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Chapter 6
PARTNERSHIPS AND MEMORANDA OF AGREEMENT/UNDERSTANDING

6.01 Introduction

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) believes partnerships with other organizations help us to provide quality and timely training and employment services to Veterans with disabilities. This chapter supplies information on service providers, intra-agency and interagency coordination, and the highly visible and important partnership with Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DOL/VETS). This chapter also contains the statutory and regulatory provisions covering subject matter related to partnerships, Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) and Memoranda of Understanding (MOU).

6.02 References and Resources

- Laws: Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933, as Amended
 38 United States Code (U.S.C.) 4103A
 38 U.S.C. 4214
 Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as Amended
 Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as Amended
 Freedom of Information Act
 Privacy Act of 1974, as Amended
 Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996
- Regulation: 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 21.252
- Guidance: U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and
 Training Service and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
 Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service Technical
 Assistance Guide (TAG), December 2008
 Memorandum of Agreement between VR&E and
 Rehabilitation Services Administration, October 3, 2005
- Websites: www.fedshirevets.gov
 www.dol.gov/vets/REALifelines/index.htm
 www.doleta.gov/programs/Wagner_Peyser.cfm
 www.sba.gov
 www.va.gov/osdbu
 www.dol.gov/vets
 www.doleta.gov/usworkforce/wia/act.cfm
 www.va.gov/cfbnpartnerships
 www.vaforvets.va.gov
 www.dav.org/

VA Form (VAF): VAF 3288, Request for and Consent to Release of Information from Claimant's Records

6.03 Overview of Service Providers

a. General Information

Effective VR&E job development and placement services are dependent upon the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's (VRC) and Employment Coordinator's (EC) ability to make full use of available resources. Each VR&E Regional Office (RO) needs to develop and cultivate a referral network that includes the following organizations and programs:

- DOL/VETS
- State Workforce Agencies (SWA) or state employment services' offices
- Programs authorized by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as Amended
- Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and federal agencies' Human Resources (HR) offices
- Other public, non-profit or for-profit organizations offering placement services
- Disabled American Veterans (DAV)

b. Local Government Agencies

All government agencies are required to provide employment opportunities to Veterans. In some geographical locations, employment services may be available through local agencies, including county and municipal governments. The availability of local services may depend on other circumstances in addition to an individual's Veteran status.

c. State Employment Services' Offices

In accordance with the Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933, as Amended, a system of public employment offices known as Employment Service, provides job-seekers (with priority to Veterans) and employers with a variety of employment-related labor exchange services, including but not limited to the following:

- Job-seeker assessment of skill levels, abilities and aptitudes

- Career guidance
- Job referral assistance
- Placement assistance
- Recruitment services to employers with job openings
- Matching job-seeker experience with job requirements, skills and other attributes
- Assisting employers with special recruitment needs

Veterans receive priority referral to jobs and training, as well as special employment services and assistance. The system provides specialized attention and service to individuals with disabilities. DOL exercises some administrative control over state employment services' offices by distributing funding and prescribing regulations. Each state employment services office participates in employment-related services through a network of state employment agencies.

d. Federal Government

DOL is responsible for maintaining the national system of state employment services offices. DOL does not directly deliver employment services to Veterans; instead, it monitors and evaluates the delivery of these services by the state employment services offices.

For more information on the Wagner-Peyser Act, as Amended, and state employment services offices go to www.doleta.gov/programs/wagner_peyser.cfm.

6.04 Other Agencies Coordination

a. Referrals

VRCs should research and network with other agencies to identify available services and programs, and to determine what personal information they require to provide services. The VRC should inform the Veteran of the nature of the information provided, and any exchange of personal information must meet applicable state and federal laws (e.g., Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act) and agency regulations and policies. The Veteran's written consent should accompany the exchange of information in the form of a VAF

3288, Request for and Consent to Release of Information from Claimant's Records.

The Veteran's Individualized Employment Assistance Plan (IEAP) should clearly show all intra-agency (agencies inside the VA) and interagency (agencies outside the VA) referrals. It should contain specific information about the methods, services and activities that the Veteran will use in achieving identified goals and objectives. The agency should be identified by name, address, telephone number and email address on the IEAP. The VRC should make contact with the agency liaison through a face-to-face, email or telephone contact in advance of the referral. The VRC and/or EC are ultimately responsible for ensuring Veterans receive the services that they need to help them obtain employment (38 CFR 21.252).

b. Coordination with Public and Private Agencies

VRCs should have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of public and private agencies providing job placement and related services. VRCs will develop innovative methods of cooperation and determine how to coordinate activities with these agencies to assist Veterans with their employment goals. Close contact with state employment services and state rehabilitation agencies will help to minimize duplicate agency contacts.

1. Partnership with DOL/VETS

Efficient and seamless service is the common goal and responsibility of interagency staff when assisting Veterans with disabilities, particularly those receiving VR&E services. Effective communication and coordinated efforts from all agencies involved will ensure Veterans receive the most comprehensive and professional service possible.

A team approach and partnership between VR&E, DOL/VETS and SWAs are fundamental to a seamless experience for Veterans receiving VR&E services as they move through the evaluation, training, job search and employment phases of their program. For more information on the DOL/VETS and VR&E partnership, refer to:

- VR&E Knowledge Management Portal, Useful Links & Resources - User Guides
- U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service Technical Assistance Guide (TAG), December 2008

- DOL Veterans' Employment and Training Service at www.dol.gov/vets

2. Partnership with OPM

Executive Order (EO) 13518, November 9, 2009, Employment of Veterans in the Federal Government, states that it is the policy (of the administration of President Barack Obama) to enhance recruitment of and promote employment opportunity for Veterans within the executive branch, consistent with merit system principles and Veterans' preferences prescribed by law. The federal government will thereby help lead by example in promoting Veterans' employment. For more information on EO 13518, see Appendix AH, EOs. In addition and in accordance with 38 U.S.C. 4214, the agency responsible for planning, implementing, and overseeing the employment of Veterans in the federal government and the Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program (DVAAP) is OPM. VRCs should maintain a working relationship with OPM and other federal agencies' HR offices in the recruitment and retention of Veterans with disabilities.

For more information on the employment of Veterans with disabilities in the federal government and DVAAP, refer to M28R.VI.8 and www.fedshirevets.gov.

3. Partnership with Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO)/VA for Vets

VR&E and VA for Vets have a similar mission, which is to increase employment opportunities within the VA for Veterans. Specifically, VA for Vets offers Veterans the tools they need to launch or advance their civilian careers through thorough military skills translation and career matching services. The service also offers professional development and deployment lifecycle support for current Veteran and Military Service Member employees, and online training and personalized services for supervisors, human resources professionals, hiring managers and coworkers who work with current Veteran employees. The Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO) is a strategic program management office that oversees all VA Veteran employment initiatives and manages VA for Vets.

For more information on VESO/VA for Vets, go to www.vaforvets.va.gov.

4. Partnership with the VA's Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

VR&E and the VA's Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (FBNP) partner to provide faith-based and secular organizations with information on the benefits of hiring Veterans with disabilities. VR&E and FBNP conduct quarterly roundtable meetings at selected ROs to discuss issues of concern and to meet with employers.

For more information on the FBNP, refer to www.va.gov/cfbnpartnerships.

5. Partnership with State Rehabilitation Agencies

VR&E ROs should expand cooperation and provision of employment services to Veterans through the assistance of state rehabilitation agencies and other programs authorized under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as Amended. The MOU between VR&E and the Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration, (RSA) is in Appendix K.

Before referring a Veteran to a state rehabilitation agency, the VRC and state rehabilitation counselor must collaboratively review the Veteran's case to determine what services the state is able to provide to the Veteran. If, after collaborating with the state rehabilitation counselor, agreement is reached on what services the state is able to provide to the Veteran, the VRC should make the referral. One advantage of the VA/state rehabilitation agency partnership is that state rehabilitation agencies are able to provide services that VA cannot legally provide to the Veteran, such as a clothing allowance and some transportation allowances. Also, state rehabilitation agency offices are usually spread out across the state and can serve Veterans who do not live close to a Regional Office or out-based VR&E office. State rehabilitation agencies are particularly advantageous to Veterans who live in areas with limited employment and placement opportunities.

6. Partnership with the Small Business Administration

VRCs should contact the Small Business Administration (SBA) during the development of an Individualized Written Rehabilitation Plan (IWRP) and/or IEAP for self-employment. Examples of services provided by the SBA are as follows:

- Offers training sessions in management and marketing techniques, some tailored exclusively to Veterans
- Publishes extensive materials on business practices

- Maintains a list of local business people available to consult with would-be entrepreneurs

The SBA can assist VRCs and Veterans with plan development concerning business trends, funding and marketing, and can assist in obtaining bank loans by guaranteeing payments against default.

For more information on the SBA and the services it provides, visit www.sba.gov.

For more information on self-employment, see M28R.VI.A.9.

7. Partnership with SCORE

Another agency to consider when developing either an IWRP and/or IEAP for a self-employment goal is SCORE. SCORE is a nonprofit association dedicated to educating entrepreneurs and helping small businesses start, grow and succeed nationwide. SCORE is a resource partner with the SBA and has been mentoring small business owners for more than 40 years.

SCORE is a valuable network of 13,000+ volunteers who offer small business entrepreneurs confidential business counseling services at no charge. SCORE volunteers have the knowledge and experience to help any small business owner get the help he/she needs.

SCORE also provides local workshops and events throughout the country to connect small business owners with the people and information they need to start, grow and maintain their businesses, as well as online workshops available 24 hours a day 7 days a week. SCORE provides resources, templates and tools to assist entrepreneurs in developing tools and plans they need to navigate their way to small business success.

For more information on SCORE, go to www.score.org.

8. Partnership with the VA's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization

VRCs must be aware of the Veteran-owned Small Business Outreach Program in VA's Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU). The Veteran-owned Small Business Outreach Program solicits Veteran-owned small businesses and provides for possible VA contract opportunities.

The OSDBU provides outreach and liaison support to business owners (small and large) and other members of the private sector concerning small business acquisition issues. OSDBU is responsible for monitoring VA implementation and execution of socioeconomic programs. OSDBU conducts different outreach efforts to assist Veteran-owned businesses, to include:

- Advising the Veteran business community of contract opportunities
- Coordinating outreach activities with national service organizations
- Sponsoring Veterans to attend business opportunity conferences
- Publishing a Veteran-owned small business resource list
- Developing news releases aimed at Veterans in business
- Maintaining a dialogue with the SBA

9. Partnership with Disabled American Veterans

In 88 offices throughout the United States and in Puerto Rico, the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) employs a corps of approximately 260 National Service Officers (NSOs) who represent Veterans and their families with claims for benefits from VA, the Department of Defense and other government agencies. Veterans need not be DAV members to take advantage of the assistance, which is provided free of charge.

NSOs function as attorneys-in-fact, assisting Veterans and their families in filing claims for VA disability compensation and pension; vocational rehabilitation and employment; education; home loans; life insurance; death benefits; and health care. The DAV also provides information seminars, counseling, and community outreach to Veterans and their families.

For more information on DAV, go to www.dav.org/.