

LGBT Workforce and Service Population Initiatives

**Human Resources and Administration
Office of Diversity and Inclusion**

Value Statement

In order to be a high performing organization in the 21st century that best serves our Veterans, VA must define diversity broadly to include all that makes us unique, including our sexual orientation and gender identity. Diversity and inclusion are more than legal or ethical imperatives; they are business imperatives to achieve high performance in public service.

Meeting the Needs of the LGBT Workforce

- In 2009, VA included sexual orientation as a protected basis in the Secretary's EEO, Diversity, and No FEAR Policy Statement.
- In 2010, VA implemented an internal complaint process to provide formal redress for complaints based on sexual orientation.
- In 2011, VA added gender identity and parental status to the list of protected bases in the Secretary's Policy Statement (signed on June 13, 2011).
- In 2012, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) held its third annual LGBT Program to increase awareness of LGBT issues in the workplace and in our service population. This past June, ODI sponsored its third LGBT Observance Program that focused specifically on the needs of LGBT Veterans.

Meeting the Needs of the LGBT Workforce, cont.

- ODI has also developed and delivered training to educate our leadership and our workforce on issues of cultural competency for the LGBT community.
- ODI has developed and implemented ***Mandatory EEO, Diversity, & Conflict Management Training for Managers and Supervisors*** covering LGBT diversity; In FY 11, over 27,000 executive, managers, and supervisors were trained.
- In FY 12, VA's Diversity Council is launching an LGBT work group to address emerging LGBT issues in the VA workforce and in our service delivery.
- In FY 13, ODI is adding a survey item in VA's Voice of VA Survey to assess perceptions of fairness and treatment of LGBT employees.

Meeting the Needs of the LGBT Community

- In July, ODI joined other VA officials from VHA and VBA in a meeting with the National Coalition of LGBT Health representing over 70 LGBT organizations to engage in a dialogue about emerging LGBT issues and their impact on VA health care and benefits services.
- VA continues to engage the LGBT Coalition on issues such as health care disparities and adoption of an LGBT Healthcare Equality Index.
- We are proud that VA anticipated and has taken the lead in addressing many emerging issues involving the LGBT community.



Veterans Health Administration

VHA Committed to Creating a Welcoming Environment

VHA is committed to instituting a patient centered approach to care that organizes services around the needs and values of the patient, including Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Veterans

Current Action

- Promoted the Joint Commission standards on visitation
- Developed a directive on care and services to Transgender Veterans
- Trained mental health and women's health providers on services for Transgender Veterans

VHA Committed to Creating a Welcoming Environment

Planned Action

- Develop an “Inclusive Language Guide” for VHA program offices and the field
- Develop and deliver cultural competency training for VHA staff that addresses LGBT issues
- Create an Office of Health Equity which will address health care equity for vulnerable populations that would include LGBT Veterans
- Form a VHA workgroup to assess progress and coordinate efforts to advance health care equality for LGBT Veterans receiving health care from VHA



National Cemetery Administration

BURIAL AND MEMORIALIZATION OF SAME-SEX COUPLES IN VA NATIONAL CEMETERIES

- VA's National Cemetery Administration (NCA) administers the following benefits under statutorily mandated eligibility criteria under sections 2306 and 2402 of title 38, United States Code (U.S.C.):
 - Provision of burial space for Veterans and their eligible family members at 131 national cemeteries, and
 - Marking the graves of Veterans and their eligible family members with a Government-furnished headstone, marker, or medallion at no cost to Veteran families.
- NCA benefit administration authorities are subject to section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), 1 U.S.C. § 7, which defines "marriage" to mean only "a legal union between one man and one woman" and "spouse" to mean only "a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or wife." Separate provisions in VA statutes, 38 U.S.C. § 101(3) and (31), also specify that for the purposes of VA benefits, "spouses" and "surviving spouses" are persons of the opposite sex who are or were the wives or husbands of Veterans.
- In accordance with these Federal laws, a same-sex spouse of Veteran would be ineligible for burial in a VA national cemetery as a "spouse" or "surviving spouse" of a Veteran.