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News Release

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VA Announces Aggressive National Recruitment Effort to Hire Mental Health Professionals

WASHINGTON - Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki recently announced the department would add approximately 1,600 mental health clinicians as well as nearly 300 support staff to its existing workforce to help meet the increased demand for mental health services. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) has developed an aggressive national recruitment program to implement the hiring process quickly and efficiently.

“The mental health and well-being of our brave men and women who have served the Nation is the highest priority for this department,” said Secretary Shinseki. “We must ensure that all Veterans seeking mental health care have access to timely, responsive and high-quality care.”

VA has developed an aggressive national mental health hiring initiative to improve recruitment and hiring, marketing, education and training programs, and retention efforts for mental health professionals, to include targeted recruitment in rural and highly-rural markets. This will help VA to meet existing and future demands of mental health care services in an integrated collaborative team environment and continue to position VA as an exemplary workplace for mental health care professionals.

It is critical for VA to proactively engage psychiatrists and other mental health care providers about the vital mission to deliver high-quality mental health services, especially for returning combat Veterans.

“The VA mental health community is aggressively transforming the way mental health care services are provided to the Veteran population. As the mental health care workforce continues to increase, VA is committed to improving Veterans’ access to services, especially for at-risk Veterans,” said VA’s Under Secretary for Health Dr. Robert Petzel.

The national recruitment program provides VHA with an in-house team of highly skilled professional recruiters employing private sector best practices to fill the agency’s most mission

critical clinical and executive positions. The recruitment team consists of 21 national, dedicated health care recruiters targeting physician and specialty health care occupations. These recruiters also understand the needs of Veterans because each member is a Veteran.

VHA has also established a hiring and tracking task force to provide oversight for this initiative to move the process forward expeditiously in a focused manner to ensure challenges, issues, or concerns are addressed and resolved. This task force is accountable for reporting progress in hiring of mental health professionals in these occupations: psychiatrists, psychologists, mental health nurses, social workers, mental health technicians, marriage and family therapists and licensed professional counselors.

VHA anticipates the majority of hires will be selected within approximately six months and the most “hard-to-fill” positions filled by the end of the second quarter of FY 2013. VA has an existing workforce of 20,590 mental health staff that includes nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers.

Interested mental health care providers can find additional information about VA careers and apply for jobs online at www.vacareers.va.gov. To locate the nearest VA facility or Vet Center for enrollment and to get scheduled for care, Veterans can visit VA’s website at www.va.gov. Immediate help is available at www.VeteransCrisisLine.net or by calling the Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 (push 1) or texting 838255.

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