#### **STAFFING**

**1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To revise Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for Social Worker GS-185 appointed under 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3).

#### 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:

- a. These changes are necessary for full conversion of the social worker occupation from the Title 5 competitive service employment system into VA's Title 38 Hybrid excepted service employment system in accordance with the "Veterans Health Care, Capital Asset and Business Improvement Act of 2003" (Public Law 108-170). Authority is given to the Secretary of the VA under 38 U.S.C. § 7402 to prescribe qualifications for occupations identified in 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3). The pages in this revision are to be inserted at the corresponding page numbers in part II of VA Handbook 5005. The existing Social Worker qualifications standards contained in Appendices II-F7 II-F9 may no longer be used. These changes will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005 that is maintained on the Office of Human Resources Management Web site.
- b. In order to apply this new qualification standard, all social workers must receive an initial special boarding by the applicable Social Worker Professional Standards Board. Initial special boarding should be completed no later than July 1, 2009. Additional guidance regarding the initial special boarding process may be found in <a href="Human Resources Management Letter 05-06-06">Human Resources Management Letter 05-06-06</a>, Attachment B, dated August 8, 2006.
- (1) For employees on VA rolls as of April 2, 2006, a promotion resulting from the initial special boarding will be effected retroactive to the beginning of the first pay period after all qualification requirements at the higher grade (including level of assignment) were met, but no earlier than April 2, 2006.
- (2) For employees appointed after April 2, 2006, a promotion resulting from the initial special boarding will be effected retroactive to the beginning of the first pay period after all qualification requirements at the higher grade (including level of assignment) were met, but no earlier than the effective date of their appointment.
- (3) Special advancements for achievement will be retroactive to the beginning of the first pay period following the accomplishment on which the advancement is based but no earlier than April 2, 2006, or the date of appointment, whichever is later. Approval criteria for special advancements for achievement are contained in VA Handbook 5017, Part V.
  - c. Significant changes include:
  - (1) Coverage section added that provides a brief description of the occupation requirements.
- (2) Standard language and sections added (basic requirements, grandfathering clauses, licensure, deviations, etc.).
  - (3) Description of creditable experience included in the grade requirements.

#### **Transmittal Sheet**

- (4) The addition of an advanced practice level for assignments that require specialized knowledge.
- (5) Description of typical assignments and knowledge, skills, abilities, and other competencies included at each grade level.
- **3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management.
- **4. RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VA Directive 5005, Staffing.
- 5. RESCISSIONS: None.

**CERTIFIED BY:** 

BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:

/s/

Stephen W. Warren Acting Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology /s/

Willie L. Hensley Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration

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## **CONTENTS-CONTINUED**

SECTION H. APPOINTMENT OF MEDICAL AND DENTAL RESIDENTS UNDER 38 U.S. C. 7406  1. GENERAL. 2. METHODS OF APPOINTMENT AND COMPENSATION	PARAGRAPH	PAGE
2. METHODS OF APPOINTMENT AND COMPENSATION	SECTION H. APPOINTMENT OF MEDICAL AND DENTAL RESIDENTS UNDER 38	U.S.C. 7406
3. APPOINTMENT DOCUMENTATION II-117 4. COMPENSATION II-118 5. PROCESSING II-118 6. DETAILS II-118 7. HUMAN RESOURCES (HRM) OFFICERS' RESPONSIBILITIES II-118 8. CHIEF RESIDENT II-119  APPENDICES   [*NOTE: THE QUALIFICATION STANDARDS THAT ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN YELLOW BACKGROUND ARE NO LONGER VALID, AND CANNOT BE USED.]  II-A. EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES FOR POSITIONS IN MANILA II-A-1 II-B. USE OF PRIVATE SECTOR TEMPORARIES II-B-1 II-C. NONCOMPETITIVE CAREER CONDITIONAL (OR CAREER) APPOINTMENT OF STUDENT TRAINEES IN ASSOCIATED HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINE II-C-1 II-C1. LIST OF MAJOR ASSOCIATED HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINE II-C-1 II-C2. EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION - RECOMMENDED SAMPLE LETTER II-C-2-1 II-D. SAMPLE BACHELOR'S DEGREE STUDENT CAREER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM AGREEMENT II-C-1 II-E. HEATHCARE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION RESIDENTS. INTERNS AND TRAINEES. III-F. VA-SPECIFIC QUALIFICATION STANDARDS II-F. LHEATHCARE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION RESIDENTS. INTERNS AND TRAINEES. II-F-1 II-F. SPYCHOLOGY TRAINEE (FILE AS GS-180). II-F-1 II-F-2. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR, GS-101-9/11/12 II-F2-1 II-F-3. PSYCHOLOGY TECHNICIAN, GS-86-11/15. II-F-1 II-F-5. PSYCHOLOGY TECHNICIAN, GS-181-5/9. II-F3-1 II-F-6. REHABILITATION OF CHENICIAN (ALCOHOLISM), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM) AND DRUG DEPENDENCE), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM) AND DRUG DEPENDENCE), GS-181-3/11 II-F6-1 II-F1-F3. SOCIAL WORKER, (FILE AS GS-185). II-F8-1 II-F1-F1-F3. SOCIAL WORKER, (FILE AS GS-185). II-F9-1 II-F1-II-F1-F1-F1-F1-F1-F1-F1-F1-F1-F1-F1-F1-F1-		
4. COMPENSATION		
5. PROCESSING		
6. DETAILS 7. HUMAN RESOURCES (HRM) OFFICERS' RESPONSIBILITIES 8. CHIEF RESIDENT. II-119 8. CHIEF RESIDENT. III-119 8. CHIEF RESIDENT. RESIDENT STANDARDS THAT ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN YELLOW BACKGROUND ARE NO LONGER VALID, AND CANNOT BE USED.] 8. III-A. EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES FOR POSITIONS IN MANILA III-A-1 8. III-B. USE OF PRIVATE SECTOR TEMPORARIES III-B. USE OF PRIVATE SECTOR TEMPORARIES III-B. III-B. III-B. III-B. III-B. III-B. III-B. III-B. III-B. USE OF PRIVATE SECTOR TEMPORARIES III-B. III-C. NONCOMPETITIVE CAREER. CONDITIONAL (OR CAREER) APPOINTMENT  OF STUDENT TRAINEES III ASSOCIATED HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINES III-C.1 8. III-C.1 LIST OF MAJOR ASSOCIATED HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINES III-C.1 8. III-C.2 EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION – RECOMMENDED SAMPLE LETTER III-C.2-III-D. SAMPLE BACHELOR'S DEGREE STUDENT CAREER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM AGREEMENT III-B. HEATHCARE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION RESIDENTS, INTERNS AND TRAINEES. III-B. III-B. HEATHCARE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION RESIDENTS, INTERNS AND TRAINEES. III-B. III-B. III-B. III-B. CHAPLAIN, GS-060-11/15. III-B. III-B. CHAPLAIN, GS-060-11/15. III-B. III-B. PSYCHOLOGY SERIES, GS. 180-11/15. III-B. III-B. PSYCHOLOGY TECHNICIAN (GS-185-9). III-B. III-B. PSYCHOLOGY TECHNICIAN (GS-185-9). III-B. III-B. III-B. PSYCHOLOGY TECHNICIAN (GS-185-9). III-B. III-B. III-B. RECHNICIAN (DRUG DEPENDENCE), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN		
7. HUMAN RESOURCES (HRM) OFFICERS' RESPONSIBILITIES	6 DETAILS	II-118 II 119
8. CHIEF RESIDENT		
[*NOTE: THE QUALIFICATION STANDARDS THAT ARE HIGHLIGHTED IN YELLOW BACKGROUND ARE NO LONGER VALID, AND CANNOT BE USED.]  II-A. EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES FOR POSITIONS IN MANILA II-A-1 II-B. USE OF PRIVATE SECTOR TEMPORARIES II-B-1 II-C. NONCOMPETITIVE CAREER CONDITIONAL (OR CAREER) APPOINTMENT OF STUDENT TRAINEES IN ASSOCIATED HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINE II-C-1 II-C1. LIST OF MAJOR ASSOCIATED HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINES II-C-1 II-C2. EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION - RECOMMENDED SAMPLE LETTER II-C2-1 II-D. SAMPLE BACHELOR'S DEGREE STUDENT CAREER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM AGREEMENT II-D-1 II-E. HEATHCARE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION RESIDENTS. INTERNS AND TRAINEES II-F1. II-F2. VA-SPECIFIC QUALIFICATION STANDARDS II-F1. CHAPLAIN, GS-960-11/15. II-F2-1 *II-F3. PSYCHOLOGY SERIES, GS-180-11/15. II-F3-1 *II-F4. PSYCHOLOGY TRAINEE, (FILE AS GS-180) II-F4-1 II-F5. PSYCHOLOGY TRECHNICIAN, GS-181-5/9. II-F5-1 II-F6. REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN, GALCOHOLISM), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (DRUG DEPENDENCE), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE), GS-181-3/11  II-F0-1  II-F1-II-F		
II-A. EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES FOR POSITIONS IN MANILA	APPENDICES	
II-B. USE OF PRIVATE SECTOR TEMPORARIES III-C. NONCOMPETITIVE CAREER-CONDITIONAL (OR CAREER) APPOINTMENT OF STUDENT TRAINEES IN ASSOCIATED HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINE III-C1 III-C1. LIST OF MAJOR ASSOCIATED HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINES III-C1-III-C2. EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION – RECOMMENDED SAMPLE LETTER III-D. SAMPLE BACHELOR'S DEGREE STUDENT CAREER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM AGREEMENT III-E. HEATHCARE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION RESIDENTS, INTERNS AND TRAINEES III-F1 II-F1 II-F1 II-F1 II-F2. VA-SPECIFIC QUALIFICATION STANDARDS II-F1. CHAPLAIN, GS-060-11/15. III-F2. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR, GS-101-9/11/12 III-F2. PSYCHOLOGY SERIES, GS-180-11/15. III-F4 III-F3. PSYCHOLOGY TRAINEE, (FILE AS GS-180) III-F4-III-F5. PSYCHOLOGY TECHNICIAN, GS-181-5/9. III-F6. REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (DRUG DEPENDENCE), GS-181-3/11 III-F6-1 *III-F7. SOCIAL WORKER, GS-185-9/15. III-F7-1 *III-F8. JUNIOR SOCIAL WORKER, GS-185-9/15. III-F9-1] II-F10. SOCIAL WORK RASSOCIATE, GS-187-5/8. III-F11-III-F11. RECREATION AID & ASSISTANT SERIES, GS-189-1/6 III-F12. III-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15. III-F13. *II-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST, GS-601.  *III-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST, GS-601.  III-F14-III-F14.		LOW
II-B. USE OF PRIVATE SECTOR TEMPORARIES III-C. NONCOMPETITIVE CAREER-CONDITIONAL (OR CAREER) APPOINTMENT OF STUDENT TRAINEES IN ASSOCIATED HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINE III-C1 III-C1. LIST OF MAJOR ASSOCIATED HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINES III-C1-III-C2. EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION – RECOMMENDED SAMPLE LETTER III-D. SAMPLE BACHELOR'S DEGREE STUDENT CAREER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM AGREEMENT III-E. HEATHCARE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION RESIDENTS, INTERNS AND TRAINEES III-F1 III-F. VA-SPECIFIC QUALIFICATION STANDARDS III-F1. CHAPLAIN, GS-060-11/15. III-F2. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR, GS-101-9/11/12 III-F2. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR, GS-101-9/11/12 III-F3. PSYCHOLOGY SERIES, GS-180-11/15. III-F4. PSYCHOLOGY TRAINEE, (FILE AS GS-180) III-F4-III-F6. REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN, GS-181-5/9 III-F6. REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (DRUG DEPENDENCE), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE), GS-181-3/11 III-F6-1 *III-F7. SOCIAL WORKER, GS-185-9/15 III-F7-1 *III-F8. JUNIOR SOCIAL WORKER, GS-185-9/15 III-F9-1] III-F10. SOCIAL WORK TRAINEE – STUDENT, (FILE AS GS-185) III-F9-1] III-F11. RECREATION AID & ASSISTANT SERIES, GS-189-1/6 III-F11-III-F12. REHABILITATION MEDICINE COORDINATOR, GS-301-9/15 III-F12-III-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15 III-F13-II-F14-II-F14-II-F14-II-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15 III-F13-II-F14-II-F14-II-F14-II-F14-II-F14-II-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15 III-F14-II-	II-A. EMPLOYMENT PROCEDURES FOR POSITIONS IN MANILA	II-A-1
OF STUDENT TRAINEES IN ASSOCIATED HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINE  II-C1  II-C1. LIST OF MAJOR ASSOCIATED HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINES. II-C1-1  II-C2. EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION – RECOMMENDED SAMPLE LETTER. II-C2-1  II-D. SAMPLE BACHELOR'S DEGREE STUDENT CAREER EXPERIENCE  PROGRAM AGREEMENT III-D-1  II-E. HEATHCARE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION RESIDENTS, INTERNS AND TRAINEES. III-E1  II-F. VA-SPECIFIC QUALIFICATION STANDARDS  II-F1. CHAPLAIN, GS-060-11/15. III-F1-1  II-F2. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR, GS-101-9/11/12. III-F2-1  *II-F3. PSYCHOLOGY SERIES, GS-180-11/15. III-F3.1  *II-F4. PSYCHOLOGY TRAINEE, (FILE AS GS-180). III-F4-1  II-F5. PSYCHOLOGY TRAINEE, (FILE AS GS-180). III-F5-1  II-F6. REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN, GS-181-5/9. III-F5-1  II-F6. REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM), REHABILITATION  **(ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN  (ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE), GS-181-3/11. III-F6-1  **(III-F7. SOCIAL WORKER, GS-185-9/15. III-F7-1  **II-F8. JUNIOR SOCIAL WORKER, (FILE AS GS-185). III-F9-1]  II-F10. SOCIAL WORK TRAINEE – STUDENT, (FILE AS GS-185). III-F9-1]  II-F11. RECREATION AID & ASSISTANT SERIES, GS-189-1/6. III-F11-1  III-F12. REHABILITATION MEDICINE COORDINATOR, GS-301-9/15. III-F12-1  III-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15. III-F13-1  **II-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST, GS-601. III-F14-1		
II-C1. LIST OF MAJOR ASSOCIATED HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINES. II-C1-1 II-C2. EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION — RECOMMENDED SAMPLE LETTER. II-C2-1 II-D. SAMPLE BACHELOR'S DEGREE STUDENT CAREER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM AGREEMENT II-D-1 II-E. HEATHCARE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION RESIDENTS, INTERNS AND TRAINEES. II-E-1 II-F. VA-SPECIFIC QUALIFICATION STANDARDS II-F1. CHAPLAIN, GS-060-11/15. II-F2-1 *II-F2. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR, GS-101-9/11/12. II-F2-1 *II-F3. PSYCHOLOGY SERIES, GS-180-11/15. II-F3-1 *II-F4. PSYCHOLOGY TECHNICIAN, GS-181-5/9. II-F4-1 II-F5. PSYCHOLOGY TECHNICIAN, GS-181-5/9. II-F5-1 II-F6. REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (DRUG DEPENDENCE), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE), GS-181-3/11. II-F6-1 *[II-F7. SOCIAL WORKER, GS-185-9/15. II-F7-1 *II-F8. JUNIOR SOCIAL WORKER, (FILE AS GS-185). II-F8-1 *II-F9. SOCIAL WORK TRAINEE — STUDENT, (FILE AS GS-185). II-F9-1] II-F10. SOCIAL WORK ASSOCIATE, GS-187-5/8. II-F10-1 II-F11. RECREATION AID & ASSISTANT SERIES, GS-189-1/6. II-F11-1 II-F12. REHABILITATION MEDICINE COORDINATOR, GS-301-9/15. II-F12-1 II-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15. II-F13-1 *II-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST, GS-601. II-F14-1	II-C. NONCOMPETITIVE CAREER-CONDITIONAL (OR CAREER) APPOINTMENT	
II-C2. EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION — RECOMMENDED SAMPLE LETTER. II-C2-1  II-D. SAMPLE BACHELOR'S DEGREE STUDENT CAREER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM AGREEMENT	OF STUDENT TRAINEES IN ASSOCIATED HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINE	II-C-1
II-D. SAMPLE BACHELOR'S DEGREE STUDENT CAREER EXPERIENCE PROGRAM AGREEMENT III-D-1  II-E. HEATHCARE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION RESIDENTS, INTERNS AND TRAINEES III-E-1  II-F. VA-SPECIFIC QUALIFICATION STANDARDS  II-F1. CHAPLAIN, GS-060-11/15. III-F1.  II-F2. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR, GS-101-9/11/12. III-F2-1  *II-F3. PSYCHOLOGY SERIES, GS-180-11/15. III-F3.1  *II-F4. PSYCHOLOGY TRAINEE, (FILE AS GS-180). III-F4-1  II-F5. PSYCHOLOGY TECHNICIAN, GS-181-5/9. III-F5-1  II-F6. REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (DRUG DEPENDENCE), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE), GS-181-3/11. III-F6-1  *II-F7. SOCIAL WORKER, GS-185-9/15. III-F7-1  *II-F8. JUNIOR SOCIAL WORKER, (FILE AS GS-185). III-F8-1  *II-F9. SOCIAL WORK TRAINEE – STUDENT, (FILE AS GS-185). III-F9-1]  II-F10. SOCIAL WORK ASSOCIATE, GS-187-5/8. III-F10-1  III-F11. RECREATION AID & ASSISTANT SERIES, GS-189-1/6. III-F11-1  III-F12. REHABILITATION MEDICINE COORDINATOR, GS-301-9/15. III-F12-1  II-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15. III-F13-1  *II-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST, GS-601. III-F14-1	II-C1. LIST OF MAJOR ASSOCIATED HEALTH CARE DISCIPLINES	II-C1-1
PROGRAM AGREEMENT III-D-1  II-E. HEATHCARE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION RESIDENTS, INTERNS AND TRAINEES. II-E-1  II-F. VA-SPECIFIC QUALIFICATION STANDARDS  II-F1. CHAPLAIN, GS-060-11/15. II-F1-1  II-F2. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR, GS-101-9/11/12. II-F2-1  *II-F3. PSYCHOLOGY SERIES, GS-180-11/15. II-F3-1  *II-F4. PSYCHOLOGY TRAINEE, (FILE AS GS-180). II-F4-1  II-F5. PSYCHOLOGY TECHNICIAN, GS-181-5/9. II-F5-1  II-F6. REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM), REHABILITATION  TECHNICIAN (DRUG DEPENDENCE), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN  (ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE), GS-181-3/11. II-F6-1  *[II-F7. SOCIAL WORKER, GS-185-9/15. II-F7-1  *II-F8. JUNIOR SOCIAL WORKER, (FILE AS GS-185). II-F8-1  *II-F9. SOCIAL WORK TRAINEE – STUDENT, (FILE AS GS-185). II-F9-1]  II-F10. SOCIAL WORK ASSOCIATE, GS-187-5/8. II-F10-1  II-F11. RECREATION AID & ASSISTANT SERIES, GS-189-1/6. II-F11-1  II-F12. REHABILITATION MEDICINE COORDINATOR, GS-301-9/15. II-F12-1  II-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15. II-F13-1  *II-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST, GS-601. II-F14-1		II-C2-1
II-E. HEATHCARE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATION RESIDENTS, INTERNS AND TRAINEES. II-E-1  II-F. VA-SPECIFIC QUALIFICATION STANDARDS  II-F1. CHAPLAIN, GS-060-11/15. II-F1-1  II-F2. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR, GS-101-9/11/12. II-F2-1  *II-F3. PSYCHOLOGY SERIES, GS-180-11/15. II-F3-1  *II-F4. PSYCHOLOGY TRAINEE, (FILE AS GS-180). II-F4-1  II-F5. PSYCHOLOGY TECHNICIAN, GS-181-5/9. II-F5-1  II-F6. REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM), REHABILITATION  TECHNICIAN (DRUG DEPENDENCE), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN  (ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE), GS-181-3/11. II-F6-1  *[II-F7. SOCIAL WORKER, GS-185-9/15. II-F7-1  *II-F8. JUNIOR SOCIAL WORKER, (FILE AS GS-185). II-F8-1  *II-F9. SOCIAL WORK TRAINEE – STUDENT, (FILE AS GS-185). II-F9-1]  II-F10. SOCIAL WORK ASSOCIATE, GS-187-5/8. II-F10-1  II-F11. RECREATION AID & ASSISTANT SERIES, GS-189-1/6. II-F11-1  II-F12. REHABILITATION MEDICINE COORDINATOR, GS-301-9/15. II-F12-1  II-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15. II-F13-1  *II-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST, GS-601. II-F14-1		
II-E-1  II-F. VA-SPECIFIC QUALIFICATION STANDARDS  II-F1. CHAPLAIN, GS-060-11/15. II-F1-1  II-F2. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR, GS-101-9/11/12. II-F2-1  *II-F3. PSYCHOLOGY SERIES, GS-180-11/15. II-F3-1  *II-F4. PSYCHOLOGY TRAINEE, (FILE AS GS-180). II-F4-1  II-F5. PSYCHOLOGY TECHNICIAN, GS-181-5/9. II-F5-1  II-F6. REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM), REHABILITATION  TECHNICIAN (DRUG DEPENDENCE), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN  (ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE), GS-181-3/11. II-F6-1  *[II-F7. SOCIAL WORKER, GS-185-9/15. II-F7-1  *II-F8. JUNIOR SOCIAL WORKER, (FILE AS GS-185). II-F8-1  *II-F9. SOCIAL WORK TRAINEE – STUDENT, (FILE AS GS-185). II-F9-1]  II-F10. SOCIAL WORK ASSOCIATE, GS-187-5/8. II-F10-1  II-F11. RECREATION AID & ASSISTANT SERIES, GS-189-1/6. II-F11-1  II-F12. REHABILITATION MEDICINE COORDINATOR, GS-301-9/15. II-F12-1  II-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15. II-F13-1  *II-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST, GS-601. II-F14-1	PROGRAM AGREEMENT	II-D-1
II-F. VA-SPECIFIC QUALIFICATION STANDARDS II-F1. CHAPLAIN, GS-060-11/15		
II-F1. CHAPLAIN, GS-060-11/15		
II-F2. VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COUNSELOR, GS-101-9/11/12	II-F. VA-SPECIFIC QUALIFICATION STANDARDS	
*II-F3. PSYCHOLOGY SERIES, GS-180-11/15.		
*II-F4. PSYCHOLOGY TRAINEE, (FILE AS GS-180)		
II-F5. PSYCHOLOGY TECHNICIAN, GS-181-5/9	*II-F3. PSYCHOLOGY SERIES, GS-180-11/15	II-F3-1
II-F6. REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (DRUG DEPENDENCE), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE), GS-181-3/11		
TECHNICIAN (DRUG DEPENDENCE), REHABILITATION TECHNICIAN (ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE), GS-181-3/11 II-F6-1  *[II-F7. SOCIAL WORKER, GS-185-9/15 II-F7-1  *II-F8. JUNIOR SOCIAL WORKER, (FILE AS GS-185) II-F8-1  *II-F9. SOCIAL WORK TRAINEE – STUDENT, (FILE AS GS-185) II-F9-1]  II-F10. SOCIAL WORK ASSOCIATE, GS-187-5/8 II-F10-1  II-F11. RECREATION AID & ASSISTANT SERIES, GS-189-1/6 II-F11-1  II-F12. REHABILITATION MEDICINE COORDINATOR, GS-301-9/15 II-F12-1  II-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15 II-F13-1  *II-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST, GS-601 II-F14-1		11-F5-1
(ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE), GS-181-3/11       II-F6-1         *[II-F7. SOCIAL WORKER, GS-185-9/15       II-F7-1         *II-F8. JUNIOR SOCIAL WORKER, (FILE AS GS-185)       II-F8-1         *II-F9. SOCIAL WORK TRAINEE – STUDENT, (FILE AS GS-185)       II-F9-1]         III-F10. SOCIAL WORK ASSOCIATE, GS-187-5/8       II-F10-1         III-F11. RECREATION AID & ASSISTANT SERIES, GS-189-1/6       II-F11-1         III-F12. REHABILITATION MEDICINE COORDINATOR, GS-301-9/15       II-F12-1         III-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15       II-F13-1         *II-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST, GS-601       II-F14-1		
*[II-F7. SOCIAL WORKER, GS-185-9/15		II E4 1
*II-F8. JUNIOR SOCIAL WORKER, (FILE AS GS-185) II-F8-1  *II-F9. SOCIAL WORK TRAINEE – STUDENT, (FILE AS GS-185) II-F9-1]  II-F10. SOCIAL WORK ASSOCIATE, GS-187-5/8 II-F10-1  II-F11. RECREATION AID & ASSISTANT SERIES, GS-189-1/6 II-F11-1  II-F12. REHABILITATION MEDICINE COORDINATOR, GS-301-9/15 II-F12-1  II-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15 II-F13-1  *II-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST, GS-601 II-F14-1		
*II-F9. SOCIAL WORK TRAINEE – STUDENT, (FILE AS GS-185) II-F9-1] III-F10. SOCIAL WORK ASSOCIATE, GS-187-5/8 II-F10-1 III-F11. RECREATION AID & ASSISTANT SERIES, GS-189-1/6 III-F11-1 III-F12. REHABILITATION MEDICINE COORDINATOR, GS-301-9/15 II-F12-1 III-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15 III-F13-1 *II-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST, GS-601 II-F14-1	*ILEQ HINIOD SOCIAL WODKED (EILE AS CS 195)	II-I'/-1
II-F10. SOCIAL WORK ASSOCIATE, GS-187-5/8 II-F10-1 II-F11. RECREATION AID & ASSISTANT SERIES, GS-189-1/6 II-F11-1 II-F12. REHABILITATION MEDICINE COORDINATOR, GS-301-9/15 II-F12-1 II-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15 II-F13-1 *II-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST, GS-601 II-F14-1		
II-F11. RECREATION AID & ASSISTANT SERIES, GS-189-1/6 III-F11-1 II-F12. REHABILITATION MEDICINE COORDINATOR, GS-301-9/15 III-F12-1 II-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15 III-F13-1 *II-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST, GS-601 III-F14-1		
II-F12. REHABILITATION MEDICINE COORDINATOR, GS-301-9/15		
II-F13. MICROBIOLOGIST, GS-403-5/15		
*II-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST, GS-601		
	*II-F14. NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST GS-601	II-F14-1
*II-F15. DIETITIAN AND NUTRITIONIST SERIES, GS-630II-F15-1	*II-F15. DIETITIAN AND NUTRITIONIST SERIES, GS-630.	II-F15-1

# **CONTENTS-CONTINUED**

PARAGRAPH	PAGE
APPENDICES-Continued	
II-G14. OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST QUALIFICATION STANDARD	II-G14-1
II-G15. LICENSED PHARMACIST QUALIFICATION STANDARD	
II-G16 DOCTOR OF CHIROPRACTIC QUALIFICATIONS STANDARD	
II-G17 DEVELOPMENT OF QUALIFICATION STANDARDS FOR VETERANS	
HEALTH ADMINISTRATION (VHA) POSITIONS FILLED UNDER	
38 U.S.C. § 7401(3)	II-G17-1
II-G18 PSYCHOLOGIST	
II-G19 NUCLEAR MEDICINE TECHNOLOGIST	II-G19-1
II-G20 <u>DIETITIAN</u>	
II-G21 KINESIOTHERAPIST	
II-G22 OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANT	
II-G23 PHYSICAL THERAPY ASSISTANT	
II-G24 MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIST	
II-G25 DIAGNOSTIC RADIOLOGIC TECHNOLOGIST	
II-G26 THERAPEUTIC RADIOLOGIC TECHNOLOGIST	
II-G27 MEDICAL INSTRUMENT TECHNICIAN	
II-G28 PHARMACY TECHNICIAN	
II-G29 <u>AUDIOLOGIST</u>	
II-G30 SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST	II-G30-1
II-G31 AUDIOLOGIST/SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST	
II-G32 ORTHOTIST-PROSTHETIST	
II-G33 MEDICAL RECORD ADMINISTRATOR	
II-G34 PROSTHETIC REPRESENTATIVE	
II-G35 MEDICAL RECORD TECHNICIAN	
II-G36 DENTAL ASSISTANT	
II-G37 DENTAL HYGIENIST	
II-G38 BIOMEDICAL ENGINEER	
[II-G39 SOCIAL WORKER	
II-H. APPOINTMENT PROCEDURES BY OCCUPATION/ASSIGNMENT	
II-H1. PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTING PHYSICIANS TO SERVICE CHIEF	TT TT4 4
AND COMPARABLE POSITIONS.	II-HI-I
II-H2. PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTING DENTISTS AND EFDAS	
II-H3. PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTING PODIATRISTS	
II-H4. PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTING OPTOMETRISTS	II-H4-1
II-H5. RECRUITMENT, APPOINTMENT, ADVANCEMENT, CHANGE IN	
ASSIGNMENT AND REASSIGNMENT OF REGISTERED NURSES (RNs)	II II  1
IN GRADES IV AND V.	П-НЭ-1
II-H6. PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTING NURSE ANESTHETISTS TO	II II ( 1
SECTION CHIEF POSITIONS	II-H6-1
II-H7. PROCEDURES FOR APPOINTING PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS	11 117 1
AT CHIEF GRADE	II-H/-I

# [APPENDIX G39. SOCIAL WORKER QUALIFCATION STANDARD GS-185 Veterans Health Administration

- **1. COVERAGE.** The following are requirements for appointment as a social worker in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). These requirements apply to all VHA social workers in the General Schedule (GS)-185 series, including those assigned to VA medical centers, Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs), Vet Centers, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) offices, and VHA Central Office.
- **2. BASIC REQUIREMENTS.** The basic requirements for employment as a VHA social worker are prescribed by statute in 38 U.S.C. 7402(b)(9), as amended by section 205 of Public Law 106-419, enacted November 1, 2000. To qualify for appointment as a social worker in VHA, all applicants must:
- a. **Citizenship.** Be a citizen of the United States. (Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified citizens in accordance with chapter 3, section A, paragraph 3g this part.)
- b. **Education.** Have a master's degree in social work (MSW) from a school of social work fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Graduates of schools of social work that are in candidacy status do not meet this requirement until the school of social work is fully accredited. A doctoral degree in social work *may not* be substituted for the master's degree in social work.
- c. **Licensure.** Persons hired or reassigned to social worker positions in the GS-185 series in VHA must be licensed or certified by a state to independently practice social work at the master's degree level. Current state requirements may be found on the <a href="OHRM website">OHRM website</a>.
- (1) **Exception.** VHA may waive the licensure or certification requirement for persons who are otherwise qualified, pending completion of state prerequisites for licensure/certification examinations. This exception only applies up to the full performance level. For grade levels above the full performance level, the candidate must be licensed or certified.
- (a) For grades below or at the full performance level, VHA social workers who are not licensed or certified at the time of appointment must become licensed or certified at the independent, master's level within 3 years of their appointment as a social worker. Most states require 2 years of post-MSW experience as a pre-requisite to taking the licensure/certification exam, and VHA gives social workers one additional year to pass the licensure/certification exam. In California, where the prerequisites for licensure exceed two years, social workers must become licensed at the independent, master's level within one year of meeting the full California prerequisites for licensure.
- (b) It is VHA policy that a VHA social worker who does not yet have a license that allows independent practice must be supervised by a licensed independent practitioner of the same discipline who is a VA staff member and who has access to the electronic health record.
- (c) Different states have different levels of licensure or certification, making it difficult for VHA staff to determine the independent practice level. Each state, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia completed surveys identifying the level of licensure or certification allowing independent practice.

Copies of the surveys are on file in the Office of Social Work Service and a summary spreadsheet of the levels of licensure or certification is available to social work professional standards board members for purposes of determining whether the social worker's level of licensure or certification meets the VHA qualification standards. All states except California use a series of licensure exams administered by the <a href="Association of Social Work Boards">Association of Social Work Boards</a> (ASWB). The ASWB is the association of boards that regulate social work. ASWB develops and maintains the social work licensing examination used across the country and is a central resource for information on the legal regulation of social work. The ASWB offers three examinations. The master's examination is generally used by states for the independent practice level of licensure or certification, while the advanced generalist and the clinical examinations are used for the advanced practice level of licensure or certification. Differences between the master's and the advanced exams demonstrate the expectation that advanced practice social workers will have a more sophisticated knowledge of practice theory and its application.

- (2) **Failure to Obtain License or Certification.** In all cases, social workers must actively pursue meeting state prerequisites for licensure or certification starting from the date of their appointment. At the time of appointment, the supervisor, Chief Social Work or Social Work Executive will provide the unlicensed/uncertified social worker with the written requirements for licensure or certification, including the time by which the license or certification must be obtained and the consequences for not becoming licensed or certified by the deadline. Failure to become licensed or certified within the proscribed amount of time will result in removal from the GS-185 social work series and **may** result in termination of employment.
- (3) **Loss of Licensure or Certification.** Once licensed or certified, social workers must maintain a full, valid and unrestricted independent license or certification to remain qualified for employment. Loss of licensure or certification **will** result in removal from the GS-185 social work series and **may** result in termination of employment.
- d. **Grandfathering Provision.** The following is the standard grandfathering policy for all Title 38 hybrid qualification standards. Please carefully review the qualification standard to determine the specific education and/or licensure/certification/registration requirements that apply to this occupation.
- (1) All persons employed in VHA in this occupation on the effective date of this qualification standard are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the title, series and grade held, including positive education and licensure or certification that are part of the basic requirements of the occupation. For employees who do not meet all the basic requirements in this standard, but who met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed to it, the following provisions apply:

Such employees in an occupation that <u>requires</u> a licensure or certification, may be reassigned, promoted up to and including the full performance (journey) level, or changed to lower grade within the occupation, but <u>may not</u> be promoted beyond the journey level or placed in supervisory or managerial positions.

(2) Employees who are appointed on a temporary basis prior to the effective date of the qualification standard may not have their temporary appointment extended or be reappointed, on a temporary or permanent basis, until they fully meet the basic requirements of the standard.

- (3) Employees initially grandfathered into this occupation, who subsequently obtain additional education and/or licensure/certification/registration that meet all the basic requirements of this qualification standard must maintain the required credentials as a condition of employment in the occupation.
- (4) If an employee who was retained in an occupation listed in 38 U.S.C. 7401(3) under this provision leaves that occupation, the employee loses protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of reentry to the occupation.

**NOTE**: If social workers covered under the grandfathering provision of the 1991 Federal law regarding licensure or certification of VHA social workers leave the GS-185 social work series, they lose the grandfathering protection. If they choose to return at a later date to the GS-185 series, they must be licensed or certified to qualify for employment as a social worker.

- e. **Physical Requirements.** See VA Directive and Handbook 5019.
- f. **English Language Proficiency.** Social workers must be proficient in spoken and written English in accordance with VA Handbook 5005, Part II, chapter 3, section A, paragraph 3j, this part.

### 3. GRADE REQUIREMENTS

- a. Creditable Experience
- (1) **Knowledge of Current Professional Social Work Practices.** To be creditable, the experience must have required the use of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics associated with current professional social work practice. The experience or education must be post-MSW degree. Experience and education satisfying this requirement must be active professional practice, which is paid/non-paid employment as a professional social worker, as defined by the appropriate state licensing board.
- (2) **Quality of Experience.** Experience is only creditable if it is obtained following graduation with a master's degree in social work and if it includes work as a professional social worker directly related to the position to be filled. Qualifying experience must also be at a level comparable to social work experience at the next lower level.
- (3) Advanced Practice Level. Advanced Practice Level is defined as the ability to provide independent and expert clinical psychosocial and case management services in a specialized area of practice to veterans who tend to have serious and severe crises, may lack any familial and community support, may be poor self-monitors, may frequently fail to comply with instructions and treatment, or may have major deficits in coping skills and require continuing professional psychological support. The advanced practice or Senior Social Worker has an increased depth and breadth of practice skills; has expertise in participating in the professional development of colleagues through mentorship and teaching; demonstrates leadership in developing and expanding professional intervention strategies; demonstrates leadership in defining and attending to professional practice issues; and has the ability to expand the conceptual knowledge of the profession. The advanced practice or Senior Social Worker will make independent professional decisions and recommendations for agency action; the consequences

to the veteran of these decisions and actions may be quite serious. Work involves intensive social work services requiring the exercise of mature professional judgment and the flexible use of a wide range of complex social work practice skills not typically required in routine social work interventions. The advanced practice or senior social worker has mastered a range of specialized interventions and provides consultation to colleagues, renders professional opinions based on experience and expertise, develops new models of psychosocial assessment or intervention, and incorporates complex multiple causation in differential diagnosis and treatment. The advanced practice or Senior Social Worker utilizes outcome evaluations to further treatment and designs system changes based on empirical findings.

- (4) **Differentiating Full Performance Level from Advanced Practice Level.** This is done based on the differences between independent practice, which is required for all VHA social workers, and advanced practice. A social worker practicing at the independent level has a generalized knowledge of practice, whereas the social worker practicing at the advanced level has specialized knowledge of practice typically related to a particular diagnosis or patient population. The advanced practice social worker can be further differentiated from the independent practice social worker by his/her ability to expand clinical knowledge in the profession, provide consultation and guidance to colleagues, role model effective social work practice skills, teach or provide orientation to less experienced social workers, develop innovations in practice interventions, and provide clinical supervision for social work licensure or certification. A social worker with advanced practice skills and personal qualifications that meet the standard for the Senior Social Worker will have passed an advanced generalist or clinical ASWB examination and be assigned to a position that requires use of the advanced practice skills in order to be considered for the senior social worker grade.
- (5) **Part-Time Experience.** Part-time experience as a professional social worker is creditable according to its relationship to the full-time workweek. For example, a social worker employed 20 hours a week, or on a 1/2-time basis, would receive 1 full-time workweek of credit for each 2 weeks of service.
- (6) **Fellowships or Post-Graduate Training.** Fellowship and post-graduate training programs are typically in a specialized area of clinical practice, i.e., group or family practice. Training as a fellow or post-graduate may be substituted for creditable experience on a year-for-year basis.
- (7) **Practicum in a VA Setting.** A VHA practicum experience <u>may not</u> be substituted for experience, as the practicum (field placement) is completed prior to graduation with a master's degree in social work.
- b. **Grade Determinations.** In addition to the basic requirements for employment, the following criteria must be met when determining the grade of candidates.
  - (1) **GS-9 Social Worker**
- (a) **Experience, Education and Licensure.** GS-9 is the entry level grade for the GS-185 social work series and is used for social workers with less than one year of post-MSW experience **and** for social workers who are not yet licensed or certified at the independent practice level. Social workers at the GS-9 level are working toward completion of prerequisites for licensure or certification. In addition, the candidates must demonstrate the KSAs in subparagraph (b) below.

**NOTE:** Social workers with more than one year of post-MSW experience may be appointed at an advanced step within the GS-9 grade commensurate with their years of experience.

#### (b) Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- <u>1</u>. Ability to provide psychosocial treatment to a wide variety of individuals from various socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, educational, and other diversified backgrounds. This requires knowledge of human development and behavior (physical and psychological), and the differential influences of the environment, society, and culture.
- <u>2</u>. Ability to work with patients and families who are experiencing a variety of psychiatric, medical, and social problems utilizing individual, group, and family counseling skills. Work with more complex problems is done under close supervision. With guidance from the social work supervisor, ability to assess the psychosocial functioning and needs of patients and their family members, and to formulate and implement a treatment plan, identifying the patient's problems, strengths, weaknesses, coping skills, and assistance needed.
- <u>3</u>. Basic knowledge of psychosocial treatment modalities and, under supervision, ability to implement treatment modalities in working with individuals, families, and groups to achieve treatment goals. This requires judgment and skill in utilizing supportive, problem solving, or crisis intervention techniques.
- <u>4</u>. Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with clients, staff, and representatives of community agencies. Ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, with people from varied backgrounds.
- <u>5</u>. Knowledge of medical and mental health diagnoses, disabilities, and treatment procedures. This includes acute, chronic, and traumatic illnesses/injuries; common medications and their effects/side effects; and medical terminology.
- <u>6</u>. Basic skill in the use of computer software applications for drafting documents, data management, and tracking. Ability to learn and utilize software programs in use by VHA.
- (c) **Assignments.** Individuals assigned as GS-9 social workers are considered to be at the entry level and are closely supervised, as they are not yet functioning at the independent practice level conferred by independent licensure or certification. Social workers at the GS-9 entry level are typically assigned to VHA program areas that do not require specialized knowledge or experience. Since these social workers are not practicing at an independent level, they should not be assigned to program areas where independent practice is required, such as in a CBOC, unless there is a licensed social worker in the program area who can provide supervision for practice. GS-9 social workers provide psychosocial services in the assigned area under supervision.

#### (2) GS-11 Social Worker

(a) **Experience, Education and Licensure.** Promotion to the GS-11 full performance level requires completion of a minimum of 1 year of post-MSW degree experience in the field of health care social

## VA HANDBOOK 5005/23 PART II APPENDIX G39

work (VA or non-VA experience) and licensure or certification in a state at the independent practice level. **NOTE:** For appointment licensure or certification at this level please refer to paragraph 2c.

#### OR,

In addition to meeting basic requirements, a doctoral degree in social work from a school of social work may be substituted for the required 1 year of professional social work experience in a clinical setting. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the KSAs in subparagraph (b) below.

## (b) Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- <u>1</u>. Knowledge of community resources, how to make appropriate referrals to community and other governmental agencies for services, and ability to coordinate services.
- <u>2</u>. Ability to independently assess the psychosocial functioning and needs of patients and their family members and to formulate and implement a treatment plan, identifying the patient's problems, strengths, weaknesses, coping skills and assistance needed, in collaboration with the patient, family and interdisciplinary treatment team.
- <u>3</u>. Ability to independently conduct psychosocial assessments and provide psychosocial treatment to a wide variety of individuals from various socio-economic, cultural, ethnic, educational and other diversified backgrounds. This requires knowledge of human development and behavior (physical and psychological) and the differential influences of the environment, society and culture.
- <u>4</u>. Knowledge and experience in the use of medical and mental health diagnoses, disabilities and treatment procedures. This includes acute, chronic and traumatic illnesses/injuries, common medications and their effects/side effects, and medical terminology.
- <u>5</u>. Knowledge of psychosocial treatment and ability to independently implement treatment modalities in working with individuals, families and groups who are experiencing a variety of psychiatric, medical and social problems to achieve treatment goals. This requires independent judgment and skill in utilizing supportive, problem solving or crisis intervention techniques.
- <u>6</u>. Ability to independently provide counseling and/or psychotherapy services to individuals, groups and families. Social workers must practice within the bounds of their license or certification. For example, some states may require social workers providing psychotherapy to have a clinical level of licensure.
- <u>7</u>. Ability to provide consultation services to other staff about the psychosocial needs of patients and the impact of psychosocial problems on health care and compliance with treatment. Ability to provide orientation and coaching to new social workers and social work graduate students. Ability to serve as a field instructor for social work graduate students who are completing VHA field placements.
- <u>8</u>. Ability to independently evaluate his/her own practice through participation in professional peer review case conferences, research studies, or other organized means.

- <u>9</u>. Knowledge and skill in the use of computer software applications for drafting documents, data management, and tracking, especially those programs in use by VHA.
- (c) **Assignments.** This is the full performance level for social workers. GS-11 social workers are licensed or certified to independently practice social work. They are assigned to all program areas, including inpatient or outpatient medicine, surgery, mental health, neurology, rehabilitation medicine, and geriatrics. Employees provide professional, independent social work services in the assigned area.

## (3) **GS-12 Senior Social Worker**

(a) Experience, Education and Licensure. Senior Social Workers have experience that demonstrates possession of advanced practice skills and judgment. At least two years should be in an area of specialized social work practice. Senior social workers must be licensed or certified by a state at the advanced practice level which included an ASWB advanced generalist or clinical examination, unless they are grandfathered by the state in which they are licensed to practice at the advanced practice level (except for licenses issued in California, which administers its own clinical examination for advanced practice). Senior social workers may have certification or other post-masters training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship or equivalent supervised professional experience in a specialty (see paragraph 3a(c)). In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the professional KSAs in subparagraph (b) below.

## (b) Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- <u>1</u>. Advanced knowledge of and mastery of theories and modalities used in the specialized treatment of complex physical or mental illness. Ability to incorporate complex multiple causation in differential diagnosis and treatment of veteran patients, including making psychosocial and psychiatric diagnoses within approved clinical privileges or scope of practice. Ability to determine priority for services and provide specialized treatment services.
- <u>2</u>. Advanced and expert skill in a range of specialized interventions and treatment modalities used in specialty treatment programs or with special patient populations. This includes individual, group, and/or family counseling or psychotherapy and advanced level psychosocial and/or case management interventions used in the treatment of veterans with polytraumatic injuries, spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries, visual impairment, post-traumatic stress disorder, etc.
- <u>3</u>. Advanced knowledge and expert skill in developing and implementing methods for measuring effectiveness of social work practice and services in the specialty area, utilizing outcome evaluations to improve treatment services. Ability to coordinate the delivery of specialized psychosocial services and programs. Ability to design system changes based on empirical findings.
- <u>4</u>. Ability to provide subject matter consultation to colleagues and students on the psychosocial treatment of patients treated in the specialty area, rendering professional opinions based on experience and expertise and role modeling effective social work practice skills. Ability to teach and mentor staff and students in the specialty area of practice and to provide supervision for licensure or for specialty certifications.

- <u>5</u>. Ability to expand clinical knowledge in the profession, demonstrating innovation in the creation of new models of psychosocial assessment or intervention to identify and address specialized clinical needs. Ability to write policies, procedures, and/or practice guidelines pertaining to the specialty population or specialty treatment program.
- (c) **Assignments.** Senior Social Workers are licensed or certified to independently practice social work at an advanced level. Senior Social Workers typically practice in a major specialty treatment program area, such as a Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center or Polytrauma Network Site; a Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Center, or a national VHA referral center, such as a national Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or a national Transplant Center, or other program areas of equivalent scope and complexity. The Senior Social Worker is assigned administrative responsibility for clinical program development and is accountable for clinical program effectiveness and modification of service patterns. They are also assigned in settings where they have no access to social work supervision, such as CBOCs or satellite outpatient clinics. They may be assigned to work with special patient populations with highly-complex health or mental health problems requiring expert level psychosocial interventions, such as VA/DOD liaisons assigned to Military Treatment Facilities as part of seamless transition or social worker case managers in Mental Health Intensive Case Management (MHICM) programs.
- (4) **Social Worker Program Coordinators and Manager.** For Social Worker Program Coordinators, grades are determined by the scope of responsibility and the type, size, and complexity of the assignment.
- (a) **Experience, Education and Licensure.** Individuals assigned as social worker program coordinator or manager must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level. Their experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills and judgment, demonstrating progressively more professional competency. They may have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the professional KSAs in subparagraph (b) below.

## (b) Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- <u>1</u>. In-depth knowledge of the program coordinated, and demonstrated knowledge and ability to write policies, procedures, and/or practice guidelines for the program.
- <u>2</u>. Knowledge and skill in management/administration, which includes supervision, consultation, negotiation, and monitoring.
  - 3. Ability to supervise multidisciplinary staff assigned to the program.
- <u>4</u>. Ability to organize work, set priorities, meet multiple deadlines, and evaluate assigned program area(s).
- <u>5</u>. Ability to provide training, orientation, consultation and guidance within clinical specialization of practice.

- (c) **Assignments.** The KSAs shown above apply to all Social Worker Program Coordinator grade levels.
- <u>1</u>. **GS-12 Social Worker Program Coordinators.** Program coordinators at the GS-12 grade are administratively responsible for a clinical program providing treatment to patients in a major specialty, such as Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) coordinators, Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST) coordinators, Homeless Veterans Program (HVP) coordinators, Community Nursing Home Program (CNHP) coordinators. They may be the sole practitioner in this specialty at the facility and typically provide direct patient care services in the program area. They manage the daily operation of the program, develop policies and procedures for program operation, and prepare reports and statistics for facility, VISN, and national use. They may be responsible for the program's budget.
- <u>2</u>. **GS-13 Social Worker Program Coordinator.** At this grade, Social Worker Program Coordinators manage the administrative and clinical aspects of a major specialty treatment program, such as PTSD, Substance Abuse Treatment Program (SAW), Home-Based Primary Care (HBPC), etc., or a combination of programs located at one facility or multiple divisions of a facility. They have responsibility for coordinating interdisciplinary staffing, work assignments, budget, treatment services provided, and admission criteria for the program. They may also supervise employees assigned to the program.
- <u>3</u>. **GS-14 Social Worker Program Manager.** At the GS-14 grade, Social Worker Program Managers are assigned to manage, direct and oversee a major specialty treatment program at a multidivision facility or at the VISN or VA Central Office level. Typical assignments at the facility level include serving as a care line manager or major section chief. Typical assignments at the VISN or VACO level include overseeing a VISN homeless program or care coordination program or a national program, such as the Fisher House Program. They have responsibility for staffing, work assignments, budget, clinical services provided and admission criteria for the program, day-to-day program operation, and all reporting requirements. Additionally, program managers at this grade generally have collateral assignments, determined by the needs of the local facility, the VISN and/or VACO.
- (5) **Supervisory Social Workers.** For supervisors, grades are determined by the scope of responsibility, the complexity of the social work services provided by supervisees, the composition of the staff supervised, (e.g. professional staff, multidisciplinary staff, tours of duty, geographical disbursement, etc.), and the amount of time spent in personnel management functions.
- (a) **Experience, Education and Licensure.** Individuals assigned as Supervisory Social Workers must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level and must be able to provide supervision for subordinate staff to qualify for licensure. Their experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills in a specialty area or in administration demonstrating progressively more professional competency and judgment. They may have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience. In addition, the candidate must demonstrate the professional KSAs in subparagraph (b) below.

## VA HANDBOOK 5005/23 PART II APPENDIX G39

- (b) Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities
- 1. Ability to independently organize work, set priorities, and meet multiple deadlines.
- <u>2</u>. Knowledge and skill in management/administration, which includes supervision, consultation, negotiation, and monitoring.
  - 3. Ability to ensure provision of clinical social work services by supervised social workers.
- <u>4</u>. Ability to provide administrative supervision and clinical supervision, including supervision for social work licensure.
- (c) **Supervisory Social Worker Assignments.** The KSAs shown above apply to all Supervisory Social Worker grade levels.
- <u>1</u>. **GS-12 Supervisory Social Worker.** At the GS-12 grade, Supervisory Social Workers typically have significant personnel management responsibilities for a small to medium size professional and non-professional staff, including support staff and professional staff at the GS-11 grade level and below. They are responsible for the professional and administrative management of an area in a social work service, in a care line, or multiple facilities. They also provide direct clinical services with or without program coordination responsibilities.
- <u>2</u>. **GS-13 Supervisory Social Worker.** Supervisory Social Workers at the GS-13 grade level typically supervise a significant number of professional staff at the GS-12 grade, including advanced practice social workers and social worker program coordinators. They are responsible for the professional and administrative management of an area in a social work service, in a care line, or across multiple sites, e.g., multi-division facilities and CBOCs with a large number of supervisees at the GS-12 grade and below. They typically also provide direct clinical services.
- <u>3</u>. **GS-14 Supervisory Social Worker.** At the GS-14 grade, Supervisory Social Workers are typically either Social Work Chiefs or Social Work Executives.
  - (6) Assistant Service Chief Social Work, Chief Social Work Service, and Social Work Executive
- (a) Assistant Service Chief of Social Work Service. Is restricted to those serving as a full assistant to the Chief Social Work Service for both administrative and professional practice. These individuals are to share, with the Chief, full responsibility for managing and supervising all aspects of social work service operations. The Assistant Service Chief is to be one grade less than the grade of the Chief Social Work Service. Individuals assigned as service chiefs or assistant service chiefs must have the equivalent of at least 1 year of creditable experience comparable to the next lower grade level. The experience must evidence possession of supervisory and management skills.
- (b) Chief Social Work Service. In facilities with a centralized social work department, individuals assigned as service chiefs have full responsibility for managing and supervising all aspects of social work service operations. The Chief Social Work Service is the highest level professional position at the facility with responsibility for the professional practice of all facility social workers and provision of social work services.

(c) **Social Work Executives.** In care lines, social workers often report administratively to staff who are not social workers. In facilities with care lines, the Social Work Executive is the highest level professional position at the facility with responsibility for the professional practice of all facility social workers and provision of social work services. Social Work Executive positions are only established at facilities that do not have a Chief Social Work Service.

**NOTE:** Grades for Assistant Service Chief, Chief Social Work Service and Social Work Executives in this section are determined by the scope of responsibility, assignment, number of social workers in the facility, and the complexity level of the facility.

<u>1</u>. **Experience, Education and Licensure.** Assistant Service Chief, Chief Social Work Service, and Social Work Executive must evidence possession of supervisory and management skills, must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure. Their experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills in administration, demonstrating progressively more professional competency skills and judgment. They may have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience. In addition, they must demonstrate the professional KSAs in subparagraph 2 below.

## 2. Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

- <u>a</u>. Knowledge and skill in management/administration, which includes supervision, consultation, negotiation, and monitoring.
  - b. Knowledge of legal, ethical, and professional standards applicable to social work practice.
- <u>c</u>. Ability to develop, maintain, and oversee social work programs in all settings. This includes identifying needs for social work assessment, evaluation, and treatment; determining priority needs for social work services; and recommending adjustments to staffing levels accordingly.
- <u>d</u>. Demonstrated global knowledge of social work practice in health care and mental health settings including resources, and the policies and procedures pertaining to home and community based care, acute care, ambulatory care, long term care, performance measures, and clinical guidelines.
- <u>e</u>. Ability to provide consultation to care line managers and other staff on social work qualification standards, social work practice, social work competency, social work productivity, and social work continuing education.
- $\underline{\mathbf{f}}$ . Ability to provide supervision for social work licensure and practice supervision for facility social workers.
- (d) Assistant Service and Service Chief Assignments. The KSAs shown in subparagraph (c) $\underline{2}$  above apply to all Social Work Chief grade levels.

- <u>1</u>. **GS-13 Assistant Chief, Social Work Service.** GS-13 Assistant Chiefs are typically found in Complexity Level 1 (High Complexity) VHA facilities and have responsibility for a large professional staff. Individuals in this assignment serve as a full assistant to the Chief Social Work Service. They function as the chief of the service during the chief's absences. These individuals share, with the Chief Social Work Service, responsibility for the management of the service and the services provided by social workers.
- <u>2</u>. **GS-12 Chief Social Work Service.** At the GS-12 grade, individuals are typically assigned as chiefs of a small, minimally complex Service that offers basic social work services at Complexity Level 3 (Low Complexity) VHA facilities with one division. The chief has full management and supervisory responsibility for clinical practice, program management, education, human resource management and supervision, and organizational stewardship for the social work program. Such facilities may offer specialty care and services and may be affiliated with academic institutions. Typically, there are no subordinate supervisory social workers at the facility.
- <u>3</u>. **GS-13 Chief Social Work Service.** At the GS-13 grade, individuals are typically assigned as chiefs of a moderate to large, complex Service that offers basic and specialized social work services in Complexity Level 2 (Medium Complexity) VHA facilities. The service normally has more than 25 social workers on staff and may include one or more subordinate supervisory social workers. The chief has full responsibility for clinical practice, program management, education, human resource management and supervision, and organizational stewardship for a social work program.
- <u>4</u>. **GS-14 Chief Social Work Service.** GS-14 Chief Social Work Service is typically assigned to Complexity Level 1 (High Complexity) VHA facilities. They typically have full responsibility for provision of complex social work services requiring advanced practice skills. The service normally has more than 35 social workers on staff, including subordinate supervisory social workers. They have full responsibility for clinical practice, program management, education, human resource management and supervision, and organizational stewardship for a social work program.
- (e) **Social Work Executive Assignments.** The KSAs shown in subparagraph (c) $\underline{2}$  above apply to all Social Work Executive grade levels.
- <u>1</u>. **GS-12 Social Work Executive.** The GS-12 Social Work Executive is typically assigned to a Complexity Level 3 (Low Complexity) VHA Facility where the clinical program does not include a wide range of acute care activities and where there are fewer than 25 social workers. The GS-12 Social Work Executive is responsible for overseeing the professional practice of all facility social workers and the provision of social work services.
- <u>2</u>. **GS-13 Social Work Executive.** The GS-13 Social Work Executive is typically assigned to a Complexity Level 2 (Medium Complexity) VHA facility and has responsibility for overseeing the practice of more than 25 social workers or for social workers in multiple divisions of a VHA facility. The GS-13 Social Work Executive is responsible for overseeing the professional practice of all social workers, and the position is typically full-time. Additionally, these are generally collateral assignments, determined by the needs of the local facility, the VISN, and/or VHA Central Office.

<u>3</u>. **GS-14 Social Work Executive.** The GS-14 Social Work Executive is typically assigned to a care line management role at a Complexity Level 1 (High Complexity) VHA facility and has responsibility for overseeing the practice of more than 35 social workers or of social workers in multiple divisions of a VHA facility. The GS-14 Social Work Executive is responsible for overseeing the professional practice of all facility social workers and provision of social work services. The position usually includes a management role, such as a care line manager/administrator.

#### 4. DEVIATIONS

- a. The appointing official may, under unusual circumstances, approve reasonable deviations to the grade determination requirements for social workers in VHA whose composite record of accomplishments, performance, and qualifications, as well as current assignments, warrant such action based on demonstrated competence to meet the requirements of the proposed grade.
- b. Under no circumstances will the educational requirements be waived. Under no circumstances will licensure requirements be waived for grade levels GS-12 or above.
- c. The placement of individuals in grade levels not described in this standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health, or designee, in VHA Central Office.

**Authority 38 U.S.C. 7402, 7403** ]