

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS MEDICAL CENTER
4801 E. Linwood Boulevard
Kansas City, Missouri 64128

November 1, 2016

MEDICAL CENTER POLICY 00-00-025

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND CULTURAL COMPETENCY

1. **PURPOSE:** To establish and communicate the Diversity Program for the Kansas City VA Medical Center (KCVA), which embraces and supports the VA's mission and strategic direction.
2. **POLICY:** It is the policy of VHA and KCVA to:
 - a. Build a diverse, high performing workforce that reflects all segments of society
 - b. Cultivate a flexible, collaborative, and inclusive work environment that leverages diversity and empowers all to contribute to the VA's mission
 - c. Become an employer of choice by valuing, managing, and embracing diversity
 - d. Promote accountability, education, and communication on diversity, inclusion and cultural competence to facilitate outstanding service to Veterans
 - e. Identify barriers to employee advancement, and develop programs and initiatives to eliminate the barriers
 - f. Enforce zero tolerance for racial and ethnic comments and behavior presented at the Medical Center
3. **DEFINITIONS:**
 - a. **Diversity:** VHA defines Diversity as all the qualities and characteristics that make individuals unique. Diversity includes everyone; it is not simply defined by race or gender. It extends to age, personal and corporate background, education, function, and personality. It includes lifestyle, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, color, religion, geographic origin, physical abilities and qualities, tenure with the organization, exempt or non-exempt status, and management or non-management status.
 - b. **Inclusion:** Inclusion is to create an environment in the workplace that actively solicits the contributions of all staff regardless of background or position. It involves valuing the contributions of all staff to the overall mission.

- c. Cultural Competency: A set of behaviors, attitudes, and policies that enable the workforce to collaborate effectively in cross-cultural situations.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES:

- a. The Medical Center Director is responsible for:

- 1) Communicating support for Diversity, and requiring all staff to support Diversity.
- 2) Ensuring managers and supervisors have performance requirements related to the way they manage and support Diversity.
- 3) Ensuring managers and supervisors complete mandated training, "Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Diversity, and Conflict Management Training for Managers and Supervisors" every 2 years.

- b. The EEO Program Manager is responsible for:

- 1) Serving as the Diversity Program Manager and managing Diversity initiatives by providing training, education, and information that enhances Diversity awareness and acceptance within the Medical Center.
- 2) Serving as the resource to employees and supervisors for matters relating to Diversity and Inclusion at the Medical Center.
- 3) Ensuring the recruitment and selection of Special Emphasis Program Managers to comply with federal laws, and that reflect the employee population. Special Emphasis Programs should include:
 - African American Program
 - Federal Women's Program
 - Asian and Pacific American Program
 - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Program
 - Hispanic Program
 - Disability Awareness Program
 - Native American Program
- 4) Establishing a facility-level Diversity Committee charged with promoting diversity initiatives throughout the Medical Center.
- 5) Conducting a fact-finding review of diversity violations reported at the Medical Center.
- 6) Networking with local diverse organizations and minority institutions to establish outreach initiatives for the Medical Center.

7) Developing the facility Cultural Competency and Diversity Plan that addresses efforts to train and educate staff on Diversity, Inclusion and Cultural Competency. The current plan is included as Attachment A.

c. Managers and Supervisors are responsible for:

- 1) Communicating and enforcing zero tolerance for racial or ethnic jokes or slurs directed toward anyone at the Medical Center.
- 2) Promoting and creating a respectful and inclusive workplace by modeling the concepts of Diversity acceptance and inclusion.
- 3) Supporting the activities of the Special Emphasis Program Managers and Diversity Committee members.
- 4) Supporting Medical Center Diversity events by attending events and providing an opportunity for their staff to attend events.
- 5) Ensuring vacancy selection panels are composed of diverse staff to help promote the principles of diversity for Medical Center hiring practices.

d. All employees are responsible for:

- 1) Ensuring all interactions with Veterans, family members, visitors, employees, and volunteers convey respect, dignity, and exceptional customer service.
- 2) Refraining from racial, ethnic, gender slurs or comments that violate VA policy.
- 3) Completing assigned Diversity training.

5. PROCEDURES:

- a. Service Chiefs are encouraged to coordinate with Human Resources and EEO to participate in Diversity recruitment initiatives, such as the student Internship programs. These programs serve to expose diverse students to VHA career opportunities. VHA recognizes that a diverse workforce strengthens its' competitive advantage by being more adaptive and creative in meeting the needs of Veterans.
- b. All staff are required to refrain from inappropriate interactions, such as racial/ethnic jokes or slurs. Violations should be reported to supervisors immediately.

- c. Supervisors should contact the EEO Office to report Diversity violations, and collaborate with the EEO Program Manager to conduct a fact-finding review.

6. REFERENCES:

- a. VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for FY 2012-2016, Retrieved from <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/files/StrategicPlan.pdf>
- b. VA Directive 5975 (March 29, 2013), "Diversity and Inclusion." Retrieved from http://vaww.va.gov/vapubs/viewPublication.asp?Pub_ID=668&FType=2

7. RESCISSION: Policy Memorandum 00-25, "Diversity and Inclusion," dated May 27, 2015.

8. RESPONSIBLE SERVICE LINE: EEO Program Manager.

9. CONCURRENCES: DAB

10. REVISION DATE: November 1, 2019

/s/

KATHLEEN R. FOGARTY
Medical Center Director

Attachment: A – Cultural Competency Plan

Kansas City VA Medical Center

Cultural Competency Plan

Fiscal Years 2017- 2019



I. INTRODUCTION

1. The mission of the VA is to deliver on President Lincoln's promise, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan". We do this by providing high quality services to America's Veterans. VISN 15's Vision is "To be a patient-centered integrated health care organization for Veterans providing excellent health care, research, and education; an organization where people choose to work; an active community partner; and a back-up for National emergencies."

2. The Kansas City VA Medical Center (KC VAMC) supports a diverse, high-performing workforce that represents all segments of society. KC VAMC supports an inclusive workplace and continues to cultivate a flexible, collaborative and inclusive work environment that facilitates cultural competency and engages all stakeholders. It is recognized that effective leadership and accountability are crucial in attaining outstanding, culturally competent Veteran and community service and improved stakeholder relations.

II. DEFINITIONS

1. Culture: Integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups. (The Joint Commission: *Advancing Effective Communication, Cultural Competence, and Patient- and Family-Centered Care: A Roadmap for Hospitals*. Oakbrook Terrace, IL: The Joint Commission, 2010.)

2. Cultural competence: Defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as "a set of values, behaviors, attitudes and practices within a system that enables people to work effectively across cultures. The term refers to the ability to honor and respect the beliefs, language, interpersonal styles and behaviors of individuals and families receiving services, as well as staff who are providing such services." Another common definition, widely used within mental health, deems cultural competence "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency or among professionals that enable effective interactions in cross-cultural situations."
(Cross et al., 1989, Towards a Culturally Competent System of Care. Vol: 1)

III. CULTURAL COMPETENCY IS IMPORTANT

1. Health care providers bring perception, traditions, and patterns of communications based on cultural, racial and ethnic identity to the clinician-patient interaction.

2. Cultural issues can influence appropriate diagnosis, treatment adherence as well as care seeking behavior and maintenance by Veterans leading to health care disparities.

3. There will be more Veterans who live in rural areas; identify as LGBT; have service-connected disabilities; are Hispanic/Women; hold diverse religious beliefs; and are from younger generations.

4. Managers and Employees will face increasing workplace challenges that include globalization; changing demographics; legal issues; technology challenges; and socio-economic and political questions.

IV. KC VAMC CULTURAL COMPETENCY PLAN GOALS

The KC VAMC will:

- Promote cross-cultural awareness and respect;
- Provide training opportunities that will promote a culturally competent workforce;
- Ensure that language assistive services are available and helpful;

V. Scope

1. The Plan addresses Medical Center efforts to work collaboratively and respectfully with:

- a. Persons served by the Kansas City VA Medical Center
- b. The Kansas City VA Medical Center workforce
- c. Community organizations and partners

2. The Plan seeks to enable respectful collaboration with stakeholders regardless of:

- a. Culture
- b. Age
- c. Gender
- d. Sexual Orientation
- e. Spiritual beliefs
- f. Socioeconomic status
- g. Language
- h. Race
- i. Color
- j. Religion
- k. Disability Status
- l. Gender Identity and Expression

VI. Plan Review

The Plan will be reviewed annually and updated as needed.

Goal	Action Steps
1. Increase staff awareness of resources available for persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update LEP Policy and communicate with staff 2. Renew language interpreter services contract 3. Communicate the availability of language services to staff
2. Increase staff awareness of Diversity, Inclusion and Cultural Competency	Communicate the VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan to the workforce
3. Assess the Medical Center's ability to provide culturally-sensitive care to LGBT veterans	Participate in the annual Health Equity Index
4. Enable the delivery of sensitive culturally-competent patient care	Collect veteran demographic data (such as race, religion, preferred language) and incorporate this information in the medical record.
5. Strengthen relationships with diverse stakeholders	Network with community and national diverse organizations
6. Employ a workforce that collaborates effectively with all stakeholders across cultures and ethnicities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Monitor compliance with mandatory supervisory Diversity training. 2. Publish the VA Secretary's annual EEO and Diversity Policy Statement. 3. Identify and implement Diversity and Cultural Competency training for the workforce.