

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AND AWARDS

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** To revise Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) procedures regarding employee recognition and awards.
2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This change updates VA Handbook 5017 to clarify that all VA employees, regardless of appointment authority, are covered by VA's recognition and award program unless otherwise excluded. These changes will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5017 that is maintained on the [Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer website](#) and [VA Publications website](#).
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of Human Resources and Administration (HRA) (006), Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer (OCHCO) (05), Employee Relations and Performance Management Service (ER&PMS) (051).
4. **RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VA Directive 5017, "Employee Recognition and Awards," dated January 3, 2025.
5. **RESCISSION(S):** Not applicable.

BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS:

/s/
Mark R. Engelbaum
Assistant Secretary for
Human Resources and Administration

DISTRIBUTION: Electronic Only

PART I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. PURPOSE.

- a. This handbook contains both mandatory Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) policies, procedures and suggested guidelines for administration of effective employee recognition and awards programs that help motivate employees to make contributions that support and enhance organizational goals and objectives.
- b. This handbook also:
 - (1) Establishes criteria for determining eligibility for superior performance awards and quality step increases;
 - (2) Revises VA's scales of awards for granting time off and monetary awards; and
 - (3) Promotes the use of Special Award Programs that are directly linked to the achievement of organizational goals and objectives, including Productivity/Gainsharing Awards Program.
 - (4) Incorporates title 38 advancements (Special Advancements for Achievement and Performance) and cash awards policy, instructions, procedures and guidance into part V of this handbook.
 - (5) Establishes the process for the recoument of awards, bonuses and relocation expenses.

2. DEFINITIONS.

- a. **Award.** A generic reference to the entire range of rewards available to recognize an employee under VA's Employee Recognition and Awards Program including cash, non-monetary, honorary and time off awards. (Unless otherwise noted, those title 38 employees covered under part V of this handbook are also covered under VA's Employee Recognition and Awards Program.)
- b. **Employee.** For purposes of VA's Employee Recognition and Awards Program, an employee means all VA employees, regardless of appointment authority, provided they meet the below definition and are not otherwise excluded by law or policy:
 - (1) Appointed in the civil service by one of the following, acting in an official capacity:
 - (a) The President;
 - (b) A Member or Members of Congress, or the Congress;

- (c) A member of a uniformed service;
 - (d) An individual who is an employee under 5 U.S.C., section 2105;
 - (e) The head of a Government controlled corporation; or
 - (f) An adjutant general designated by the Secretary concerned under section 709(c) of title 32;
- (2) Engaged in the performance of a Federal function under authority of law or an Executive act; and