Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Response to the VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) National
Advisory Committee (NAC) 2016 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: 1a) It is recommended that VA extend the life span of a volunteer flash ID badge for volunteers (with no computer access or access to a restricted area) from one (1) year to three (3) years. 1b) It is also recommended that VA standardize volunteer ID badges as flash badges at all VA Medical Centers (unless the volunteer requires the badge for computer access or access to a restricted area).

VA Response: VA agrees in principle; however, the current Personal Identity Verification (PIV) System does not provide the capability to extend the Flash Badge to 3 years. A Non-PIV Card with a 3-year expiration date can be issued to volunteers who receive a favorable adjudication of a Special Agreement Check/Fingerprints. Existing VA policy requiring issuance of a PIV Card will remain in effect for those volunteers who require computer access or access to a restricted area. The volunteers who require a PIV Card will need to undergo a Tier 1 National Agency with Written Inquiries level investigation. VAVS will continue to collaborate with the Office of Operations, Security, and Preparedness as they develop the requirements for the NEXT GEN PIV System and revisit the capability to extend the Flash Badge for volunteers without computer access or access to a restricted area from 1 year to 3 years.

VA non-concurs with 1b. There are only 3 types of PIV credentials: PIV Badge; Non-PIV Badge; and Flash Badge. Volunteers are considered Without Compensation (WOC) Employees and are a critical component of VA's supplemental services in the delivery of health care. Volunteers are required to undergo on-boarding processes to obtain a PIV credential in accordance with Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12, VA Directive 0710, and VA Directive 0735.

Recommendation 2: To enhance applications to acknowledge and document regularly scheduled/occasional volunteer services, donations, and volunteer hours at Vet Centers, it is recommended that the Department of Veterans Affairs, through the Director, Voluntary Service Office, take actions to: 2a) Develop and implement procedures to ensure that volunteers, volunteer hours, and donations provided for Vet Centers are accurately documented. 2b) Acknowledge and recognize these dedicated volunteers and community partners who serve at Vet Centers nationwide. 2c) VA expand the Voluntary Service System to include a national service code for Vet Center volunteers.

VA Response: VA concurs with Recommendation 2a. VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) at VA Central Office (VACO) has been collaborating with the Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS) at VACO during the past year to ensure monetary gifts and donations to Vet Centers are deposited into the General Post Fund (GPF) account established for the Vet Center by their servicing VA medical facility and that volunteers are appointed in accordance with Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook 1620.01, *Voluntary Service Procedures*, and have a VA Form 10-7055 with the appointing official's signature on file.

VA concurs with Recommendation 2b. VAVS is committed to providing the appropriate recognition for contributions of VAVS volunteers and their organizations to the VAVS Program. Volunteers have a significant impact on VA and need to be recognized for their contributions. Recognition is the responsibility of all staff. Procedures for employee recognition and awards are specified in existing VA policy under VA Directive 5017 and VA Handbook 5017, *Employee Recognition and Awards*, VHA Handbook, 1620.01, *Voluntary Service Procedures*, VA Financial Policies and Procedures Awards, Ceremonies, Food or Refreshment, Gifts or Mementos, Volume II – Chapter 4, April 2016, and may consist of tangible awards, such as certificates, pins, plaques, etc. WOC employees under 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 513 and 38 U.S.C. 7405 may participate in the VA Employee Recognition and Awards Program. VHA medical facilities have volunteer recognition events to acknowledge the contributions of their volunteers. VAVS and RCS will collaborate to ensure Vet Center volunteers are receiving the appropriate recognition.

VA concurs with Recommendation 2c. VAVS has established a national code for Vet Centers in the Voluntary Service System (VSS), the system used to track volunteer hours and donations. VAVS has communicated the code to the VAVS field stations and has asked those with local codes for Vet Centers to switch their local code to the national code. In fiscal year (FY) 2017, VSS will be rolling out its redesign, which will no longer use codes, instead it will allow a physical location, benefiting service, assignment, and role type to be inputted in the tracking system. With a VA networked computer and access to VSS, Vet Centers will be able to input their own hours instead of keeping track on an excel spreadsheet, which will ensure hours and donations are documented accurately.

VA Action Plan–Vet Center Volunteers.

Steps to Implement	Lead Office	Other Offices	Tasks	Due Date	Current Status	Contact Person
RCS Memorandum (Memo) to field to reiterate VA policy on the acceptance of monetary gifts or donations.	10RCS	In Collaboration with VAVS	Prepared memo to All Readjustment Counseling Service Staff.	8/14/2015	Completed	Michael Fisher michael.fisher6@va.gov (202) 461-0525
Provide RCS Memo to VAVS Field Staff.	VAVS		Sent RCS Memo to VAVS All Staff.	8/14/2015	Completed	Sabrina Clark sabrina.clark@va.gov (202) 461-7300
Volunteers are appointed in accordance with VHA Handbook 1620.01.	VAVS		Toolkit provided to RCS (VHA Handbook 1620.01; VHA 10-7055, Application for Voluntary Service; sample Position	2/4/2016	Completed	Sabrina Clark sabrina.clark@va.gov (202) 461-7300

			Descriptions (PD)).			
Review the formula that is used to determine the amount of Central Office (CO) advance that is sent to each VA facility annually. Many facilities use their CO Advance funds to pay for their recognition events. Currently, the formula is based on the number of beds and, therefore, would not account for Vet Centers or Community Based Outpatient Clinics. Facilities who recognize the volunteers serving outside of the medical facility setting do not receive enough funding through CO advance to provide an appropriate recognition ceremony.	VAVS	VACO GPF Review Committee	Discussed during May and June's monthly VACO GPF Review Committee meetings.		Pending	Sabrina Clark sabrina.clark@va.gov (202) 461-7300
Establish VSS National Code for Vet Center. Communicate the National Code with VAVS Field Staff.	VAVS VAVS		Create National Service Code. Notify field to switch their local code to the national code.	5/19/2016	Completed Completed	Sabrina Clark sabrina.clark@va.gov (202) 461-7300 Sabrina Clark sabrina.clark@va.gov

VSS redesign rolled out.	VAVS		Communicate new process with the field.		In process	Sabrina Clark sabrina.clark@va.gov
Ensure Vet Centers have VA networked computer and access to VSS to input volunteer hours.	VAVS	10RCS	Collaborate with RCS.		In process	Sabrina Clark sabrina.clark@va.gov and Michael Fisher Michael.Fisher6@va.gov
Provide education to Vet Center Staff who serve as volunteer supervisors, to ensure their knowledge of volunteer sign-in procedures and to reinforce volunteer compliance.	VAVS	10RCS	Conference calls and during Face-to-Face opportunities.			Sabrina Clark sabrina.clark@va.gov and Michael Fisher Michael.Fisher6@va.gov

Recommendation 3: It is recommended that the Department of Veterans Affairs ensures that volunteers and volunteer hours (both regular and occasional) are appropriately recorded when volunteering at national cemeteries. VAVS staff will serve as the subject matter expert on guiding NCA to develop appropriate assignment guides, establish parameters for effectively tracking NCA volunteers and their hours, as well as encourage recognition events. In addition, there are resources (templates for application, assignment guide, training, etc.) available.

VA Response: VA concurs. VAVS is committed to ensuring that NCA volunteer hours are recorded properly to the designated national code in VSS. In FY 2017, VSS will be rolling out its redesign, which will no longer use codes, instead it will allow a physical location, benefiting service, assignment, and role type to be inputted in the tracking system. With access to VSS, NCA will be able to input their own hours onsite instead of keeping track on an excel spreadsheet, which will help to ensure hours are documented accurately. VAVS is committed to collaborating with NCA to ensure NCA volunteers and their organizations are receiving the appropriate recognition for their contributions. Volunteers have a significant impact on VA and need to be recognized for their contributions. Recognition is the responsibility of all staff. Procedures for employee recognition and awards are specified in existing VA policy under VA Directive 5017 and VA Handbook 5017, *Employee Recognition and Awards*, VHA Handbook, 1620.01, *Voluntary Service Procedures*, VA Financial Policies and Procedures Awards, Ceremonies, Food or Refreshment, Gifts or Mementos, Volume II – Chapter 4, April 2016, and may consist of tangible awards, such as certificates, pins, plaques, etc. WOC employees under 38

U.S.C. 513 and 38 U.S.C. 7405 may participate in the VA Employee Recognition and Awards Program. However, GPF can only be used to benefit patients and members, as defined under VHA Handbook 4721, *VHA General Post Fund Procedures*, and therefore, cannot be used to recognize NCA volunteers.

VA Action Plan–NCA Volunteers.						
Steps to Implement	**Lead Office**	**Other Offices**	**Tasks**	**Due Date**	**Current Status**	**Contact Person**
Collaborate with NCA regarding available resources to enhance volunteer programs at national cemeteries	VAVS	Appropriate offices will have the opportunity to review and concur.	Refresh Tool Kit with policy, VAVS points of contact, sample volunteer PDs.	As soon as approved	Open	Sabrina Clark sabrina.clark@va.gov (202) 461-7300
Work with NCA to allow access to VSS to input volunteer hours.	VAVS	40-NCA	Set up training to educate NCA staff on the VSS redesign.	FY 2017	Open	Sabrina Clark sabrina.clark@va.gov (202) 461-7300

Recommendation 4: To expand the VA Voluntary Service (VAVS) National Advisory Committee's (NAC) categories of membership to include Post-9/11 Veterans' Groups and other Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) whose Mission Statement and/or Charter include provisions to serve Veterans. Exempt current Certified VAVS NAC organizations from Public-Private Partnership regulation as identified in VA Directive 0008 and VHA Directive 1098. It is recommended that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs fully support active coordination, wherever feasible, with Post 9/11 Veterans' Groups/NGOs including, but not limited to Team Rubicon; Team Red, White and Blue; and The Mission Continues. The NAC membership further recommends that the VA take action to authorize additional Non-Governmental Organizations and representatives from the Office of Community Engagement as part of the VAVS National Advisory Committee. It is also recommended that the Secretary, through the VAVS Director, explore the expansion of the VAVS National Advisory Committee's membership categories, beginning Associate Service Member category, to include such groups.

VA Response: VA concurs. The language in the current VAVS NAC Charter states, "With the exception of the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, who are Regular Government Employees, all members of the Committee are named by national organizations involved in VA volunteer activities." The Post 9/11 Veterans' groups and NGOs, as mentioned in this recommendation, have innovative programs in place that support the VAVS Program mission and can advise the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on the coordination and promotion of volunteer activities and strategic partnership within VA health care facilities, in the community, and on

other matters relating to volunteerism and charitable giving as per the VAVS NAC's scope of activities. The Deputy Chairperson will work with the Executive Committee to update the membership categories in the current VAVS NAC Standard Operating Procedures, (SOP) to include a category of membership to expand the membership to include Post-9/11 Veterans' Groups and other NGOs whose Mission Statement and/or Charter include provisions to serve Veterans. Additionally, VHA Directive 1098, *VHA Public-Private Partnerships*, was published on September 15, 2015. The current NAC member organizations have met the criteria for responsible, productive, and innovative partners and are in compliance with the policy. VA requires that all potential new members be vetted for their suitability and appropriateness to serve on the committee in accordance with due diligence efforts set forth in the policy. Within the guidance it is recommended that vetting prior to new partnerships be accomplished by completion of a Due Diligence Worksheet. This worksheet will be used to determine suitability and appropriateness of potential new members to serve on the VAVS NAC.

VA Action Plan–Authorize additional NAC membership criteria.						
Steps to Implement	**Lead Office**	**Other Offices**	**Tasks**	**Due Date**	**Current Status**	**Contact Person**
Update VAVS NAC SOP.	VAVS/NAC	NAC Membership Subcommittee	Develop a new category to be added to the VAVS NAC SOP.	April 2017	Pending	Sabrina Clark sabrina.clark@va.gov (202) 461-7300
Vote on changes to VAVS NAC SOP.	VAVS/NAC	Executive Committee/NAC Service Members	Membership Subcommittee brings forward to Executive Committee during Spring EC Meeting; if approved, Updated SOP.	April 2017	Pending	Sabrina Clark sabrina.clark@va.gov (202) 461-7300

Recommendation 5: Approve VAVS to proceed with publishing an updated Position Classification Guide for VAVS Officers/Program Managers in concert with the Human Resource Classification Workgroup, signed by the Under Secretary for Health or designated official, or Determine if VA or VHA should implement policy to allow VAVS Officers/Program Managers to be classified in a job series, such as Health Systems Specialist – 0671 series or similar, that would allow growth to GS-14, or at a minimum, allow the most prevalent and numerous factors of the job rule the classification.

VA Response: VA concurs and supports VAVS with reviewing and revising VAVS positions to reflect the skill level, management, and supervisory role that VAVS Officers/Program Managers have in today's VA. VA acknowledges that the role has become significantly more managerial and less administrative in nature through the years. VA Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM) is no longer permitting Position Classification Guides to be issued. VAVS has reactivated its Classification Workgroup and

has reached out to the Workforce Management and Consulting (WMC) Office for a subject matter expert to assist with determining the best approach to updating the Voluntary Service Officer and Voluntary Service Specialist PDs.

VA Action Plan–Reclassify VAVS Officers/Program Managers under job series that would allow growth or allow the most prevalent and numerous factors of the job rule the classification.						
Steps to Implement	**Lead Office**	**Other Offices**	**Tasks**	**Due Date**	**Current Status**	**Contact Person**
Reactivate VAVS Classifications Workgroup.	VAVS	VAVS field staff/10A2/ OHRM	Invite WMC and OHRM to join workgroup calls.	May 2016	Complete	Sabrina Clark (202) 461-7300 sabrina.clark@va.gov
Classification Workgroup will work with WMC and OHRM to determine best approach to updating the Voluntary Service Officer and Voluntary specialist PDs to better describe how the positions have evolved during the past 20 years.	VAVS/WMC	10N/10A2	Schedule Meeting of Classification Workgroup.	September 2016	Complete	Sabrina Clark (202) 461-7300 sabrina.clark@va.gov

Recommendation 6: 6a) Revise/Amend VA Directive 0004 to reflect that volunteers be permitted to complete privacy training (and all other mandatory training) via other methods outside of TMS. 6b) Revise/Amend VA Directive 0004 to reflect that training documentation be recorded in the official Volunteer Personnel File in lieu of TMS.

VA Response: 6a) VA concurs. A revision/amendment to VA Directive 0004 is not required. VA Employee Education System supports print options as a modality for training.

6b) VA concurs-in-principle but maintains the need for national oversight and the ability to maintain TMS as the system of record. VA Directive 0004, *Education and Learning Delivery System*, requires all mandatory training be entered into TMS for purposes of tracking for VA staff. VA staff includes VA employees and non-VA employees with justifiable business requirements to access VA training, specifically including, but not limited to WOC, contractors, volunteers, and Veteran Service Organization representatives,

residents, and trainees. A revision/amendment to VA Directive 0004 is not required. The VSS application tracks all training required for each volunteer along with its completion status. An automated interface between VSS and TMS is currently in development. VAVS may continue to use VSS, as requested, as an interim repository to manage Volunteer Training until the automated interface is developed and the records can be imported to TMS.

VA Action Plan–Notification to the field that EES supports print options as a modality for training. Support interface between VSS and the TMS system.						
Steps to Implement	**Lead Office**	**Other Offices**	**Tasks**	**Due Date**	**Current Status**	**Contact Person**
Notification to the field that EES supports print options as a modality for training.	10B2A	10A2/ 10N	Determination of signature level.	In progress	Open	Sabrina C. Clark (202) 461-7300 sabrina.clark@va.gov
Collaboration and exploration of VSS interface with the TMS System.	10B2A	10A2 005	VSS development team is currently exploring this option with TMS. EES has offered assistance to VAVS to develop a requirements document to clarify the interface needed with VSS and TMS to allow training completions to be documented in the TMS system.	FY 2017 FY 2017	Open	Sabrina C. Clark (202) 461-7300 sabrina.clark@va.gov