

EMPLOYEE UNIFORMS

1. REASON FOR ISSUE. This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Handbook provides procedures for furnishing and servicing employee uniforms. The Handbook designates employees who are required to wear a uniform, describes the major articles that make up the uniform; and denotes whether uniforms are to be provided by issue or by an allowance paid to the employee.

2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES. This Handbook documents the rate modifications for the uniform allowance pay period and hourly rates affecting Fire Fighters and Food Production employee categories. (see App. B)

3. RELATED ISSUES. VHA Handbook 1850 to be issued.

4. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITY. The Director, Environmental Programs Service (10NA7) is responsible for the content of this Handbook. Questions concerning this Handbook may be directed to the Director, Environmental Programs Service at (202) 266-4603.

5. RESCISSIONS. VHA Handbook 1850.04, dated January 28, 2010, is rescinded.

6. RECERTIFICATION. This document is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of November 2016.

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DISTRIBUTION: E-mailed to the VHA Publications Distribution List 11/8/2011

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EMPLOYEE UNIFORMS

1. PURPOSE

This VHA Handbook contains the mandatory requirements for furnishing and servicing employee uniforms. It designates employees who are required to wear a uniform and describes the major articles that make up the uniform. It also illustrates whether uniforms are to be provided by issue or by an allowance paid to the employee.

2. AUTHORITY

Uniforms for all employees, except Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) police officers, are authorized in accordance with title 5 United States Code (U.S.C.) 5901-5903, and as interpreted and implemented by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Uniforms and uniform allowances for VA police officers are authorized by 38 U.S.C. 903. **NOTE:** *Handbook 0730 addresses the uniform requirements and logistics for VA Police.*

3. DEFINITIONS

a. **Employee.** A full-time employee or part-time employee of VHA, this excludes volunteers, trainees, and workers who receive a stipend or salary from a source other than VA-appropriated funds, and other workers in similar categories.

b. **Uniform.** Uniform refers to distinct articles of clothing described in Appendix A.

c. **Special Purpose (protective) Clothing.** Special Purpose (protective) Clothing consists of items furnished as a safeguard against exposure to inclement weather, possible injury, or cross infection. Protective items include all items purchased for use as protection against infection, contamination, or injury to a person or damage to the normal apparel worn by the person. This includes coveralls, shoes, gloves, goggles, rubber aprons, isolation gowns, masks, parkas, etc. This clothing is purchased from operating funds and processed through the textile care processing facility in lots, as is hospital linen. **NOTE:** *Items of protective clothing are not considered issue or allowance uniforms.*

4. SCOPE

This Handbook contains the mandatory requirements for furnishing and servicing employee uniforms, and:

- a. Designates employees who are required to wear a uniform;
- b. Describes the major articles that make up the uniform; and
- c. Denotes whether uniforms are to be provided by issue or by an allowance paid to the employee by VA.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE VA MEDICAL FACILITY DIRECTOR

The VA medical facility Director, or designee, is responsible for:

- a. Establishing local uniform procedures regarding the style and color of uniforms to be issued (see par. 6).
- b. Establishing procedures for documenting proof-of-purchase for first year (initial) payments to employees. *NOTE: Proof-of-purchase applies to employees receiving the initial uniform allowance.*
- c. Delegating to the operating Service Chief, the authority to authorize and discontinue uniform allowance payments for employees as provided in Appendix B using VA Form 10-5397, Employee Uniform Allowance Authorization. The original authorization form must be maintained in the payroll office, with a copy to the employee's service office and to the employee. *NOTE: It is preferred that the authority to authorize and discontinue uniform allowance, based on Appendix B, originate with the service initiating the personnel action using Block C on the VA Form 10-5397.*
- d. Meeting its labor relation's responsibilities when implementing this Handbook.

6. UNIFORM SELECTION

VA medical facility Director or designee determines the style and color of uniforms to be worn by appropriate services that are designated to receive "issue" uniforms.

- a. The type of material and style of uniforms selected for issue must be based on textile care processing costs, appearance, and suitability of the garment to the environment where it is to be worn.
- b. Employees who are provided an allowance to purchase their own uniforms are expected to select clothing as designated in Appendix A and as appropriate to the propriety of a medical setting.
- c. Employees must dress according to standards set by their professional or occupational association. The wearing of badges, patches, uniforms, or equipment, other than those prescribed, is prohibited.

7. PROCUREMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- a. Employees who are paid a uniform allowance must provide themselves with all articles comprising the uniform, except as authorized in Appendix A.
- b. Uniforms must be procured in the usual and customary manner that all supplies are procured.

- c. The Standard Color Reference of America number must be utilized on all procurement documents.
- d. Issued uniforms remain the property of VA after they have been issued and must be turned in by employees who no longer require them for official duty.
- e. Employees must be required to reimburse VA for loss or damage to uniforms when due to employee negligence.
- f. VA Form 10-1148, Employees Uniform and Property Issue Documentation, must be used to account for issue uniforms.

8. WEARING REQUIREMENTS

- a. Employees are required to wear the standard uniform described in Appendix A while on duty, except for deviations and exceptions designated by the medical facility Director. Standard uniforms are listed first in order in Appendix A, with all other listings considered options. Medical facility employees having frequent contact with patients in wards or treatment areas are required to wear a uniform.
- b. Individuals serving VA in a “without compensation” status or under one of the Federally-sponsored programs, and patients and members assigned duties in a therapeutic program must be issued the same type uniform as that worn by VHA employees who perform similar duties.
- c. The medical facility Director may authorize employees to wear uniforms to and from work.

9. DEVIATIONS AND EXCEPTIONS

The medical facility Director is authorized to determine when wearing a uniform is not consistent with the duties of the position, and to prescribe when the uniform is not required.

- a. The medical facility Director is authorized to select the method, issue, or allowance to provide uniforms for rotating residents, whichever is the most economical.
- b. When a position title changes without a significant change in duties or position requirements, employees assigned in the position must continue to wear the same style of uniform.
- c. The medical facility Director may authorize employees to wear personal clothing while on duty when, in the opinion of the professional staff, a benefit to patients may result. Affected employees are not entitled to be issued uniforms, a uniform allowance, or laundry service at VA’s expense during the period when personal clothing is worn. Once the deviation is approved, the method of pay adjustment must be performed manually for the designated employee authorized to wear personal clothing.

d. The medical facility Director may permit employees eligible for issued uniforms to wear personally-owned uniforms while on duty, provided personal uniforms are equal in quality, are the same color, and of similar design as the standard issue uniform. *NOTE: This may also include personally-owned culotte-type outfits for female employees who meet quality and color requirements of the standard uniform.*

e. The medical facility Director is authorized to approve or disapprove deviation requests concerning the style and color of uniforms for employees who receive issued uniforms.

f. Request for waivers to procedures in this Handbook (i.e. conversion of employees from uniform issue to allowance), must be approved by the Director, Environmental Programs Service, VA Central Office. This request for a waiver must be forwarded through the appropriate Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director. Each request for a waiver must include a complete justification, cost analyses, and recommended allowance rates not to exceed authorized limits. If a waiver is approved the method of pay adjustment must be performed manually at each VA medical facility for each designated employee.

10. IDENTIFICATION INSIGNIA

a. A shoulder patch, button, or other insignia to indicate membership in, or certification by, an approved professional or occupational organization may be worn. The cost of such insignia is the employee's responsibility.

b. Employees whose duties routinely bring them into contact with patients need to wear an easily read identification badge showing name and position title. Identification badges must be furnished at VA's expense.

11. ALTERATION, REPAIR, AND REPLACEMENT

a. Government-issue uniforms may be altered and repaired at VA expense.

b. Personally-owned uniforms are not to be altered or repaired at VA expense. An exception may be made for a garment damaged while performing official duties.

12. TEXTILE CARE PROCESSING FACILITY SERVICES

a. Uniforms prescribed in Appendix A and worn by employees while performing their official duty may be processed by a VA laundry facility, providing the service is available.

b. The maximum weekly quantity of uniforms that may be processed for each employee must be established and approved by the Chief, Environmental Management Service. Except for unusual circumstances, this must be limited to one clean uniform for each duty day.

13. UNIFORM ALLOWANCE

When authorized in Appendix A and prescribed uniforms are worn, an allowance must be paid to specific groups of employees for the purpose of offsetting the cost for uniforms. The rates payable are specified in Appendix B and are broken down as follows:

a. Payment for the first year of uniformed service must be made by direct payment to an employee entering on duty, in a job subject to the uniform requirements, or whose job is made subject to uniform requirements. This first initial payment must be included with the first salary payment to the employee. If an employee is paid the initial allowance, then subsequently separated and re-employed in the same position within 1 year, a second initial allowance is not authorized. No initial allowance is to be authorized if separation occurs before the first pay period. **NOTE:** *The employee must provide documentation for proof-of-purchase for the first year payment.*

b. Payment for subsequent years of uniformed service must be made as a bi-weekly pay period allowance. The pay period allowance must be effective at the beginning of the first pay period following completion of the first year of service.

c. An employee who transfers between positions with different uniform requirements must be entitled to receive payment for the first and subsequent years of uniformed service as outlined in subparagraphs 13.a. and b.

d. A change in style or color of the prescribed uniform does not entitle employees to a second first year payment of the employee uniform allowance. Affected employees must be permitted to continue wearing obsolete uniforms until replaced through normal wear.

e. The initial allowance payable to a part-time or intermittent employee, who is otherwise eligible for a uniform allowance, must be based on the maximum number of duty hours authorized by the appointment document. The bi-weekly allowance must be based on the employee's established tour and any additional hours worked not in excess of 40 hours in a week.

f. The amount payable to a full-time employee who serves only part-time where a uniform is required must be determined by adjusting the annual allowance to conform to the limited number of uniforms worn.

g. Employees appointed for periods of less than 1 year, or substitute employees, must be provided uniforms by issue in lieu of being paid a uniform allowance.

h. The first year payment is not authorized for an employee who transfers between positions subject to the same uniform requirements.

i. In no case may an employee who does not regularly wear a uniform while on duty be paid a uniform allowance.

j. The bi-weekly allowance must not be reduced for periods of leave with pay, unless it is known that the employee will not return to duty at the expiration of such leave. In such cases,

the allowance must be discontinued as of the date it becomes known that no return to duty will occur. **NOTE:** *No reduction for leave without pay is to be made unless the period of leave without pay covers a complete pay period.*

k. Any employee receiving a uniform allowance who resigns less than 1 year after receiving the initial uniform allowance, must repay to VA a prorated share of the amount paid based on the number of months remaining in the 12-month period following the initial payment from VA. Repayment liability may be waived by local management in situations, which are beyond an employee's control (e.g., reassignment for failure to meet physical standards or in lieu of disability retirement).

l. Any employee entitled to and receiving a uniform allowance must receive payment of the initial or one-time uniform allowance. The method of pay adjustment must be performed manually for the designated employee.

14. UNIFORM ISSUE

a. The number of uniforms issued to each employee needs to be the minimum required to ensure that a clean uniform is available each day. Five uniforms per employee are normally adequate. Where the even exchange system is used (an employee receives a fresh uniform in exchange for a uniform they bring in), three uniforms per employee are normally adequate.

b. For medical facilities using the bundle system, issues in excess of five uniforms per employee, may be justified when frequent laundry service is not available. In no instance must the total cost of all uniforms issued to an individual employee exceed \$400 during any single calendar year.

c. Issued uniforms must be replaced, when rendered unserviceable, on an item-for-item basis.

d. Uniforms purchased by VA must not be furnished to employees who receive a uniform allowance.

e. Records of the cost of uniforms purchased for issue must be kept separate from the cost of linen and protective clothing.

UNIFORMS PRESCRIBED FOR WEAR BY VHA EMPLOYEES

Position	Type Uniform	Provided By
All Supply, Processing, Distribution and Warehouse including first-line supervisors	ACQUISITION & MATERIEL MANAGEMENT	
Female or Male	To be determined by the VA medical facility Director	Issue
Dentist (Full- or part-time, including consultant, attending and resident)	DENTAL	
Female or Male	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue
For Clinical Wear	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue
Hygienist, Expanded Function Dental Auxiliary (EFDA) and Assistant		
Female	Pants, Tailored, White or Pastel, and Tunic, White or Pastel, or Dress, White or Pastel	Allowance
Male	Shirt, Sport, Dress Pastel, White or Pastel, and Trousers, Dress Patel, White or Pastel	Allowance
Laboratory Technician		
Female or Male	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue

Position	Type Uniform	Provided By
<p>All Trades, Crafts and Service Plant Operators, Motor Vehicle Operators, including first-line supervisors and grounds.</p> <p>Female or Male</p> <p>Fire Chief, Fire Fighters, Fire Prevention Inspectors</p> <p>Female</p> <p>Male</p> <p>All environmental management employees including first line supervisors, interior design, (designer excluded); glazing maintenance, grounds maintenance, painters, pest control applicators, textile care employees and other crafts.</p> <p>Female or Male</p>	<p>ENGINEERING</p>	
	To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue
	Same as Male except Pants, Blue, or Skirt, Blue	Allowance
	Cap, Visor, Bell Type Crown; Blue Coat, Short; Blue Trousers; Blue Shirt, Long or Short Sleeves; Blue Tie, Black Optional	Allowance
	Insignia Cap, Badge VA Legend and Issue Seal	Issue
	<p>ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT</p>	
To be determined by VA medical facility Director	Issue	

Position	Type Uniform	Provided By
<p>Medical Illustrators, Photographers</p> <p>Female or Male</p>	<p>MEDICAL MEDIA</p> <p>To be determined by VA medical facility Director</p>	<p>Issue</p>
<p>Technicians</p> <p>Female or Male</p>	<p>NUCLEAR MEDICINE</p> <p>To be determined by VA medical facility Director</p>	<p>Issue</p>
<p>Chief and Assistant Chief</p> <p>Female or Male</p> <p>Supervisory and Staff Nurses, Nurse Anesthetists, Infection Control Nurses and Nurse Practitioners</p>	<p>NURSING</p> <p>To be determined by VA medical facility Director</p>	<p>Issue</p>
<p>Female</p>	<p>Pants, Tailored, White and Tunic, White, or Dress White</p>	<p>Allowance</p>
<p>Male</p>	<p>Shirt, White and Trousers, White</p>	<p>Allowance</p>
<p>Female or Male</p>	<p>If uniforms described above are not required, alternate uniform to be determined by VA medical facility Director</p>	<p>Issue</p>
<p>Nursing Technicians, Practical/Vocational Nurse</p>		
<p>Female</p>	<p>Pants, Tailored, White and Tunic, White, or Dress White</p>	<p>Allowance</p>
<p>Male</p>	<p>Shirt, White and Trousers, White</p>	<p>Allowance</p>

Position	Type Uniform	Provided By
<p>Nursing Assistants/Techs</p> <p>Female or Male</p>	<p>NURSING continued</p> <p>To be determined by VA medical facility Director</p>	<p>Issue</p>
<p>Dietitians, all food service workers, cooks, supervisors, interns, technicians</p> <p>Female or Male</p>	<p>NUTRITION AND FOOD</p> <p>To be determined by VA medical facility Director</p>	<p>Issue</p>
<p>Chief, Food Production</p> <p>Female</p>	<p>Blouse, white, skirt, A-line, black pants, black short coat, white (for kitchen wear only), black string tie</p>	<p>Allowance</p>
<p>Male</p>	<p>Shirt, white, pants, black, short coat, white (for kitchen wear only) tie, black choke proof</p>	<p>Allowance</p>
<p>Technicians, Technologists, Helpers, Aids, Assistants, and doctoral-level employees</p> <p>Female or Male</p>	<p>PATHOLOGY AND LABORATORY MEDICINE</p> <p>To be determined by the VA medical facility Director</p>	<p>Issue</p>

Position	Type Uniform	Provided By
<p>Chief, Pharmacy and other pharmacists, pharmacy aids and technicians, including first line supervisors and pharmacy students</p> <p>Female or Male</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PHARMACY</p> <p>To be determined by VA medical facility Director</p>	<p>Issue</p>
<p>All Specialists, Aids and First-Line Supervisors</p> <p>Female or Male</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION</p> <p>To be determined by VA medical facility Director</p>	<p>Issue</p>
<p>Prosthetic representatives, technicians, technologists (Orthotic prosthetic restoration)</p> <p>Female or Male</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PROSTHETIC AND SENSORY AIDS</p> <p>To be determined by the VA medical facility Director</p>	<p>Issue</p>
<p>Social Worker</p> <p>Female or Male</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">SOCIAL WORK SERVICE</p> <p>To be determined by the VA medical facility Director</p>	<p>Issue</p>

Position	Type Uniform	Provided By
<p>Audiologists and Speech Pathologists (Doctoral level or full-time staff) Audiology and Speech Pathology Trainees Optometrists Clinical Psychologists Podiatrists Physician's Assistant Interns Physicians and Scientists, M.D. Level (Full- or part-time including attendings, consultants and career residents) Anesthetists All other technologists, technicians and therapists</p> <p>Female or Male</p>	<p>ALL OTHER CLINICAL</p> <p>To be determined by VA medical facility Director</p>	<p>Issue</p>

UNIFORM ALLOWANCE RATES

Employee	Initial Allowance	Per Annum Allowance	Pay Period Rates	Hourly Rates
Chief, Food Production/Foreman or Leader	400.00	204.00	7.85	0.0981
Dental Assistant, Hygienist and EFDA	400.00	215.00	8.27	0.1034
Fire Chief, Fire Fighter and Fire Prevention Inspector	800.00	500.00	19.23	0.2404
Nurse, Supervisory and Staff	400.00	215.00	8.27	0.1034
Nurse, Practical or Vocational	400.00	215.00	8.27	0.1034
Nurse Practitioner, Infection Control, Anesthetists	400.00	215.00	8.27	0.1034
Nursing Technicians	400.00	215.00	8.27	0.1034
Resident, if approved by the VA medical facility Director	400.00	215.00	8.27	0.1034