Office of Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity@Work

March 2020

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

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Upcoming Events

March 2020

Women's History Month
Irish-American Heritage Month
Brain Injury Awareness Month
Professional Social Work Month

Anniversary of the U.S. Senate's First Convening Under the Constitution (1789)
March 4

International Women's Day
March 8

Deaf History Month
March 13–April 15

LGBT Health Awareness Week
March 23-29

National Vietnam War Veterans Day
March 29

Cesar Chavez Day
March 31

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.

DEFENSE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE POSTER

Commemorate

Women's History Month

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) joins the Nation in commemorating Women's History Month this March by celebrating the achievements of women and their contributions to our Nation's history. Continued on page 4.

Commemorate

Irish-American Heritage Month

VA joins the Nation in commemorating Irish-American Heritage Month this March. From the **2019 Presidential Proclamation**: *During Irish-American Heritage Month, we celebrate the indispensable contributions Irish Americans have made to every chapter of our Nation's history. Generations of Irish immigrants have carried to our shores character, culture, and values that continue to play pivotal roles in the strength and success of America.*

Irish Americans helped define and defend our great Nation in its earliest days. The Continental Congress appointed more than 20 generals of Irish descent to lead the Continental Army through the Revolutionary War. The courage of these Irish generals on the battlefield was as inspiring as it was fierce. The Pennsylvania Line, the backbone of George Washington's Army and one of its largest and hardest-hitting units, consisted of so many soldiers of Irish descent that it was often called the "Line of Ireland." After they fought for our Independence, Irish Americans helped enshrine the visionary principles of self-government outlined in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Many Irish Americans immigrated to the United States during the terrible years of Ireland's Great Famine in the middle of the 19th century. Despite facing discrimination and poverty, Irish Americans persevered thanks to their industry, leadership, and integral involvement in society. In 1868, Irish-American businessman Edmund McIlhenny grew his first commercial crop of peppers in Avery Island, Louisiana, and created "Tabasco" hot sauce. Andrew Mellon, the grandson of Irish immigrants, built a thriving business empire before becoming the Secretary of the Treasury, during which time he advocated for economic policies that sparked the tremendous prosperity of the 1920s. In 1937, he funded the construction of the National Gallery of Art and donated his extensive art collection to the museum.

Today, more than 31 million Americans look back with pride on their Irish heritage and the legacy of their ancestors. The faith, perseverance, and spirit of Irish Americans across our country is indelibly woven into the tapestry of the American story. As we spend this month honoring the incredible history of Irish Americans, especially on St. Patrick's Day, we look forward to a bright future of continued friendship and cooperation between the United States and Ireland.

For more information on Irish-American Heritage Month, visit the **U.S. Census Bureau's Facts for Features: Irish-American Heritage Month and St. Patrick's Day**. For more information on one aspect of the historical military service of Irish Americans, visit the National Park Service webpage on **Irish Soldiers in the Union Army**.

Policy Alert

Paid Parental Leave

Paid parental leave was authorized under the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020 (Public Law 116-92) on December 20, 2019. Public Law 116-92 modifies Section 6382 of United States Code, which addresses leave requirements for Family and Medical Leave, to include the provisions for Paid Parental Leave. By definition, leave taken under Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is Leave Without Pay (LWOP). Under section 6382, employees may supplement their own paid leave in place of LWOP. However, the modification allows employees to receive up to 12 weeks of Paid Parental Leave (paid by the employing agency) for the birth, adoption or placement of a child occurring on/after October 1, 2020.

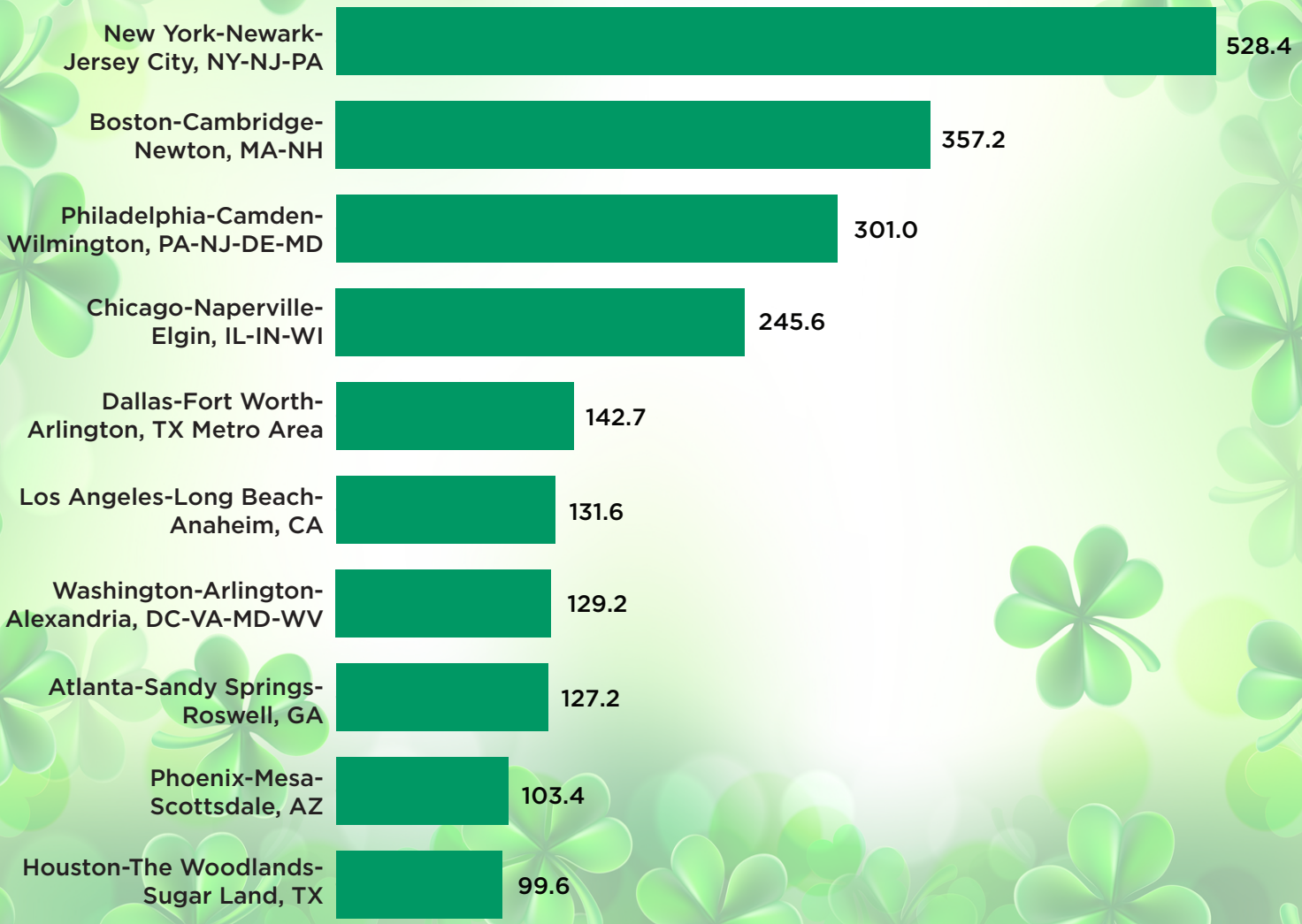
Title 38 employees will receive Paid Parental Leave entitlement under VA policy (VA Handbook 5011, Part III, Ch 3, paragraph 7d). Paid Parental Leave benefit will apply to both parents. Employees will not be required to exhaust their Annual and/or Sick Leave accounts prior to using the Paid Parental Leave entitlement. FMLA expires 12 months from the date of birth, adoption or foster care placement. Employees must agree to return and work for the employing agency for at least 12 weeks after the leave ends.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will write the implementing regulations to fill in all the gaps and details that are not currently in the law (anticipated by late Spring). OPM's regulations are subject to the formal "rule making" process and public comment period. Once OPM issues the final regulations, VA will establish agency policy and guidance to address how Paid Parental Leave will be implemented and what it means for VA employees.

Where Irish Eyes Are Smiling in America

Metropolitan Areas With the Largest Irish Population Reporting Irish as Single Ancestry

(In thousands)



United States® Census Bureau

U S Department of Commerce
U S CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

Source: 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
<www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>

Commemorate

Continued from Page 1

This year's Women's History Month theme, as established by the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, commemorates the 75th Anniversary of the end of World War II by "Honoring the Past, Securing the Future."

Women's role during World War II was immeasurable. Rosie the Riveter became an iconic image of working women in the World War II era and foreshadowed the great role women would come to play in America's workforce. While men enlisted in the military during this time, women increasingly filled positions in both white and blue-collar fields, including construction, steel, and lumber. They faced a great deal of discrimination, including lower pay, sexual harassment, dangerous working conditions, and long hours. As women continued to gain skill in these fields, they also gained the respect of their male counterparts and were provided opportunities for advancement in America's workforce.

Not only did World War II prompt more women to enter the workforce on the American home front, but women also contributed by serving in the U.S. military during this conflict. A number of women's units were formed at this time: the WAACs (Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, later renamed to Women's Army Corps); the United States Naval Reserve (Women's Reserve) better known as the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service); the Marine Corps Women's Reserve; the SPARS (the Coast Guard Women's Reserve named for an acronym representing the Coast Guard motto, "Semper Paratus, Always Ready"), the WASPs (Women Airforce Service Pilots), the Army Nurse Corps, and the Navy Nurse Corps. According to the National World War II Museum, nearly 350,000 U.S. women served in uniform, home and abroad, to volunteer for these units which also encouraged women from racial minority backgrounds to enlist.

On February 11, 2020, the Center for Women Veterans, the Center for Minority Veterans and the Veterans Canteen Services screened "The Six Triple Eight: No Mail, Low Morale" with special guest speaker, VA Secretary Robert L. Wilke. This documentary celebrates the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, the only all-Black female battalion to serve in Europe during World War II. More information about the women of the Six Trip Eight can be found on the **Women of the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion website**.

When women returned from the war, they could not easily access the same benefits available to white men. Although women and racial minorities were entitled to the same benefits as white men under the GI Bill, they often faced difficulty trying to claim their benefits due to discrimination. In 2020, VA commemorates the struggles of these pioneers and celebrates both their achievements that led to great advancements for women and their contributions to building our Nation during a time of war.

As of September 30, 2019, women represent 60.62 percent of the overall VA workforce, 4.18 percent below the National Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF) benchmark of 64.85 percent. Including both permanent and temporary employees, women Veterans comprise 15.99 percent of VA's women employees. In VA's permanent leadership pipeline (GS-12 through GS-14), women have less than expected representation in holding 57.5 percent of those positions. Women also have less than expected representation in holding 41.24 percent of VA's executive leadership positions (GS-15 and Senior Executive Service positions).

This year, Equal Pay Day occurs during Women's History Month on March 31, 2020. This date symbolizes how far into the year women must work to earn what men earned in the previous year. Equal Pay Day was originated by the National Committee on Pay Equity (NCPE) in 1996 as a public awareness event to illustrate the gap between men's and women's wages.

VA encourages organizations and facilities to organize activities targeted at raising awareness, increasing knowledge, and addressing any identified barriers to the full employment and inclusion of women in VA. The Center for Women Veterans is hosting a lunch and special screening of "**The Hello Girls**" for VA Central Office on Wednesday, March 18, 2020, in the G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Veterans Conference Center (room 230), 810 Vermont Ave. NW, from 11-12:30pm. Attendees can **RSVP for this event online**. For more information about this event, contact Ms. Missina Schallus at (202) 461-6195 or Ms. Michelle Terry at (202) 461-6190.

For more information about Women's History Month, contact your local Equal Employment Opportunity or Federal Women's Program Manager or **Ms. Sehar Minhas**, VA's National Federal Women's Program Manager, at (202) 461-4036. For more information on VA's National Federal Women's Program, visit the **ODI Web site**.

Federal Relay Conference Captioning

RCC Service Available to Federal Deaf and Hard of Hearing Employees

Relay Conference Captioning (RCC) is a free service to all Federal Employees and is dedicated to providing functional equivalency to deaf and hard-of-hearing participants in conference calls and/or multi-party calls. The service uses high-quality captioners that deliver live, real-time text streamed to an Internet-connected computer anywhere in the world. During captioned conference calls, participants can follow along with the dialogue by reading it on-screen as it is spoken and captioned. To submit a request for RCC Service, visit the **Federal Relay Conference Captioning website**.

Child Care Subsidy Program

2,242 VA Employees Currently Enrolled in VA CCSP

The Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP) is a Nationwide program for full-time VA employees. It is designed to assist lower income VA employees with the cost of child care and can be used as a retention tool for VA managers. To participate in the program, VA employees:

- Must be employed at VA a minimum of 60 days before the employee is eligible to participate in the program;
- Have a total family income up to $89,999;
- Have a child between the ages of birth to age 12 and up to age 17 for medical;
- Must use a licensed daycare provider or a state regulated facility.

VA employees may apply online using the Child Care Records Management System (CCRMS). For more information, visit the **VA Child Care Subsidy Program Office website**.

2020 White House Leadership Development Program

Application Period Open Until March 6, 2020

The Healthcare Leadership Talent Institute (HLTI) is accepting applications for the 2020 White House Leadership Development Program (WHLDP). The one-year program is sponsored by the Executive Office of the President and the President's Management Council. Each year, the WHLDP provides 14-20 Federal employees the opportunity to build executive leadership skills through hands-on exposure to policies, priorities and implementation strategies at the National level.

High-potential GS-15 and equivalent employees are encouraged to apply. They must complete an application and attach their resume, latest performance evaluation, and an acknowledgement and certification signed by the applicant and their supervisor. An SES-level rating panel will review and score the packages and present a recommendation to the VA Secretary. The Secretary may nominate up to six candidates for the program. The National White House Program Office will conduct its own screening of agency nominees before selecting the Fellows for 2020 program.

Selected Fellows will be on a full-time rotation outside the VA for one year. The home organization remains responsible for paying all salary and benefits. Fellows are expected to reside in the Washington DC metropolitan area for the duration of the program. There is no corporate funding for relocation and/or travel expenses.

Applicants must receive approval from their supervisor to participate. Upon successful completion of WHLDP, Fellows will return to VA and they may be reassigned to another position. Both the candidate and the supervisor will agree to a reassignment within the VA.

To obtain the White House Leadership Development Program manual, an application form, and an applicant acknowledgement and certification form, or for additional information, contact Dr. Vijay Kumar, HLTI. Completed packages are due to HLTI by March 6, 2020.

Moving from Caregiver Support to Caregiver Integration

Joint Campaign for Inclusive Care launched in October 2019

The **Campaign for Inclusive Care** is a strategic joint initiative of VA and Elizabeth Dole Foundation, graciously supported by USAA, to embrace, engage, and empower caregivers, clinicians, and Veterans throughout the entire care journey from day one. Through the **Academy for Inclusive Care**, the Campaign for Inclusive Care offers comprehensive online training and guidance for VA healthcare providers on the practice of inclusive care on topics ranging from "What is Inclusive Care?" to "Communicating with a Caregiver" to "The Caregiver Journey" and more.

By giving providers the tools and training they need to include caregivers as part of the care team, the Campaign for Inclusive Care is making inclusive care the standard of care across the Veterans Health Administration and, ultimately, at healthcare facilities nationwide. The goal is to improve outcomes for Veterans, their caregivers, and their healthcare providers.

PMF Class of 2020 Finalist In-Person Hiring Fair

Save the Date for March 13, 2020

The Human Capital Services Center (HCSC) announces the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in-person Hiring Fair for the Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Class of 2020. The Hiring Fair will be held on Friday, March 13, 2020 from 8:30am-5:00pm (ET), at the National Institute of Health (NIH) Natcher Conference Center (9000 Rockville Pike, Bethesda, MD 20892).

This Hiring Fair gives PMF finalists and hiring managers an opportunity to meet and learn more about VA's mission, critical needs, and career prospects. Additionally, hiring managers may conduct on-the-spot interviews with high potential hires.

The PMF provides a unique opportunity to hire recent graduates from the top graduate, law, and doctoral level programs worldwide to usher in a new generation of VA leaders. This hiring can be used to add to current staff competencies, accelerate and support of workforce succession management.

The PMF program is a two-year, government-wide program administered by OPM and is focused on developing a cadre of future government leaders. PMFs are appointed at the GS-9, 11 or 12 levels (or equivalent), based on qualifications and agency need.

The PMF Program provides a unique opportunity to hire recent graduates from the top graduate, law, and doctoral level programs worldwide. Many participants have extensive prior experience in public administration, technology, science, health, human resources, business, and financial management that can be instrumental to help serve Veterans.

In order to recruit a PMF, the organization must meet the minimum requirements:

- Have an approved and vacant Full Time Equivalent (FTE) position;
- Hiring level can be at the GS-9, GS-11, or GS-12 positions, and can offer a higher career ladder; and
- Position description must already be classified.

Candidates are hired through the excepted service, Schedule D hiring appointing authority, under 5 CFR 213.3402(a), (b), and (c). Offices interested in participating in the hiring fair must have an opportunity posted in the OPM Talent Management System (TMS) no later than February 28, 2020. VA's PMF Coordinators will assist hiring managers post VA PMF appointment opportunities in the OPM TMS.

There is no fee to participate in the hiring fair, however the hiring organization must reimburse the OPM PMF Program Office the placement fee of $7,000 for costs associated with the recruitment, selection, placement, orientation and graduation of Fellows within 30 days of the PMF's acceptance of a PMF appointment. All costs for training, normal salary and benefits costs associated with an employee are covered by the organization.

If your office has a need for exceptional talent, and an interest in hiring a PMF, contact Lynn Peters at 202-632-7322 or visit the **VA PMF website**.

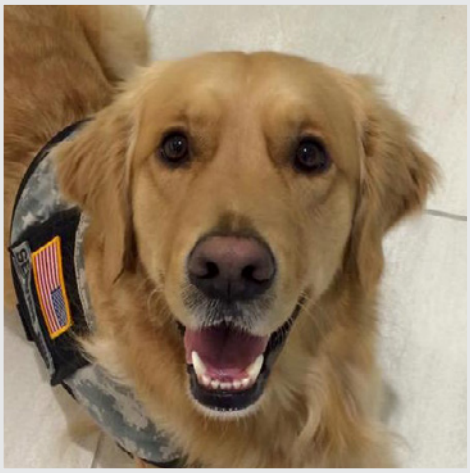
Veterinary Health Benefits for Mental Health Mobility Service Dogs

What are service dogs?

Service dogs are specially trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a chronic disability who cannot perform the work or task independently for him or herself. Service dogs can, for example, pick things up, guide people who are blind, alert people who are deaf or pull a wheelchair. They can also remind a person to take prescribed medications and calm a person with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack. It is important to note that service animals are working animals, not pets.

How can service dogs help Veterans with mental health conditions?

Veterans with substantial mobility limitations associated with a mental health disorder for which a service dog has been identified as the optimal way to address the mobility impairment may be eligible for veterinary health benefits through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Mental Health Mobility Service Dog Initiative. A substantial mobility limitation indicates that most common life and work activities (i.e., leaving the house, or getting to medical appointments, using public transportation, etc.) are impaired or prevented for the person more than half the time.



Under the Mental Health Mobility Service Dog Initiative, this benefit has been offered for Veterans with a mental health condition. It provides comprehensive coverage for the canine's health and wellness and any prescription medications necessary to enable the dog to perform its duties in service to the Veteran.

How can a Veteran apply for VA veterinary health benefits?

A Veteran should meet with a VA mental health provider to begin the application process for this benefit. The mental health provider and care team will evaluate and determine whether the mental health condition is the primary cause of the Veteran's substantial mobility limitations. The team will also assess whether a mobility service dog would be the optimal intervention or treatment approach for the Veteran. If the team considers a service dog to be the optimal intervention, they will apply to

receive the benefit on behalf of the Veteran by contacting the VA Offices of Mental Health Services and Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service at VHAPSASClinicalSupportTeam@va.gov.

Each Veteran's case is reviewed and evaluated by a prescribing clinician for the following:

- Goals that are to be accomplished through other assistive technology or therapy
- Goals that are to be accomplished through the use of a service dog
- Ability and means, including potential co-caregivers, to care for the dog currently and in the future

The Veteran will be informed if the veterinary benefit has been granted. Veterans approved for the benefit are then referred to ADI-accredited agencies https://www.assistancedogsinternational.org to apply for a service dog.

What is covered by the VA veterinary health benefit?

Veterans with working service dogs are provided veterinary care and equipment through VA Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service. VA does not pay for the dog or for boarding, grooming, food or other routine expense associated with owning a dog. Additional information about VA's veterinary health benefits can be found at http://www.prosthetics.va.gov/ServiceAndGuideDogs.asp.

In late 2016, the Center for Compassionate Care Innovation partnered with the VA Offices of Mental Health Services and Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service to extend eligibility for veterinary health care, specialized equipment and travel support to Veterans with chronic mobility issues associated with a mental health disorder. These benefits help Veterans with some of the costs involved with caring for their service dogs when they receive them from an approved agency accredited by Assistance Dogs International (ADI).

Additional Resources

- Assistance Dogs International (Service Dogs)
- International Guide Dog Federation (Guide Dogs)

Training

FEW Webinars

Federal Employed Women (FEW) offers Webinar Wednesdays 30-minute "Soar to New Heights" Webinars. This March, FEW will be offering a workshop on Imposter Syndrome, March 4, 2020, noon-12:30pm (EST). Seventy percent of women suffer from Imposter Syndrome, but few people talk about it. Join us for a discussion on how to overcome self-doubt and soar to greatness in business and your career. For more information about FEW's Webinar Wednesdays, including dial-in information, visit **FEW Webinars**.

Recruitment Professional Development Series

Office of Personnel Management's Outreach, Diversity, and Inclusion Office Covers Range of Talent Acquisition Guidance

Recruitment of diverse, qualified talent requires an active, targeted recruitment plan that drives job seekers to apply for your jobs. The Recruitment Professional Development Series from the Recruitment Policy and Outreach team in the Office of Personnel Management's Outreach, Diversity, and Inclusion Office will cover a range of talent acquisition guidance over the next several months. Whether you are just starting out or you are a seasoned subject matter expert, you will find some new information, tips, and best practices in these no cost, online sessions. Human resources professionals, recruiters, hiring officials, and employees who participate in recruiting and outreach activities should consider attending:

Recruiting Analytics Basics—March 4, 2020 at 1:30 PM (Eastern): This session provides a methodology and a tool for analyzing recruitment activities by developing an analytical framework, defining success, and focusing on what's important to your organization.

Onboarding Basics—March 18, 2020 at 1:30 PM (Eastern): This session will cover the elements of effective onboarding, effective delivery methods, and key metrics.

Effective Skills for Successful Federal Recruiters (Three Sessions): In addition to technical knowledge (rules, regulations, etc.), Federal recruiters must possess relevant "soft" skills to effectively interact with talent sources and job seekers in the course of the recruitment cycle.

Part 1: Prepare for Action—March 17, 2020 at 1:30 PM (Eastern): This session will teach the importance of understanding your agency and positions, and of thinking strategically when planning to recruit for your workforce needs.

Part 2: Build Your Network—March 24, 2020 at 1:30 PM (Eastern): This session will offer tips to cultivate and build relationships, and help you understand the importance of consulting with your partners.

Part 3: Find Your Ideal Candidate—March 31, 2020 at 1:30 PM (Eastern): This session will show you how to interact skillfully with job seekers and suggest practical means of evaluating your results.

Attendance will be online using Adobe Connect. You will be provided a link to the webinar and login information upon registration using the links above. Requests for reasonable accommodation will need to be submitted to the Event Organizer upon registration no later than one week prior to the session.

For more information about these sessions, contact the **Recruitment Policy and Outreach team**.

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