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#### Chapter 2. Training

#### 1. General

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| Introduction | This topic contains information on the training requirements and process for the National Call Centers (NCCs), the National Pension Call Center (NPCC), the National IRIS Response Center (NIRC), Regional Office (RO) Public Contact Teams (PCT) and Outreach Personnel |

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| a. Overview | In order to meet our goal of providing Veterans with a world-class customer service experience, we must have thoroughly-trained Public Contact Representatives (PCRs) who are professional, knowledgeable, courteous, and who deliver consistent and accurate information to our customers.  It is the responsibility of the Benefits Assistance Service (BAS) Training Staff and local management at the NCCs, NPCC, NIRC, and PCTs to ensure that our employees receive comprehensive initial training and ongoing refresher training. |

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| b. Training Objectives | A comprehensive training program, including the basic orientation phase, is important in the development of knowledgeable employees. It should establish objectives that meet the initial training needs of new employees and the continuing training requirements for experienced employees and supervisory personnel.  These objectives include:   * ensuring all NCC, NPCC, and NIRC PCRs and all RO PCT personnel are fully versed in VA benefits for Servicemembers, Veterans, and their families; * ensuring our employees receive adequate training in all VA applications in order to promote continuity and flexibility of operations; and * providing opportunities for employees to improve their knowledge, skills, and abilities through education and training experiences. |

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| c. Training Responsibilities – Local Management | It is the responsibility of management at the NCCs, NPCC, NIRC, and PCTs to:   * within 10 business days of the issuance of the annual BAS National Training Curriculum (NTC), local TMS administrators must add users to the appropriate TMS classes to ensure proper assignment of the required curriculum; * within 30 business days of onboarding a new employee to a position within the NCCs, NPCC, NIRC, or PCTs, local TMS administrators must add users to the appropriate TMS classes to ensure proper assignment of the required curriculum; * ensure strict compliance with the training curriculum provided by the BAS Training Staff; * prepare and submit all required training reports by the designated due date; * provide continuous evaluation of deficiencies identified during quality reviews and recommendations from Central Office visits; * provide appropriate remedial or refresher training, as needed, to ensure PCRs possess the skills and knowledge required to meet their responsibilities; * prepare and submit all assigned refresher training packages by the established due date as defined by Policy Letter 27-16-04*,* [*Benefits Assistance Service (BAS) Fiscal Year 2017 National Training Curriculum(NTC) for Outreach and Public Contact Personnel*](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/BAS/letters/index.asp); * fully participate in the NCC, NPCC, and NIRC Continuous Improvement Plans training sessions, meeting all requirements and designated due dates; * submit requests for new materials or updates to existing materials to the [BAS Quality and Training Mailbox](mailto:VAVBAWAS/CO/BAS/QUALITY&TRAINING%20%3cBASQUAL&TRNG.VBACO@va.gov%3e); * be aware of various training opportunities offered by VBA through the Talent Management System (TMS) in addition to training offered by other agencies, such as the Office of Personnel Management (OPM); and * provide appropriate feedback to the BAS Training Staff on the relevance and accuracy of course content. |  |

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| d. Training Responsibilities – BAS Training Staff | It is the responsibility of the BAS Training Staff to:   * provide oversight for the NCC, NPCC, NIRC, and PCT training curriculums; * develop centralized training courses, standardized curricula, and provide training materials and guides for the NCCs, NPCC, NIRC, and PCTs; * ensure all developed curriculum is properly maintained, pertinent, accurate, and reflects current policy and procedures relative to the program; * conduct periodic reviews of course curriculum to ensure its relevance; and * conduct Core Week training for the initial NCC, NPCC, and NIRC Challenge Training Course, provide appropriate support and/or guidance to local management to ensure their compliance with the training curriculum. |

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| e. Location of Training Materials | Materials for the initial training curriculum and refresher training sessions, including lesson plans, participant guides, and other training materials may be found at: [BAS Training Staff Website](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/BAS/quality-training/training/index.asp). |

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| f. Documentation of Training | It is imperative that all training received is completely and appropriately documented in accordance with the national training curriculum guidelines.  It is incumbent upon local management to ensure compliance with this requirement.  All NCC/NPCC/NIRC and RO PCT staffs are required to submit quarterly training reports to the [BAS Quality and Training mailbox](mailto:VAVBAWAS/CO/BAS/QUALITY&TRAINING%20%3cBASQUAL&TRNG.VBACO@va.gov%3e). These reports are due by the fifth business day of the month following the end of the quarter. Quarterly reporting is required for the following months and are due by the designated due date:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | Fiscal Year (FY) 17 Reporting Period | FY 17 Report Due Date | | October – December | January 9, 2017 | | January – March | April 7, 2017 | | April – June | July 10, 2017 | | July – September | October 6, 2017 |   The format for these reports will be based on readily available TMS reports (Learning History and/or Learning Hours). |

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| g. Training Evaluations | Training evaluations are an essential and critical part of the training process. In order to ensure that our training program is effective and meets the needs of our employees, strict compliance to a standardized evaluation process is required.  For all BAS Training courses, evaluations must be completed in TMS. Local management will assign all employees to the appropriate TMS class as identified in the BAS National Training Curriculum.  It is the responsibility of local management to ensure that evaluations are completed after each lesson.  All lesson evaluations will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by the BAS Training Staff to ensure all feedback is reviewed and considered for possible lesson updates or revisions, training process improvement, or instructor development. |

#### 2. Types of Training

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| Introduction | This topic provides a brief description of the various types of training including:   * formal training; * new PCR Challenge Training; * refresher or remedial training; * NCC/NPCC/NIRC management training, and * make-up training |

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| a. Formal Training | Formal training is training which is documented and evaluated by management. This does not include on-the-job training.  This type of training includes any training accomplished through classroom instruction, computer assisted instruction, and other individual training activities such as review of manuals, circulars, and other written job-related materials issued by local or Central Office management. |

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| b. New PCR Challenge Training | New PCR Challenge Training consists of formal training and a subsequent observation period in which the new employee works with an experienced employee observing job performance.  All NCC and NPCC employees undergo a segmented eight-week training curriculum developed by the BAS Training Staff. .  Local management facilitates the training for weeks 1-4 and 5, 7-8. Staff members from the BAS Training Staff facilitate Core Week Challenge training onsite at the respective NCC and/or NPCC. Core Week Challenge training provides instruction and guidance on the most common call types and addresses high error trend categories. The BAS Quality Client Services Staff also provides training on the BAS Quality Management Plan (QMP) for the call centers during Core Week Challenge training. |

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| c. Refresher Training | Refresher training is essential and provides an opportunity to re-emphasize important subject matter and present new information or procedures. It ensures that employees at all levels understand what is required of their positions and enables them to provide world-class customer service. It also identifies how their individual efforts contribute to the completion of claims and/or appeals, their local office’s performance goals, and VA’s mission.  Refresher training topics will be assigned quarterly by the BAS Training Staff and will be based on evaluations of deficiencies identified during local or national quality reviews, recommendations from Central Office site visits, and necessary recurring training topics.  The development of a refresher training schedule is the responsibility of the local management staff; however, all training guidance, to include mandatory training topics and designated training dates, provided by the BAS Training Staff must be followed. |

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| d. NCC /NPCC/NIRC Management Training | Members from the BAS Training and Quality Staffs will periodically host and facilitate training for the management staffs of the NCCs, NPCC, and the NIRC.  Topics include:   * management strategies and duties, * benefits and procedural information, * Continuous Improvement Plans (CIP), * reports and trend analysis, and * consistent call monitoring and correspondence evaluation.   NCCs, NPCC, and NIRC management staff shall fully participate and attend  all scheduled CIP training sessions, and will complete timely the necessary actions to ensure success of the CIP sessions, to include:   * research and analysis of the assigned topic to identify opportunities for improvement, * development and implementation of action plans to address identified deficiencies, and * preparation and maintenance of improvement plan and supporting materials to drive performance improvement in the assigned area/topic |

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**2. Types of Training,** Continued

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| e. Make-up Training | Employees who are absent from a scheduled training session must complete a  make-up training session. The scheduled and tracking of make-up training is  completed by local management; however, all required TMS action to record the make-up training session must be completed. |

#### 3. Training Resources

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| Introduction | This topic identifies the numerous resources for the BAS training program. |

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| a. Training Library | The Regional Offices and the NCC, NPCC, and NIRC training coordinators will maintain a library of resources and training aids.  The library shall be readily accessible to all employees.  If the library is maintained on the Intranet or a shared drive, employees must be made aware of the location of the materials and be appropriately trained on how to access the resources.  The BAS Training Team also maintains a library of training materials that is used for refresher training. The library is located on the [BAS Training Staff Website](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/BAS/quality-training/training/index.asp). |

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| b. Talent Management System (TMS) | TMS is a web-based education and development program that provides users with a catalog of web-based and instructor-led training options. TMS is designed to present users with essential information about VA programs, required VA and VBA training, and personal development. TMS can be accessed at: <https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/login.jsp>  The following mandatory courses, which must be completed by all VA employees, are also a part of the PCR Challenge new-hire curriculum and are available within TMS:   * VA Privacy and Information Security Awareness and Rules of Behavior * VHA Privacy Policy Web Training * Prevention of Workplace Harassment (No FEAR) * Annual Government Ethics Training * VBA Continuity of Operations |

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**3. Training Resources,** Continued

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| c. New PCR Challenge Training Program | The BAS Training Staff has developed a comprehensive training curriculum for newly hired Public Contact Representatives at the NCCs, NPCC, and NIRC.  The curriculums contain modules on a wide range of subject material and contain specialized training for the NCCs, NPCC, and NIRC.  Each module is regularly reviewed due to procedural or policy changes to ensure that the course content is current and accurate.  The curriculum can be found at: [BAS Training Staff Website](http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/BAS/quality-training/training/index.asp) |  |
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