VA Diversity Council (VADC) Meeting Minutes

October 21, 2015, 1:00-3:00 pm

VACO, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Conference Room 830

1. Georgia Coffey, VADC Co-Chair and Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for the Office of Diversity & Inclusion (ODI), provided opening remarks and reminded attendees that voting members or their alternates are requested to attend each and every meeting.
2. Ms. Coffey presented an ODI Shared Leadership Award to VA’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Workgroup. Bruce Gipe (Board of Veterans Appeals) accepted on behalf of all of the members including Deborah McCallum, Dot Hostetter, Jeff Pellegrini, Heliana Ramirez, Carlos Rodriguez, Victor Urrego-Vallowe, Jeremy Sims, Zander Keig, and Dr. Kenneth Jones. This award recognizes VA employees for demonstration of shared leadership principles and competencies to move forward the ODI mission and vision. The LGBT Workgroup was established under the VADC in 2012 to develop strategies to identify and address any VA global, systemic LGBT employee concerns and needs, and to ensure VA has an inclusive work environment that is free from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.
3. Ms. Coffey discussed the October 15, 2015, training coordinated by Maxie Witkin (Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication) on "Employment Protections against Sexual-Orientation Discrimination and Gender-Identity Discrimination in the Federal Sector" moderated by Dan Vail, formerly of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and Louis Lopez, Office of Special Counsel.
4. Ms. Coffey led VADC operations:
   1. April 15, 2015, VADC meeting minutes approved. Barbara Ward (Center for Minority Veterans) discussed including more detail in meeting minutes. In the future, minutes will focus on agenda and action items but will also highlight important discussions that may occur.
   2. Antony Washington (ODI) called for volunteers to join the committee charged with the VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan refresh. Ms. Coffey reports that the Office of Personnel Management has updated the Government-Wide Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan but changes are minimal.
5. Yvonne Rannels (ODI) discussed the Secretary's Fifth Annual Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards Program. ODI and the Office of Resolution Management (ORM)/Alternative Dispute Resolution Excellence Awards Program are planning for a joint ceremony to be held at VA Central Office (VACO) and attended virtually by those awardees not in the immediate Washington, DC area.

*Update: At the time of this meeting, the awardees had not yet been notified and so their names were not announced on this day. Congratulations to Audrey Oatis-Newsome Director, Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Employment Office, Veterans Health Administration, Washington, DC; Maria Heliana Ramirez LISW, LGBT Staff and Allies Special Emphasis Program Manager, VA Palo Alto Health Care System, Menlo Park Division, Veterans Health Administration, Palo Alto, California; and the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System Gathering of Healers Program Planning Team, Veterans Health Administration (Members: Curtis Kekahbah, Bruce Kafer, Karen Hebda, Phyllis Spears, Cindy Mapelli, Mark Besich, Sharon Hammond, Katherine Kretschmer, George Campbell, and Rex Kinsey, Sr.)*

1. Ms. Coffey discussed the Council’s proposed name change to the Diversity and Inclusion in VA Council (DIVAC) to reflect the importance of workplace inclusion as well as workforce diversity. The Council will review a draft revised charter prior to the next Council meeting. The Council will vote to adopt this charter and the name change at the next meeting.
2. Kelley Carameli (Veterans Health Administration, National Center for Organization Development) presented the 2015 All Employee Survey Diversity Demographic Scores. Ms. Coffey pointed out that VA’s Inclusion Index is 61 percent, compared with VA’s Diversity Index which is 92 percent. VA has an obligation to improve this score as outlined in the Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan. Mr. Gipe pointed out that inclusion scores declined from 2014 to 2015 for transgender/transsexual VA staff.
3. John Fuller (ODI) presented the proposed ODI initiative: World Café on Race Relations. The World Café will be piloted on December 8, 2015, at VACO before being rolled out to the field with the St. Louis Records Management Center (RMC), Veterans Benefits Administration, in January 2016. Some Council members expressed concern over ensuring:
   1. There is a measurable outcome or action plan at the end of these sessions.
   2. Employees are provided support following what might be emotional World Café discussions (suggestions were made to involve the Employee Assistance Program and Chaplain Services).
   3. The invitation to participate in World Café events is widely promoted to employee resource and other groups for diversity.

*Ms. Coffey made a motion for the VADC to endorse and support this initiative; the motion passed with no objections.*

*Update: VBA reports that the St. Louis RMC World Café event is now scheduled for March 2016.*

1. Dr. Arthur McMahan (ORM) provided a briefing on VA’s Anti-Harassment Office (AHO). AHO will provide centralized tracking, monitoring and reporting processes to proactively respond to all allegations of harassment; ensure all harassment allegations are reported to VA leadership (outlining prompt corrective measures taken to decrease harassing behavior in the workplace); and provide education and awareness training on the harassment program and the reporting process.

1. Dionn Henderson (ODI) provided an update on the fiscal year (FY) 2016 National Diversity Internship Program (NDIP). Information is available on the NDIP Web page at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/internship.aspx>.
2. David Williams (ODI) reported that the call for Management Directive 715 Report data has been distributed and that the call for VA Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report data will be signed and distributed shortly.

*Update: This call memo was signed on October 27, 2015 (CTS 2015-000104).*

1. Administrations and Staff Offices were requested to report out on their FY 2015 accomplishments towards VA’s Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan.

*Update: A few organizations are outstanding. Original due date was December 21, 2015. Point of contact is* [*David.Williams6@va.gov*](mailto:David.Williams6@va.gov)*.*

1. Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.