



## Upcoming Events

[January 2020](#)

National Mentoring Month

Religious Freedom Day

January 16

World Religion Day

January 19

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
(Federal Holiday observed)

January 20

International Holocaust Remembrance Day

January 27

## D&I and ADR Awards

Nomination Period Now Open!

Nominate VA employees and teams who worked hard in the areas of diversity and inclusion or alternative dispute resolution. Read [page 2](#).

## ORM

Steps Toward Conflict Resolution

You can contact the Office of Resolution Management (ORM) toll-free at 1-888-566-3982 (TTY/TDD at 1-888-626-9008), from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. in all time zones, and speak with a specialist regarding [Equal Employment Opportunity Complaint Processing](#), [Alternative Dispute Resolution](#), and the [Harassment Prevention Program](#).

To file a discrimination or harassment complaint, you must contact [ORM](#) within 45 calendar days of the date of the alleged discriminatory incident.



## Commemorate

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

VA joins the Nation in commemorating the icon Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on January 20, 2020, a U.S. federal holiday. The national recurring theme is "Remember! Celebrate! Act! A Day On...Not A Day Off." It is observed on the third Monday of January each year, around the time of Dr. King's birthday, January 15. [Continued on page 3.](#)

## Eighth Annual Secretary's D&I Excellence and ADR Excellence Awards

### Call for Nominations

The nomination period is now open for the Eighth Annual Secretary's Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Excellence Awards and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Excellence Awards! These awards provide VA the opportunity to recognize the outstanding work of individuals and teams in the areas of D&I and ADR. Nominations are due by January 31, 2020. For more information on the D&I Awards, visit the [Office of Diversity and Inclusion website](#). For more information on the ADR Awards, visit the [Office of Resolution Management website](#).

## Workforce Recruitment Program

### Database of Candidates Now Available

The Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) is a recruitment and referral program that connects federal and private sector employers nationwide with highly motivated college students with disabilities, including Veterans, who are eager to demonstrate their abilities in the workplace. The WRP maintains the largest database of Schedule A candidates for hiring into the Federal Government and is recognized by the Office of Personnel Management as a model strategy for the recruitment and hiring of individuals with disabilities and top candidates may be selected quickly. Administrations and Staff Offices are encouraged to access the [WRP database](#) to find qualified candidates to support your specific hiring needs.

## VA Central Iowa Health Care System Employees Participate in Historic Event

### "First People" of Iowa Recognized with Permanent Display in Iowa State Capital

On November 14, 2019, the VA Central Iowa Health Care System (CIHCS) Native American & Alaska Native Special Emphasis group participated in a historic event. The "First People" of Iowa were recognized with a permanent display in the Iowa State Capital building. The Iowa Commission on Native American Affairs had been working with the Iowa Legislative Council for over eight years to recognize the contributions and history of the state's indigenous people, according to Ms. Jill Avery with the Iowa Department of Human Rights. In June of 2019, approval was granted, and a space was provided for the display.

The display contains tribal flags from some of the many Native tribes that lived in Iowa. One of those tribes was The Iowa and is the origin of the state's name. The tribes represented in the display are: Citizen Potawatomi Nation (Neshnabe), Iowa Tribe of Kansas (Baxoje), Iowas of Oklahoma (Baxoje), Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (Anishinaabe), Omaha Tribe of Nebraska and Iowa (U-Mo'n-Ho'n), Otoe-Missouria Tribe (Jiwere), Ponca Tribe of Nebraska (Usni), Rosebud Tribe of South Dakota (Sicangu Oyate), The Sac and Fox Tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa (Meskwaki), Santee Sioux Tribe of Nebraska (Isanti), and Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska (Ho-Chunk). A ceremonial pipe, a "Native Veteran" hat, a plaque thanking the supporters of the display, and a copy of the Sac and Fox bylaws were placed in the display. Cedar, Sage, sweetgrass, and tobacco, plants used in Native traditional ceremonies, were also placed in the display.

The VA CIHCS special emphasis group was invited to help design and install the display with help from Ms. Stephanie Higgins, the Iowa National Guard's Native American & Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM). The VA CIHCS group comprised Ms. Edna Porter and Ms. Helena Hanson, the CIHCS Native American/Alaska Native SEPMs, Chaplain Antonette Tom, and Mr. Timothy Perkins, EEO Program Manager. Ms. Hanson's daughter, Ms. Ivory Hanson, volunteered her time and effort as well. The group spent the entire morning assembling the tribal flags and other items, respectfully placing them in the display. Everyone who participated was excited and honored to be a part of the project and especially thrilled to see the flag of their tribe displayed. All the members of the commission appreciated the hard work and acknowledged it would not have been a success without the group's contributions. For additional information, contact the [Office of Diversity and Inclusion](#).



*Pictured by the Native American display.  
Front left to right: Chaplain Antonette Tom,  
Jill Avery, Ivory Hanson, and Helena Hanson.  
Back: Stephanie Higgins and Timothy Perkins.*

# Commemorate

## Continued from Page 1

On this Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, the American people are called upon to engage in public service and promote peaceful social change. Dr. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. His unfinished movement toward equality can be achieved by our united, enduring efforts.

While others were advocating for freedom by “any means necessary,” including violence, Dr. King used the power of words and acts of nonviolent resistance to achieve seemingly impossible goals.

In 1964, at 35 years old, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. became the youngest person to win the Nobel Peace Prize for his work in civil rights and social justice.

America honored Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with a national holiday and memorialized his legacy on the National Mall in the Nation’s Capital with the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, dedicated in 2011.

For more information about Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s Birthday, visit the [Office of Diversity and Inclusion website](#).

## Policy Alerts

### **EEO, Diversity and Inclusion, No FEAR, and Whistleblower Rights and Protection Policy Statement**

On December 18, 2019, VA Secretary Robert L. Wilkie signed the [Equal Employment Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion, No FEAR, and Whistleblower Rights and Protection Policy Statement](#). This document summarizes VA’s EEO, Diversity and Inclusion, Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act (No FEAR), and Whistleblower Rights and Protection policies.

### **Religious Exercise and Liberty in the Workplace**

Secretary Wilkie established the Department’s stance on issues involving faith in the workplace. In support of the updated [VA Directive 0022, Religious Symbols in VA Facilities \[PDF\]](#), the Secretary distributed this policy guidance and responses to associated frequently asked questions on [Religious Exercise and Liberty in the Workplace](#). These changes highlight the Department’s commitment to the religious expression rights of its Veterans, employees, and visitors. As a Department, we should strive to ensure that the observance and practice of these principles are accommodated in all activities. All managers and supervisors should understand the responsibilities regarding this guidance.

### **Animals on VA Property**

[VHA Directive 1188, Animals on Veterans Health Administration \(VHA\) Property \[PDF\]](#), amended on April 25, 2019, establishes policy regarding any person who wishes to access VHA property accompanied by an animal. Previous VA regulation authorized the presence of seeing-eye dogs on VA property and other animals at the discretion of a VA facility head. The updated regulation ensures VA practices remain consistent with applicable federal law. It also assists those entering and working at VA facilities in developing a clear and consistent understanding of the criteria governing facility access for service animals. Under the updated regulation, service dogs are allowed on VA owned or leased property. Only dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability are considered service animals. There are no restrictions on the breeds of dogs that may be considered service animals. All other animals will not be permitted in VA facilities, unless expressly allowed as an exception under regulations for activities such as animal-assisted therapy or for other reasons such as law enforcement purposes. Emotional support animals are not considered service animals under these regulations. Refer to the [Frequently Asked Questions \[PDF\]](#) for further guidance.



Office of Human Resources & Administration/Operations, Security, and Preparedness  
Office of Diversity and Inclusion | Office of Resolution Management  
Alternative Dispute Resolution | Resolution Support Center | Harassment Prevention Program  
Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection | VHA Diversity & Inclusion Community of Practice  
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