



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Washington DC 20420

March 9, 2021

In Reply Refer To: HRA/OSP 006
FOIA Request: 20-00864-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 November 6, 2020, In the **fifth interim Initial Agency Decision**, Bates numbered pages (20-08472-F) 011341-011353 were referred, under FOIA tracking number **20-00864-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 dated June 1, 2020

This concludes HRA/OSP's **fifth 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: 2021.03.09 09:36:25 -05'00'

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



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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 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.