

STAFFING

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for Health and Wellness Coach, GS-0101, appointed under 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3), Appointments in Veterans Health Administration and 38 U.S.C. § 7405 (a)(1)(B), Temporary full-time appointments, part-time appointments and without-compensation appointments.
2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This new standard establishes the Health and Wellness Coach occupation under VA's title 38 hybrid excepted service employment system in accordance with the authority established under Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010, P.L. 111-163 (2010). The VA Secretary has authority under 38 U.S.C. § 7402, Qualifications of appointees to prescribe qualifications for occupations identified in or established under 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3), Appointments in Veterans Health Administration and 38 U.S.C. § 7405(a)(1)(B) Temporary full-time appointments, part-time appointments and without-compensation appointments. The new standard is effective on the date of publication. This qualification standard is maintained on the [Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer website](#) and [Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer \(OCHCO\) \(va.gov\)](#).
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of Human Resources and Administration/ Operations, Security and Preparedness (HRA/OSP) (006), Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) (05), Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059).
4. **RELATED DIRECTIVE:** [VA Directive 5005, Staffing, April 15, 2002](#).
5. **RELATED HANDBOOK:** VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, Part II, Appendix G17.
6. **RESCISSIONS:** Not applicable.

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY
OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

DISTRIBUTION: Electronic only

/s/
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Human Resources and Administration/
Operations, Security, and Preparedness

FORMER VA HANDBOOK REFERENCE: Not Applicable.
EFFECTIVE DATE: May 22, 2024

**HEALTH AND WELLNESS COACH
QUALIFICATION STANDARD
GS-0101
Veterans Health Administration**

- 1. COVERAGE.** The following are requirements for appointment or placement as a Health and Wellness Coach in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). These requirements apply to all VHA Health and Wellness Coaches in the General Schedule GS-0101 series. Health and Wellness Coaches provide care to Veterans seeking self-directed, lasting changes aligned with their values. They provide interventions that promote health and wellness and enhance well-being (i.e., what matters to the individual), improve health related outcomes, reduce likelihood of inpatient admission and improve quality of life across the continuum of care in all settings. Health and Wellness Coaches work with individuals to identify their motivation for change, determine goals for their work together, develop treatment plans to reach these goals, implement those treatment plans and assess progress in order to adjust plans as necessary. Health and Wellness Coaches provide information on the relationship between lifestyle and health outcomes, exploring behaviors that increase the risk of developing or worsening chronic disease and those that reduce the likelihood of chronic illness. Health and Wellness Coaches collaborate with Veterans, caregivers and providers to develop goals designed to improve health outcomes, reduce risk from chronic illness and lessen the likelihood of admission to the emergency department, inpatient care or long-term care.
- 2. AUTHORITIES.**
 - a. [P.L. 111-163, Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010.](#)
 - b. [38 U.S.C. § 7401, Appointments in Veterans Health Administration.](#)
 - c. [38 U.S.C § 7402, Qualifications of appointees.](#)
 - d. [38 U.S.C § 7403, Period of appointments; promotions.](#)
 - e. [38 U.S.C § 7405, Temporary full-time appointments, part-time appointments, and without-compensation appointments.](#)
 - f. [38 U.S.C § 7407, Administrative provisions for §§ 7505 and 7406 appointments.](#)
- 3. DEFINITIONS.**
 - a. **Appointing Official.** The Human Resources (HR) Officer is delegated appointing authority to process and authenticate notifications of personnel actions and authority to effect management-approved employment actions on behalf of officials, employees and facilities for which service is provided.

b. **Approving Official.** The Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director, Facility Director, or Under Secretary for Health or designee (for VHA Central Office appointments) is the approving official and will determine whether to approve or disapprove the appointment of employees in hybrid occupations.

c. **Experience.**

(1) **Creditable Experience.** To be creditable, experience must have required the use of knowledge, skills and abilities associated with current Health and Wellness Coaching experience. Experience satisfying this requirement may be paid or non-paid employment as a Health and Wellness Coach.

(2) **Part-Time Experience.** Part-time experience is creditable according to its relationship to a full-time workweek. For example, an individual employed 20 hours per week, or on a half-time basis, would receive one full-time work week of credit for each two weeks of service.

(3) **Quality of Experience.** Qualifying experience must be at level comparable to Health and Wellness Coach experience at the next lower grade level of the position being filled. Experience is only creditable if it is post-certification experience as a Health and Wellness Coach directly related to the position to be filled. Qualifying experience must also be at a level comparable to Health and Wellness Coach experience at the next lower level. For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, administrative independence, complexity and range of variety as described in this standard at the specified grade level and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time.

d. **Journey Level.** The full performance level for this qualification standard is the GS-09 grade level.

4. **BASIC REQUIREMENTS.** To qualify for appointment to this position, all applicants must possess the following:

a. **Citizenship.** Be a citizen of the United States (U.S.). Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified citizens in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 7407(a).

b. **Education and/or Experience.**

(1) Successful completion of a full 4-year course of study in an accredited college or university leading to a bachelor's or higher degree in behavioral or social science or related disciplines appropriate to the position.

OR

- (2) Combination of education and experience that provided the applicant with knowledge of one or more of the behavioral or social sciences equivalent to a major in the field.

OR

- (3) Four years of appropriate experience that demonstrated that the applicant has acquired knowledge of one or more of the behavioral or social sciences equivalent to a major in the field.

c. **Certification.**

- (1) **List of certifications.** Candidates must be currently certified by the National Board for Health and Wellness Coaching (NBHWC).
- (2) **Exception for Non-Certified Health and Wellness Coaches.**
 - (a) Non-certified applicants who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for certification, may be given a temporary appointment as Health and Wellness Coach under the authority of 38 U.S.C. § 7405(c)(2).
 - (b) Non-certified individuals may only provide care under the supervision of a certified Health and Wellness Coach at or above the full performance level or other designated occupation with the appropriate training and expertise.
 - (c) Non-certified individuals may only be appointed at the entry level and may not be promoted until certification is obtained.
 - (d) Temporary appointments of non-certified Health and Wellness Coaches may not be extended beyond one year or converted to a new temporary appointment.
 - (e) **Failure to Obtain Certification.** In all cases, Health and Wellness Coaches must actively pursue meeting certification requirements starting from the date of their placement into the occupation. At the time of appointment, the Human Resources (HR) Office staff in collaboration with the supervisor will provide the uncertified Health and Wellness Coaches with the written requirement to obtain certification, the date by which the certification must be acquired and the consequences for not becoming certified by the deadline. Failure to obtain certification during this time period may result in termination of employment.
- (3) **Loss of Credential.** Management officials, in collaboration with HR office staff, must immediately relieve employees who fail to maintain the required

certification of the duties and responsibilities associated with this occupation, which may also result in separation from employment.

- (4) HR Office staff must appoint Health and Wellness Coaches according to the provisions in Chapter 3, Section B, paragraph 16 of this part, who have, or have ever had their Health and Wellness Coach certification revoked, suspended, denied, restricted, limited or issued/placed in a probationary status.

d. **Grandfathering Provision.** Employees in VHA in this occupation, under a permanent, appropriate, and legal placement on the effective date of the qualification standard, are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the grade and/or assignment held, including certification. For employees who do not meet all the basic requirements required in this standard, but who met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed to it, the following provisions apply:

- (1) Employees may be reassigned, promoted up to and including the full performance (journey) level or changed to lower grade within the occupation but may not be promoted beyond the journeyman level or be newly placed in supervisory or managerial positions.
- (2) Employees in an occupation that requires a certification only at higher grade levels must meet the certification requirement before they can be promoted to those higher grade levels.
- (3) 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.
- (4) Employees retained in this occupation under this provision who subsequently leave the occupation lose protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of re-entry to the occupation.
- (5) Employees initially grandfathered into this occupation who subsequently obtain additional education and/or certification that meet all the basic or assignment specific qualification requirements of this standard must maintain the required credentials as a condition of employment in the occupation.

NOTE: This provision is not intended to regularize appointments/placements.

e. **Physical Requirements.** See [VA Directive and Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service](#).

- f. **English Language Proficiency.** Health and Wellness Coach candidates must be proficient in spoken and written English in accordance with 38 U.S.C. § 7403 (f).
- 5. OFFICIAL POSITION TITLES.** All official documents relating to a position (e.g., functional statements and personnel actions) must use the approved official title and grade level as described below:
- a. Health and Wellness Coach, GS-07.
 - b. Health and Wellness Coach, GS-09.
 - c. Lead Health and Wellness Coach, GS-11.
 - d. Supervisory Health and Wellness Coach, GS-11.
- 6. GRADE DETERMINATIONS.** In addition to the basic requirements outlined in paragraph 4, the following criteria must be met when determining the grade of candidates.
- a. **Health and Wellness Coach, GS-07.**
 - (1) **Experience.** None beyond the basic requirements.
 - (2) **Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate the following KSAs:
 - (a) Knowledge of health and wellness coaching processes and techniques.
 - (b) Ability to promote positive lifestyle choices.
 - (c) Ability to effectively communicate in writing through a variety of modalities.
 - (d) Ability to effectively communicate verbally/non-verbally.
 - (3) **Assignment.** Employees at this grade level serve in a Health and Wellness Coach entry-level developmental position. At the entry grade, Health and Wellness Coaches are responsible for providing basic health coaching by conducting interventions using one-on-one, couple or group modalities in outpatient and inpatient settings using multiple formats (face-to-face, telephone, virtual, etc.) in order to reduce or eliminate high-risk behaviors while increasing/promoting a positive lifestyle (habits and behaviors) resulting in increased well-being. Employees at this grade are closely supervised and competency in progressively complex tasks is monitored by the supervisor. Health and Wellness Coaches facilitate development of personalized health plans focused on behavioral

interventions based on current scientific knowledge and research. Health and Wellness Coaches equip and empower individuals to live their lives to the fullest by improving quality of life across the lifespan that reduces risk for chronic disease, reverses or slows progression of chronic disease and increases the sense of well-being at the end of life. These plans include person-centered customized goals, action steps and interventions developed by the individual and include input from other members of the health care team. Health and Wellness Coaches must communicate proactively and effectively both orally and in writing.

b. Health and Wellness Coach, GS-09.

- (1) **Experience.** One year of creditable experience equivalent to the next lower grade.
- (2) **Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate the following KSAs:
 - (a) Knowledge of current research literature related to health and wellness, including behaviors that promote a healthy lifestyle and well-being.
 - (b) Skill in using health and wellness coaching techniques to promote positive behavior change using one-on-one, couple or group modalities.
 - (c) Skill in exercising effective interpersonal communication techniques to develop and maintain strong interpersonal relationships.
 - (d) Ability to assist the client in developing a comprehensive personalized health plan based on a patient's action-oriented goals.
 - (e) Ability to identify resources internal and external to the organization that are necessary for achieving patient overall health and well-being goals.
 - (f) Ability to use information technology (IT) equipment and various/emerging technologies to carry out work responsibilities.
 - (g) Ability to document patient information using appropriate systems.
- (3) **Assignment.** Employees at this grade level serve as Health and Wellness Coaches at the full performance level. Health and Wellness Coaches use behavioral change theories (e.g., motivational interview and trans-theoretical model) and tools to assist individuals in the process of health coaching. They provide interventions that promote health and wellness and enhance well-being (i.e., what matters to the individual), improve health related outcomes, reduce likelihood of inpatient admission and improve

quality of life across the continuum of care in all settings. Health and Wellness Coaches foster an environment that equips and empowers each individual to develop and fully engage in a lifestyle management plan. Health and Wellness Coaches facilitate the development of personalized health plans that emphasize self-care in combination with conventional treatment plans that include individualized intervention strategies to help the client use existing skills and develop new ones to enhance success. Health and Wellness Coaches provide information on the relationship between lifestyle and health outcomes, exploring behaviors that increase the risk of developing or worsening chronic disease and those that reduce the likelihood of chronic illness. They are responsible for guiding individuals to learn about available support tools and resources outside of healthcare (e.g., social determinants of health) in the community that assist in attainment of goals. Health and Wellness Coaches contact eligible participants for enrollment and explain the health coaching process. They develop and distribute locally approved health education materials based on national guidance to patients and family members that are in line with the patient's personalized health plan. Health and Wellness Coaches are responsible for conducting outreach activities directly to potential participants and internal and external referral sources informing them of available programs and services. They coordinate care with patients' treatment providers including primary care, specialty care and mental health to ensure identified goals are aligned with the overall plan of care around what matters most to the individual. They provide health coaching support to multidisciplinary groups whose purpose is to address specific health and well-being goals or metrics in both the inpatient and outpatient setting. At this level, Health and Wellness Coaches develop individualized health and wellness group curriculum and/or provide input into curriculum developed by higher-level management. They use applicable IT equipment, systems and software to maintain accurate, complete, current and confidential medical records in accordance with accepted standards. Health and Wellness Coaches at this level may assist with data management analyses, special studies and reports for use by management for budget preparation, workload projections and quality assurance and usage reviews. Health and Wellness Coaches participate in quality improvement projects and refine information for comprehensive reports addressing elements such as patient reported outcome measures, work measurement, trend analysis, efficiency, effectiveness and productivity.

c. **Lead Health and Wellness Coach, GS-11.**

- (1) **Experience.** One year of creditable experience equivalent to the next lower grade.
- (2) **Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate the following KSAs:

- (a) Skill in managing a Health and Wellness program as evidenced by establishing program goals and objectives, monitoring work processes and coordinating administrative operations of an organization.
 - (b) Ability to lead and train Health and Wellness Coaches to ensure competency in performance of Health and Wellness Coach-related duties, activities and tasks.
 - (c) Ability to assign, coordinate and oversee the Health and Wellness Coach staff daily duties, tasks and other responsibilities as appropriate.
 - (d) Ability to retrieve, track and trend information needed for reporting related to health coaching.
 - (e) Ability to address and resolve routine patient and/or employee complaints and/or concerns.
- (3) **Assignment.** For all lead assignments, the Lead Health and Wellness Coaches must spend 25% or more of their time performing lead duties over more staff one grade level below. Employees at this grade level articulate and communicate to the Health and Wellness Coaches they lead the assignments, projects, problems to be solved, actionable events, milestones and/or program issues under review as well as the deadlines and time frames for completion. They communicate the supervisor's instructions to the team and represent the team in interactions with the supervisor for the purpose of obtaining resources (e.g., computer hardware and software, use of overtime and compensatory time) and securing needed information or decision from the supervisor on major work problems and issues that arise. Lead Health and Wellness Coaches represent the team consensus and convey their findings and recommendations in meetings and dealings with other team leaders, program officials, the public and other customers on issues related to or that impact the team's objectives, work products, services and/or tasks. They are responsible for resolving simple, informal complaints of Health and Wellness Coaches and refer more complex issues, such as possible disciplinary actions, formal grievances and appeals, to the supervisor. Lead Health and Wellness Coaches evaluate employee training needs and provide training and troubleshooting for health coaches in health coaching, administrative processes and associated supporting issues. They participate assessing candidates interviewed for positions and make recommendations to the supervisor regarding various personnel actions including promotions or reassignments. Lead Health and Wellness Coaches are responsible for reviewing work during and after completion to evaluate adequacy of methods, procedures and results; able to apply skills

and knowledge to routine and non-routine assignments; and adhere to basic policy and instructions.

d. **Supervisory Health and Wellness Coach, GS-11.**

- (1) **Experience.** One year of creditable experience equivalent to the next lower grade.
- (2) **Knowledge, Skills, Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to meeting the experience above for this grade level, the candidate must fully demonstrate the following KSAs:
 - (a) Knowledge of interdisciplinary issues and organizational structure to serve as liaison between the Health Coaching program and other internal/external programs that affect coordination of care, healthcare access, program evaluation, as well as assessment and planning for future needs.
 - (b) Ability to perform the full range of supervisory duties, which include responsibility for assignment of work to be performed, competency assessments, performance evaluations, selection of staff and recommendation of awards, advancements and, when appropriate, disciplinary actions.
 - (c) Ability to mentor and train Health and Wellness Coaches to ensure competency in performance of Health and Wellness Coach-related duties, activities and tasks.
 - (d) Ability to address and resolve complex and unique patient and/or employee complaints and/or concerns.
 - (e) Ability to determine the continuing education needs of staff and appropriate resources to meet those needs.
- (3) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty) and range of variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Supervisory Health and Wellness Coaches have full responsibility for managing and supervising all aspects of Health Coaching operations including practice, program management, education, human resource management and supervision. Supervisory Health and Wellness Coaches develop long-range program plans, goals, objectives and milestones and evaluate the effectiveness of the facility Health Coaching program. They evaluate employee training needs and provide training and troubleshooting for health coaches in health coaching, administrative processes and associated supporting issues. Health and Wellness Coaches review work during and after completion to evaluate the adequacy of methods, procedures and results; are able to apply skills and knowledge to routine

and non-routine assignments; and adhere to basic policy and instructions. They are responsible for networking with internal leadership and external organizations (including local voluntary agencies, state and local health agencies, support groups and educational institutions) to exchange information regarding health coaching programs and services. Supervisory Health and Wellness Coaches assign work based on priorities, difficulty and requirements of the assignment while taking subordinates' capabilities into consideration. They interview and select candidates for positions and effect various personnel actions including promotions or reassignments. Supervisory Health and Wellness Coaches maintain program and administrative reference materials, project files and relevant background documents and distribute/make these items available as appropriate.

7. DEVIATIONS.

- a. The establishment of a position and subsequent placement of an individual in a grade or assignment not described in the hybrid title 38 qualification standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health or designee prior to placement.
- b. Under no circumstance will educational requirements necessary to meet basic qualifications or assignment specific educational requirements be waived.
- c. Under no circumstance will the credential (i.e., license, certification, and/or registration) requirements to meet basic qualifications or assignment specific credentials be waived unless an exception provision is provided in the qualification standard.
- d. In rare and unusual circumstance(s), the Under Secretary for Health or designee may approve requests for reasonable deviations to the grade determination requirements for an individual whose composite record of experience, accomplishments, performance, and qualifications warrant such action based on demonstrated competence to meet the requirements of the grade and/or assignment.

RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Human Resources and Administration/Operations, Security and Preparedness (HRA/OSP) (006), Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) (05), Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059)