

# LGBTSA Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 2

February 28, 2013

## Same Sex Benefits for Domestic Partners of Military Members

### Special points of interest:

- Same Sex Benefits for Military and Families
- HRC HEI Update
- Next LGBTSA Meeting
- LGBT-related Staff Trainings
- VAPAHCS recognized by the Office of Health Equity!

On February 11, 2013, a memorandum was released entitled [“Extending Benefits to Same-Sex Domestic Partners of Military Members”](#). This memo describes near completion of the Repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell and asserts that “all America’s sons and daughters who volunteer to serve our Nation in uniform are treated with equal dignity and respect, regardless of their sexual orientation.” The memo continues to explain that family member and dependent benefits will be extended to same-sex domestic partners of Military Service members and their children. Learn about VA benefits for LGB Veterans at the VA Central Office [Benefits Webpage](#).



### Inside this issue:

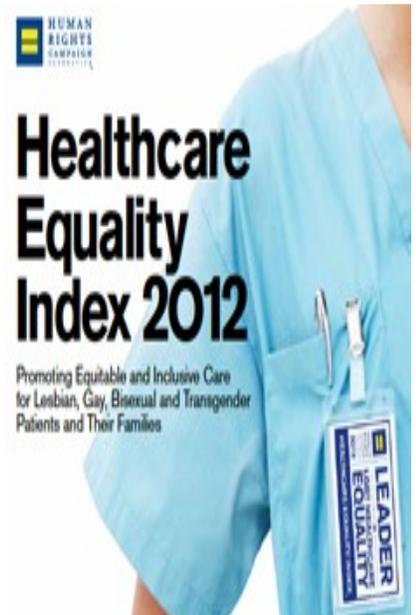
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### HRC HEI Update

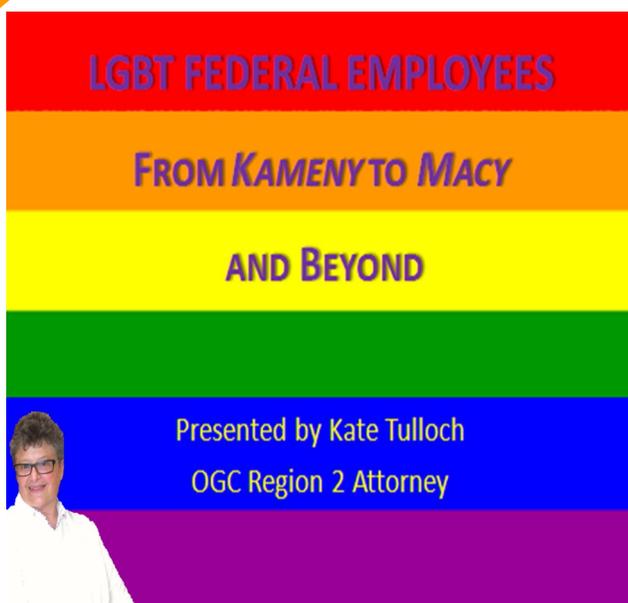
The HRC HEI application for VAPAHCS is on track to meet the newly extended deadline of April 1, 2013.

Our updated VAPAHCS [“Patients Rights and Responsibilities of VA Patients and Residents of Community Living Centers”](#) includes the HEI Core Criteria 1. Patient Rights and 2. Hospital Visitation. Additionally, the [No Fear Policy](#) satisfies HEI Criteria 3. Anti-discrimination Staff Policy. Finally, we are well on our way to satisfying HEI Criteria 4. Staff Training of at least 5 managers in the [“LGBT Patient Centered Care: Executive Briefing”](#) training. VAPAHCS has 5 managers registered for this training. In addition we have 16 staff registered for the [“Your LGBT](#)

[Patients An Introduction”](#) and 6 staff registered for the [“Transgender Patients: Organizational Best Practices”](#). If you would like to help VAPAHCS meet its goal of being rated a “Leader in LGBT Healthcare,” please register yourself at the above links and email [Dave.Leo@va.gov](mailto:Dave.Leo@va.gov) so your training will be counted in our HEI application!



## LGBT Federal Employee Rights



Wondering about the rights of LGBT Federal Employees, given recent changes for LGBT Military? On the Office of Diversity and Inclusion website, a terrific PowerPoint presentation entitled "From Kameny to Macy And Beyond" by Kate Tulloch, Office of General Council Region 2 Attorney is a great resource. To find the PowerPoint, scroll down to the bottom of the [ODI webpage](#) and select the link entitled LGBT PowerPoint presented by Kate Tulloch.

This presentation provides an overview of historical rulings relating to LGBT federal

employees and current policy, including a mixed bag of improvements in EEOC and continued restrictions due to the Defense of Marriage Act.

Here's an example of the type of information you'll learn from the presentation:

"Sexual orientation, like transgender, is not itself a protected class. However, the necessary implication of Macy is that when an employer makes a discriminatory employment decision based on an employee's sexual orientation, the employer impermissibly takes sex or gender into account in violation of Title VII."

## VA LGBT Inclusion Initiatives

A VA memorandum was released on 12/20/2013 entitled "LGBT Inclusion Initiatives," addressed to VISN Directors and Facility Directors which states the following:

"1. **Background:** In recognition of the imperative for equity in health care delivery, the Under Secretary for Health (USH) launched the Office of Health Equity (OHE/10A6) in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in fiscal year 2012. Once the office is fully established and staffed, it will be responsible for championing the advancement of health equity and health care equality for all Veterans, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, physical or mental disability, socioeconomic status, sex, sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.

In the interim, the Principal Deputy Undersecretary for Health (PDUSH) recognized a timely opportunity to jump start the work of OHE, forming a workgroup to help en-

sure VHA takes immediate, coordinated action to advance the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Veterans. The workgroup met over 90 days to assess current activities in VHA, review external standards, identify gaps, and make recommendations for immediate action. The group made several recommendations that were approved by the VHA National Leadership Council in May 2012.

The workgroup recommended that at a minimum, **each facility should undertake at least three specific initiatives** over the following year to help build a welcoming and inclusive environment for LGBT Veterans within the facility.

2. Facilities may choose initiatives which impact inclusion in the LGBT Veteran populations. The initiatives should support the delivery of culturally competent, equitable, and inclusive health care for all Veterans. Facilities may choose initiatives focused on

policy, education, research, cultural competency, special emphasis programs, or outreach. On July, 18, 2012, a memorandum by the PDUSH and the Deputy Undersecretary for Health for Operations and Management encouraged each facility to participate in the Healthcare Equality Index (HEI). **Given that the HEI has policy and educational initiatives, participation in the HEI counts towards meeting two of the three initiatives.** Any initiative that has been in place since January 2012 qualifies.

3. OHE compiled a list of VA and non-VA resources (Attachment A) to assist facilities in identifying possible interventions. The resources list includes links to tools, training, programs, and ideas to help build a welcoming and inclusive environment for LGBT Veterans.

4. VISN Directors are asked to provide a summary of their VISN's compliance using the LGBT Inclusion Initiative Reporting Worksheet

5. OHE is prepared to provide assistance and answer any questions. For more information contact Carlos J. Rodriguez, OHE Program Manager at [Carlos.Rodriguez5@va.gov](mailto:Carlos.Rodriguez5@va.gov).

*(Signed by)*

Robert L. Jesse, MD, PhD

Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health

*(and)*

William Schoenhard, FACHE

Deputy Under Secretary for Health Operations and Management"

**While only 3 were requested, VAPAHCS' summary included 15 initiatives including the HEI (which is worth 2)!**

## LGBT Inclusion Initiative: National Recognition for VAPAHCS

As described on page 2 of this issue, the Office of Health Equity (OHE) requested local VAs report at least 3 LGBT-related Inclusion Initiatives. According to OHE Program Manager Carlos Rodriguez, OHE received reports from 145 VA facilities across the nation describing 570 different initiatives, which have been entered into separate spreadsheets according to category. At the end of this month, OHE will publish a report describing the initiatives and announcing the spreadsheet location on an OHE SharePoint, which will be available for all interested VA employees to consult.

Since VAs were only asked to list 3 initiatives, this is not an exhaustive list. Of the 570 reported initiatives, 29% were training, 27% were policies, 16% awareness campaigns, and 6% were support groups-

to learn about the remaining initiatives, keep an eye out for the forthcoming OHE Report. Mr. Rodriguez states OHE will continue to monitor the initiatives and the facilities' progress.

In addition to listing each initiative in the spreadsheet, OHE is also showcasing initiatives that show particular promise. VAPAHCS' May 31, 2012 Conference "Improving the Quality of Services and Supports Offered to LGBTQ Veterans" hosted by the Psychology and Social Work Services is being showcased as a promising initiative that other VAs may want to model trainings after.

The purpose of this conference was to facilitate an increase in participants' self-awareness and comfort in working with LGBTQ Veterans through experiential activi-

ties and to develop clinical skills through clinical case discussions. Additionally, participants learned about VA initiatives designed to improve the quality of services and supports offered to LGBTQ Veterans including LGBT-related VA policies and local LGBT Veterans services. Guest presenter Michelle Alcedo, B.A. from the National Resource on LGBT Aging also taught participants about the unique needs of the aging LGBT community and multiple ways to create an inclusive, welcoming and safe environment for all LGBTQ Veterans accessing VA care. Conference presenters also included VAPAHCS staff Rachael Guerra, Ph.D., Jeanette Hsu, Ph.D., Simon Kim, Ph.D., Kile Ortigo, M.A. and Heliana Ramirez, LISW.

Way to go VAPAHCS!!!



"VAPAHCS' Conference 'Improving the Quality of Services and Supports Offered LGBTQ Veterans'...is being showcased as a promising initiative"

## Next LGBTSA Meeting

The next LGBTSA meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 14th from noon-1 pm.

### VTel Locations:

- Palo Alto
- Menlo Park
- San Jose

### VANTS Line:

- 1800 767-1750
- Access Code 86067



## LGBT Staff and Allies Newsletter

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Please send Heliana ideas of stories to be featured in the next issue of the LGBTSA Newsletter!

VAPAHCS LGBT Programs are on the web!  
Visit us at  
<http://www.paloalto.va.gov/lgbtsa.asp>

The VAPAHCS LGBT Staff and Allies is a group of over 30 VA employees who began meeting in April, 2012. The purpose of LGBTSA is to raise awareness about LGBT Veteran and employee experiences at VAPAHCS through public relations campaign, staff training and resource development for the hospital system. Through community outreach, LGBTSA strives to increase VA enrollment among LGBT Veteran Patients and encourage employment applications from LGBT civilians and Veterans.

LGBTSA members work in a variety of departments across the VA Palo Alto Healthcare System including Social Work, Psychology, Medicine, Recreation Therapy, Engineering and Housekeeping to name a few. Members identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and as allies to the LGBT community. LGBTSA welcomes anyone who is interested in making VAPAHCS the choice for LGBT Veterans seeking care and LGBT people seeking employment.

### VAPAHCS LGBT Veteran Support Group featured in the Journal of Homosexuality, Volume 60!

In the new special edition of the Journal of Homosexuality "[The Rise and Fall of DADT](#)," authors explore the "evolution of government policy on gays and lesbians serving in the U.S. Military." Included in this Special Edition is an article entitled "If We Ask, What They Might Tell: Clinical Assessment Lessons from LGBT Military Personnel Post-DADT," which describes VAPAHCS' very own LGBT Veteran Support Group. Check out the [Contents Page](#) to see all of the articles listed in this edition of the Journal of Homosexuality.

