

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs



OFFICE OF RESOLUTION MANAGEMENT

END OF YEAR UPDATE

December 2013



OUR MISSION

To promote a discrimination-free work environment focused on serving Veterans by preventing, resolving, and processing workplace disputes in a timely and effective manner.

The Importance of Early Resolution of EEO Complaints

The equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaint process is a vital right and protection for all Federal employees. However, if prolonged or not handled properly, it can also divert many needed resources away from our primary mission of serving our Veterans. When approached positively, an EEO complaint can actually serve as a valuable management opportunity to improve workplace relationships and increase mission performance.

Addressing EEO complaints early using alternative dispute resolution (ADR) is an effective way of accomplishing a number of important objectives. First and foremost, ADR can repair the working relationship that has been damaged by the complaint. Furthermore, early resolution minimizes both management and employee time and attention devoted to the complaint. It also eases the disruption in the workplace caused by the complaint. Finally, it avoids the substantial cost of processing an EEO complaint. At VA, these outcomes mean that more of VA's critical managerial, staff, and capital resources can be focused on VA's bottom line of serving our nation's Veterans.

The Office of Resolution Management (ORM), VA's office responsible for processing EEO complaints, strongly supports early resolution and is diligently working with officials across the Department to increase the rate at which EEO complaints are resolved before they reach the formal investigation stage. ORM's EEO counselors, the first contact for pre-complaint counseling, assist the parties by encouraging resolution through traditional EEO counseling or ADR. To accommodate the growing number of requests for mediation, the most frequently used ADR process, ORM added 10 full-time mediators to its staff during FY2013 to help achieve the goal of early resolution.

This attention to early resolution is paying off. In FY 2013, ORM improved VA's resolution rate to 52% from 48% in FY 2012. This equates to more than \$37 million in costs avoided.* The breakdown of resolution rates by Administration is in the table that follows.

While VA is moving in the right direction with early resolution, there is still potential for improvement. Bringing conflicting parties together is the first step, but both parties need to be prepared and open to consider

VA Entity	FY 13 Resolution Rate
VHA	52%
VBA	52%
NCA	44%
VACO	47%

a variety of approaches to resolving the complaint. Unfortunately, when the parties are ill-prepared, achieving resolution can be a challenge.

To guide preparation, ORM has developed a 20-minute training presentation for both managers and complainants. The training helps participants understand mediation, and become familiar with the different parties involved and their roles. It also highlights the benefits of mediation. ORM sends a link to the training to each mediation participant, both manager and employee, as soon as the meeting is scheduled.

Being prepared can go a long way in achieving success in mediation.

There is one important part of this process where VA senior leaders can have a significant impact on resolution: managerial commitment. If senior leaders communicate their commitment to early resolution to their leadership teams, then VA can

reap more of the benefits of resolution sooner, and more resources can be allocated to our Veterans as well. To realize these benefits, we must ensure that:

- (1) Management participate when ADR is elected, which is consistent with VA policy;
- (2) All managers involved in EEO complaints take the Pre-Mediation Training for Managers in advance of any mediation session; and,
- (3) All managers in mediation be prepared to propose possible solutions to the dispute(s) being discussed.

The benefits of early resolution and mediation are too important to be left to chance. It is essential that we take the above steps to realize the valuable returns to VA and its mission. Thank you for your efforts.

* ORM commissioned a study that calculated that each complaint that is resolved before the formal stage of the complaint process avoids approximately \$17,000 in processing costs. In 2013, 2,193 EEO cases were resolved before the formal stage. 2,193 x \$17,000 equals \$37,281,000 in costs avoided.

Early resolution means that more of VA's critical managerial, staff, and capital resources can be focused on VA's bottom line of serving our Nation's Veterans.

Office of Resolution Management At A Glance

You may find the resources below helpful in your efforts to resolve workplace disputes and to create a better working environment.

Pre-Mediation Training – http://www.va.gov/adr/docs/PRPforMEDIATION-MANAGEMENT_No_KC.swf

Assessments – ORM offers assessments of VA facilities that explore workplace conflict, employee satisfaction, and/or ADR program operations. For more information contact Tracey Therit, District Director (202) 461-0280

Resolution Strategies – A list of strategies, practices, resources, training opportunities, and useful ideas and options that can be used to maximize early complaint resolution. http://vaww.va.gov/ORM/docs/Resolution_Strategies_for_Informal_EEO_Complaints_Final.pdf

Executive Leaders Guide – Detailed information on the EEO complaint process, as well as insights into complaint prevention and early resolution. <http://www.va.gov/ORM/docs/ExecLeaderGuide.pdf>

EEO, Diversity, and ADR Dashboard – An overview of EEO and ADR key indicators: EEO complaint information, ADR activity, workforce demographics and settlement agreements. Information is available by VISN, Area, and MSN. For assistance using this dashboard, use the Reference Guide, available on the Data Definitions Tab on the website. http://vssc.med.va.gov/webm/ORM_dashboard.aspx

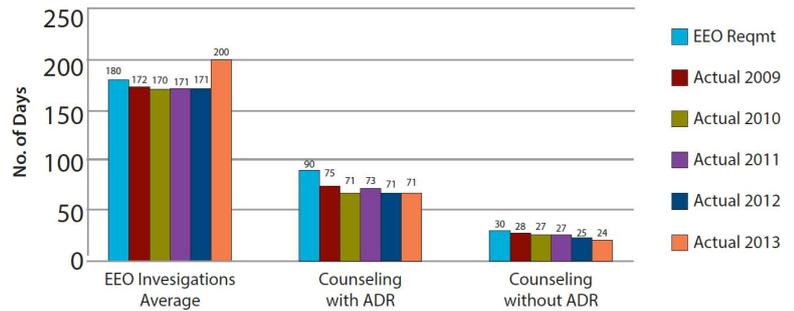
STDP Executive Dashboard – A tool that measures complaints during different stages of the complaint cycle. It can monitor the status of active cases as well as measure historical trends and performance standards. <https://vaww.stdp.cdco.va.gov>

Once on the links homepage, highlight the VACO tab and then click on the link for the ORM Executive Dashboard. For assistance with this dashboard, contact the National Service Desk: (888) 326-6780 or CDCO-NSD@va.gov

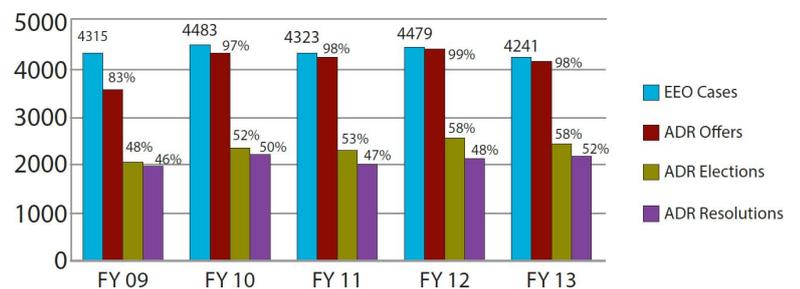
Trend Data – An analysis of EEO complaint activity at the informal and formal stage of the complaint process. Information is broken down by administration and by VISN, MSN, and Area. http://www.va.gov/ORM/docs/Comparision_of_Formal_and_Informal_Complaint.pdf

2013 Operating Results

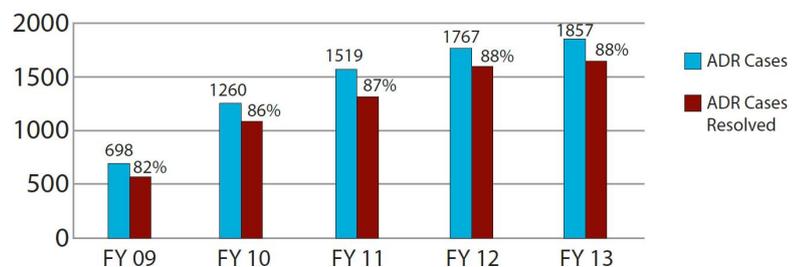
Processing Times



ADR Uses in EEO Process



ADR Used to Address Non-EEO Workplace Disputes



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FIELD OFFICES

District I

Mid-Atlantic Operations:

Washington, DC (202) 632-9599

Southeastern Operations:

St. Petersburg, FL (727) 540-3971; Lake City, FL

District II

Northeastern Operations:

Lyons, NJ (908) 604-5349; Bedford, MA;
Cleveland, OH; Murfreesboro, TN; New York, NY

Great Lakes Operations:

Hines, IL (708) 202-7072

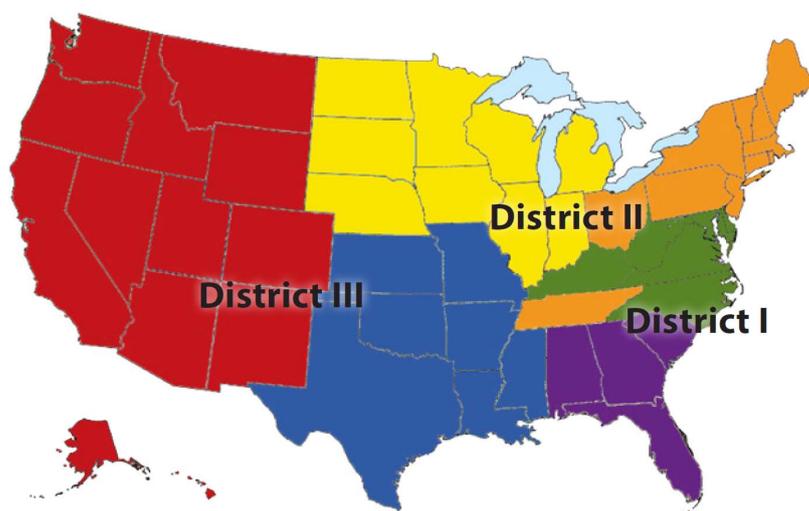
District III

Western Operations:

Los Angeles, CA (310) 268-3586; Long Beach, CA;
Palo Alto, CA; Sepulveda, CA; Vancouver, WA

Central Plains Operations:

Houston, TX (713) 794-7756; Leavenworth, KS;
Little Rock, AR



- Mid-Atlantic Operations
- Northeastern Operations
- Western Operations
- Southeastern Operations
- Great Lakes Operations
- Central Plains Operations

OUR VISION

VA is recognized as the leader in promoting
a discrimination-free environment for those who serve our Nation's Veterans