaborate with the CWV and other Administrations and Staff Offices on issues, policies, and programs related to women Veterans.

(c) Lead VBA's execution of the WVP operating plan.

(d) Monitor and assess the successful implementation of women Veterans programs within VBA, and facilitate VBA's compliance with this Directive.

(e) Report directly to the Under Secretary for Benefits on issues and programs related to women Veterans.

(3) Ensure support for the WVP and cooperation with the program's organizational structure throughout VBA's programs and offices.

(4) In coordination with CWV, VHA, NCA, and OPP, conduct and sponsor appropriate social and demographic research identifying the needs of women Veterans and evaluate women Veteran program performance.

d. The Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs shall:

(1) Establish and maintain internal, organizationally specific policies, procedures, guidelines and training for employees that support the WVP.

(2) Designate and provide authority for a WVP Lead to:

(a) Serve as the NCA's representative for their internal women Veterans programs.

(b) Collaborate with the CWV and other Administrations and Staff Offices on issues, policies, and programs related to women Veterans.

(c) Lead NCA's execution of the WVP operating plan.

(d) Monitor and assess the successful implementation of women Veterans programs within NCA, and facilitate NCA's compliance with this Directive.

(e) Report directly to the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs on issues and programs related to women Veterans.

(3) Ensure support for the WVP and cooperation with the program's organizational structure, throughout NCA's programs and offices.

(4) In coordination with CWV, VBA, VHA, and OPP, conduct and sponsor appropriate social and demographic research identifying the needs of women Veterans and evaluate women Veteran program performance.

e. **The Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs (OPIA)** shall:

(1) Establish and maintain internal, organizationally specific policies, procedures, guidelines and training for employees that support the WVP.

(2) Ensure support for the WVP and cooperation with the program's organizational structure.

(3) Designate a WVP Lead to serve as the Administration's representative for issues related to women Veterans and provide authority for program lead to readily acquire assistance of internal organizations in support of WVP activities.

(4) Establish and maintain policies, procedures, guidelines to ensure women Veterans are considered in all VA internal and external communication.

f. **The Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning** shall:

(1) Establish and maintain internal, organizationally specific policies, procedures, guidelines and training for employees that support the WVP.

(2) Ensure support for the WVP and cooperation with the program's organizational structure.

(3) Designate a WVP Lead to serve as the Administration's representative for issues related to women Veterans and provide authority for program lead to readily acquire assistance of internal organizations in support of WVP activities.

(4) In coordination with CWV, VBA, VHA, and NCA, conduct and sponsor appropriate social and demographic research identifying the needs of women Veterans and evaluating WVP performance.

g. **The WVP Governance Board (WVPGB)** - The WVPGB includes VA officials with sufficient autonomy to assure institutional integrity and to fulfill the Department's responsibilities of caring for the Nation's women Veterans in policies and procedures. The WVPGB is responsible for ensuring that the Department is in conformance with the elements of the approved operating plan and that appropriate offices are adhering to established policy and guidance.

(1) The WVPGB membership is made up of VA key officials including the Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, Chief of Staff, and the Executive Director, Acquisition, Logistics, and Construction.

(2) The WVPGB will report to the Secretary.

(3) The Center for Women Veterans is responsible for the administration of the WVPGB.

(4) The WVPGB—through bi-annual meetings with CWV Director and WVP Program Leads—will:

(a) Conduct a high-level review of the Program to ensure the needs of key stakeholders are addressed.

(b) Provide guidance to the Program as a whole for quality improvement.

(c) Provide guidance on how the Program can have more of an impact.

(d) Review workload planning and forecasting which will be used in budgeting and resource scheduling.

(e) Review metrics to monitor and enhance Program's effectiveness.

(f) Support cross-cutting initiatives.

(g) Assume responsibility for ensuring that the Program's mission is being carried out.

(h) Ensure adequate financial and human resources.

4. REFERENCES:

a. 38 U.S.C. § 318.

b. 2012 Report - Strategies for Serving Our Women Veterans, October 18, 2012.