VA Diversity Council (VADC) Meeting Minutes

April 15, 2015, 1:00-3:00 pm

VACO, 810 Vermont Avenue NW, Conference Room 830

1. Gina S. Farrisee, Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration and VADC Co-Chair, and Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for the Office of Diversity & Inclusion (ODI) and VADC Co-Chair, welcomed attendees and introduced new Council members.
2. Ms. Coffey discussed the establishment of the Diversity and Inclusion in Government Council and her role as VA’s representative on this new body.
3. Ms. Coffey discussed VA’s Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 and asked that VADC members review this report and share its findings with their organizations. *This report, presenting VA’s accomplishments and chronicling the measurable outcomes of the Department’s efforts toward realizing the goals of the VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for FY 2012–2016, is now available online at* [*http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/files/diar.pdf*](http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/files/diar.pdf)*.*
4. Ms. Coffey led VADC operations:
   1. January 21, 2015, VADC meeting minutes approved.
   2. Rhonda Palmore, Training and Communications, ODI, announced the Secretary’s Fifth Annual Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Awards Program. Nominations are due to Administration points of contact by Friday, May 29, 2015. For more information, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/sec-awards.aspx>.
5. Cathy Mitrano, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Resolution Management, discussed the change in processing discrimination complaints based on sexual orientation. These complaints now fall under Title VII and will be processed by the Office of Resolution Management. The Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication will issue final agency decisions. **Action Item: It was suggested that VA create one repository for frequently asked questions and listing points of contact regarding Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender issues for all three Administrations.**
6. Ms. Coffey and David Williams, Director of Workforce Analysis, ODI, presented the State of the Agency and encouraged distribution of this presentation throughout the Department. There was discussion regarding how the data for nonmonetary awards are captured and on the June 4, 2014, memo from Ms. Farrisee, “Ensuring Appropriate Review of Findings of Discrimination.” *Following this meeting, it was confirmed that VA is the first Cabinet-level agency to receive certification through the Office of Special Counsel’s 2302(c) Certification Program which allows federal agencies to meet the statutory obligation to inform their workforces about the rights and remedies available to them under the Whistleblower Protection Act, the Whistleblower Protection and Enhancement Act, and related civil service laws.*
7. Lester Stephens, Training and Communications, ODI, discussed the proposed FY 2015 Secretary’s Equal Employment Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion, No FEAR, and Whistleblower Protection Policy Statement. Changes to last year’s policy include the clarification that sexual orientation is now covered under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and a revision to the definition of a service animal in regards to reasonable accommodations. *The Secretary signed and distributed the policy (available at* [*http://www.diversity.va.gov/policy/statement.aspx*](http://www.diversity.va.gov/policy/statement.aspx)*) on April 20, 2015.* **Action Item: ORM was asked to research if discipline is taken in settled cases where there were findings of discrimination.**
8. Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for July 15, 2015.
9. *The July 15, 2015, meeting was cancelled. VADC members were invited to an October 15, 2015, training 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). The next meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2015.*