



Getting a Job in the VA: A Guide for Trainees and Early Career Psychologists

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VA Hiring Process: Background

- VA uses **various federal hiring authorities** when filling vacancies
- The most commonly used hiring authorities for clinical occupations are **Title 38** and **Hybrid Title 38**



- **Title 38:** Physicians, Dentists, Nurses, Physician Assistants, Chiropractors, Optometrists, Podiatrists, Expanded Function Dental Auxiliaries
- **Hybrid Title 38: Psychology** and other non-Title 38 clinical occupations



VA Hiring Process: Background

- Grade/salary determined by qualification standards during a **Professional Standards Board (PSB)**
 - PSBs consider professional credentials
 - Psychologists generally appointed at Step 1 for approved Grade
 - Required “specialized experience” begins after “conferral date”
- VA may recruit/select current/former trainees **non-competitively**
 - VAMCs not required to announce positions at USAJOBS
 - Follow local bargaining unit agreement job posting requirements
 - Veterans’ preference must be applied (N/A to Psychology in FY17)
- Psychologists awaiting licensure may be hired as **Graduate Technicians**



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VA Hiring Process: Common Barriers

- Disqualifying psychologists for not meeting qualification standards at the time of recruitment – should be evaluated based on projected qualifications at time of hire
- Using USAJOBS when hiring managers already have an interested and qualified candidate
- Using an area of consideration of “Internal VA Employees” when using USAJOBS – trainees are considered “external.”
 - Recognize that trainees may still be considered outside of USAjobs





VA Hiring Process: Common Barriers

- Belief that hiring flexibilities only apply to a VAMC's current trainees
- Applying Veterans' Preference (VP) to occupations listed in the most recent OIG Top 5 Critical Shortage Occupation list – Psychology is exempt from VP in FY 2017
- USAJOBS announcements and online questionnaires that include language disqualifying trainees





VA Hiring Process Tips



- **DO** start job search once you are within 6-9 months of program completion
- **DO** refer to TACLVA Job Search Guide for CV, interview, and other tips
- **DO** network with National Healthcare Recruitment ([NHRS Recruiters](#)), hiring managers, and local HR staff at desired VAMCs to be considered non-competitively for vacancies
- **DO** build a profile at www.usajobs.gov and establish a “[job search agent](#)” so you are notified when positions are announced matching your criteria



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VA Hiring Process Tips

- **DO** tailor CVs for the job being recruited – demonstrate you meet, or will meet, education, training, licensure, and specialized experience requirements
- **DO** reference “Hiring VHA Trainees Flyer”
- **DO** contact trainee.recruitment@va.gov when you have recruitment questions/concerns
- **DO** use VA Psychology Student Community of Practice’s Pulse page to view vacancies

CALL TO ACTION:
LEVERAGE HIRING FLEXIBILITIES TO
RECRUIT AND APPOINT
VA HEALTH PROFESSIONS TRAINEES TO TITLE 38
AND HYBRID TITLE 38 VACANCIES

URGENT!

HOW TO LEVERAGE HIRING FLEXIBILITIES

- All have the requisite of degrees to qualify under competition.
- Hiring current or former VA health professions trainees who signed in Title 38 positions under prior orders.
- Meet all other health professions and education and licensure requirements for the position.
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CONSULTATIVE/STRATEGIC APPROACH

- Working officials and human resources should recognize current and former VA health professions trainees as a priority applicant pool for Title 38 and hybrid Title 38 vacancies.
- VA health professions trainees are eligible for direct and indirect hiring paths.
- Early communication between HR and relevant clinical areas (with training partners) should occur to identify viable candidates current or former graduates before making decisions.
- Fully utilize hybrid Title 38 and Title 38 flexibility, don't log down the recruitment and hiring process with internal clinical announcements when there is a pool of health professions trainees who are eligible for direct or indirect hiring.
- Current operating procedures should be updated to include VA health professions trainees.



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TakeACloserLook@VA (TACLVA)

- TakeACloserLook@VA (TACLVA) is VA's first agency-wide strategic recruitment initiative targeting VHA Health Professions Trainees
- Ongoing collaboration between NHRS and Office of Academic Affiliations (OAA)
- Featured in VA Blogs, agency-wide HR, PAO, and program office calls
- Special campaign for psychology to match interested trainees with vacancies - requires notification of vacancies by Psychology Chiefs



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TakeACloserLook@VA (TACLVA)

- Marketing efforts: social media presence at Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter
- TakeACloserLook@VA hosts VA career information for trainees and early-career psychologists

<http://www.vacareers.va.gov/taclva>

The screenshot shows the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs website. The main navigation bar includes links for Health, Benefits, Burials & Memorials, About VA, Resources, News Room, and Locations. The breadcrumb trail reads: VA Health Care > VA Careers > Take a Closer Look. The page title is 'VA Careers' and the sub-header is 'Take the First Step Toward a Career at VA' with a 'SHARE' button. Below the header is a 'QUICK LINKS' section with buttons for Hospital Locator, Health Programs, Protect Your Health, and A-Z Health Topics. A 'Veterans Crisis Line' banner is also visible. The main content area features a large image of a smiling woman in a white lab coat, with the 'TAKE A VA CLOSER LOOK' logo overlaid. Text below the image reads: 'As a VHA Health Trainee, your career is just beginning. Now's the time to make the career decisions that will define your life. Take your first step on your new journey with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Read more about how VA can support you career.' A 'Support for your finances' section mentions 'VA offers generous loan repayment programs because'. On the right, a 'Learn more & Launch Your Career at VA' box prompts users to sign up for a newsletter and includes an email address input field and a 'Submit' button.



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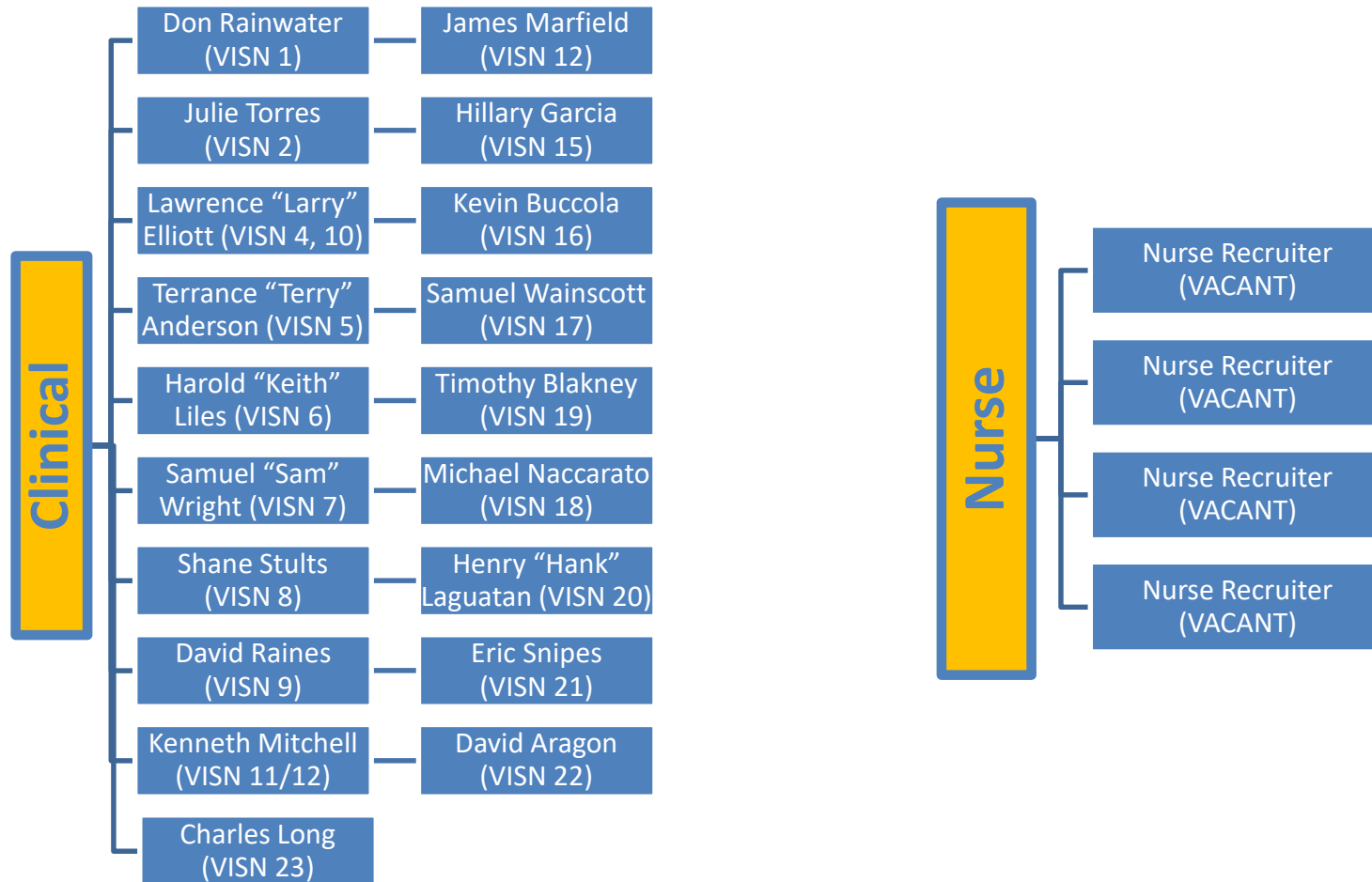


National Healthcare Recruitment Service (NHRS)

- Team of professional healthcare recruiters using private industry best practices to fill VA's critical vacancies
- Recruiters work directly with clinical hiring managers to learn position requirements to aid in finding the “best fit”
- Develops tailored recruitment plans to identify, screen and refer candidates
- Identifies and finds solutions for obsolete hiring and onboarding practices



NHRS Recruiters





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Resources

- FY17 Hiring VA Trainees Flyer and HR Question and Answers
- [Myth Busters-Special Hiring Authority](#)
- [NHRS Recruiter Search](#)
- [USAJOBS How to Apply Tips](#)
- [TakeACloserLook@VA homepage](#)
- [TakeACloserLook@va.gov](#) for applicants interested in future employment
- [Trainee.recruitment@va.gov](#) for questions regarding trainee recruitment





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