



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Washington DC 20420

December 2, 2020

In Reply Refer To: HRA/OSP 006
FOIA Request: 21-01351-F

Via Email: foia@americanoversight.org

American Oversight
Attention: Mr. Austin Evers
1030 15th Street NW
Suite B255
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Evers:

This is a response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), FOIA Service, dated July 28, 2020, in which you requested:

- All calendars and calendar entries for the agency officials listed below, including any calendars maintained on their behalf, reflecting events that took place from January 1, 2020 to the date the search is conducted ... for a. Secretary Robert Wilkie, b. Acting Deputy Secretary Pamela J. Powers and c. Acting Chief of Staff Brooks D. Tucker.

The VA FOIA Service received your request on July 29, 2020, and assigned it FOIA tracking number 20-08472-F.

On December 2, 2020, In the **seventh interim Initial Agency Decision**, Bates numbered pages (20-08472-F) 014641-014662 and 016955-016976 were referred under FOIA tracking number **21-01351-F**, to the VA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration/Operations, Security and Preparedness (HRA/OSP).

HRA/OSP has reviewed the above mentioned, referred pages related to your request. Those pages constitute one document (PowerPoint document; notated below) that is being released to you in full at no cost to you:

- VA Special Pays and Bonuses Task Force Kick-Off Meeting

This concludes HRA/OSP's **seventh interim** response to your request. If you have any further questions concerning this letter, you may contact Cynthia Hunter at Cynthia.Hunter@va.gov or 202-461-0734.

Sincerely,

CYNTHIA
Hunter 1746806

Digitally signed by CYNTHIA
Hunter 1746806
Date: 2021.03.08 16:39:22 -0500

Cynthia Hunter
Correspondence Analyst / FOIA Liaison
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources
and Administration/Operations, Security and Preparedness

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of Human Resources and Administration

Department of Veterans Affairs

VA Special Pays and Bonuses Task Force Kick-Off Meeting

June 1, 2020



Choose  **VA**

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MULTI-VA-2019-0316-S-000001

Objective

- To develop a cohesive VA-enterprise strategy on the use of special pays and bonuses along with a tailored implementation plan
Special pays and bonuses include but are not limited to:
3Rs Incentives (Recruitment, Relocation, Retention)
Hazard Pay Differential (HPD) and Environmental Differential Pay (EDP)
Special Contribution Awards (SCA)
Performance Awards

3Rs Current Policy and Requirements

- **3Rs (VA Handbook 5007, Part VI, Ch 2 and 3) Title 5, Hybrid Title 38, Title 38W/OPM Waiver up to 50% W/Out OPM Waiver up to 25% Two Levels of Supervisory Approval Required HR Technical Review Required Recruitment (VA Form 10016) Position difficult to fill w/o incentive Requires service level agreement for no less than 6 months Relocation (VA Form 10016) Position difficult to fill w/o incentive No minimum service requirement during COVID-19 Retention (individual up to 25%, group up to 10%) (VA Form 10017) Used to retain current employees with superior or unique competencies in positions difficult to fill or services are essential and are likely to leave federal service without an incentive Requires fully successful rating**

HPD and EDP Current Policy and Requirements

- HPD and EDP (VA Handbook 5007, Part V, Ch 7) Title 5 HPD covers GS employees and EDP covers FWS employees DoA from ASHRA/OSP Pending Criteria for HPD Employee has been assigned to and performs duty related to a qualifying hazard Hazardous duty has not already been considered in the classification of the employee's position Safety precautions have not reduced the hazardous element to a less than significant level of risk OPM approved pay differentials (Appendix A to subpart I of 5 CFR 550 for HPD and Appendix A to subpart E of 5 CFR 532 for EDP) 25% HPD is authorized for an employee assigned to work with "virulent biologicals" (e.g., COVID-19) 8% EDP is authorized for high degree hazard and 4% for low degree hazard Approving official obtains guidance from Occupational Safety and Health in making determination that criteria is met Approving official works with timekeeper and payroll to approve for hours in a pay status on the day(s) on which the duty is performed. May only be authorized for the duration of the hazardous situation and only as long as the hazardous condition exists.

SCA Current Policy and Requirements

- SCA (VA Handbook 5017, Part I and III) Title 5, Hybrid Title 38, Title 38 W/OPM Waiver Up to \$25KW/O OPM Waiver Up to \$10K DoA from SecVA for Administrations/Staff Offices to Approve up to the Limit Pending During COVID-19 Waived Cumulative Limit per Employee Recognizes Individual Employee or Group Criteria Used to recognize an act, service, or achievement exceeding normal job expectations (e.g., special project, medical advancement, creative effort that increased efficiency/customer service, heroism in an emergency, improved quality of services) Factors used to determine amount are impact (moderate, substantial, exceptional and local, regional, or general) (See VA Handbook 5017, Part III, Appendix A) Recommending and Approving Official Submit Award on VA Form 4659 to HR for Technical Review and Processing SCA should not recognize someone for contributions that will be considered in their annual performance rating and award

Additional Pay Authorities

- **Additional Authorities**
Title 5, Hybrid Title 38
Premium Pay (e.g. Overtime, Night differential, Sunday premium, Holiday premium, LEAP)
Special Salary Rates
Title 38
On Call Pay
Weekend Pay (Premium Pay for Service on Saturday or Sunday)
Nurse Locality Pay
Nurse Executive Special Pay
Pharmacist Executive Special Pay
Nurse Recruitment and Retention bonus (up to \$4K per year for a 4 year agreement; with a significant shortage in any clinical service)

CARES Act and Other Legislative Proposals

- CARES ActDoA from SecVA to Administrations/Staff Offices to Waive CapsOGC Review of Waivers of Basic PayCovers:Bi-Weekly, Annual, and Aggregate LimitsMonthly Reports to CongressFirst report reflected 128 employees bi-weekly pay limits waived for the period March 27-April 25 in the amount of \$343,893.03MISSION ActWaive \$290M cap on awards and incentives FY20 and FY21HEROES ActPandemic Pay Other proposalsPremium Pay for Title 38HDP for Title 38

COVID-19 Data on 3Rs

- **3Rs Data During COVID-19** During the period of March 27, 2020 thru May 28, 2020, there were 24,663 transactions processed in HRSmart All Transactions processed exclusive by VHA 64 transactions processed using NOA 815 (Recruitment Incentives) 19 transactions processed using NOA 816 (Relocation Incentives) 24,580 transactions processed using NOA 827 (Retention Incentives) 99.96% of transactions (24,569) processed by five VISN VISN 17 (1,449) VISN 19 (2,667) VISN 21 (7,470) VISN 22 (9,751), and VISN 8 (3,232)

COVID-19 Data on HPD/EDP

- No HPD or EDP coded as COVID-Related have been approved. Process and instructions for documenting COVID-related in VATAS and DFAS pending. Non-COVID-Related HPD and EDP has been approved each pay period. During the period of March 27, 2020 thru May 23, 2020, there were 10,393 instances where HPD and EDP was requested and approved in VATAS. Due to no codes specific to COVID-19 in VATAS or DFAS at this time, it is unclear whether any of the non-COVID related partnership with COVID HPD/EDP.

Admin/Staff Ofc	Total Counts
NCA	1
STAFF	6
VBA	1
VHA	10,385
Grand Total	10,393

VA Workforce Fund Plan on Awards

- Required by OMB Memorandum M-19-24 Agency submitted first plan for FY 2020, FY2021 plan due by June 30 Requires agencies to update awards spending plans for FY 2021, and must include: Identify the projected awards spending level, as a dollar amount, for FY 2021, by bureau or major subdivision; Align with agency strategic goals and support organizational values (e.g., innovation, integrity, teamwork); Specifically address how the agency will strategically spend its determined amount in FY 2021 and subsequent years consistent with its broader recognition plan; Explain how the strategic spending plan will result in improved outcomes and organizational performance; Explain how the agency has evaluated and adjusted, as appropriate, the balance between rating-based awards and individual contribution awards; Ensure use of an evidence-based approach to support issuing awards and the amount; and Define how the agency will determine the effectiveness of awards and recognition programs and the measures used to evaluate effectiveness.

OIG Audit of 3Rs

In January 2017, the OIG issued a report auditing VAs use of 3Rs. The Audit included ten recommendations of which two are open. <https://www.va.gov/oig/pubs/VAOIG-14-04578-371.pdf>

1. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration review and update procedures and add internal controls for Administrations to ensure recruitment and relocation incentives are fully justified and authorized before being included on vacancy announcements for hard-to-fill positions or before the final selectee is identified in cases where a position is not filled through a vacancy announcement.
2. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration review and update procedures and add internal controls for the Corporate Senior Executive Management Office to ensure Senior Executive Service recruitment and relocation incentives are fully justified and authorized before being included on vacancy announcements for hard-to-fill positions or before the final selectee is identified in cases where a position is not filled through a vacancy announcement.
3. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration review and update procedures and add internal controls for Administrations to monitor compliance with its employee certification requirement before relocation incentives are authorized for payment.

OIG Audit of 3Rs

4. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration review and update procedures and add internal controls to monitor the Corporate Senior Executive Management Office's compliance with the employee certification requirement before Senior Executive Service relocation incentives are authorized for payment. 5. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration review and update procedures and add internal controls for Administrations to monitor facilities' compliance with developing workforce and succession plans to reduce the risk of long-term reliance on retention incentives. 6. . We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration review and update procedures and add internal controls to monitor the Corporate Senior Executive Management Office's compliance with developing workforce and succession plans to reduce the risk of long-term reliance on retention incentives for Senior Executives. 7. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration monitor the Corporate Senior Executive Management Office to ensure its technical review and recommendations to the VA Chief of Staff regarding Senior Executive Service incentives are prudent and in full compliance with VA Handbook 5007/46.

OIG Audit of 3Rs

8. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration assess the feasibility of limiting the number of consecutive years employees in specific occupations or groups of employees in specific occupations can receive retention incentive payments. 9. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration review and update procedures and add internal controls for Administrations to monitor facilities' compliance with VA Handbook 5007/46 requirements to initiate debt collection from individuals who did not fulfill their recruitment, relocation, or retention incentive service obligations. 10. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration examine the capabilities of the HR Smart personnel system to determine the extent to which it is possible to develop an incentive-specific automated alert that notifies Human Resources personnel when employees have outstanding recruitment, relocation, or retention incentive service obligations.

AWARD or COMPENSATION TYPE	CRITERIA	TYPES OF EMPLOYEES					
		TITLE 5	HYBRID TITLE 38	TITLE 38		SES & EQV	
				PHYSICIANS/ DENTISTS/ PODIATRISTS	ALL OTHERS**	SES	T38 SES EQV
PRESIDENTIAL RANK AWARD	5 USC 4507 is the statute providing for the PRA program. Eligibility is found in 5 CFR 451.301. The Presidential Rank Award Program has been recognizing distinguished and meritorious executives since 1980, along with distinguished and meritorious senior professionals since 2003. The award recognizes a select group of career senior executives who have provided exceptional service to the American people over an extended period of time. Only 1% of SES or senior career employees, respectively, may earn the distinguished rank. Only 5% of SES or senior career employees, respectively, may earn the meritorious rank. Distinguished rank recipients earn 35% of their salary as an award. Meritorious rank award recipients earn 20% of their salary as an award. Nominees must meet the following eligibility criteria by the nomination deadline: • Hold a career appointment in the SES; • Be an employee of the nominating agency on the nomination deadline; and • Have at least three years of career or career-type Federal civilian service at the SES level. Service does not have to be continuous. Qualifying service may include appointments in the SES, Senior Foreign Service, FBI/DEA SES, Defense Intelligence SES, and other SES-equivalent systems. Service under other than career-type appointments (e.g., noncareer, limited, indefinite) or in Senior Level or Scientific-Professional or equivalent positions is not qualifying. Healthcare professionals appointed under Title 38 §7306 who are not paid under the authority of 38 USC §7431 (Physicians and Dentist Pay) shall be deemed a career appointee for the purposes of Title 5 sections 4507 (Awarding of Ranks in the SES) and 5384 (Performance Awards), and therefore eligible to receive these awards. VA Handbook 5027, Part VI, 3. B. : Calendar Year Limitations. An executive may not receive a performance award and the PRA in the same calendar year.					X	Healthcare professionals appointed under Title 38 §7306 who are not eligible to be paid under 38 U.S.C. §7431 (i.e. physicians and dentists) shall be deemed a career appointee for the purposes of Title 5 sections 4507 (Awarding of Ranks in the SES) and 5384 (Performance Awards).

AWARD or COMPENSATION TYPE	CRITERIA	TYPES OF EMPLOYEES					
		TITLE 5	HYBRID TITLE 38	TITLE 38		SES & EQV	
				PHYSICIANS/ DENTISTS/ PODIATRISTS	ALL OTHERS**	SES	T38 SES EQV
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION	A contribution, act, service, or achievement that benefits VA/government. Cash award up to \$10,000 for an individual and \$25,000 for a group based on tangible and/or intangible benefits. VA Handbook 5017, Part I, Appendix B, C and D contain the delegations of authority for VHA, VBA and NCA. Per DepSec memo, VA SES, SES-EQV, and SL SCA recommendations must be submitted through CSEMO and DCOS for SecVA approval/disapproval. Awards in excess of \$10,000 must be approved by OPM, and awards in excess of \$25,000 must be approved by the White House.	X	X	X	X	X	X
TIME-OFF	Time off from 4 to 40 hours in recognition of a specific contribution, act, service or achievement that benefits VA/government. NOTE: Policy update pending to permit 1 to 40 hours of time off to be granted to all covered employees, including physicians and dentists who used to be paid on a daily rate.	X	X	X (8 hour minimum for physicians and dentists pending policy update)	X		
SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE	Sustained performance beyond normal job requirements as reflected in the employee's most recent rating of record. A one-time cash award with the amount determined by the employee's performance rating. For SES – 5 USC 5384 (b) covers eligibility and min/max percentages 5 USC 5384 says agencies shall (not may) pay SES awards "[t]o encourage excellence in performance" in lump sums in accordance with legal requirements that they: • Not be paid for less than fully-successful performance • Be paid in amounts "determined by the agency head" but may not be less than 5% or more than 20% of base pay; and • Total awards in the aggregate cannot exceed 10% of the total base pay for the agencies' SES corps in the prior FY (but there is no floor).	X	X	X	X	X	The regulatory percentage limits do not apply to the SES EQV, but VA policy is to group position comparable to the SES, then calculate award percentages based on actual salary (if below the Pay Band cap) or at the cap (if base pay exceeds the cap).
QUALITY STEP INCREASE	Outstanding performance during the most recent performance appraisal cycle. Adjustment in base pay to next step of grade.	X*					

AWARD or COMPENSATION TYPE	CRITERIA	TYPES OF EMPLOYEES					
		TITLE 5	HYBRID TITLE 38	TITLE 38		SES & EQV	
				PHYSICIANS/ DENTISTS/ PODIATRISTS	ALL OTHERS**	SES	T38 SES EQV
SPECIAL ADVANCEMENT FOR PERFORMANCE	For those who have demonstrated a sustained high level of performance and professional competence over and above that normally expected of employees in the particular grade and profession, or who have made noted contributions in some phase of their profession. Adjustment in base pay to next step of grade.		X (Subject to criteria of QSI - 1 step only)		X		
SPECIAL ADVANCEMENT FOR ACHIEVEMENT	Advancement within the grade for professional achievements above that expected for the grade level or assignment if the employee has also demonstrated a high level of performance and potential for assumption of greater responsibility.		X		X (up to 5 steps)		
RN, CRNA & PA CASH AWARD	Cash award up to \$2,000 for obtaining specialty certification that is not a requirement to meet the qualifications of the position.				X (Registered Nurses, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists and Physician Assistants only)		
SUGGESTION	Ideas that define a problem or objective, present a solution or plan for improvement, and tell how the solution will improve the efficiency, economy or effectiveness of government operations or otherwise benefit the government. Employees are eligible for a percentage of the tangible benefit or cash award.	X	X	X	X		
INVENTION	If an employee creates an invention that benefits the government and/or the public may be considered for a cash or honorary award. Must be approved by OGC.	X	X	X	X		
ORGANIZATIONAL	Can be developed within an organization to support specific organizational goals and objectives, such as improved customer service, innovative practices, quality initiatives, etc.	X	X	X	X		
GAINSHARING	Improvements in performance/productivity that are measured as an increase in productivity that results in more effective/efficient use of resources. Typically cash award based on pre-determined formula for measuring and sharing gains distributed to employees who produce gains.	X	X	X	X		

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		TITLE 5	HYBRID TITLE 38	TITLE 38		SES & EQV	
				PHYSICIANS/ DENTISTS/ PODIATRISTS	ALL OTHERS**	SES	T38 SES EQV
NON-MONETARY	Contributions or achievements that may not warrant a cash award or may supplement a cash or time-off award. Award items of nominal value such as pen-and-pencil sets, mugs, water bottles, desk organizers, etc. whose primary value is as a form of recognition under VA's award program and not as an object with monetary value.	X	X	X	X	X	X

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		TITLE 5	HYBRID TITLE 38	TITLE 38		SES & EQV	
				PHYSICIANS/ DENTISTS/ PODIATRISTS	ALL OTHERS**	SES	T38 SES EQV
RETENTION INCENTIVE	Title 5 General Schedule, Hybrid Title 38, Title 38, SES, SL and ST, Federal Wage System and and Executive Schedule positions. Retention incentives may be used to retain employees with high or unique qualifications or whose services are essential to a special VA need and who are likely to leave Federal service without an incentive. Incentive amount may not exceed 25% of employees basic rate of pay. The retention incentive must be reviewed annually to determine if the need for retention still exists, and a retention service agreement is required.	X	X	X	X	X	X
RECRUITMENT INCENTIVE	Title 5 General Schedule, Hybrid Title 38, Title 38, SES, SL and ST, Federal Wage System and and Executive Schedule positions. Recruitment incentives may be utilized to attract and appoint high quality employees in positions that are likely to be difficult to fill without such incentives. Incentive amount may not exceed 25% of employee's basic rate of pay for an obligated service period not to exceed 4 years.	X	X	X	X	X	X
RELOCATION INCENTIVE	Title 5 General Schedule, Hybrid Title 38, Title 38, SES, SL and ST, Federal Wage System and and Executive Schedule positions. Relocation incentives may be authorized for full-time Federal employees who must change worksite and physically relocate to a different geographic area when the approving official determines that without the incentive, it would be difficult to fill the position with a high quality candidate. Incentive amount may not exceed 25% of employee's basic rate of pay for an obligated service period not to exceed 4 years.	X	X	X	X	X	X
STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM	Title 5 General Schedule, Hybrid Title 38, SES, SL and ST, Federal Wage System and Executive Schedule positions. Used to recruit or retain high quality candidate or employee with an outstanding student loan. Employees may receive up to \$10,000 per year, up to a total lifetime gross amount of \$60,000.	X	X	X	X	X	X

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STATUTORILY REQUIRED PAY FOR PHYSICIANS AND DENTISTS

MARKET PAY FOR PHYSICIANS, DENTISTS, AND PODIATRISTS	VHA Physicians, Dentists and Podiatrists A component of total pay intended to reflect the recruitment and retention needs for a specialty or assignment of a particular physician, dentist or podiatrist at a VA facility. Market pay added to pay equals an individual's annual rate of pay for all purposes including annuity calculation. All 7401(1) physicians, dentists and podiatrists must be considered for and receive if they meet the criteria.			X			
PERFORMANCE PAY FOR PHYSICIANS, DENTISTS, AND PODIATRISTS	VHA Physicians, Dentists and Podiatrists The third segment of pay under VA's Physician, Dentist and Podiatrist pay system. Performance pay is based on the achievement of specific goals and performance objectives each fiscal year. VHA physicians, dentists and podiatrists may receive a lump sum of up to \$15,000 (or 7.5%, whichever is the lesser amount) based on the degree to which the individual meets or exceeds the specific goals/objectives determined locally by the Medical Facility Director. The amount payable may vary annually. All 7401 physicians and dentist must be considered for and receive if they meet the criteria.			X			

APPRAISED VALUE OFFER & PERMANENT CHANGE OF STATION

AWARD or COMPENSATION TYPE	CRITERIA	TYPES OF EMPLOYEES					
		TITLE 5	HYBRID TITLE 38	TITLE 38		SES & EQV	
				PHYSICIANS/ DENTISTS/ PODIATRISTS	ALL OTHERS**	SES	T38 SES EQV
AVO & PCS	Eligibility and limitations covered in VA Finance Policy Volume XIV – Chapter 8						
	The following relocating employees are eligible for relocation expense allowances [to include AVO where approved]: - An employee newly appointed to his/her first official duty station; - An employee transferring in the interest of the Government from one agency or official duty station to another for permanent duty, and the commuting distance between the new official duty station and permanent residence has increased by 50 miles or greater from the old official duty station and the permanent residence; - An employee performing travel in accordance with an overseas tour renewal agreement; - An employee returning to his/her place of residence after completing a prescribed tour of duty for the purposes of separation from Government service or separation from the overseas assignment for reassignment to the same or different Government agency, which may or may not include PCS relocation benefits; A student trainee assigned to any position upon completion of college work; - Assignment under 5 U.S.C. 4109, Government Employees Training Act (GETA); - A career appointee to the SES, as defined in 5 U.S.C. 3132(a)(4), and a prior SES appointee who is returning to his/her official residence for separation and who will be retaining SES retirement benefits; or - An employee who is being assigned to a TDY station in connection with a TCS assignment lasting longer than 6 months but less than 30 months.	X	X	X	X	X	X

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*FWS employees are not eligible.

**Includes optometrists, chiropractors, registered nurses, certified registered nurse anesthetists, physician assistants and expanded-function dental auxiliaries.

SES nominated for awards undergo background checks by the OGC, OIG and ORM to ensure there are no adverse findings pending or against them.

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SES awards of all types are generally paid from the appropriation or revolving fund that provides their salary. The most relevant appropriations and revolving funds are the following:

- VHA Medical Services, VHA Support and Compliance, VHA Medical Facilities, and VHA Research and Support
- VBA-GOE generally pays VBA senior leadership
- National Cemetery Administration
- Information Technology
- General Administrative; funds VA's Staff Offices, which includes OM, HRA, OGC, BVA, OALC, etc.
- Major Construction
- Franchise Fund, which provides common administrative support service for VA and other government agency customers
- Supply Fund, which is in charge of procuring equipment, supplies, and personal services

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PRESIDENTIAL RANK AWARD	5 USC 4507 is the statute providing for the PRA program. Eligibility is found in 5 CFR 451.301. The Presidential Rank Award Program has been recognizing distinguished and meritorious executives since 1980, along with distinguished and meritorious senior professionals since 2003. The award recognizes a select group of career senior executives who have provided exceptional service to the American people over an extended period of time. Only 1% of SES or senior career employees, respectively, may earn the distinguished rank. Only 5% of SES or senior career employees, respectively, may earn the meritorious rank. Distinguished rank recipients earn 35% of their salary as an award. Meritorious rank award recipients earn 20% of their salary as an award. Nominees must meet the following eligibility criteria by the nomination deadline: • Hold a career appointment in the SES; • Be an employee of the nominating agency on the nomination deadline; and • Have at least three years of career or career-type Federal civilian service at the SES level. Service does not have to be continuous. Qualifying service may include appointments in the SES, Senior Foreign Service, FBI/DEA SES, Defense Intelligence SES, and other SES-equivalent systems. Service under other than career-type appointments (e.g., noncareer, limited, indefinite) or in Senior Level or Scientific-Professional or equivalent positions is not qualifying. Healthcare professionals appointed under Title 38 §7306 who are not paid under the authority of 38 USC §7431 (Physicians and Dentist Pay) shall be deemed a career appointee for the purposes of Title 5 sections 4507 (Awarding of Ranks in the SES) and 5384 (Performance Awards), and therefore eligible to receive these awards. VA Handbook 5027, Part VI, 3. B. : Calendar Year Limitations. An executive may not receive a performance award and the PRA in the same calendar year.					X	Healthcare professionals appointed under Title 38 §7306 who are not eligible to be paid under 38 U.S.C. §7431 (Physician, Dentist and Podiatrist Pay) shall be deemed a career appointee for the purposes of Title 5 sections 4507 (Awarding of Ranks in the SES) and 5384 (Performance Awards).

AWARD or COMPENSATION TYPE	CRITERIA	TYPES OF EMPLOYEES					
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SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION	A contribution, act, service, or achievement that benefits VA/government. Cash award up to \$10,000 for an individual and \$25,000 for a group based on tangible and/or intangible benefits. VA Handbook 5017, Part I, Appendix B, C and D contain the delegations of authority for VHA, VBA and NCA. Per DepSec memo, VA SES, SES-EQV, and SL SCA recommendations must be submitted through CSEMO and DCOS for SecVA approval/disapproval. Awards in excess of \$10,000 must be approved by OPM, and awards in excess of \$25,000 must be approved by the White House.	X	X	X	X	X	X
TIME-OFF	Time off from 4 to 40 hours in recognition of a specific contribution, act, service or achievement that benefits VA/government. NOTE: Policy update pending to permit 1 to 40 hours of time off to be granted to all covered employees, including physicians and dentists who used to be paid on a daily rate.	X	X	X (8 hour minimum for physicians and dentists pending policy update)	X		
SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE	Sustained performance beyond normal job requirements as reflected in the employee's most recent rating of record. A one-time cash award with the amount determined by the employee's performance rating. For SES – 5 USC 5384 (b) covers eligibility and min/max percentages 5 USC 5384 says agencies shall (not may) pay SES awards "[t]o encourage excellence in performance" in lump sums in accordance with legal requirements that they: • Not be paid for less than fully-successful performance • Be paid in amounts "determined by the agency head" but may not be less than 5% or more than 20% of base pay; and • Total awards in the aggregate cannot exceed 10% of the total base pay for the agencies' SES corps in the prior FY (but there is no floor).	X	X	X	X	X	The regulatory percentage limites do not apply to the SES EQV, but VA policy is to group position comparable to the SES, then calculate award percentages based on actual salary (if below the Pay Band cap) or at the cap (if base pay exceeds the cap).
QUALITY STEP INCREASE	Outstanding performance during the most recent performance appraisal cycle. Adjustment in base pay to next step of grade.	X*					

AWARD or COMPENSATION TYPE	CRITERIA	TYPES OF EMPLOYEES					
		TITLE 5	HYBRID TITLE 38	TITLE 38		SES & EQV	
				PHYSICIANS/ DENTISTS/ PODIATRISTS	ALL OTHERS**	SES	T38 SES EQV
SPECIAL ADVANCEMENT FOR PERFORMANCE	For those who have demonstrated a sustained high level of performance and professional competence over and above that normally expected of employees in the particular grade and profession, or who have made noted contributions in some phase of their profession. Adjustment in base pay to next step of grade.		X (Subject to criteria of QSI - 1 step only)		X		
SPECIAL ADVANCEMENT FOR ACHIEVEMENT	Advancement within the grade for professional achievements above that expected for the grade level or assignment if the employee has also demonstrated a high level of performance and potential for assumption of greater responsibility.		X		X (up to 5 steps)		
RN, CRNA & PA CASH AWARD	Cash award up to \$2,000 for obtaining specialty certification that is not a requirement to meet the qualifications of the position.				X (Registered Nurses, Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists and Physician Assistants only)		
SUGGESTION	Ideas that define a problem or objective, present a solution or plan for improvement, and tell how the solution will improve the efficiency, economy or effectiveness of government operations or otherwise benefit the government. Employees are eligible for a percentage of the tangible benefit or cash award.	X	X	X	X		
INVENTION	If an employee creates an invention that benefits the government and/or the public may be considered for a cash or honorary award. Must be approved by OGC.	X	X	X	X		
ORGANIZATIONAL	Can be developed within an organization to support specific organizational goals and objectives, such as improved customer service, innovative practices, quality initiatives, etc.	X	X	X	X		
GAINSHARING	Improvements in performance/productivity that are measured as an increase in productivity that results in more effective/efficient use of resources. Typically cash award based on pre-determined formula for measuring and sharing gains distributed to employees who produce gains.	X	X	X	X		

AWARD or COMPENSATION TYPE	CRITERIA	TYPES OF EMPLOYEES					
		TITLE 5	HYBRID TITLE 38	TITLE 38		SES & EQV	
				PHYSICIANS/ DENTISTS/ PODIATRISTS	ALL OTHERS**	SES	T38 SES EQV
NON-MONETARY	Contributions or achievements that may not warrant a cash award or may supplement a cash or time-off award. Award items of nominal value such as pen-and-pencil sets, mugs, water bottles, desk organizers, etc. whose primary value is as a form of recognition under VA's award program and not as an object with monetary value.	X	X	X	X	X	X

AWARD or COMPENSATION TYPE	CRITERIA	TYPES OF EMPLOYEES					
		TITLE 5	HYBRID TITLE 38	TITLE 38		SES & EQV	
				PHYSICIANS/ DENTISTS/ PODIATRISTS	ALL OTHERS**	SES	T38 SES EQV
RETENTION INCENTIVE	Title 5 General Schedule, Hybrid Title 38, Title 38, SES, SL and ST, Federal Wage System and and Executive Schedule positions. Retention incentives may be used to retain employees with high or unique qualifications or whose services are essential to a special VA need and who are likely to leave Federal service without an incentive. Incentive amount may not exceed 25% of employees basic rate of pay. The retention incentive must be reviewed annually to determine if the need for retention still exists, and a retention service agreement is required.	X	X	X	X	X	X
RECRUITMENT INCENTIVE	Title 5 General Schedule, Hybrid Title 38, Title 38, SES, SL and ST, Federal Wage System and and Executive Schedule positions. Recruitment incentives may be utilized to attract and appoint high quality employees in positions that are likely to be difficult to fill without such incentives. Incentive amount may not exceed 25% of employee's basic rate of pay for an obligated service period not to exceed 4 years.	X	X	X	X	X	X
RELOCATION INCENTIVE	Title 5 General Schedule, Hybrid Title 38, Title 38, SES, SL and ST, Federal Wage System and and Executive Schedule positions. Relocation incentives may be authorized for full-time Federal employees who must change worksite and physically relocate to a different geographic area when the approving official determines that without the incentive, it would be difficult to fill the position with a high quality candidate. Incentive amount may not exceed 25% of employee's basic rate of pay for an obligated service period not to exceed 4 years.	X	X	X	X	X	X
STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM	Title 5 General Schedule, Hybrid Title 38, SES, SL and ST, Federal Wage System and Executive Schedule positions. Used to recruit or retain high quality candidate or employee with an outstanding student loan. Employees may receive up to \$10,000 per year, up to a total lifetime gross amount of \$60,000.	X	X	X	X	X	X

STATUTORILY REQUIRED PAY FOR PHYSICIANS AND DENTISTS

AWARD or COMPENSATION TYPE	CRITERIA	TYPES OF EMPLOYEES					
		TITLE 5	HYBRID TITLE 38	TITLE 38		SES & EQV	
				PHYSICIANS/ DENTISTS/ PODIATRISTS	ALL OTHERS**	SES	T38 SES EQV
MARKET PAY FOR PHYSICIANS, DENTISTS, AND PODIATRISTS	VHA Physicians, Dentists and Podiatrists A component of total pay intended to reflect the recruitment and retention needs for a specialty or assignment of a particular physician, dentist or podiatrist at a VA facility. Market pay added to pay equals an individual's annual rate of pay for all purposes including annuity calculation. All 7401 physicians, dentists and podiatrists must be considered for and receive if they meet the criteria.			X			
PERFORMANCE PAY FOR PHYSICIANS, DENTISTS, AND PODIATRISTS	VHA Physicians, Dentists and Podiatrists The third segment of pay under VA's Physician, Dentist and Podiatrist pay system. Performance pay is based on the achievement of specific goals and performance objectives each fiscal year. VHA physicians, dentists and podiatrists may receive a lump sum of up to \$15,000 (or 7.5%, whichever is the lesser amount) based on the degree to which the individual meets or exceeds the specific goals/objectives determined locally by the Medical Facility Director. The amount payable may vary annually. All 7401 physicians and dentist must be considered for and receive if they meet the criteria.			X			

APPRAISED VALUE OFFER & PERMANENT CHANGE OF STATION

AWARD or COMPENSATION TYPE	CRITERIA	TYPES OF EMPLOYEES					
		TITLE 5	HYBRID TITLE 38	TITLE 38		SES & EQV	
				PHYSICIANS/ DENTISTS/ PODIATRISTS	ALL OTHERS**	SES	T38 SES EQV
AVO & PCS	Eligibility and limitations covered in VA Finance Policy Volume XIV – Chapter 8 The following relocating employees are eligible for relocation expense allowances [to include AVO where approved]: - An employee newly appointed to his/her first official duty station; - An employee transferring in the interest of the Government from one agency or official duty station to another for permanent duty, and the commuting distance between the new official duty station and permanent residence has increased by 50 miles or greater from the old official duty station and the permanent residence; - An employee performing travel in accordance with an overseas tour renewal agreement; - An employee returning to his/her place of residence after completing a prescribed tour of duty for the purposes of separation from Government service or separation from the overseas assignment for reassignment to the same or different Government agency, which may or may not include PCS relocation benefits; A student trainee assigned to any position upon completion of college work; - Assignment under 5 U.S.C. 4109, Government Employees Training Act (GETA); - A career appointee to the SES, as defined in 5 U.S.C. 3132(a)(4), and a prior SES appointee who is returning to his/her official residence for separation and who will be retaining SES retirement benefits; or - An employee who is being assigned to a TDY station in connection with a TCS assignment lasting longer than 6 months but less than 30 months.	x	x	x	x	x	x

*FWS employees are not eligible.

AWARD or COMPENSATION TYPE	CRITERIA	TYPES OF EMPLOYEES					
		TITLE 5	HYBRID TITLE 38	TITLE 38		SES & EQV	
				PHYSICIANS/ DENTISTS/ PODIATRISTS	ALL OTHERS**	SES	T38 SES EQV

**Includes optometrists, chiropractors, registered nurses, certified registered nurse anesthetists, physician assistants and expanded-function dental auxiliaries.

SES nominated for awards undergo background checks by the OGC, OIG and ORM to ensure there are no adverse findings pending or against them.

SES awards of all types are generally paid from the appropriation or revolving fund that provides their salary. The most relevant appropriations and revolving funds are the following:

AWARD or COMPENSATION TYPE	CRITERIA	TYPES OF EMPLOYEES					
		TITLE 5	HYBRID TITLE 38	TITLE 38		SES & EQV	
				PHYSICIANS/ DENTISTS/ PODIATRISTS	ALL OTHERS**	SES	T38 SES EQV

- VHA Medical Services, VHA Support and Compliance, VHA Medical Facilities, and VHA Research and Support
- VBA-GOE generally pays VBA senior leadership
- National Cemetery Administration
- Information Technology
- General Administrative; funds VA's Staff Offices, which includes OM, HRA, OGC, BVA, OALC, etc.
- Major Construction
- Franchise Fund, which provides common administrative support service for VA and other government agency customers
- Supply Fund, which is in charge of procuring equipment, supplies, and personal services

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Office of Human Resources and Administration

Department of Veterans Affairs

VA Special Pays and Bonuses Task Force Kick-Off Meeting

June 1, 2020



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Objective

- To develop a cohesive VA-enterprise strategy on the use of special pays and bonuses along with a tailored implementation plan
Special pays and bonuses include but are not limited to:
3Rs Incentives (Recruitment, Relocation, Retention)
Hazard Pay Differential (HPD) and Environmental Differential Pay (EDP)
Special Contribution Awards (SCA)
Performance Awards

3Rs Current Policy and Requirements

- **3Rs (VA Handbook 5007, Part VI, Ch 2 and 3) Title 5, Hybrid Title 38, Title 38W/OPM Waiver up to 50% W/Out OPM Waiver up to 25% Two Levels of Supervisory Approval Required HR Technical Review Required Recruitment (VA Form 10016) Position difficult to fill w/o incentive Requires service level agreement for no less than 6 months Relocation (VA Form 10016) Position difficult to fill w/o incentive No minimum service requirement during COVID-19 Retention (individual up to 25%, group up to 10%) (VA Form 10017) Used to retain current employees with superior or unique competencies in positions difficult to fill or services are essential and are likely to leave federal service without an incentive Requires fully successful rating**

HPD and EDP Current Policy and Requirements

- HPD and EDP (VA Handbook 5007, Part V, Ch 7) Title 5 HPD covers GS employees and EDP covers FWS employees DoA from ASHRA/OSP Pending Criteria Employee has been assigned to and performs duty related to a qualifying hazard Hazardous duty has not already been considered in the classification of the employee's position Safety precautions have not reduced the hazardous element to a less than significant level of risk OPM approved pay differentials (Appendix A to subpart I of 5 CFR 550 for HPD and Appendix A to subpart E of 5 CFR 532 for EDP) 25% HPD is authorized for an employee assigned to work with "virulent biologicals" (e.g., COVID-19) 8% EDP is authorized for high degree hazard and 4% for low degree hazard Approving official obtains guidance from Occupational Safety and Health in making determination that criteria is met Approving official works with timekeeper and payroll to approve HPD/EDP for hours in a pay status on the day(s) on which the duty is performed. HPD/EDP may only be authorized for the duration of the hazardous situation and only as long as the hazardous condition exists.

SCA Current Policy and Requirements

- SCA (VA Handbook 5017, Part I and III) Title 5, Hybrid Title 38, Title 38 W/OPM Waiver Up to \$25KW/O OPM Waiver Up to \$10K DoA from SecVA for Administrations/Staff Offices to Approve up to the Limit Pending During COVID-19 Waived Cumulative Limit per Employee Recognizes Individual Employee or Group Criteria Used to recognize an act, service, or achievement exceeding normal job expectations (e.g., special project, medical advancement, creative effort that increased efficiency/customer service, heroism in an emergency, improved quality of services) Factors used to determine amount are impact (moderate, substantial, exceptional and local, regional, or general) (See VA Handbook 5017, Part III, Appendix A) Recommending and Approving Official Submit Award on VA Form 4659 to HR for Technical Review and Processing SCA should not recognize someone for contributions that will be considered in their annual performance rating and award

Additional Pay Authorities

- **Additional Authorities**
Title 5, Hybrid Title 38
Premium Pay (e.g. Overtime, Night differential, Sunday premium, Holiday premium, LEAP)
Special Salary Rates
Title 38
On Call Pay
Weekend Pay (Premium Pay for Service on Saturday or Sunday)
Nurse Locality Pay
Nurse Executive Special Pay
Pharmacist Executive Special Pay
Nurse Recruitment and Retention bonus (up to \$4K per year for a 4 year agreement; with a significant shortage in any clinical service)

CARES Act and Other Legislative Proposals

- CARES ActDoA from SecVA to Administrations/Staff Offices to Waive CapsOGC Review of Waivers of Basic PayCovers:Bi-Weekly, Annual, and Aggregate LimitsMonthly Reports to CongressFirst report reflected 128 employees bi-weekly pay limits waived for the period March 27-April 25 in the amount of \$343,893.03MISSION ActWaive \$290M cap on awards and incentives FY20 and FY21HEROES ActPandemic Pay Other proposalsPremium Pay for Title 38HDP for Title 38

COVID-19 Data on 3Rs

- **3Rs Data During COVID-19** During the period of March 27, 2020 thru May 28, 2020, there were 24,663 transactions processed in HRSmart All Transactions processed exclusive by VHA 64 transactions processed using NOA 815 (Recruitment Incentives) 19 transactions processed using NOA 816 (Relocation Incentives) 24,580 transactions processed using NOA 827 (Retention Incentives) 99.96% of transactions (24,569) processed by five VISNs VISN 17 (1,449) VISN 19 (2,667) VISN 21 (7,470) VISN 22 (9,751), and VISN 8 (3,232)

COVID-19 Data on HPD/EDP

- No HPD or EDP coded as COVID-Related have been approved. Process and instructions for documenting COVID-related in VATAS and DFAS pending. Non-COVID-Related HPD and EDP has been approved each pay period. During the period of March 27, 2020 thru May 23, 2020, there were 10,393 instances where HPD and EDP was requested and approved in VATAS. Due to no codes specific to COVID-19 in VATAS or DFAS at this time, it is unclear whether any of the non-COVID related partnership with COVID HPD/EDP.

Admin/Staff Ofc	Total Counts
NCA	1
STAFF	6
VBA	1
VHA	10,385
Grand Total	10,393

VA Workforce Fund Plan on Awards

- Required by OMB Memorandum M-19-24 Agency submitted first plan for FY 2020, FY2021 plan due by June 30 Requires agencies to update awards spending plans for FY 2021, and must include: Identify the projected awards spending level, as a dollar amount, for FY 2021, by bureau or major subdivision; Align with agency strategic goals and support organizational values (e.g., innovation, integrity, teamwork); Specifically address how the agency will strategically spend its determined amount in FY 2021 and subsequent years consistent with its broader recognition plan; Explain how the strategic spending plan will result in improved outcomes and organizational performance; Explain how the agency has evaluated and adjusted, as appropriate, the balance between rating-based awards and individual contribution awards; Ensure use of an evidence-based approach to support issuing awards and the amount; and Define how the agency will determine the effectiveness of awards and recognition programs and the measures used to evaluate effectiveness.

OIG Audit of 3Rs

In January 2017, the OIG issued a report auditing VAs use of 3Rs. The Audit included ten recommendations of which two are open. <https://www.va.gov/oig/pubs/VAOIG-14-04578-371.pdf>

1. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration review and update procedures and add internal controls for Administrations to ensure recruitment and relocation incentives are fully justified and authorized before being included on vacancy announcements for hard-to-fill positions or before the final selectee is identified in cases where a position is not filled through a vacancy announcement.
2. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration review and update procedures and add internal controls for the Corporate Senior Executive Management Office to ensure Senior Executive Service recruitment and relocation incentives are fully justified and authorized before being included on vacancy announcements for hard-to-fill positions or before the final selectee is identified in cases where a position is not filled through a vacancy announcement.
3. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration review and update procedures and add internal controls for Administrations to monitor compliance with its employee certification requirement before relocation incentives are authorized for payment.

OIG Audit of 3Rs

4. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration review and update procedures and add internal controls to monitor the Corporate Senior Executive Management Office's compliance with the employee certification requirement before Senior Executive Service relocation incentives are authorized for payment. 5. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration review and update procedures and add internal controls for Administrations to monitor facilities' compliance with developing workforce and succession plans to reduce the risk of long-term reliance on retention incentives. 6. . We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration review and update procedures and add internal controls to monitor the Corporate Senior Executive Management Office's compliance with developing workforce and succession plans to reduce the risk of long-term reliance on retention incentives for Senior Executives. 7. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration monitor the Corporate Senior Executive Management Office to ensure its technical review and recommendations to the VA Chief of Staff regarding Senior Executive Service incentives are prudent and in full compliance with VA Handbook 5007/46.

OIG Audit of 3Rs

8. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration assess the feasibility of limiting the number of consecutive years employees in specific occupations or groups of employees in specific occupations can receive retention incentive payments. 9. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration review and update procedures and add internal controls for Administrations to monitor facilities' compliance with VA Handbook 5007/46 requirements to initiate debt collection from individuals who did not fulfill their recruitment, relocation, or retention incentive service obligations. 10. We recommended the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration examine the capabilities of the HR Smart personnel system to determine the extent to which it is possible to develop an incentive-specific automated alert that notifies Human Resources personnel when employees have outstanding recruitment, relocation, or retention incentive service obligations.