

VETERANS AFFAIRS PALO ALTO HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
3801 Miranda Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94304

Effective Date: August 28, 2006

Issue Date: January 22, 2013

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM MEMORANDUM No. 05-13-04

SUBJECT: PERSONNEL SUITABILITY AND SECURITY PROGRAM

1. **SUMMARY:** Health Care System Memorandum (HCSM) No. 05-09-04, dated August 28, 2009, is rescinded. Minor changes have been made to the requirements and procedures for ensuring appropriate background screenings and/or investigations are conducted on applicants and all appointees.
2. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this policy is to outline the procedures for determining and designating appropriate position risk/sensitivity levels and for conducting appropriate background screenings and/or investigations on applicants and all appointees. This includes, but is not limited to, permanent and temporary employees, contractors, interns, students, residents, trainees, volunteers, consultants and attendings, fee-basis appointees, Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) appointees, without compensation (WOC) appointees, work study appointees, and any other types of appointees that have access to VA operations, facilities, information, or information technology systems.
3. **POLICY:** It is VA policy that position risk/sensitivity designations are made in accordance with the guidance set forth in VA Notice 09-02, Position Designation System and Automated Tool (PDAT), and that the corresponding level of background screening and/or investigation is initiated and adjudicated in a timely manner as required by the Title 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Parts 731 and 732, and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) guidelines.
4. **PROCEDURES:**
 - a. Human Resources Management Service (HRMS) will ensure the procedures for documenting position risk/sensitivity level designations are conducted in accordance with VA Notice 09-02. Position sensitivity designations must be consistently applied to all positions, in accordance with Title 5 CFR, Parts 731 and 732, and VA and VHA Directives and Handbooks. Hiring and continued employment must be consistent with a position's national security and/or public trust responsibilities. Positions are given appropriate sensitivity designation based on national security and public trust responsibilities.

b. HRMS will ensure the procedures for conducting and documenting background screenings and/or investigations and subsequent adjudications are conducted in accordance with VA and VHA Directives 0710, Personnel Suitability and Security Program; VA Handbook 0710, Program Risk Level Designation; and VHA Handbook 0710.01, Position Risk and Sensitivity Designations for VHA Positions and Medical Center Policy.

c. HRMS staff will work closely with Logistics Management Service/Network Contracting Office's Contracting Officers/Purchasing Agents, Voluntary Service, and other services to ensure the appropriate level of background screenings are conducted on applicants and employees.

5. **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

a. The Chief, HRMS is responsible for:

(1) Ensuring the local Personnel Suitability and Security Program is operating in accordance with applicable VA and VHA policy.

(2) Ensuring that positions are given appropriate risk/sensitivity designation based on national security and public trust responsibilities and that position risk/sensitivity designations are consistently applied to all positions, in accordance with the VA Notice 09-02 and 5 CFR, Parts 731 and 732.

(3) Ensuring HRMS personnel with responsibility for, and authority to make, position risk/sensitivity designations have received training on position risk/sensitivity designations.

(4) Ensuring position risk/sensitivity designations are periodically reviewed for accuracy.

(5) Ensuring that hiring and continued employment is consistent with the position's national security and/or public trust responsibilities.

(6) Ensuring a Special Agreement Check (SAC) is initiated prior to entry on duty for all applicants and appointees, and the appropriate background screening and/or investigation is conducted in a timely and consistent manner.

(7) Ensuring that applicants and/or incumbents in national security or public trust positions are referred for appropriate background investigation.

(8) Reviewing and analyzing the results of background screenings and/or investigations, adjudicating the results of background screenings and/or investigations within required timeframes, and taking the appropriate action when cases result in unfavorable adjudication.

(9) Ensuring that documentation is on file to support the required background screening and/or investigation in accordance with current policy.

(10) Creating and maintaining an accurate personnel suitability and security database.

(11) Ensuring required personnel suitability and/or security forms are completed and filed in the employee's Official Personnel Folder in accordance with applicable regulations.

(12) Ensuring that electronic fingerprinting equipment is properly used and maintained.

b. Contracting Officers/Purchasing Agents are responsible for:

(1) Ensuring a SAC is initiated prior to entry on duty for all contractors and the appropriate background screening and/or investigation is conducted in a timely and consistent manner.

(2) Ensuring that all contractors complete fingerprinting and required paperwork in a timely manner so background screenings and/or investigations can be completed.

(3) Ensuring that contracts include provisions for appropriate background screenings and/or investigations of contractors.

(4) Providing instruction to the contractors regarding the procedures for obtaining the required background screening and/or investigation.

(5) Assigning appropriate risk/sensitivity designations for contractor positions with assistance from HRMS and/or the service requesting the contractor services.

(6) Ensuring that documentation is on file to support the required background screening and/or investigation in accordance with current policy.

c. The Chief, Voluntary Service is responsible for:

(1) Ensuring a SAC is initiated prior to entry on duty for all volunteers and the appropriate background screening and/or investigation is conducted in a timely and consistent manner.

(2) Ensuring that all volunteers complete fingerprinting and required paperwork in a timely manner so background screenings and/or investigations can be completed.

(3) Assigning appropriate risk/sensitivity designations for volunteer positions with assistance from HRMS and/or the service requesting the volunteer services.

d. Service chiefs, managers, and supervisors are responsible for:

(1) Ensuring that any appointee under their supervision completes fingerprinting and required paperwork in a timely manner so background screenings and/or investigations can be completed.

(2) Assisting Contracting Officers/Purchasing Agents with assigning appropriate risk/sensitivity designations for contractor positions, and assisting the Chief, Voluntary Service with assigning appropriate risk/sensitivity designations for volunteer positions.

e. Employees are responsible for:

(1) Completing fingerprinting and required paperwork in a timely manner so background screenings and investigations can be completed.

(2) Ensuring that their responses are true, complete and correct to the best of their knowledge and belief and are made in good faith.

6. **REFERENCES:**

a. VA Directive and Handbook 0710, Personnel Security and Suitability Program, dated May 18, 2007.

b. VHA Handbook 0710.01, Personnel Security and Suitability Program, dated May 18, 2007.

c. VA Notice 09-02, Position Designation System and Automated Tool (PDAT), dated March 24, 2009.

d. Title 5 CFR, Parts 731 and 732.

e. Executive Order 10450, dated April 27, 1953.

f. The Federal Information Security Management Act, dated August 23, 2004.

g. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-130, dated February 8, 1996.

h. NIST Special Publication 800-53, dated August 3, 2009.

i. Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 (HSPD-12), dated August 27,

2004.

- j. OMB Memorandum M-05-24, dated August 23, 2004.
 - k. Federal Information Processing Standards 201 (FIPS 201) as amended by FIPS 201-1, dated March 2006.
7. **RESCISSION DATE**: January 31, 2017.
 8. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL**: Chief, Human Resources Management Service.

Elizabeth Joyce Freeman
Director