

MYTH BUSTERS

Leveraging Title 38/Hybrid Title 38 Hiring Flexibilities



The Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA) frequently hears from Service Chiefs, training directors, and trainees that they face challenges utilizing Title 38/Hybrid Title 38 non-competitive hiring authority. By not hiring our qualified trainees, VA's investment in preparing them for VA employment is a missed opportunity. In collaboration with Workforce Management and Consulting's National Healthcare Recruitment Service (NHRS) we are releasing the following guidance to clarify many hiring myths filtering through the field.

Myth 1: Trainees can only be hired using special hiring authority during their first year after completing VA training.

Fact: There is no limitation on who can be hired via Title 38/Hybrid Title 38 non-competitive hiring authority or when they are hired so long as they are qualified (or will be qualified), bargaining unit job posting requirements are met (which may not require USAJOBS announcements) and Veterans preference is not violated. Any current or former trainees (VA or non-VA) can be hired non-competitively at any time no matter how long ago they finished training.

Myth 2: Recruitment or relocation incentives can only be offered if they were advertised in a USAJOBS posting

Fact: VA has flexibility to utilize hiring tools, such as recruitment and relocation incentives, Permanent Change of Station (PCS) relocation allowances, and EDRP, when the service line hiring official has determined there is a need, properly justifies the need, and receives approval from the appropriate approving official. There is not a requirement to post a vacancy announcement to offer incentives; however, justification, adherence to criteria and appropriate

approvals must occur prior to any negotiations with the tentative candidate (see steps below). Note: If a vacancy announcement is posted, the appropriate language for the specific tool or incentive must appear in the vacancy announcement.

1. Recruitment or relocation incentives may be offered when the service line hiring official has determined there is a need and completes Section A of VA Form 10016, Justification and Authorization of Recruitment and Relocation Incentives, with proper justification, and receives approval from appropriate approving officials in accordance with VA Handbook 5007 prior to initiating recruitment efforts.
2. PCS relocation allowances may be offered when the service line hiring official has determined there is a need, completes a written justification memorandum that supports one or more of the eight key factors listed in HRML 05-17-01, and receives approval from the appropriate approving officials prior to initiating recruitment efforts
3. Education Debt Reduction Program (EDRP) may be offered for selected Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 occupations for which retention and recruitment is difficult. Procedures for offering EDRP are provided in VHA Handbook 1021.01, Education Debt Reduction Program Procedures. EDRP may be used as an incentive at any point during the recruitment process so long as the request is compliant with Handbook 1021.01.



Myth 3: Language in USAJOBS postings may not be adjusted by HR.

Fact: Language in USAJOBS postings may be modified by HR officials if errors are identified, requirements allowed in the VA Qualification Standard are not reflected appropriately, the announcement is found to limit VA's flexibility in hiring upcoming graduates of VA trainee program, etc. Service line hiring officials should collaborate with HR officials to make sure flexibilities for hiring trainees are included in the recruitment process and any posted announcement and that assessment questionnaires in USAJOBS are not screening out trainees.

Myth 4: Current trainees may not be considered for vacant positions while in their training program.

Fact: Current trainees may be recruited and selected before receiving their degree if they are on track to complete their academic program and meet the profession's qualification standards at the time of appointment. Use of appropriate language in Tentative Job Offers (TJO) will protect VA if candidates fail to become fully qualified at the time of appointment. There is also no limit on how early trainees can be considered and tentatively offered positions.

Myth 5: Local union bargaining unit agreements require that positions are announced through a USAJOBS posting.

Fact: Service line hiring officials should work closely with servicing HR offices to determine other possible avenues for satisfying internal bargaining unit posting requirements as an alternative to posting for internal candidates on USAJOBS. This may include local email notifications, bulletin board postings, etc., to expedite the internal processes. For external candidates, there is no need to post external announcements on USAJOBS or other external sites when there is already a qualified and interested applicant pool to select from which may include trainees (current, past, etc.) or other qualified external candidates. VA Handbook 5005 has no requirement to post external vacancy announcements on USAJOBS.

Myth 6: VA can only recruit for a position after the position becomes vacant.

Fact: Succession planning is a key component of successful recruitment strategies. Service line hiring officials and HR officials should be engaged in identifying trends in recruitment and retention in critical occupations not only in their own facility but also in the local labor market. The ability to forecast and plan for future recruitment needs is essential to the retention of upcoming graduates of VA trainee programs. Flexibilities such as seeking approval to hire over-ceiling/authorized FTEE or over budget, double encumbering positions when someone is expected to retire/resign and tentatively committing upcoming trainees prior to graduation, etc., are avenues to assist with succession planning.

