**VA Diversity Council (VADC) Meeting Minutes**

December 7, 2011, 1-3 pm

VACO, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Conference Room 830

1. Welcoming remarks and introductions by Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), and VADC Co-chair.
2. September 7, 2011, VADC Meeting Minutes approved.
3. Yvonne Rannels, Program Specialist, Training and Communications Team, ODI, reported the status of the VADC Report to the Secretary. Everyone was thanked for their contributions and comments. The report was entered into VAIQ in October with a due date in early November. *\*Update as of 12/21/11: All organizations have concurred with the report. It is now being reviewed for the Secretary’s signature.*
4. Director Stephanie Elaine Birdwell introduced the functions of the Office of Tribal Government Relations (OTGR):
   1. OTGR was created in response to President Clinton’s Executive Order 13175 and President Obama’s Memorandum on Tribal Consultation dated November 5, 2009.
   2. Mission: To consult with American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments to develop partnerships that enhance access to services and benefits by Veterans and their families
   3. Vision: VA has positive relationships with American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments and is part of the landscape of Indian Country. Every Veteran receives excellent services that are holistic in nature and that lead to optimal health. American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments view the VA as an organization of integrity that advocates for their needs. VA demonstrates its commitment to Veterans by being culturally competent, respecting the unique sovereign status of Tribes, and reaching Veterans in Indian Country. Veterans know how to access all VA services and benefits and are woven into the fabric of VA.
   4. Tribal Government Relations Specialists:
      1. Manage a portfolio of relationships with tribal governments (within a specific region).
      2. Develop relationships with tribal leaders, Federal, and state VA personnel and partnership agencies. These relationships will enhance the work relationships of VA administrations with tribal governments.
      3. Serve as a resource to tribal governments seeking to engage in productive relationships with VA.
      4. Serve as the Department resource in developing more productive, positive relationships with Tribes.
5. Sue Dyrenforth, National Center for Organizational Development (NCOD), reported on the activities of the Emerging Issues in Diversity and Inclusion Committee and on exploring disparate perceptions of fairness and empowerment by gender and race/ethnicity within the VA workforce and Senior Executive Service. Ms. Coffey made the motion to continue a dialogue with NCOD. The motion was passed.
6. Tinisha Agramonte, Director of Outreach and Retention, ODI, and team lead for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Committee, introduced Nancy Dolan, Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Office of Policy and Planning, who discussed the LGBT Veteran Policy Workgroup. Ms. Agramonte also discussed the LGBT Employee Workgroup that will function as an employee resource group as well as a workgroup that will examine and address the needs of Veterans and other clients. Renee Allen, VADC Representative, VA Blacks in Government Chapter, suggested that this workgroup work closely with VA’s Inquiry Routing & Information System (VA’s online method of receiving questions from Veterans and other clients from the VA Web site).
7. Ms. Rannels, team lead, reported on the activities of the Diversity and Inclusion Communications Committee.
   1. The team met once after the last VADC quarterly meeting, on September 30.
   2. They discussed the kick-off of a VA-wide D&I communications campaign starting with a poster campaign.
   3. These posters would be electronically available from the VADC web page so that facilities can go online, download and print them as desired.
   4. The team plans to have drafted up some poster concepts for the VADC consideration by the next quarterly meeting.
8. Carolyn Wong, Director of Training and Communications, ODI, and team lead for the Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Report Committee, kicked off the discussion on the Government-Wide Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan and Guidance.
   1. Ms. Coffey walked through a PowerPoint presentation on the new Government-Wide Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan.
   2. VA will publish an updated VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan by March 15.
   3. VADC members will be invited to a teleconference meeting in February to review the plan.
   4. Lisa Red, VADC Alternate, Veterans Health Administration (VHA), reports that VHA will not have an individual plan; rather, VHA will follow the revised VA-wide plan once published.
   5. It was discussed that the updated VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan should align with the Government-Wide Plan, VA’s Workforce and Succession Plan, and the VA Strategic Plan.
   6. There was discussion about how to measure VA’s progress towards goals and objectives in the Plan. The following ideas were discussed:
      1. Examine the results of the Best Places to Work survey administered by the Partnership for Public Service.
      2. Examine the results of the All Employee Survey.
      3. Use VA’s new Diversity and Inclusion Indices.
9. Ms. Agramonte promoted the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP). To encourage greater participation in WRP, the Office of Human Resources and Administration, as part of its “Human Capital Investment Program,” established a centralized fund to reimburse salary costs for approximately 50 WRP students. The VA goal for FY 2012 is to place at least 20 WRP interns and, of those who are eligible for permanent employment, hire 20 percent into the VA workforce. To apply for centralized funding, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx#WRP>. The question was once again asked if PTSD is considered a targeted disability. *\*Update: Not in attendance at today’s meeting, Christy Compton, ODI, clarified that PTSD is considered a targeted disability after the Match 2, 2011, meeting.*
10. Arlene Gonzalez, VA’s new National Hispanic Employment Manager, was introduced and discussed the fact that Hispanic participation, particularly that of Hispanic women, still remains low in VA.
11. Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm. The next meeting will be held March 7, 2012.