



OCT 30 2015

VETERANS' PROGRAM LETTER NO. 01-16

TO: ALL VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING STAFF
ALL STATE WORKFORCE AGENCY (SWA) ADMINISTRATORS
ALL REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS, EMPLOYMENT AND
TRAINING ADMINISTRATION (INFO)

FROM: TERESA W. GERTON

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Teresa W. Gerton", is written over the printed name.

SUBJECT: The Department of Labor Veterans' Employment & Training Service and
the Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and
Employment Joint Partnership Modernization Project

- I. **Purpose:** To provide guidance to states and Department of Labor (DOL)/Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) field staff on changes to the Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VA/VR&E) joint national agreement to coordinate services for veterans enrolled in VA's Chapter 31 program. This modernization project is expected to improve efficiency and coordination between the agencies and improve the outcomes achieved by veterans being served jointly under the process described by the new national agreement and technical assistance guide (TAG).
- II. **References:**
 - Title 38, United States Code (38 USC), Chapters 31 and 41; and
 - Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report 13-29, *Better Targeting, Coordinating, and Reporting Needed to Enhance Program Effectiveness*, dated December 13, 2012.
- III. **Rescissions:** Veterans' Program Letter (VPL) No. 01-09.
- IV. **Background:** DOL/VETS and the VA/VR&E Service agree that the successful readjustment of veterans with disabilities into the civilian workforce is a mutual responsibility and concern. In order to advance, improve, and expand employment opportunities for veterans with disabilities, both agencies met in early 1995 to discuss

ways to improve services to those veterans and other individuals eligible to be served by VA/VR&E. In August of that year, the first in a series of Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) between the two agencies was signed.

Since 1995, thousands of veterans with disabilities have benefited from the resulting cooperation and coordination between the two federal agencies and staff employed at each state agency (SA) that receives Jobs for Veterans State Grant funding from VETS. In order to address service delivery system changes and improve processes and procedures, a new MOA was signed by both agencies on October 3, 2005. In December 2012, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued Report #13-29. GAO recommended that the VA/DOL agreement be reviewed and revised as needed. Three specific recommendations in that report included:

- *Improving reporting on achievement of program performance goals;*
- *Assessing program effectiveness; and*
- *Improving the guidance provided to staff in the Technical Assistance Guide (TAG).*

V. **The Partnership Modernization Project:** This modernization project was developed by the Joint Work Group (JWG) consisting of VETS and VR&E staff, as a comprehensive effort to identify the commitment both agencies share to improve referral and employment processes, participant outcomes, and program reporting for those veterans enrolled in the Chapter 31 program and served through the efforts of the SA staff who serve VR&E clients, VETS and VR&E personnel.

As part of the modernization project, the JWG members updated the TAG issued in December 2008. This updated TAG provides the SA, VETS, and VR&E staff detailed information on the following areas:

- *Development of effective local Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) to facilitate vital communication and information sharing between agencies;*
- *Distinct roles and responsibilities of each program partner;*
- *Cooperative efforts to provide realistic goals for Chapter 31 veterans through:*
 - *better use of up-to-date labor market information, and*
 - *development of an Individual Employment Assistance Plan (IEAP), to ensure realistic goals toward achieving suitable employment are jointly set in accordance with GAO report 13-29 findings;*
- *Policies and revised reporting tools to improve the efficiency of referral and processes toward the achievement of suitable employment;*
- *Strategies to develop job opportunities and secure successful outcomes for Chapter 31 participants served by SA, VR&E, and VETS personnel within this joint framework;*
- *Comprehensive instructions on the use of the revised VETS-201, VR&E Participant Tracking Form, for improved data collection and reporting in accordance with GAO recommendations; and*
- *Partnership conflict resolution procedures.*

VI. Future Training Opportunities: The JWG is in the final stages of completing training materials to assist with the updates contained in this modernization project. These training opportunities are separated into three major subjects:

- *Revising or developing new local MOUs between the state agency, VA Offices, and VETS in each of the state agencies using the National MOA (Attachment A) as a model;*
- *Use and overview of the revised Technical Assistance Guide (TAG) (Attachment B) which also provides a template for the local MOUs; and,*
- *Completing joint reporting requirements (using the currently approved Fiscal Year (FY) 2015-2019 VETS-201 VR&E Participant Tracking report form until the proposed VETS-201 (Attachment C) form receives Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval and VETS-201 Instructions (Attachment D).*

These will be provided in three separate training webinars held during the first quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2016. Respective dates and times will be provided. Online courses will also be developed in conjunction with National Veterans' Training Institute (NVTI) accessible for use by state agency, VR&E, and VETS staff late in the first quarter following the webinars.

VII. Actions Required:

- A. VETS' Directors for Veterans' Employment and Training (DVETs) will ensure that appropriate SA personnel and VR&E staff receive a copy of this VPL (and all attachments).
- B. DVETs will review their respective state's currently signed local MOU(s), identify deficiencies based on the National MOA and new requirements in the revised TAG, and complete new local MOUs, as needed, by March 31, 2016.
A MOU template is available for use in Appendix A of the TAG (Attachment B).
- C. In the event there is more than one VR&E office serving Chapter 31 participants residing within a state or for more than one contiguous state, the DVET, in conjunction with the appropriate SA and VR&E personnel, will locally determine whether it is in the best interest of all parties to have a separate MOU for each VR&E office or one statewide MOU signed by all VR&E offices to coordinate services to the veterans within the state. (Note: The servicing VR&E office may be located in an adjacent state, and the respective DVETs will coordinate to ensure complete MOU coverage).
- D. SAs will e-mail all newly executed local MOUs executed for veterans served in their respective state to VETS-VRE@dol.gov by March 31, 2016, for access and review by the VR&E Joint Work Group in accordance with GAO recommendations.
- E. DVETs will ensure that a complete VETS-201 Form for the reporting quarter ending December 31, 2015 is emailed to the VETS-VRE@dol.gov by January 31, 2016; and

no later than 30 days after the end of each subsequent quarter utilizing the proposed form as soon as VETS receives OMB approval.

(Note: Use the following naming convention for the subject of the email and the spreadsheet submitted: the state identifier, the VR&E Regional office number, FY, and the quarter ending date of the form. For example, the subject on the email to VETS-VRE@dol.gov and the VETS-201 Form submitted for the 1st quarter of FY 2016 from Montana would read: MT-436-FY16-Q1.)

- F. VETS' regional members on the Joint Work Group will continue to serve as subject matter experts (SMEs) to directly assist VETS Regional Office staff concerning any issues raised within the region. Matters that cannot be resolved will be elevated to the full VA/DOL Joint Work Group for resolution at the discretion of each respective regional administrator and/or VETS' leadership. Questions for elevation to the full JWG may be sent to the VETS-VRE@dol.gov e-mail box through the appropriate VETS regional office.

VIII. Inquiries: Questions should be addressed to the appropriate DVET. DVETs and other VETS staff with questions should contact their respective regional office.

IX. Expiration Date: When rescinded or superseded.

X. Attachments:

- A. National MOA signed by DOL/VETS and the VA/VR&E Service
- B. Revised Technical Assistance Guide (TAG), dated September 2015
- C. Proposed VETS-201 Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Chapter 31) Participant Tracking Report (Pending OMB Approval)
- D. Proposed VETS-201 Instructions (Pending OMB Approval)