

March 31, 2011

**CERTIFICATION OF SPECIAL CARE AND BENEFITS TEAMS (CBTs)  
EVALUATING OR TREATING  
FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR (FPOW)**

**1. PURPOSE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive provides policy for the implementation of a mandatory education and certification program for the Special Former Prisoners of War (FPOW) Care and Benefits Teams (CBTs). These teams are the main liaisons between the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and FPOW; therefore team composition, training and operations should ensure that FPOW receive the highest quality care and benefit services.

**2. BACKGROUND**

a. Since 1997, VHA's Employee Education System (EES) has presented national workshops to address the experiences of being a captive of the enemy during any of our Nation's wars. These workshops address the unique aspects of the POW experience in each war, each theater, and in different camps. Hundreds of VHA clinicians and Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) staff have attended these programs.

b. In response to the success of these initial workshops, VHA medical facilities and VA Regional Offices (VBA) have developed highly effective and efficient CBTs dedicated to outreach and identification of FPOW, efficient processing of their disability claims, and high quality clinical services.

c. VHA has determined by policy that these teams must be available to provide care for FPOW who require expert evaluation and care, or are referred by facility or clinical leaders for medical care. These teams are also available to serve as consultants for primary care, mental health, or other clinical teams to address specific management questions or to provide advice.

d. The certification program for the FPOW CBTs is based on team composition and designation, completion of specified educational requirements, and development and execution of a performance improvement plan. VHA's EES has created a certification program for designated clinicians who care for FPOW patients based on specified educational requirements. EES, in collaboration with VA Central Office and field experts in FPOW clinical and benefits issues, provide educational opportunities specifically designed to certify Special FPOW Care and Benefits Teams.

**THIS VHA DIRECTIVE EXPIRES MARCH 31, 2016**

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e. Requirements for team certification include:

(1) **Appropriate team composition.** These teams must be comprised of three persons (minimum), including two physicians (one treatment and one Compensation and Pension Evaluator) and an FPOW Coordinator. One or more members of the FPOW CBT must be certified through the Disability Examination management Office (DEMO) as qualified to perform Compensation and Pension (C&P) examinations. CBT membership can be expanded to other professionals based on the needs of the patient population being served;

(2) Designation by the Facility Director as the Special FPOW CBT;,,

(3) Completion of specified educational requirements by each member of the team:

(a) Participation every five (5) years by all FPOW CBT members in the VHA EES “FPOW Case Management Certification Training” face-to-face course, and

(b) A one-time completion by all team members of the self study module, “Veterans Health Initiative: American Ex-Prisoners of War” found in the VA Learning Management System (LMS), including successful completion of the post examination.

f. Completion and execution of an annual quality improvement plan aimed at improving performance in claims processing times and accuracy, customer satisfaction, and quality of care as appropriate. In recognition of this performance, VHA physicians and other health care providers who are certified members of the Special FPOW Care and Benefits Team may receive a written certificate of accomplishment.

**3. POLICY:** It is VHA policy that Special FPOW CBTs are certified at all VHA medical facilities caring for FPOW.

### 4. ACTION

a. **Under Secretary for Health.** The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, is responsible for establishing the FPOW Care and Benefits Oversight Group (CBOG), which includes members from EES, VHA, VBA Compensation and Pension (C&P) Division, and the FPOW Advisory Committee.

b. **FPOW CBOG.** FPOW CBOG is responsible for coordinating the certification and learning activities for the Special FPOW CBTs.

c. **EES.** EES is responsible for:

(1) Leading the collaboration of VHA and VBA C&P staff to develop learning opportunities for Special FPOW CBTs.

(2) Maintaining and up-dating the Veterans Health Initiative (VHI) FPOW module “VHI: American Ex-Prisoner of War”.

d. **Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director.** The VISN Director is responsible for ensuring certification of Special FPOW CBTs.

e. **Facility Director.** The Facility Director is responsible for:

- (1) Designating health care providers as members of the Special FPOW CBT.
- (2) Ensuring participation and tracking completion for all CBT members of the EES “FPOW Case Management Certification Training” course; and
- (3) Ensuring participation and tracking completion for all CBT members of the self-study module, “VHI: American Ex-Prisoners of War”.
- (4) Ensuring development and execution of the annual quality improvement plan.
- (5) Ensuring that team members participate in FPOW Case Management Certification Training at five year intervals.
- (6) Encouraging clinicians who care for FPOWs but who are not members of the FPOW CBT to take the LMS self-study course.

**5. REFERENCES:** “Veteran Health Initiative: American Ex-Prisoners of War”, VA EES, 2001.

**6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY:** The Associate Chief Consultant for Mental Health Post-Deployment Activities and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (116) and EES FPOW Program Manager are responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be directed to (202) 461-7364 or (205) 731-1812 extension 315.

**7. RESCISSIONS:** VHA Directive 2008-040 is rescinded. This VHA Directive expires on March 31, 2016.

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