Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Washington, DC 20420

AMENDED
May 11, 2020

VHA DIRECTIVE 1850.04(1)
Transmittal Sheet
April 6, 2017

EMPLOYEE UNIFORMS

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive provides policy for furnishing and servicing employee uniforms. The directive designates the employees required to wear a uniform, describes the major articles that make up the uniform; and denotes whether uniforms are to be provided by issue or by an allowance paid to the employee.

2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES: This directive contains an amendment in paragraph 4.b. to remove the mandate for local policy creation, dated May 11, 2020.

3. RELATED ISSUES: VHA Directive 1850.

4. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: The Director of Environmental Program Services (10NA5C) is responsible for the content of this directive. Questions concerning this directive may be directed to the Healthcare Environment and Facilities Programs (HEFP) Administrative Services (10NA5A) at vhahefpadmin@va.gov.

5. RESCISSION: VHA Handbook 1850.04, dated November 4, 2011, is rescinded.

6. RECERTIFICATION: This VHA directive is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of April 2022. This VHA directive will continue to serve as national VHA policy until it is recertified or rescinded.

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DISTRIBUTION: Emailed to the VHA Publications Distribution List on April 17, 2017.

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EMPLOYEE UNIFORMS

1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) directive describes the mandatory requirements for furnishing and servicing employee uniforms, designates the employees required to wear a uniform, describes the major articles that make up the uniform, and denotes whether uniforms are to be issued or by an allowance paid to the employee. Uniforms and uniform allowances for Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) police officers are authorized by title 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 218 (c), public law 98-528 and are addressed in VA Handbook 0730. **AUTHORITY:** Title 5 United States Code U.S.C. 5901-5903.

2. DEFINITIONS

a. **Employee.** The term employee includes full-time and part-time employees of VA, but excludes volunteers, trainees and workers who receive a stipend or salary from a source other than VA appropriated funds, and other workers in similar categories.

b. **Special Purpose (Protective) Clothing.** Special purpose (protective) clothing refers to items furnished as a safeguard against exposure to inclement weather and/or possible injury or cross infection. Protective items include all items purchased for use as protection against infection, contamination or injury to a person or damage to the normal apparel worn by the person and includes, but are not limited to: coveralls, shoes, gloves, goggles, rubber aprons, isolation gowns, masks, parkas, lab coats, aprons, etc. The above items are purchased through operating funds, some of which can be processed through the textile care processing facility in lots much like hospital linen, when appropriate. Items of protective clothing are not designated as either issue or allowance uniforms.

c. **Uniform.** Uniform refers to distinct articles of clothing prescribed in Appendix A.

3. POLICY

It is VHA policy that each medical facility will have a management process that determines style, color, make, appropriate use, inventory, handling, distribution and allotment procedures for uniforms to be worn by designated employees

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Under Secretary for Health**. The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, is responsible for ensuring compliance with requirements contained in Federal laws and regulations, Executive Orders, and VA and VHA Directives and Handbooks.

b. **VA Medical Facility Director.** The VA medical facility Director, or designee, is responsible for:

(1) Establishing VA medical facility uniform standards regarding the style and color of uniforms to be worn, consulting local labor bargaining units when appropriate.

(2) Authorizing employees to wear uniforms to and from work. ***NOTE:*** *Current Guidelines of the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN) concerning uniforms worn in the peri-operative areas should be followed. AORN does not recommend employees wear uniforms to and from work.*

(3) Authorizing deviations and exceptions to wearing a uniform, as outlined in paragraph 8.

c. **Chief, Environmental Management Service.** As the Textile Care Officer (TCO), the Environmental Management Service (EMS) Chief is responsible for overseeing the management, distribution, inventory and procurement of approved uniform apparel.

5. UNIFORM SELECTION

a. Type of material and style of uniforms selected for issue shall be based on textile care processing costs, appearance and suitability of the garment for the environment where it will be worn.

b. Employees who are provided an allowance to purchase their own uniforms are expected to select clothing designated in Appendix A and appropriate to a professional medical setting.

c. Employees shall dress according to standards set by their professional or occupational association.

d. The wearing of badges, patches, uniforms or equipment other than those prescribed is also prohibited (see paragraph 9).

6. PROCUREMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

a. Employees who are paid a uniform allowance will provide themselves with all articles comprising the uniform, except as authorized in Appendix A.

b. Uniforms will be procured in accordance with federal acquisition and VA procurement guidelines and regulations.

c. Issue uniforms remain the property of VA after they have been issued and must be turned in by employees who no longer require them for official duty. Employees will be required to reimburse VA for loss or damage to uniforms when due to employee negligence.

d. VA Form 10-1148, Employees Uniform and Property Issue Documentation, will be used to account for issue uniforms. ***NOTE:*** *Textile Management Software Systems which meet the requirements of this directive are available on the open market; their use to provide reports and management control is strongly recommended.*

7. WEARING REQUIREMENTS

a. Employees are required to wear the uniform prescribed in Appendix A while on duty, except for deviations and exceptions (see paragraph 8). VA medical facility employees having frequent contact with patients in wards or treatment areas will wear a uniform.

b. Individuals serving VA in a “without compensation” status or under one of the federally sponsored programs, and patients and members assigned duties in a therapeutic program will be issued the same type uniform as that worn by VA employees who perform similar duties. ***NOTE:*** *In some cases, it may be appropriate to assign different style and color uniforms.*

8. DEVIATIONS AND EXCEPTIONS

a. The VA medical facility Director is authorized to determine when wearing a uniform is not consistent with the duties of the position, and to prescribe when the uniform will not be required. In no case will an employee who does not wear a uniform while on duty be paid a uniform allowance.

b. The VA medical facility Director is authorized to select the method, issue or allowance, to provide uniforms for rotating medical interns and residents, whichever is the most economical.

c. When a position title changes without a significant change in duties or position requirements, employees assigned in the position will continue to wear the same style of uniform.

d. The VA medical facility Director may authorize employees to wear personal clothing while on duty when, in the opinion of the professional staff, a benefit to patients may result. Affected employees will not be entitled to issue uniforms, uniform allowance or laundry service at VA expense during period when personal clothing is worn. Once the deviation is approved, the method of pay adjustment will be performed manually for the designated employee.

e. The VA medical facility Director may permit employees eligible for issue uniforms to wear personally-owned uniforms while on duty, provided that personal uniforms are equal in quality, the same color, and of similar design as the standard issue uniform. (This may also include personally owned culotte-type outfits that meet quality and color requirements of the standard uniform.)

f. The VA medical facility Director is authorized to approve or disapprove deviation requests concerning the style and color of uniforms for employees who receive issued uniforms.

g. Requests for waiver to the uniform standards, i.e., conversion of employees from uniform issue to allowance, must be approved by the Director, Environmental Programs Service, VA Central Office. Requests for a waiver should be forwarded through the

appropriate Veterans Integrated Service Network director. Each request for a waiver must include a complete justification, cost analyses and recommended allowance rates not to exceed authorized limits. Should a waiver be approved, the method of pay adjustment will be performed manually at each VA medical facility for each designated employee.

9. IDENTIFICATION INSIGNIA

a. A shoulder patch, button or other insignia to indicate membership in, or certification by, an approved professional or occupational organization may be worn. The cost of such insignia will be borne by the employee. ***NOTE****: Medical center logos and seals may be worn.*

b. Employees whose duties routinely bring them into contact with patients shall wear an easily read identification badge showing names and position titles in accordance with local facility guidelines. Identification badges will be furnished at VA expense.

10. ALTERATION, REPAIR AND REPLACEMENT

a. Government-issue uniforms may be altered and repaired at VA expense.

b. Personally owned uniforms will not be altered or repaired at VA expense. An exception may be made for a garment damaged while performing official duties.

11. TEXTILE CARE PROCESSING FACILITY SERVICES

a. Uniforms issued and worn by an employee while performing official duty may be processed by a VA laundry facility, providing the service is available.

b. The maximum weekly quantity of uniforms that may be processed for each employee will be established and approved by the Chief, Environmental Management Service. Except for unusual circumstances, this will be limited to one clean uniform for each duty day.

12. UNIFORM ALLOWANCE

a. When authorized in Appendix A and prescribed uniforms are worn, an allowance will be paid to specific groups of employees for the purpose of offsetting the cost for uniforms. The rates payable are specified in Appendix B.

b. Payment for the first year of uniformed service will be made by direct payment to an employee entering on duty, in a job subject to the uniform requirements, or whose job is made subject to uniform requirements. The first year payment will be included with the first salary payment to the employee. If an employee is paid the initial allowance, then subsequently separated and re-employed in the same position within 1 year, a second initial allowance is not authorized. No initial allowance will be authorized if separation occurs before the first pay period.

c. Payment for subsequent years of uniformed service will be made as a biweekly pay period allowance. The pay period allowance will be effective at the beginning of the first pay period following completion of the first year of service.

d. An employee who transfers between positions with different uniform requirements will be entitled to receive payment for the first and subsequent years of uniformed service as outlined in paragraphs 12.b and 12.c.

e. A change in style or color of the prescribed uniform will not entitle employees to the first year payment of the employee uniform allowance. Affected employees will be permitted to continue wearing obsolete uniforms until replaced through normal wear.

f. The initial allowance payable to a part-time or intermittent employee, who is otherwise eligible for a uniform allowance, will be based on the-maximum number of duty hours authorized by the appointment document. The biweekly allowance will be based on the employee's established tour and any additional hours worked not in excess of 40 hours in a week.

g. The amount payable to a full-time employee who serves only part-time where a uniform is required will be determined by adjusting the annual allowance to conform to the limited period uniforms are worn.

h. Employees appointed for periods of less than 1 year or substitute employees will be provided uniforms by issue in lieu of being paid a uniform allowance.

i. The first year payment is not authorized for an employee who transfers between positions subject to the same uniform requirements.

j. In no case will an employee who does not regularly wear a uniform while on duty be paid a uniform allowance.

k. The biweekly allowance will not be reduced for periods of leave with pay, unless it is known that the employee will not return to duty at the expiration of such leave. In such cases, the allowance will be discontinued, as of the date it becomes known that no return to duty will occur. No reduction for leave without pay will be made unless the period of leave without pay covers a complete pay period.

l. Any employee receiving a uniform allowance who resigns less than 1 year after receiving the initial uniform allowance shall repay to VA a pro rata share of the amount paid based on the number of months remaining in the 12-month period following the initial payment. Repayment liability may be waived by local management in situations, which are beyond an employee's control (e.g., reassignment for failure to meet physical standards or in lieu of disability retirement).

m. Any employee entitled to, and receiving a uniform allowance, will receive payment of the initial or one-time uniform allowance. The method of pay adjustment will be performed manually for the designated employee.

13. UNIFORM ISSUE

a. All full-time employees approved to wear uniforms that must be laundered between uses, in accordance with Appendix A, shall be issued a minimum of seven uniforms. For other employees, the minimum number of such uniforms issued to each employee must be the number required to ensure that a clean uniform is available each day.

b. In no instance will the total cost of all uniforms issued to an individual employee exceed $600.00 during any one calendar year. ***NOTE:*** *The $600 limit may be exceeded in the case of uniforms that are required to be in compliance with the National Fire and Safety Protection Association (i.e., Electricians).*

c. Issue uniforms will be replaced when rendered unserviceable on an item-for-item basis.

d. Uniforms purchased by VA will not be furnished to employees who receive a uniform allowance.

e. Records of the cost of uniforms purchased for issue will be kept separate from the cost of linen and protective clothing.

14. REFERENCE

Guidelines for Perioperative Practice, 2016. Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN) (http://www.aornstandards.org/). ***NOTE:*** *This linked document is outside of VA control and may or may not be conformant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.*

UNIFORMS PRESCRIBED FOR WEAR BY VA EMPLOYEES

Service	Position	Type Uniform	Provided By
ACQUISITION & MATERIAL MANAGEMENT and Sterile Processing Service (SPS)	All Supply, Processing, Distribution and Warehouse, including first-line supervisors	To be determined by the VA medical facility Director	Issue
DENTAL	Dentist (Full- or part-time, including consultant, attending and resident)	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue
DENTAL	For Clinical Wear	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue
DENTAL	Hygienist, EFDA (Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary) and Assistant	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Allowance
DENTAL	Laboratory Technician	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue
ENGINEERING	All Trades, Crafts and Service Plant Operators, Motor Vehicle Operators, including first-line supervisors and grounds.	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue
ENGINEERING	Fire Chief, Fire Fighters, Fire Prevention Inspectors	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Allowance
ENGINEERING	Fire Chief, Fire Fighters, Fire Prevention Inspectors	Insignia Cap, Badge VA Legend and Issue Seal	Issue

Service	Position	Type Uniform	Provided By
ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT	All environmental management employees, including first line supervisors, interior design, (designer excluded); glazing maintenance, grounds maintenance, painters, pest control applicators, textile care employees and other crafts.	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue
MEDICAL MEDIA	Medical Illustrators, Photographers	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue
NUCLEAR MEDICINE	Technologist	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue
NURSING	Chief and Assistant Chief	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue
NURSING	Supervisory and Staff Nurses, Nurse Anesthetists, Infection Control Nurses and Nurse Practitioners	To be determined by VA medical center Director	Allowance
NURSING	Nursing Technicians, Practical/Vocational Nurse	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Allowance
NURSING	Nursing Assistants	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue

Service	Position	Type Uniform	Provided By
NUTRITION AND FOOD	Dietitians, all food service workers, cooks, supervisors, interns, technicians	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue
NUTRITION AND FOOD	Chief, Food Production	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Allowance
PATHOLOGY AND LABORATORY MEDICINE	Technicians, Technologists, Helpers, Aids, Assistants, and doctoral-level employees	To be determined by the VA medical facility Director	Issue
PHARMACY	Chief, Pharmacy and other pharmacists, pharmacy aides and technicians, including first line supervisors and pharmacy students	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue
PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION	All Specialists, Aids and First Line Supervisors	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue
PROSTHETIC AND SENSORY AIDS	Prosthetic representatives, technicians, technologists (Orthotic prosthetic restoration	To be determined by the VA medical facility Director	Issue
SOCIAL WORK SERVICE	Social Worker	To be determined by the VA medical facility Director	Issue

Service	Position	Type Uniform	Provided By
ALL OTHER CLINICAL	Audiologists and Speech Pathologists (Doctoral level or full-time staff) Audiology and Speech Pathology Trainees Optometrists Clinical Psychologists Podiatrists Physician's Assistant Residents and Interns (Other than career) Physicians and Scientists, M.D. Level (Full- or part-time including attending, consultants and career residents) Anesthetists All other technologists, technicians and therapists	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue

UNIFORM ALLOWANCE RATES

Employee	Initial Allowance	Per Annum Allowance	Pay Period Rates	Hourly Rates
Chief, Food Production/Foreman or Leader	400.00	204.00	7.85	0.0981
Dental Assistant, Hygienist and EFDA (Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary)	400.00	215.00	8.27	0.1034
Fire Chief, Fire Fighter and Fire Prevention Inspector	800.00	500.00	19.23	0.2404
Nurse, Supervisory and Staff Nurse	400.00	215.00	8.27	0.1034
Nurse, Practical/Vocational	400.00	215.00	8.27	0.1034
Nurse Practitioner, Infection Control, Anesthetists	400.00	215.00	8.27	0.1034
Nursing Technicians	400.00	215.00	8.27	0.1034
Physician Resident *if approved	400.00	215.00	8.27	0.1034