

STAFFING

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for the appointment of Peer Support Apprentices and Peer Specialists, GS-102, in VA.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This handbook contains mandatory procedures on staffing. Under authority of the Secretary of VA in 38 U.S.C. 7402, this revision establishes a qualification standard for the Peer Support Apprentice/Peer Specialist occupation in the title 5 competitive service, in accordance with Section 405 of the “Veterans' Mental Health and Other Care Improvements Act of 2008” (Public Law 110-387), as codified in 38 U.S.C. 7402(b)(13). The new standard is effective on the date of issuance of this handbook. These changes will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, that is maintained on the [Office of Human Resources Management](#) Web site.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059), Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management.
- 4. RELATED DIRECTIVES:** VA Directive 5005, Staffing.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** The following former qualification standard appendices for title 5 occupations that VA has now replaced with qualification standards in II-G appendices reflecting the occupations' current status as title 38 hybrid or, for Librarian and Hospital Librarian Trainee only, has deferred to applicable OPM qualification standard.
 - a. Appendix II-F3 (Psychology Series, GS-180-11/15)
 - b. Appendix II-F4 (Psychology Trainee, File as GS-180)
 - c. Appendix II-F7 (Social Worker, GS-185-9/15)
 - d. Appendix II-F8 (Junior Social Worker, File as GS-185)
 - e. Appendix II-F9 (Social Worker Trainee – Student, File as GS-185)
 - f. Appendix II-F14 (Nuclear Medicine Technologist, GS-601)
 - g. Appendix II-F15 (Dietitian and Nutritionist Series, GS-630)
 - h. Appendix II-F16 (Dietetic Intern; Dietetic Intern (Coordinated Masters), File as GS-630)
 - i. Appendix II-F17 (Dietetic Resident, File as GS-630)
 - j. Appendix II-F18 (Occupational Therapy Trainee – Student, File as GS-631)
 - k. Appendix II-F19 (Corrective Therapist, GS-635-6/15)

- l. Appendix II-F20 (Occupational Therapy Assistant, GS-636-4/5/6/7/8)
- m. Appendix II-F21 (Physical Therapy Assistant, GS-636-4/5/6/7/8)
- n. Appendix II-F24 (Medical Technology Trainee – Student, File as GS-644)
- o. Appendix II-F25 (Diagnostic Radiologic Technician/Technologist, GS-647-3/8)
- p. Appendix II-F26 (Therapeutic Radiologic Technician/Technologist, GS-648-3/8)
- q. Appendix II-F27 (Audiologist and/or Speech Pathologist Trainee, Audiologist and/or Speech Pathologist Clinical Fellowship Trainee, File as GS-665)
- r. Appendix II-F30 (Medical Record Technician, GS-675-4/7)
- s. Appendix II-F31 (Dental Assistant, GS-681)
- t. Appendix II-F34 (Hospital Librarian Trainee, File as GS-1410)
- u. Appendix II-F35 (Librarian, GS-1410-7/15)

CERTIFIED BY:

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

/s/Roger W. Baker
Assistant Secretary for
Information and Technology

/s/John U. Sepúlveda
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NOTE: This transmittal page accompanied the former VA Handbook 5005, Staffing publication. It is provided for reference to highlight the establishment of this qualification standard.

PEER SUPPORT APPRENTICE/PEER SPECIALIST
QUALIFICATION STANDARD GS-102-5/9
AUTHORITY: 38 U.S.C. 7402

BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL GRADES AND TITLES

- a. **Citizenship.** Citizen of the United States.
- b. **Physical and Medical Requirements.** The applicant must be able to perform primarily light and sedentary duties with occasionally moderate physical demands, exercise patience, and control emotions, with reasonable accommodation if necessary, without endangering the health and safety of the applicant or others. (See also VA Directive and Handbook 5019.)

BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR PEER SPECIALISTS, GS-102-6/9:

- a. **Statutory Requirements.** Section 405 of Public Law 110-387, as codified in 38 U.S.C. 7402(b)(13), established that to be eligible to receive appointment to a Peer Specialist position, a person must:
 - (1) be a veteran who has recovered or is recovering from a mental health condition;
and
 - (2) be certified by -
 - (a) a not-for-profit entity engaged in peer specialist training as having met such criteria as the Secretary shall establish for a peer specialist position; or
 - (b) a State as having satisfied relevant State requirements for a peer specialist position.
- b. **Length of Experience as a Consumer of Mental Health Recovery Services.**
Veterans eligible under 38 U.S.C. 7402(b)(13) must have spent a minimum of 1 year in personal recovery from a mental health condition.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR PEER SUPPORT APPRENTICES, GS-102-5: As a Peer Support Apprentice hired to become a certified Peer Specialist, a Veteran must have spent a minimum of 1 year in recovery from a mental health condition. In all cases, Peer Support Apprentices must actively pursue becoming certified as required to serve as a Peer Specialist by 38 U.S.C. 7402(b)(13)(B). At the time of appointment, the supervisor will provide the Peer Support Apprentice with the written requirements for becoming certified, the date by which he or she must become certified, and the consequences for not becoming certified by the deadline. Failure to become certified by the prescribed date will result in removal from this GS-102 occupation and **may** result in termination of employment.

SPECIALIZED EXPERIENCE FOR PEER SPECIALISTS, GS-102-6/9: In addition to the basic requirements, candidates must have at least 1 year of specialized experience equivalent to the next lower grade level. Specialized experience is progressively responsible, post-personal mental health recovery experience as a mentor providing counseling to support peers in mental health and/or addiction recovery, a recovery advocate directly involved with consumers of mental health services, a psychiatric therapy aide, or equivalent work involving in-person communication to support others in mental health recovery.

SUBSTITUTION OF EDUCATION FOR PEER SPECIALISTS, GS-102-6/9: Graduate education or a post-bachelor's degree internship meets the specialized experience required for GS-6/9 *only* in those instances where it is directly related to the work of the position. Six (6) months of graduate education or a 1-year post-bachelor's degree internship meets the requirements for GS-6. One full year of graduate education meets the requirements for GS-7. One and one-half years of graduate education meets the requirements for GS-8. Two full years of graduate education or a master's degree meets the requirements for GS-9. One year of full-time graduate education is considered to be the number of credit hours that the school attended has determined to represent 1 year of full-time study. If that information cannot be obtained from the school, 18 semester hours should be considered as satisfying the 1 year of full-time study requirement. Part-time graduate education is creditable in accordance with its relationship to a year of full-time study at the school attended.

NOTE: *In recruiting and examining for these positions, participation in community, social service, and similar volunteer activities that meets the definition of specialized experience is creditable applicant experience.*

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)

**SAMPLE A.
CONDITION OF EMPLOYMENT**

I, _____, understand that I must produce evidence that I am certified in peer counseling as described in the VA qualification standard for Peer Support Apprentice/Peer Specialist, to officials of the Department of Veterans Affairs (facility), _____, _____, not later than (date) . I have received a copy of the criteria for being certified in peer counseling, and I understand that failure to become so certified and make available documentation of its receipt may result in the termination of my employment.

(Name)

(Date)

Witnesses:

(Name)

(Date)

(Name)

(Date)