

Chapter 1
PERFORMING MOTIVATIONAL AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

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Chapter 1 PERFORMING MOTIVATIONAL AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

1.01 Introduction

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) motivational and outreach activities are designed to ensure that a Servicemember or Veteran with potential eligibility for Chapter 31 benefits and VR&E services is made aware of program services. These activities should provide sufficient understanding to assist the Servicemember or Veteran in making an informed choice to apply for vocational rehabilitation and related services. This chapter is a summary of how VR&E partners with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Compensation Division to identify a Veteran with potential eligibility for VR&E services after receiving a Service-Connected (SC) disability rating; follows-up with a Veteran who does not apply for VR&E services after receiving an application; counsels Veterans concerning potential Chapter 31 benefits; and utilizes specialized outreach efforts to reach a Servicemember or Veteran who is potentially eligible to receive VR&E benefits.

1.02 References and Resources

Laws: 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 3697

Directives: VA Directive 6515

Resources: VETSNET Operational Report (VOR) Desk Reference

VA Forms (VAF): VAF 28-1900, Disabled Veterans Application for Vocational Rehabilitation
VAF 28-8890, Important Information about Vocational Rehabilitation Benefits
VAF 119, Report of Contact

Websites: www.facebook.com/VeteransBenefits
www.twitter.com/VAVetBenefits
<https://www.youtube.com/user/DeptVetAffairs>
www.flickr.com/photos/VeteransAffairs
<http://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/>
<http://www.pdhealth.mil/dcs/pdhra.asp>
<http://www.yellowribbon.mil/yrrp/>

1.03 Motivational and Outreach Activities

a. Initial Motivational Contact

The Veterans Service Center (VSC) informs the Veteran of the availability and purpose of the VR&E program when VSC processes an original or reopened claim that results in an initial SC disability rating of 10 percent or greater or an increased combined SC disability rating of 20 percent or greater. VAF 28-1900 and VAF 28-8890, are automatically sent to the Veteran when eligibility for Chapter 31 benefits is established for initial or increased SC disability compensation.

See Appendix O, VA Forms, for information on how to access all forms referenced in this chapter.

b. Future Control for Veteran Motivational Contact

The VSC uses the 810 diary code series in SHARE, a program used by Compensation Service to establish claim control and to view the Veteran's military, personal, and compensation and pension ratings information, to track follow-up activities for a Veteran identified as seriously disabled and establishes a 30-day future control for a subsequent motivational contact.

c. VR&E Responsibilities

VR&E Divisions must check VOR monthly for pending 810 diary codes requiring action. A Veteran with severe disability conditions who has not filed a VAF 28-1900 is reflected on the VOR under the 810 diary code series. If a completed VAF 28-1900 is submitted prior to the control date, VR&E must clear the pending 810 diary code series in SHARE using the Pending Issue File Cleared (PCLR) command.

If a Veteran with a severe disability does not complete and return VAF 28-1900 within 30 days from the date of receipt, VR&E staff must personally contact the Veteran to explain the benefits and services available under the VR&E program and encourage him/her to apply for VR&E services using VAF 28-1900. VR&E must clear the pending 810 diary code series in SHARE and document the contact on VAF-119 and file the form in the Veteran's Claims File (C-File).

VR&E Divisions are required to analyze the effectiveness of their motivational and outreach efforts. VR&E Officers or their designees are required to conduct a Systematic Analysis of Operations (SAO) regarding motivational/outreach activities annually. This analysis should include a review of VSC's compliance with required procedures for providing initial motivational materials when authorizing SC disability compensation awards, the effectiveness of VR&E motivational/outreach activities and whether the type of motivational contact by VR&E is appropriate.

d. Specialized Outreach Efforts

Specialized outreach efforts are required for a transitioning Servicemember, and a hospitalized Servicemember or Veteran. These include the Transition GPS Program, educational and vocational counseling services under Chapter 36, Post-Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA), Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP), Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES), and VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC).

1. Transition GPS Program

The Transition GPS Program, formerly the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), was established to meet the needs of a separating Servicemember during their period of transition into civilian life by offering job-search assistance and related services.

The law creating Transition GPS established a partnership among the Departments of Defense, VA, Transportation and the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) to give employment and training information to a Servicemember within 180 days of separation or retirement.

Transition GPS helps a Servicemember and his/her spouse make the initial transition from military service to the civilian workplace with less difficulty and at less overall cost to the government. An independent national evaluation of the program estimates that a Servicemember who participates in Transition GPS, on average, finds their first post-military employment opportunity three weeks sooner than those who do not participate in Transition GPS.

Transition GPS consists of comprehensive three-day workshops at selected military installations nationwide. Professionally-trained workshop facilitators from the State Employment Services, military family support services, Benefits Assistance Service, Veterans Health Administration (VHA), National Cemetery Administration, Department of Labor contractors or VETS staff may present at the workshops.

2. Educational/Vocational Counseling (Chapter 36)

(a) Eligibility

VR&E provides educational and vocational counseling services to individuals who meet one of the following criteria:

- Servicemember who is within six months prior to discharge

from active duty.

- Veteran who is within one year following discharge from active duty.
- Current beneficiaries of educational assistance under Chapters 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 1606 and/or 1607.

(b) Services

Services provided under Chapter 36 include the following:

- Counseling to facilitate career decision-making for civilian or military occupations.
- Educational and vocational counseling to choose an appropriate civilian occupation and develop a training program.
- Academic and adjustment counseling to resolve barriers that impede success in training or employment.

For more information on educational and vocational counseling under Chapter 36, see 38 U.S.C. 3697 and M28R.VII.A.1.

3. Post-Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA)

The Department of Defense (DoD) launched the PDHRA Program to safeguard the well-being of a Servicemember. While the initial focus of the PDHRA is on returning Reservists and National Guard members who fall within the three- to six-month post-deployment period, the program is also made available to a Servicemember who has returned from deployment since September 11, 2001. PDHRA events focus on reconnecting a Servicemember and his/her family with service providers to ensure that they are aware of and understand the benefits and resources that are available to help them overcome the challenges of reintegration. VR&E's participation in these events facilitates contact with OEF/OIF/OND Reservists and National Guard members and provides them with information regarding VR&E benefits.

For more information on the PDHRA Program, see www.pdhealth.mil/dcs/pdhra.asp

4. Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP)

DoD's YRRP events provide National Guard and Reserve members and

their families with information, services and referrals throughout the entire deployment cycle. The goal of the YRRP is to provide reintegration assistance at 30-day, 60-day and 90-day intervals following demobilization. YRRP events focus on reconnecting a Servicemember and his/her family with service providers to ensure that they are aware of and understand the benefits and resources that are available to help overcome the challenges of reintegration. VR&E's participation in these events facilitates contact with OEF/OIF/OND Reservists and National Guard members, and provides them with information regarding VR&E benefits.

For more information on the YRRP, see www.yellowribbon.mil

Note: VR&E Divisions are encouraged to include PDHRA and YRRP events in their outreach activities. The volume of exiting Servicemembers, frequency and location of events will need to be considered when determining which events are attended.

5. Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES)

A national Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by VA on January 17, 2012, and DoD on February 1, 2012, that provides guidance and responsibilities for stationing VR&E counselors on military installations (see Appendix K, Signed MOUs). Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs) provide outreach and transition services to a Servicemember transitioning through the IDES program. VRCs engage the Servicemember early in their recovery, helping them identify the skills they have, the skills they need and opportunities where those skills can be used for future employment.

Services range from a comprehensive rehabilitation evaluation to determine abilities, skills and interests for employment purposes, to support services to obtain and maintain employment. By physically placing VRCs at IDES locations on military installations, quality and timeliness of benefits delivery is improved by beginning the process of developing a new career that is uniquely appropriate for each individual's desires and abilities during the transition process.

6. VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC)

The VSOC program was designed to serve beneficiaries receiving educational benefits. Veteran students transitioning from active duty service to civilian life face unique challenges entering the college or university setting. They may need special supportive services to deal with issues such as symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Traumatic Brain Injury or other mental and physical health issues. Under the VSOC

program, VRCs are assigned to certain campuses to provide VA benefits, outreach services, support and assistance to ensure the Veteran's health, educational and benefit needs are met.

VRCs assigned to campuses are easily accessible by Veteran students. Counselors are available to respond to quick questions or detailed requests for assistance accessing VA benefits such as life insurance, home loans, VR&E, Post-9/11 GI Bill or other VA education benefits.

Through the VSOC program, Veteran students can obtain a referral for health services through VA medical facilities and local Veteran Centers, information on submitting a claim for disability compensation, the location of community and campus resources, and employment and resume assistance. The VSOC counselor may also provide assistance and information on application, evaluation and entitlement to VR&E Chapter 31 services.

VSOC counselors also provide supportive guidance to the Veteran and an eligible dependent by assisting in resolving problems that may interfere with their ability to complete their education and enter the civilian workforce in a viable career.

e. VR&E Duties at Outreach Events

The duties of VR&E staff attending outreach events may include, but are not limited to, the following tasks:

- Staffing information tables with Chapter 31 and Chapter 36 benefits information (e.g., Quick Books, VR&E Orientation CDs and VAF 28-1900).
- Addressing questions and concerns regarding Chapter 31 and Chapter 36 benefits.
- Assisting a Servicemember, Veteran, or dependent with completing applications for Chapter 31 or Chapter 36 benefits.
- Submitting a brief summary of events, including date, location, services provided, and number of participants.

Outreach events are routinely held on weekends. Therefore, ROs must consider the availability of overtime funds or the use of compensatory time for employees attending outreach events.

1.04 Use of Social Media

a. Definition

Social media is defined as a form of electronic communication through which users create online or virtual communities and network to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content, such as videos, photos, etc. Examples of commonly used social media are websites for social networking and microblogging.

b. Official Use of Social Media

VA has established a substantial online presence utilizing the most current social media platforms. The main goal of VA social media is to interact with the “millions of Veterans and their family members” who already use social media each day. VA’s official policy on use of social media by VA employees is outlined in VA Directive 6515. VA’s official social media sites are:

1. Facebook

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) manages a Facebook page to allow real-time feedback on various programs and services. This page is also used to notify Veterans and stakeholders of upcoming events and to make other announcements. VR&E staff is responsible for providing a Facebook posting biweekly.

This site can be accessed at www.facebook.com/VeteransBenefits

2. Twitter

VBA manages an account on Twitter to allow real-time feedback on various programs and services. Twitter is a social networking and microblogging service similar to Facebook. Posts are limited to 140 characters. VR&E staff is responsible for providing a microblog, called a “tweet”, on a weekly basis.

This site can be accessed at www.twitter.com/VAVetBenefits

3. Flickr

Flickr is a photo-sharing site is used to “put a face on” VA personnel, facilities, services and Veterans.

The VA’s Flickr address is www.flickr.com/photos/VeteransAffairs

4. VAntage Point

This is the official blog of the VA and provides a forum for Veterans, active-duty military, their families and the general public to learn about the Department and its initiatives and to contribute feedback. Since VA employees are encouraged to submit guest blogs, VAntage Point may also be used in local outreach and marketing efforts if approved by the VR&E Officer and the RO Director.

Vantage Point's address is www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage

5. YouTube

YouTube provides a video posting site for individuals to share and view videos. The website also provides a forum for response to videos by written reply or video reply. VR&E Service will solicit and may post testimonial-type videos featuring Chapter 31 participants discussing their experiences in the program. VR&E Service may also utilize YouTube to reach out to employers to market the program and services, and to encourage them to consider VR&E as a hiring resource. Staff must contact the VA Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs and the VA Social Media Office before submitting a video.

Go to www.youtube.com/user/DeptVetAffairs#g/c/A93A5833057D78B7 for VA videos on YouTube.

c. Restrictions on the Use of Social Media

1. General Restrictions for all VA Employees

Employees who are not officially authorized to speak on behalf of VA must never state or infer in their communications that they represent VA's official position. When acting in or outside of their official capacities, VA employees must draw a clear distinction between their personal views and their professional duties. Similarly, employees should discourage Veterans and associated participants from seeking official VA determinations via social media. In these cases, employees must be clear that these requests must be submitted through the designated official channels to ensure proper protection of personal information and for an official response to be provided.

It is important to note that each employee is personally responsible for the content they publish on social media, and be mindful that what is published will be public for a long time; in some cases, a personal disclaimer should be written to indicate that the speaker is not

representing the VA or a specific program.

2. Specific Restrictions for VR&E Employees

VR&E staff are expected to adhere to VA-wide policies on the use of social media as described in VA Directive 6515. In addition to the general restrictions for all VA employees listed above, VR&E employees have specific restrictions based on the nature of the counseling relationship, which are consistent with the Code of Professional Ethics for Rehabilitation Counselors governing use of technology and media presentations. Due to VR&E's responsibility to protect the Veteran's privacy and the Veteran's assumption of the confidentiality of VA communications, VR&E staff should not communicate directly with Veterans, Servicemembers, and/or their families via VA or personal social media sites. VR&E staff should not use their personal social media sites to conduct official VA business, or create a perception that the employee is speaking on behalf of VA. VR&E staff should refrain from discussing specific VA claims-related issues with Veterans, Servicemembers, and/or families via social media to ensure protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and other protected information from disclosure in a public forum. VR&E staff should not respond as a VR&E employee to any posting on social media sites, unless officially designated to do so by a senior management official.

1.05 Counseling a Veteran or Servicemember

VA must give a Veteran eligible for Chapter 31 benefits the opportunity to obtain counseling regarding VR&E services and the possible advantages of electing benefits under Chapter 31, regardless of the education benefit actually claimed. A Veteran who may be eligible for VR&E services must be referred to the VR&E Division for motivational contact and counseling even if they have not requested counseling.