

**Date:** FEB 19 2015

**From:** Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration (006)

**Subj:** Mandatory Fair Employment Opportunities Training for Human Resources Professionals and Hiring Managers (VAIQ 7567246)

**To:** Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials

1. On October 14, 2014, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Katherine Archuleta, issued a memorandum, titled "Government-wide Guidance to Ensure Fair Employment Opportunities for Applicants Who Are Unemployed or Facing Financial Difficulty Through No Fault of Their Own." Within 180 days from the date of this memorandum (April 12, 2015) all hiring officials and human resources professionals are to be trained in accordance with the President of the United States call to action for employers, communities, and Federal agencies to take steps to reduce barriers to employment, encourage recruitment, and facilitate hiring of hundreds of thousands of Americans who have the skills, experience and a desire to work. The training course will be broadcast live using the new VA Information Technology Campus Studio at [www.vaitcampus.com](http://www.vaitcampus.com) on or about March 20, 2015 through April 11, 2015. It is important all VA hiring officials and HR professionals take the training during this timeframe in order to meet the deadline set by the OPM of April 12, 2015.

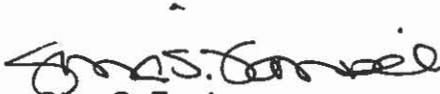
2. Specifically, the memorandum states, applicants should not be prevented from applying or obtaining employment solely due to a gap in employment or financial difficulties endured through no fault of their own; and hiring officials and human resources (HR) professionals are to ensure the fair treatment of all applicants, as well as current employees, throughout the hiring process. The memorandum also states, "(a) Agencies shall not make an unfavorable determination with respect to the suitability, fitness, or qualifications of an applicant for Federal employment because the applicant: (i) is or was unemployed; or (ii) has experienced or is experiencing financial difficulty through no fault of the applicant, if the applicant has undertaken good-faith efforts to meet his/her financial obligations." In the VA hiring process, the Optional Form (OF) - 306 Declaration for Federal Employment is used to make suitability determinations, and should not be used to make qualifications determinations. HR Offices may not require the submission of the OF-306 as part of the initial application process, unless the position being filled is a Testing Designated Position (see VA Handbook 5021) or requires a credential (i.e., certification, licensure or registration). Hiring managers and HR professionals may not use periods of unemployment or suitability issues as a basis for disqualifying or not considering applicants in the initial phase of the hiring process.

Page 2

Subject: Mandatory Fair Employment Opportunities Training for Human Resources Professionals and Hiring Managers (VAIQ 7567246)

3. To ensure the training requirement is met (outlined in the memorandum from OPM), the VA HR Academy has developed a brief training course, using the new virtual training platform, for all HR professionals and hiring managers on the guidance you will need to follow to ensure there are not unnecessary barriers facing the long term unemployed.

4. For questions regarding this HR training requirement, please contact Janice Jones, Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM), at [janice.jones10@va.gov](mailto:janice.jones10@va.gov) or Lula Bright, VA HR Academy, OHRM, at [lula.bright@va.gov](mailto:lula.bright@va.gov).

  
Gina S. Farrisee