

New Committee Member's Orientation Handbook



New Committee Member's Orientation Handbook



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New Committee Member's Orientation Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

This publication is designed to assist committee members in understanding their roles and responsibilities while serving on a VA Advisory Committee governed by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA).

This Handbook serves as a tool to assist you in carrying out your committee responsibilities. Your committee's Designated Federal Officer (DFO) is responsible for providing orientation to new members regarding the purpose and goals of their committee.

The General Services Administration is responsible for conducting annual reviews of advisory committee accomplishments; responding to inquiries from Federal agencies on establishing new committees or the renewal of existing groups; and maintaining a FACA database on the internet from which advisory committee information may be obtained. Together, GSA and the Federal community work to eliminate the overlap or duplication of advisory bodies, terminate unnecessary or inactive committees, and develop committee management regulations, guidelines, and training in response to requirements of the Executive Branch and Congress.

For additional information concerning VA advisory committees, you may also contact Jeffrey A. Moragne, Director, Advisory Committee Management Office at (202) 266-4660. Or send a note to the ACMO mailbox at: VA.Advisory.Cmte@va.gov.

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ABOUT DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) was established as an independent agency under the President by Executive Order 5398 on July 21, 1930, and was elevated to Cabinet level on March 15, 1989. Department of Veterans Affairs Act, Pub. L. No. 100-527, 102 Stat. 2635 (1988).

The Department's mission is to serve America's Veterans and their families with dignity and compassion, and to be their principal advocate in ensuring that they receive medical care, benefits, social support, and lasting memorials promoting the health, welfare, and dignity of all Veterans in recognition of their service to this Nation.

VA is the second largest Federal department and has over 340,000 employees. Among the many professions represented in the vast VA workforce are physicians, nurses, benefit counselors, statisticians, architects, computer specialists, and attorneys. As advocates for Veterans and their families, VA is committed to providing the very best care and services.

VA comprises a Central Office, which is located in Washington, DC, and field facilities throughout the Nation. There are three major administrations: Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, and National Cemetery Administration.

Veterans Health Administration's mission is to develop, maintain, and operate a national health care delivery system for eligible Veterans; administer a program of education and training for health care personnel; conduct health care research; and provide contingency support for Department of Defense and Department of Health and Human Services during times of war or national emergency.

Veterans Benefits Administration's mission is to provide benefits and services to Veterans, their families and survivors in a responsive, timely, and compassionate manner in recognition of their service to the Nation. These benefits and services include compensation, pension, fiduciary services, educational opportunities, vocational rehabilitation and employment services, home ownership and insurance.

National Cemetery Administration's mission is to honor Veterans and their families with final resting places in national shrines, and with lasting tributes that commemorate their service and sacrifice to our Nation.

Overall, services and benefits are provided through a nationwide network of 150 medical centers, 819 community-based outpatient clinics, 300 Vet Centers, 56 Regional Offices, and 131 National and 90 State or Tribal Cemeteries.

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STRUCTURE OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Purpose of Federal Advisory Committees: The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) was enacted in 1972 to ensure that the work of Federal advisory committees is objective, transparent, and cost effective. FACA and its implementing regulations set forth the processes for establishing, operating and overseeing advisory committees.

The FACA regulations define Federal advisory committees as any committee, board, commission, council, conference, panel, task force, or other similar group, which is established or utilized by the President or by an agency official, for the purpose of obtaining advice or recommendations for the President on issues or policies within the scope of an agency official's responsibilities.

Advisory Committee Members: Federal advisory committee members are drawn from nearly every occupational and industry group and geographical section of the United States and its territories. FACA requires that committee membership be "fairly balanced in terms of the points of view represented and the functions to be performed." In addition, some committees' authorizing statutes include specific requirements for members, such as prior military experience or expertise in a particular subject area.

As a result, committee members generally have personal and professional experiences that match the program responsibilities of their sponsoring agencies and the specific scope of the committee on which they serve. In balancing committee memberships, agencies are expected to assure representation of diverse and sometimes opposing viewpoints, to provide a foundation for developing advice and recommendations that are fair and comprehensive.

Types of Members and Their Purpose:

Chair: The Committee Chair is a member of the committee selected by the appointing authority or identified in the authorizing statute. The Chair presides at all meetings of the committee, makes sure the agenda is adhered to as closely as possible, ensures public participation, and certifies the accuracy of meeting minutes. The Chair ensures that all rules of order and conduct are maintained during meetings. If the Chair must leave the meeting due to a conflict of interest, that individual appoints either another committee member or the DFO to preside. When a committee member(s) may not participate in committee discussions due to a conflict of interest situation, the Chair ensures that the member(s) physically leaves the room and does not participate.

Special Government Employee (SGE): An SGE is a private citizen or an individual appointed based on expertise that will contribute to the committee's objectives. As

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defined in 18 U.S.C. § 202, an SGE is an officer or employee who is retained, designated, appointed, or employed to perform temporary duties, with or without compensation, for not more than 130 days during any period of 365 consecutive days. SGEs must review and comply with the standards of ethical conduct for employees of the executive branch. Federally registered lobbyists may not be appointed or re-appointed as SGEs.

Ex-officio Member: An ex-officio member is a Federal official who represents his or her agency and possesses expertise in a subject matter related to the committee's objectives. Ex-officio members have full voting rights unless otherwise stated in the charter or the committee's authorizing legislation.

Representative: A representative is an individual who serves on an advisory committee to provide it with the point of view of a nongovernmental entity. This person represents a special interest group, an organization, or an affected population. The prohibition against appointing or re-appointing Federally registered lobbyists does not apply to representatives.

Regular Government Employee (RGE): An RGE is a full-time or permanent part-time employee of the Federal Government..

Consultants: Consultants are not members of advisory committees but may be invited to subcommittee or parent committee meetings. They do not deliberate, vote on committee recommendations, or count toward the quorum.

Subcommittees/Workgroups: Subcommittees or workgroups generally are not subject to FACA and report to their parent advisory committee. They are convened to gather information, conduct research, draft position papers, and analyze relevant issues and facts. While subcommittees or workgroups are not subject to FACA, their activities are covered by the charter of the parent committee.

Sources for Obtaining New Committee Members: Solicitation of names of individuals in a given area may come from leaders in pertinent fields, scientific and professional organizations, and staff. Nominees may also be received from Agency officials, members of Congress, Veterans Service Organizations, the general public, current or former committee members, universities, and colleges. Committee members may also forward resumes or nominations to replace them. VA occasionally uses *Federal Register* notices to seek nominations.

Orientation of New Committee Members: The DFO provides orientation to the members regarding the purpose and goals of the committee, including their responsibilities to the committee and the agency, and ethics training by the

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appropriate official. In the case of filing committees, the DFO is responsible for ensuring that members submit the required Confidential Financial Disclosures.

Terms of Appointment: A committee member generally may serve ***no longer than two terms of 2 to 3 years*** unless the committee's authorizing legislation states otherwise, or unless the DFO of the committee, in consultation with the Committee Management Officer, provides specific justification in a membership approval package for additional terms of service. All other committee members whose service exceeds two terms will complete their service at the end of their current term. To the extent possible, terms will be staggered to ensure that the dates for termination of the members' terms are not all the same.

As a committee member, we will ask you for recommendations for other qualified individuals who could serve on the committee when your term or terms end.

Expiration of Committee Members: When you have completed your appointed term(s) on the committee, you will simply rotate off.

Committee Member's Resignation: If you decide to resign from the committee, a notification must be sent to your respective committee's DFO, preferably by letter.

Compensation or Honorarium Payment:

SGEs and Representatives: The stipend or honorarium generally paid to committee members who serve as an SGE or representative is established by the Secretary. Honorarium payments are paid ***only*** for days present at committee meetings. Exceptions to this policy may be approved by the Chief of Staff for scientists and medical specialists. SGE and representative members generally are also eligible to receive travel and per diem. Some committees handle this differently. The DFO and committee staff will discuss these payments with you in more detail, including any exceptions that may apply to your committee, and are responsible for coordinating your travel.

RGEs: The RGE members are not eligible to receive stipend or honorarium and must travel under a Federal travel order.

LAWS AND REGULATIONS

Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA): FACA, 5 United States Code (U.S.C.) App. 2, was enacted on October 6, 1972. FACA establishes a legal framework to govern the creation and operation of advisory committees in the Executive Branch to ensure that advice provided to agencies by Federal advisory committees is objective and transparent to the public.

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Specifically, Congress determined that:

- The need for many existing committees had not been reviewed;
- New committees should be established only when determined to be essential;
- Committees should be terminated when they are no longer needed;
- There should be standard and uniform procedures governing the operation of committees;
- Congress and the public should be kept informed of the number, purpose, membership activities, and costs of advisory committees; and
- The function of advisory committees should be advisory only.

In order to accomplish this, FACA outlines general responsibilities of Federal officials involved with committee management and broad guidelines for the operation of advisory committees.

Government in the Sunshine Act (5 U.S.C. § 552b): The Government in the Sunshine Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552b, was enacted to ensure that certain government meetings are open. Subsection (c) lists 10 exemptions that allow an agency to close all or part of an agency's meetings, including Federal advisory committee meetings. Meetings may be closed in accordance with subsection (c) to protect certain types of information, including trade secrets, commercial or financial information obtained from an individual, or information of a personal nature where disclosure would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy. Request for closed meetings must be reviewed by VA's Office of General Counsel (OGC). 5 U.S.C. § 552b(c)(4) and (6).

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (5 U.S.C. 552): The Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552, sets standards for determining which records held by government agencies must be made available to the public and which records may be withheld. Pursuant to section 10(b) of FACA, the records of Federal advisory committees generally must be made available for public inspection and copying and the public does not need to submit a FOIA request to access these records. However, if there is a reasonable expectation that records sought fall within exemptions set forth in 552(b) of FOIA, they may be withheld.

Privacy Act (5 U.S.C. § 552a): Congress found that in order to protect the privacy of individuals identified in information systems maintained by Federal agencies, it was necessary to regulate the collection, maintenance, use, and dissemination of information collected by such agencies. The purpose of the Privacy Act is to provide safeguards for an individual against an invasion of personal privacy. Records of

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members of advisory committees are subject to the Privacy Act.
<http://www.justice.gov/opcl/privstat.htm>.

FACA Final Rule (41 CFR Parts 101-6 and 102-3):

The Final Rule is an administrative document promulgated by the General Services Administration (GSA) that provides interpretive guidelines for FACA. The Final Rule is binding on Federal agencies. For example, FACA requires that meetings be announced timely in the Federal Register. The Final Rule specifies that a notice must be published at least 15 days before the meeting.

FACA – BACK TO THE BASICS

What is FACA? FACA is a Federal statute that governs the establishment, termination and management of Federal advisory committees. FACA is also enacted to promote openness and transparency and to regulate the number and duration of Federal advisory committees.

When does FACA apply? FACA applies to all groups with at least one non-Federal employee established or utilized by an agency to obtain advice or recommendations, unless an exception applies.

What are the requirements for a Federal advisory committee?

- Must have a signed and filed Charter;
- Must have a DFO;
- Must conduct public meetings with agenda announced in Federal Register 15 days in advance and an opportunity for public to submit written comments;
- Must have a balanced membership;
- Must ensure records are maintained and available for public inspection.

What constitutes an advisory committee meeting? FACA applies to all gatherings where substantive matters upon which the committee provides advice or recommendations are discussed. This includes “virtual” gatherings, such as tele- and video-conferences.

What is a DFO?

- VA employee who manages day-to-day Federal advisory committee operations;
- Must approve or call committee meetings;
- Must attend all committee meetings;

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- Must approve meeting agenda;
- Must ensure meeting minutes are certified by VA Committee Chair within 90 days after the Federal advisory committee meeting.

Are Federal advisory committees allowed to ever meet privately? Federal advisory committees may convene to perform two types of work *without* a public meeting:

Preparatory work. A meeting convened solely to gather information, conduct research, analyze relevant issues, facts in preparation for a Federal advisory committee meeting or to draft papers for deliberation by Federal advisory committee; and

Administrative work. A meeting convened solely to discuss administrative matters of the Federal advisory committee or receive administrative information from agency.

As discussed above, Federal advisory committee meetings may also be closed in whole or in part under limited circumstances, such as when discussing trade secrets, personal information, scientific review of research award applications, and criminal matters. OGC must concur in the closure.

Are committee members allowed to testify before a congressional committee or speak with congressional staff about Federal advisory committee matters? As a committee member, if you're asked to testify, you may speak about Federal advisory committee matters *only* in your personal capacity. As committee members, you do not have authority to testify on behalf of the Federal advisory committee and do not speak for VA. Your testimony should clarify that you are providing your personal opinion and are not speaking on behalf of VA or the Federal advisory committee. Because you are acting in your personal capacity if you testify, VA *cannot* reimburse you for expenses or pay honoraria. As a courtesy, please inform your respective committee's DFO if you are going to testify.

ETHICS – GETTING STARTED

The purpose of this section is to alert advisory committee staff of potential issues that may arise for SGE in connection with their service on a VA advisory committee so that they may seek advice from a VA Deputy Ethics Officer, Office of General Counsel when advisable. Obtaining ethics advice -- in writing, in advance, and based on a complete disclosure of all relevant facts -- from a VA deputy ethics official will provide safe harbor under the government ethics rules.

Why should a member get advice? Seeking advice from an ethics official in advance of taking action and complying with that advice will, in virtually all cases, protect an SGE

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from criminal prosecution or other administrative action. It is a good idea to get advice in writing.

When do the Ethics Rules apply?

- Ethics rules apply even if SGE serves without compensation.
- Ethics rules apply even on days when SGE is not directly performing Government services.
- SGEs are Government employees for ethics purposes, but are subject to less restrictive conflict of interest requirements and ethics rules.

Financial Disclosure: SGE members are required under the Ethics in Government Act to file financial disclosure reports when first appointed and annually thereafter. However, the Delegated Agency Ethics Official (DAEO) may exclude committee members from the filing requirement based on the particular duties and responsibilities of the committee and has done so with respect to many committees. Your DFO knows whether your committee's members are required to file. If you are required to file a financial disclosure report, you may not participate in a meeting until your report is reviewed and certified by the DFO and an agency ethics official. If required to file, you should submit your original completed report no later than three weeks prior to the first meeting of the year to the DFO. The DFO will do an initial review of your financial disclosure report, and then submit it to the Office of General Counsel for review.

RGE members of an advisory committee must submit reports. If the RGE files a confidential or public financial disclosure, a copy of most recent OGE 450 or SF 278 is acceptable.

For ethics questions or advice, contact VA's OGC Ethics Specialty Team at (202) 461-6000 or (202) 461-7694, or by email at GovernmentEthics@va.gov. You may also submit questions or comments via fax at (202) 273-6403. Most VA ethics questions can be answered in a telephone call.

CATEGORIES OF ETHICS LAW

Bribery – 18 U.S.C. § 201: This law prohibits Federal employees, including SGEs, from seeking, accepting, or agreeing to receive anything of value in return for being influenced in the performance of an official act.

Compensation for Representation Services – 18 U.S.C. § 203: This law prohibits an SGE from receiving compensation for representational services rendered by the employee or another person before VA or another Federal agency or other specified entity (such as a court or commission) in any particular matter involving a specific party

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in which the SGE has participated personally and substantially as a government employee. Representational services are communications with the intent to influence or persuade the government.

Acting on Someone Else's Behalf Before the Government – 18 U.S.C. § 205: This law prohibits an SGE from representing a party, with or without compensation, before VA or another Federal agency or other specified entity (such as a court or commission) in any particular matter involving a specific party in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest that the SGE participate in personally and substantially as a government employee.

Conflicts of Interest - 18 U.S.C. § 208: In particular, it is a crime for you to participate *personally and substantially* as a Government officer or employee in a *particular matter* which will *directly and predictably* affect your financial interest or a financial interest imputed to you. Persons whose financial interests are imputed to you is a spouse, minor child, general partner, or employee, or an organization in which SGE serves as officer, director, trustee, general partner, or organization with which the SGE has an arrangement for prospective employment.

A *particular matter* is a matter that is narrowly focused upon the financial interests of specific persons, or a discrete and identifiable class of persons. For instance, deliberations, decisions, actions focused on interest of specific parties (e.g., a contract, grant, or case in litigation) **OR** general applicability (focused on a discrete and identifiable class such as an industry), but NOT broad policy directed at a large and diverse group.

Salary of Government Officials and Employees Payable Only by United States – 18 U.S.C. § 209: This statute prohibits employees from being paid by someone other than the United States for doing their official Government duties. For example, a highly paid executive of a corporation, upon entering Government service, could not accept an offer from her former employer to make up the difference between her Government salary and the compensation she received from her former employer. The prohibition does not apply to:

- SGE and employees serving without compensation;
- Funds contributed out of the treasury of any State, county, or municipality;
- continued participation in a bona fide pension, retirement, group life, health or accident insurance, profit-sharing, stock bonus, or other employee welfare or benefit plan maintained by a former employer;
- Payments for travel, subsistence and other expenses made to an employee by a tax-exempt nonprofit organization incurred in connection with training;

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- Moving expenses incurred in connection with participation in an executive exchange or fellowship program in an executive agency.

STANDARDS OF ETHICAL CONDUCT

Appearance Personal and Business Relationships – 5 C.F.R. § 2635.502: There may be circumstances in which an SGE's participation in committee business would raise a question regarding the SGE's impartiality such as:

- SGE cannot participate in specific party matters where a person with whom you have a "covered relationship" is, or represents, a party;
- You have a "covered relationship" with all persons whose interests are yours under criminal conflict law, plus others;
- Bottom line---would a reasonable person with knowledge of all the relevant facts question your impartiality in the matter?

Gifts – 5 C.F.R. § 2635.202: A gift given to an SGE because of his or service on a VA advisory committee or given by a prohibited source, which includes an entity whose interests are affected financially by agency decision, would obviously raise concerns. Prohibited source includes: entity seeking official action by VA; entity doing/seeking business with VA; entity could be substantially affected by Committee decisions; or entity of which a majority of members are prohibited sources. An exception is SGE may accept meals, lodgings, transportation and other benefits arising from outside employment when benefits not offered due to status as Federal employee. Other minor exceptions exist, e.g., \$20 per occasion, \$50 during calendar year from the same source—consults an ethics official.

Charitable Fundraising – 5 C.F.R. § 2635.807: An SGE may engage in fundraising in a personal capacity as long as they do not personally solicit funds or support from a person whose interests may be substantially affected by the performance or nonperformance of the SGE's official duties.

Teaching, Speaking, and Writing – 5 C.F.R. § 2635.807: There are some circumstances where SGEs may not receive compensation for teaching, speaking, or writing that relates to official duties. SGEs may not be paid if the activity "relates to official duties" such as:

- Undertaken as part of official duties;
- Invitation extended primarily because of official position;

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- Invitation from someone whose interests may be substantially affected by member's Government duties;
- Information conveyed draws substantially on non-public information; or
- Subject matter deals significantly with any specific party matter to which SGE is assigned or was assigned within past year of current SGE appointment.

Hatch Act – 5 U.S.C. § 7321 – 7326: The Hatch Act rules limiting political activities apply to SGEs only while they are conducting government business. For instance, the SGE should not engage in partisan political activity while on duty, on Government property, or while using a Government vehicle; the SGE should not solicit or receive political contributions while on duty. An SGE may be a candidate for public office in a partisan election, but cannot campaign while on duty. Partisan political activity is activity directed at the success or failure of a political party, or a candidate in a partisan political election.

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Appendix A: Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committees

The following list of 25 VA advisory committees includes 15 that have been established by statute (with an asterisk *) and 10 non-statutory panels designed to provide advice on selected VA programs and policies. The advisory committees listed below are arranged alphabetically according to key words (**bold print**) in their titles. Immediately following the list of committees are summaries of the committees' objectives.

1)	VA National Academic Affiliations Council
*2)	Advisory Committee on Cemeteries and Memorials
3)	Clinical Science Research and Development Service Cooperative Studies Scientific Evaluation Committee
*4)	Advisory Committee on Disability Compensation
*5)	Veterans' Advisory Committee on Education
*6)	Veterans' Advisory Committee on Environmental Hazards
*7)	Advisory Committee on Former Prisoners of War
8)	Genomic Medicine Program Advisory Committee
*9)	Geriatrics and Gerontology Advisory Committee
*10)	Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses
11)	Health Services Research and Development Service Merit Review Board
*12)	Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans
13)	Joint Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development and Clinical Science Research and Development Services Scientific Merit Review Board
*14)	Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans
15)	MyVA Advisory Committee
16)	National Research Advisory Council
*17)	Advisory Committee on Prosthetics and Special Disabilities Programs
*18)	Advisory Committee on the Readjustment of Veterans
*19)	Veterans' Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation
20)	Rehabilitation Research and Development Service Scientific Merit Review Board
21)	Veterans' Rural Health Advisory Committee

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*22)	Special Medical Advisory Group
*23)	Advisory Committee on Structural Safety of Department of Veterans Affairs Facilities
24)	Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee
*25)	Advisory Committee on Women Veterans

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Appendix B: Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee Objectives

VA National Academic Affiliations Council

Provides advice to the Secretary regarding partnerships between VA and its academic affiliates.

Advisory Committee on **Cemeteries** and Memorials (Statutory)

Provides advice to the Secretary on the administration of national cemeteries, the selection of cemetery sites, the erection of appropriate memorials, and the adequacy of Federal burial benefits.

Clinical Science Research and Development Service **Cooperative Studies** Scientific Evaluation Committee

Provides advice on VA cooperative studies, multi-site clinical research activities, and policies related to conducting and managing these efforts; ensures that new and ongoing projects maintain high quality, are based upon scientific merit, and are efficiently and economically conducted.

Advisory Committee on **Disability Compensation** (Statutory)

Provides advice to the Secretary on establishing and supervising a schedule to conduct periodic reviews of the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD).

Veterans' Advisory Committee on **Education** (Statutory)

Provides advice to the Secretary on the administration of education and training programs for Veterans and Servicepersons, Reservists, and dependents of Veterans under Chapters 30, 32, 35, and 36 of Title 38, and Chapter 1606 of Title 10, United States Code.

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Veterans' Advisory Committee on **Environmental Hazards** (Statutory) – Administratively Inactive

Provides advice to the Secretary on adverse health effects that may be associated with exposure to ionizing radiation, and makes recommendations on proposed standards and guidelines regarding VA benefit claims based upon exposure to ionizing radiation.

Advisory Committee on **Former Prisoners of War** (Statutory)

Provides advice to the Secretary on the administration of benefits for Veterans who are former prisoners of war, and to assess the needs of such Veterans in the areas of service-connected compensation, health care, and rehabilitation.

Genomic Medicine Program Advisory Committee

Provides advice on the scientific and ethical issues related to the establishment, development, and operation of a genomic medicine program within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Geriatrics and Gerontology Advisory Committee (Statutory)

Provides advice to the Secretary on all matters pertaining to geriatrics and gerontology by assessing the capability of VA health care facilities to meet all the needs of older Veterans, and by evaluating VA facilities designated as Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Centers.

Research Advisory Committee on **Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses** (Statutory)

Provides advice to the Secretary on proposed research studies, research plans, or research strategies relating to the health effects of military service in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War.

Health Services Research and Development Service Merit Review Board

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Provides advice on the fair and equitable selection of the most meritorious research projects for support by VA research funds; ensures the high quality and mission relevance of VA's legislatively mandated research and development program.; advise on the scientific and technical merit, originality, feasibility, and mission relevance of individual research proposals; and advise on the adequacy of protection of human and animal subjects.

Advisory Committee on **Homeless Veterans** (Statutory)

Provides advice to the Secretary on benefits and services provided to homeless Veterans by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Joint Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development and Clinical Science Research and Development Services Scientific Merit Review Board

Provides advice on the scientific quality, budget, safety, and mission relevance of investigator-initiated research proposals submitted for VA merit review consideration. The proposals to be reviewed may address research questions within the general area of biomedical and behavioral research or clinical science research. The Board also advises VA research officials on program priorities and policies, as well as administration of VA's intramural program.

Advisory Committee on **Minority Veterans** (Statutory)

Provides advice to the Secretary on the administration of VA benefits for Veterans who are minority group members in the areas of compensation, health care, rehabilitation, outreach, and other services.

Department of Veterans Affairs **MyVA** Advisory Committee

Provides advice to the Secretary and the Executive Director, MyVA Task Force, on matters affecting the MyVA initiative and VA's ability to rebuild trust with Veterans and other stakeholders, improve service delivery focusing on Veteran outcomes, and set the course for longer-term excellence and reform

National Research Advisory Council

Provides advice to the Secretary on research and development sponsored and/or conducted by the Veterans Health Administration, to include policies and programs of the Office of Research and Development.

Advisory Committee on **Prosthetics and Special Disabilities** Programs (Statutory)

Provides advice to the Secretary on VA prosthetics programs and the rehabilitation research, development, and evaluation of prosthetics technology; assesses VA programs that serve Veterans with spinal cord injury, blindness or vision impairment, loss of or loss of use of extremities, deafness or hearing impairment, or other serious incapacities.

Advisory Committee on the **Readjustment** of Veterans (Statutory)

Provides advice to the Secretary on policies, organizational structures, and the provision and coordination of services to address Veterans' post-war readjustment to civilian life, with particular emphasis on post-traumatic stress disorder, alcoholism, other substance abuse, post-war employment, and family adjustment.

Veterans' Advisory Committee on **Rehabilitation** (Statutory)

Provides advice to the Secretary on the rehabilitation needs of disabled Veterans and the administration of VA's rehabilitation programs.

Rehabilitation Research and Development Service Scientific Merit Review Board

Provides advice on the fair and equitable selection of the most meritorious research projects for support by VA research funds; provides advice for research program officials on program priorities and policies; ensures that the VA Rehabilitation Research and Development program promotes functional independence and improves the quality of life for impaired and disabled Veterans.

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Veterans' **Rural Health** Advisory Committee

Provides advice to the Secretary on health care issues affecting enrolled Veterans residing in rural areas.

Special Medical Advisory Group (Statutory)

Provides advice to the Secretary and the Under Secretary for Health on matters relating to the care and treatment of Veterans and other matters pertinent to the operations of the Veterans Health Administration, such as research, education, training of health manpower, and VA/DOD contingency planning.

Advisory Committee on **Structural Safety** of Department of Veterans Affairs Facilities (Statutory)

Provides advice to the Secretary on structural safety in the construction and remodeling of VA facilities, and to recommend standards for use by VA in the construction and alteration of facilities.

Department of Veterans Affairs **Voluntary Service** National Advisory Committee

Provides advice to the Secretary and the Under Secretary for Health on how to coordinate and promote volunteer activities within VA health care facilities.

Advisory Committee on **Women Veterans** (Statutory)

Provides advice to the Secretary on the needs of women Veterans regarding health care, rehabilitation benefits, compensation, outreach, and other programs administered by VA.
