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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 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 Veteran or Servicemember 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 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 for them; counsels Veterans concerning potential Chapter 31 benefits and utilizes specialized outreach efforts and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) forms to notify a Veteran who is potentially eligible to receive VR&E benefits.

1.02 References and Resources

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

Resources: Share User Guide
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.pdhealth.mil/dcs/pdhra.asp
www.yellowribbon.mil

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 (see Appendix O, VA Forms), are automatically sent to the Veteran when eligibility for Chapter 31 benefits is established for initial or

increased SC disability compensation.

b. Future Control for Veteran Motivational Contact

The VSC uses the 810 diary code in Share (a program used by Compensation 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

1. 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. If a completed VAF 28-1900 is submitted prior to the control date, VR&E must clear the pending 810 diary code in Share using the Pending Issue File Cleared (PCLR) command.
2. 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 in Share and document the contact on VAF-119 (see Appendix O, VA Forms) and file the form in the Veteran's Claims File (C-File).
3. 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 Assistance Program (TAP), Coming Home to Work (CHTW) program, educational and vocational counseling services under Chapter 36, Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) Priority Processing, Post-Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA), Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP), Integrated Disability

Evaluation System (IDES) and VetSuccess on Campus (VSOC).

1. Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

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 TAP 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.

TAP 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 TAP, on average, finds their first post-military employment opportunity three weeks sooner than those who do not participate in TAP.

TAP 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. Coming Home to Work (CHTW) Program

The CHTW program was created to provide transition assistance to a hospitalized Servicemember at a military treatment facility or VA medical center. For more information regarding the CHTW program, see M28R.III.B.2.

3. Educational/Vocational Counseling (Chapter 36)

VR&E provides educational and vocational counseling services to a transitioning Servicemember who falls under any of the following conditions:

- Is within six months prior to discharge from active duty
- Is within one year following discharge from active duty

- Is a current beneficiaries of educational assistance under Chapters 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 1606 and/or 1607
- Is a Veteran and a qualified dependent who is eligible for and is entitled to education assistance under Chapters 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 1606 and/or 1607

Services 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.

4. Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) Priority Processing

VR&E's role is to ensure that priority processing of applications is completed for a Veteran designated as OEF/OIF/OND. Priority processing is geared toward active duty, National Guard or Reserve Veterans who were deployed in the OEF/OIF/OND theaters or in support of these combat operations, as identified by the Department of Defense (DoD). Each Regional Office OEF/OIF/OND manager is responsible for overseeing the OEF/OIF/OND workload and outreach initiatives. These responsibilities include the following:

- Working closely with the National Guard and Reserve to obtain Service Medical Records (SMRs)
- Coordinating with VHA representatives to expedite medical examinations
- Working with the Development Centers in obtaining SMRs or other pertinent data
- Serving as a resource to other employees and groups within VA on issues relating to OEF/OIF/OND claims in their jurisdiction

5. Post-Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA)

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

6. 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 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 YRRP, see www.yellowribbon.mil.

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

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

- (a) Staffing information tables with Chapter 31 and Chapter 36 benefits information (e.g., Quick Books, VR&E Orientation CDs and VAF 28-1900).
- (b) Addressing a Servicemember's questions and concerns regarding Chapter 31 and Chapter 36 benefits.

- (c) Assisting a Servicemember with completing applications for Chapter 31 or Chapter 36 benefits.
- (d) Submitting a brief summary of PDHRA and YRRP events with the monthly CHTW report, including these items:
 - Date of event
 - Location of event
 - Number of participants
 - Services provided

VR&E staff should review the PDHRA and YRRP websites for upcoming events and coordinate their calendars accordingly. PDHRA and YRRP events are routinely held on weekends at local National Guard or Reserve Command units. Therefore, ROs must consider the availability of overtime funds or the use of compensatory time for employees attending PDHRA and YRRP events.

7. 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.

8. 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 (Chapters 1606, 1607, 30 & 35).

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.

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

Currently, VA has a presence on Facebook and Twitter. These social media are used by VR&E exclusively to support VBA initiatives, satisfy public demands, and conduct outreach to the stakeholders.

c. Restrictions on the Use of Social Media

Social media is restricted to VR&E official use only, as outlined in section b above. It is the VR&E staff's responsibility to protect the Veteran's privacy and the Veterans' assumption of the confidentiality of their communications with any VR&E staff.

VR&E staff must not use their personal social media sites to communicate with Veterans, Servicemembers, and/or families regarding any VA-related issues. Examples of personal social media sites are Facebook, Twitter, and Skype.

In addition, VR&E staff must not respond as a VR&E employee to any posting on social media sites unless officially designated by a senior management official.

1.05 Counseling a Veteran or Servicemember

VA must give a Veteran with disabilities 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 should be referred to the VR&E Division for motivational contact and counseling even if they have not requested counseling.