

## VA CORE VALUES AND CHARACTERISTICS GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS & SUPERVISORS

*This document provides information that managers and supervisors can use to reinforce and explain VA's I CARE Values and Characteristics to their employees.*

### Distribute the I CARE pins and cards

- To begin, please review the following tools and resources at the I CARE web site: <http://www.va.gov/ICARE/>
  - I CARE Message from Leadership (under “Quick Links” column)
  - I CARE Overview Presentation (under “Tools & Resources” in “Quick Links” column)
  - I CARE FAQs (under “Tools & Resources” in “Quick Links” column)
- Ensure every person assigned to your organization receives an I CARE pin and card and understands how the I CARE values support VA's mission. Distribute pins and cards at staff meetings, town halls or other meetings.
- Reinforce I CARE values during supervisory activities, such as in employee meetings.
  - Highlight stories and examples of I CARE values in action.
  - Consider creating an informal weekly wrap-up with employees that highlights accomplishments that align with I CARE values.
- Discuss I CARE values during mid-term assessments and annual performance reviews with employees. Reinforce activities that demonstrate I CARE values.
- Use I CARE recognition certificates to acknowledge employee efforts and reward team members who demonstrate I CARE core values in their daily work. For samples of certificates, go to the I CARE Web site at: <http://www.va.gov/ICARE/>

### Share the I CARE Key Messages with Your Staff

VA's core values of Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence (I CARE) define “who we are” and underscore our commitment to Veterans. Equally important are VA's core characteristics: Trustworthy, Accessible, Quality, Innovative, Agile and Integrated. These characteristics define “what we stand for” and describe the traits all VA organizations and employees should possess and demonstrate. Together, our values and characteristics provide a baseline for the standards of behavior expected of all VA employees.

- **I CARE is not just a slogan**
  - I CARE core values require all VA employees to exemplify the highest standards of personal and professional conduct.
  - VA employees must live these values every day so that VA can achieve excellence for Veterans.
  - I CARE values help us accomplish our mission, inspire us to do our very best and unite us in meeting our obligations to Veterans and their families.
  - Employees should read, understand and follow our values and encourage others to do the same. Living by VA's values and characteristics demonstrates our care for Veterans.
- **Leaders, managers and supervisors are the primary models and advocates for I CARE**
  - Leaders must be aware of their status as role models and avoid even the appearance of misconduct or inappropriate behavior.
  - Continually examine policies, procedures and processes to ensure that an ethical climate is being nurtured and that any impediments to maintaining a values-based environment are removed.
- **Accountability is key to successfully integrating I CARE core values across VA**
  - Quickly address actions that counter our values and apply corrective action.
  - Reinforce behaviors of people who are demonstrating the core values by rewarding them appropriately, publicly and in a timely manner.