



# Onboarding Toolkit for Onsite Sponsors





## VA Veterans Onboarding Program

Welcome to the VA Veterans Onboarding Program! As an onsite sponsor, you will play a key role in building a foundation of success for Veterans and Military Service Members across VA. The Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO) created this comprehensive onboarding program to help you equip new Veteran employees with the skills and support they need to thrive at VA.

Preparing Veterans for long-term careers at VA requires collaboration from HR professionals, supervisors, onsite sponsors and Veteran mentors. This Onboarding Toolkit provides you with the information you will need to participate in the onboarding program. The toolkit materials are listed below, along with a description of how you can use each document to support your role in the field test.

- **Onsite Sponsor Guide to Onboarding Veterans and Military Service Members**  
Review this guide to understand the background, timeline and materials to help you onboard new employees.
- **Fact Sheet**  
Refer to this fact sheet for quick tips on helping the new Veteran employee acclimate to VA.
- **Flyer**  
Share this flyer with your staff and colleagues to spread awareness of the onboarding program.
- **Key Stakeholder Overview**  
Use this briefing to understand your specific role, responsibilities, and tools available to you.
- **Talking Points**  
Refer to these simple messages when colleagues inquire about the program or review them to understand more information about the program.
- **Email Template\***  
Use this template when onboarding a Veteran or Military Service Member.
- **Supporting Program Tools\***
  - Onboarding Checklist for Onsite Sponsor
  - Onboarding Roles and Activities

Thank you for your support of VESO's efforts and our Veteran employees.

*\*Refer to the Onsite Sponsor Guide to Onboarding Veterans and Military Service Members for more specific instructions about how and when to use these materials.*

# *Onsite Sponsor Guide to Onboarding Veterans and Military Service Members*



## Message from the Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO)



The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) established the Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO) to focus solely on recruiting, retaining and reintegrating qualified Veterans into the VA workforce.

VA wants to be the employer of choice for Veterans and Military Service Members (in the National Guard or Reserves). The VA Veterans Onboarding Program will help facilitate the transition to a career at VA.

As onsite sponsor, you play an important role by creating an onboarding experience that affirms to our Veterans and service members that they have made the right career choice.

You can make a significant difference in how quickly the new employee becomes productive while directly affecting employee engagement and retention. Using the resources from the VA Veterans Onboarding Program will make your job easier as you help to welcome new employees into your daily operations.

First impressions of our organization—both good and bad—are made the first day. Think back on your first day at VA. What do you remember?

You can help shape another meaningful VA career. Thank you for supporting those who serve our country, both in uniform and at VA.



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## Introduction

Remember your first days as a new VA employee? Those initial experiences go a long way in determining how quickly you became an effective, fully contributing member of the workforce.

Now it's your turn to help ensure that the new Veteran hire's first days on the job are a positive experience. You have been selected as an onsite sponsor because you exemplify special qualities and are a role model for the new employee. An onsite sponsor should be available to:

- Answer questions or find someone who can.
- Offer suggestions and advice about VA and the local area.
- Help the new hire find his or her way around at work.

Typically, you can expect to serve as an onsite sponsor from the day the new hire accepts the job offer to about a month after his or her start date.

## VA Veterans Onboarding Program

The VA Veterans Onboarding Program is more than simply equipping new hires with the tools and resources to perform the job. It's about creating a positive experience that starts before the new hire comes in the front door.

The VA Veterans Onboarding Program provides you with information and resources to successfully bring a newly hired Veteran or Military Service Member on board.

### Why Is Onboarding Important?

Successful onboarding directly affects employee retention. Statistics show that employees need the most support during the first 18 months of employment. Making a strong first and lasting impression is essential.

The VA Veterans Onboarding Program is important because it can:

- Reduce turnover and retraining costs
- Help the new hire transition quickly and become productive sooner
- Affect employee retention and overall job satisfaction
- Build a cohesive team

As the onsite sponsor, you will have direct contact with the new employee during the first month and a unique opportunity to affect the new hire's decision to stay at VA.



## Onsite Sponsor Role and Responsibilities

In your role as the onsite sponsor, you will support the new hire during his or her first 30 days of employment. To foster a positive and productive work environment, you will advise and encourage the newly hired Veteran or service member. Some of the responsibilities of the onsite sponsor include helping the new employee to:

- Feel welcome
- Understand the structure, culture, policies and practices of VA
- Become familiar with the available services and location of resources he or she needs to do the job

Review the [Onsite Sponsor Checklist](#) and the [Onboarding & Mentoring Roles and Activities](#) resources to prepare to welcome the new hire on his or her first day. Direct any questions you may have about your role and responsibilities to your supervisor.



### Before the New Hire's First Day

Sending a welcome message to the new employee sets the right tone. It's your opportunity to introduce yourself and to extend an offer of support before the first day of employment. Ask your supervisor about sending a welcome message to the new hire. Use the [welcome message](#) template to send your email greeting. Be sure to coordinate sending your welcome message with the supervisor's email.

Check with the supervisor to see if you can help prepare the new hire's work space with supplies and instructions, such as:

- Phone directory of contacts, e.g., Human Resources.
- Voicemail instructions.
- General office supplies (stapler, tape dispenser, pens, scissors, paper, etc.)
- Instructions for requesting technical support for the computer and/or phone.

Having the necessary supplies and instructions available for using the equipment on the first day of work allows a new hire to feel welcome and more comfortable.

### New Hire's First Day

An employee's first day is full of excitement and anticipation. Not only must the new hire adjust to an entirely new environment, but he or she must also learn and remember new names and locations.

The better prepared you are to welcome the new hire on his or her first day, the easier this transition will be for everyone. Feeling welcome at the start supports that all-important positive first impression of the organization.

During the first days, an onsite sponsor should provide:

- Advice, guidance and encouragement
- Help in understanding the culture of VA
- Suggestions on how to balance office communications via email, the telephone, or in person.
- Help in building networks and relationships within the work group

Show the new hire how to locate the onboarding materials for [Veterans and Military Service Members](#) on the *VA for Vets* website. Share the Onboarding Roles and Activities tool with the new hire. Let him or her know that you are a resource for the first 30 days.

The supervisor will provide you with a Point of Contact list of key people who the new hire should meet. Share the list with the new employee and use it for tracking purposes. Explain that you will introduce the new employee to key people over the course of the first month.

Before introductions, ask the new hire to say his or her name, and then repeat back his or her name to ensure you are pronouncing it correctly.

Show the new employee around the workplace. A tour of the facility should include:



- Restrooms
- Break/lunch rooms/kitchen
- Vending machines
- Supply room, including any office procedures
- Emergency and first-aid supplies
- Copier and fax machine, including instructions on use
- Mail center(s)
- Transportation services and stops
- Elevators and stairwells for exiting the building in case of evacuation

After the tour, make sure the new hire knows how to contact you, his or her supervisor and the HR professional.

If possible, try to eat lunch together on the first day and invite other coworkers to join you. It is important to build a social network at work and to help others get to know the new employee.

A new job often means an adjustment for the entire family, especially if they have relocated. Ask about hobbies and interests and do what you can to ease the transition to help him or her feel comfortable in the organization.

## New Hire's First Week

Make time to review the resources and tools on the *VA for Vets* website ([VAforVets.va.gov](http://VAforVets.va.gov)). Encourage the new employee to review the VA Veterans Onboarding Program web pages and to set up a [VA for Vets](http://VAforVets) account.



## First 30 Days

During the next several weeks, help the new hire settle into the organization and answer day-to-day questions. Encourage the new hire to build relationships with other coworkers. Maintain frequent contact and share some unwritten rules such as traditions (e.g., casual Friday), nuances and relevant incentive programs. Discuss initial experiences and whether they match the new hire's expectations.

## Summary

The VA Veterans Onboarding Program ensures new employees are quickly on their way to establishing productive and satisfying VA careers. You can make a difference in the first 30 days by fostering a positive and productive work environment.

Thank you for supporting those who serve our country, both in uniform and at VA.

At the end of the VA Veterans Onboarding Program, VESO will send you and the new hire an onboarding feedback form. You are strongly encouraged to complete the form.

If you have questions about the program, please contact VESO at [vaveteranonboarding@va.gov](mailto:vaveteranonboarding@va.gov).

## Onsite Sponsor Tips



### DO

- Be patient and positive. It takes time to develop a relationship.
- Look for a preferred style of communication.
- Remember that listening may be more important than giving advice in some instances.

### DON'T

- Try to cover everything right away.
- Worry about being perceived as the “expert.” Your experience is important to the new hire, but you don’t have to know all of the answers.
- Try to force a relationship.
- Judge and be careful not to draw conclusions without exploring why someone feels or acts the way they do.



## VA Veterans Onboarding Program

### Onsite Sponsor Fact Sheet

The VA Veterans Onboarding Program helps newly hired Veteran and Military Service Member employees to transition from military service to the federal civilian workforce. Your organizational expertise and friendly personality distinguish you as an onsite sponsor to help new hires feel welcome and comfortable during their first days at VA.

#### **Prepare for Onboarding**

Your supervisor will reach out to you with information about the new employee, including his or her name, start date and position. You should coordinate with your supervisor and begin planning the new hire's first-day activities in the weeks leading up to his or her arrival.

**Develop** a schedule for the new employee's first day, which should involve:

- Greeting him or her at the facility's entrance
- Introducing him or her to new colleagues
- Attending HR orientation
- Touring the VA facility

**Send** a welcome message to the new employee. Include instructions about:

- Transportation
- Parking
- Arrival time
- Facility access
- Contact information

#### **Welcome the New Hire**

Make the first impression a positive one by helping him or her feel at ease and being the go-to resource for any questions or concerns.

- Greet and welcome the new hire when he or she arrives.
- Introduce the new hire to your supervisor and colleagues.
- Escort the new employee to HR orientation.
- Consider inviting him or her to lunch.
- Provide your perspective on the organization's culture, mission, values and procedures.
- Serve as a resource to answer any questions or concerns during the first week.

#### **Onboarding Beyond the First Day**

Onboarding does not end after the first day. It is a process that continues until the employee is fully acclimated to VA and his or her new position. You are part of a critical network of support that will ensure the Veteran begins to build a long-term, meaningful VA career.

- **Check in** with the new employee periodically.
- **Offer** your ongoing support as he or she "learns the ropes."

Access the *VA for Vets* website for guides, checklists, letters and helpful tips at [www.VAforVets.VA.gov/onboarding](http://www.VAforVets.VA.gov/onboarding).

# WELCOME

## Veterans and Military Service Members !

### Launching Your Civilian Career at VA

VA wants to ensure you have the skills and support you need to succeed here. As part of the Veterans Onboarding Program, you will receive orientation, mentoring and training tailored to help ease the transition from military service to the civilian workforce.

### Onboarding and Mentoring Resources

Your support team is available to help you launch a successful civilian career at VA:

- **HR Professionals** to conduct orientation
- **Onsite sponsors** to guide you through the first few week of employment and introduce you to new coworkers
- **Supervisors** will review performance expectations with you and help you achieve your individual career development goals
- **Mentors** will answer questions and help you adjust to the VA culture
- **Training** resources are available to help you shape your career path and succeed at VA

Visit the *VA for Vets* website at [VAforVets.VA.gov/employees](https://VAforVets.VA.gov/employees) for additional information and resources.





# Veteran Onboarding and Mentoring Program Key Stakeholder Overview



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# Onboarding Program Overview

- The Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO) is launching the Veterans Onboarding Program, a comprehensive effort to ensure new Veteran and Military Service Member employees have the support they need to thrive at VA. The program will:
  - Provide support and resources for newly hired Veterans and Military Service Members during the first six months of employment
  - Complement existing orientation programs at VA field offices
  - Help Veterans successfully transition from the military to the federal civilian workforce
- **Key stakeholders** that will implement the program include HR professionals, supervisors, on-site sponsors and mentors. This presentation will review not only the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholder participation, but will outline the specific tools developed to assist key stakeholders

# Onboarding and Mentoring Program Roles and Activities



# HR Professionals



- Provide new hires with an overview of VA policies and procedures

## Roles and Responsibilities



# HR Professionals (cont'd)



- Tools to help you:

## Guidance Documents

- Quick Reference Card for HR Professionals

## Templates and Samples

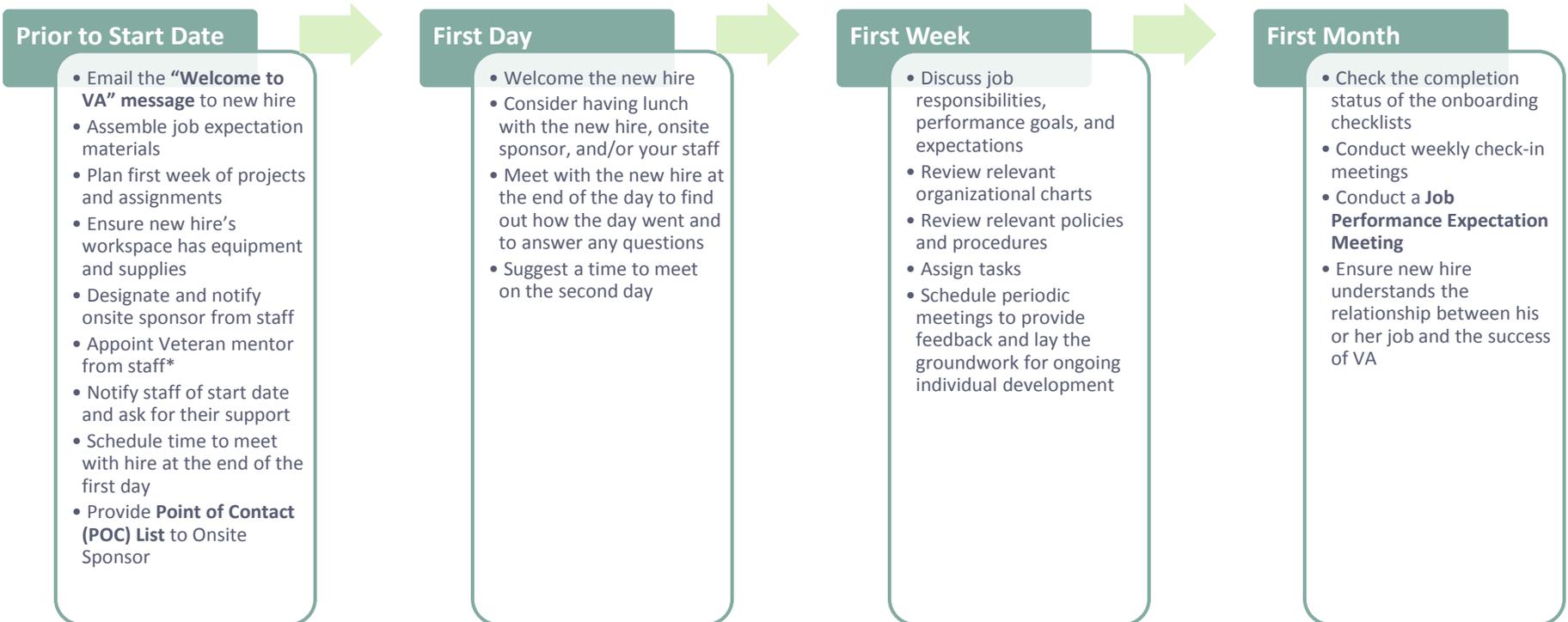
- Sample Orientation Outline



# Supervisors

- Set performance expectations and help new hires achieve their development goals

## Roles and Responsibilities



# Supervisors (cont'd)



- Tools to help you:

## Guidance Documents

- Onboarding Roles and Activities
- Supervisors Guide to Onboarding Veterans and Military Service Members
- Onboarding Checklist for Supervisors

## Templates and Samples

- Job Performance Expectation Meeting Template
- Agenda for Check-in Meeting Template
- Welcome Message to New Hire Sample
- Supervisor Message to Onsite Sponsor Sample
- Supervisor Message to Staff Sample

## Other Tools

- POC List
- Onboarding Feedback Form for Supervisors
- Self-Directed Learning VA Websites
- Guided Conversations Agenda



# Onsite Sponsors



- Serve as the initial point of contact at VA and help new hires get situated

## Roles and Responsibilities



# Onsite Sponsors (cont'd)



- Tools to help you:

## Guidance Documents

- Onboarding Roles and Activities
- Onsite Sponsor Guide to Onboarding Veterans and Military Service Members
- Onboarding Checklist for Onsite Sponsors

## Templates and Samples

- Welcome Message to New Hire Sample

## Forms

- Onboarding Feedback Form for Onsite Sponsors

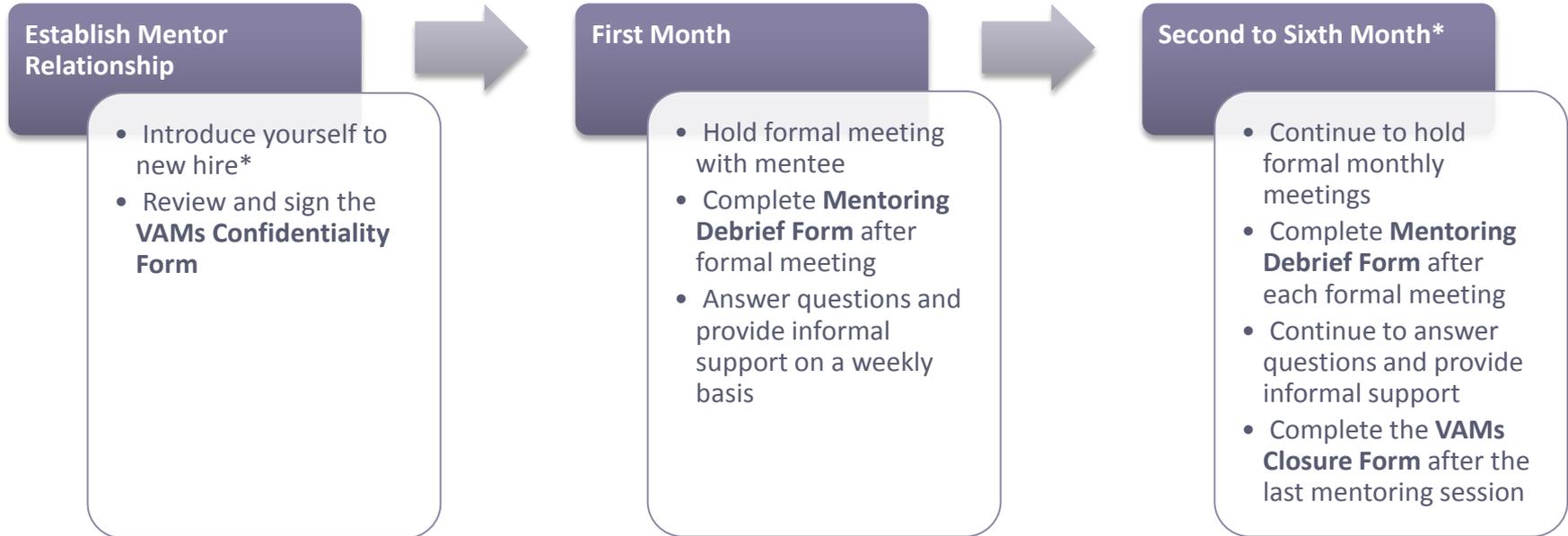


# Veteran Mentors



- Ease the transition from military to civilian workforce and help understand the culture of VA

## Roles and Responsibilities



# Veteran Mentors (cont'd)



- Tools to help you:

## Guidance Documents

- Veterans as Mentors Guide to Mentoring
- VAMs Checklist

## Forms

- VAMs Mentoring Debrief Form
- VAMs Confidentiality Agreement
- VAMs Closure Form
- Onboarding Feedback Form for Veteran Mentors

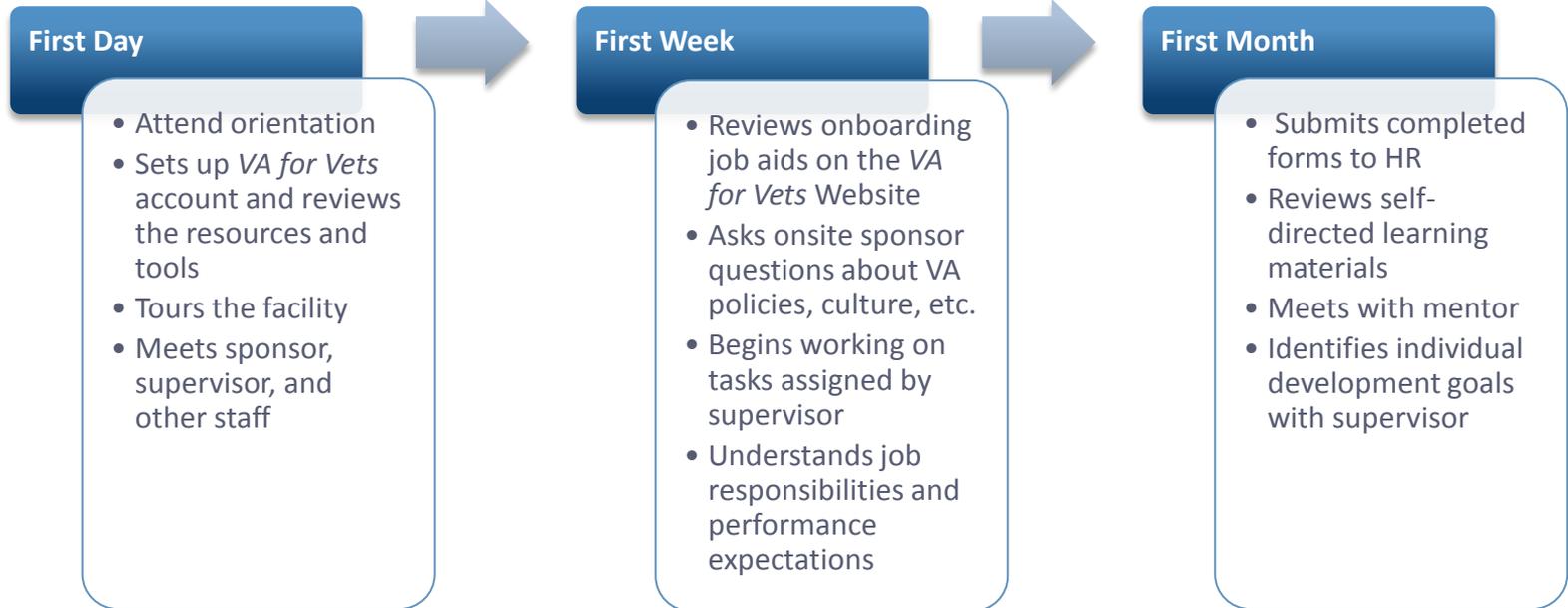


# New Hires



- Support the mission of VA

## Activities



# New Hires (cont'd)



- Tools to help them:

## Guidance Documents

- Onboarding Roles and Activities
- Onboarding Checklist for Veterans and Military Service Members
- Planning for Success at VA Job Aid
- VAMs Fact Sheet

## Forms

- Individual Development Plan
- Onboarding Feedback Form for Veterans and Military Service Members



# Thank You



- Thank you for supporting Veterans and fostering a Veteran-friendly work environment.
- To learn more about the Onboarding and Mentoring Program, visit:
  - [VAforVets.VA.gov/Onboarding](https://VAforVets.VA.gov/Onboarding)





## VA Veterans Onboarding Program

### Overview Talking Points

- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) values the Veterans and Military Service Members who have chosen to continue their public service as federal employees.
- To ensure that these new employees have the skills and support they need to thrive at VA, the Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO) is launching a comprehensive onboarding program.
- The VA Veterans Onboarding Program is a talent management tool that enables Veterans and Military Service Members to successfully transition to the federal civilian service.
- This program begins when a job offer is accepted and continues over several months as the new employee is introduced to VA's mission, vision and values and becomes socialized to the Department's culture.
- Through onboarding, employees will more fully understand and feel connected to the VA's organizational strategy and culture.
- The measure of success for the *VA for Vets* onboarding program is fully engaged and productive Veteran employees who build long-term VA careers, feeling valued and recognized for their contributions to the team.





## VA Veterans Onboarding Program

### Welcome Message Sample Email

#### Onsite Sponsor to New Hire

Dear [NEW HIRE],

Welcome to [ORGANIZATION]. My name is [SPONSOR NAME] and I will serve as your onsite resource for the first month of employment, answering your questions and helping you become comfortable with your new working environment.

On the first day I will meet you at [SITE-SPECIFIC LOCATION, LIKE FRONT DOOR, SECURITY GATE, PARKING, ETC.] on [OFFICE ADDRESS/LOCATION] at [TIME] and escort you to the orientation. [Provide parking/public transportation and building access instructions.]

After orientation, I will meet you and give you a tour of the facility, make sure you are comfortable in your office space and introduce you to some of the staff.

I'm really looking forward to meeting you and providing you with any help you may need to be successful at [ORGANIZATION]. If you have any questions, please contact me at [PHONE] or [EMAIL]. I look forward to seeing you on [START DATE].

Best,

[ONSITE SPONSOR NAME]

cc: [SUPERVISOR NAME]



## Veteran Onboarding Program

### Onboarding & Mentoring Roles and Activities

This document lists the key roles and activities for onboarding and mentoring a Veteran or Military Service Member.

**New Hire:** Veteran or Military Service Member who is new to Federal civilian workforce.

**Onsite Sponsor:** Appointed staff member who partners with a Veteran or Military Service Member during the first 30 days of employment to help orient him or her into VA.

**Mentor:** Veteran volunteer who provides cultural mentoring and transition assistance to the new hire.

**Supervisor:** Involved throughout the entire onboarding process to create an experience that reaffirms the Veteran's or Military Service Member's decision to join VA.



#### New Hire

- Accepts job offer.

#### Onsite Sponsor

- Learn the correct pronunciation of the new hire's name.
- Ask your supervisor about sending a [welcome message](#) to the new hire.
- Review the Point of Contact list provided by the supervisor.
- Help supervisor set up the new office space, as requested.

#### Supervisor

- Confirm with HR the new hire's start date and orientation date, time, and location.
- Assign an onsite sponsor.
- Review the sample welcome messages to [New Hire](#), [Onsite Sponsor](#) and [Staff](#) to determine if applicable.
- Assemble job expectation materials for the new hire and plan the first week of work assignments.
- Provide the onsite sponsor with the [Point of Contact](#) list of key people the new hire should meet.
- Review the [Guided Conversations](#) agenda.
- Review the [VA Websites](#) and add any additional links to the template.
- Request computer and phone access for the new hire.
- Arrange for building pass, parking pass, and IDs, as necessary.
- Explore the [VA for Vets](#) website.
- Ensure that the workspace is set up with office supplies, nameplate, working phone, phone list, and working computer.
- Schedule a time to meet with the new hire at the end of the first day.



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#### New Hire

- Meet the onsite sponsor.
- Attend orientation.
- Take a tour of the facility with the onsite sponsor.
- Meet supervisor and coworkers.
- Review the Onboarding Roles and Activities resource with the onsite sponsor.
- Access the onboarding materials for [Veterans and Military Service Members](#) with the onsite sponsor.
- Request contact information from onsite sponsor, supervisor and HR professional.
- Check that phone and computer are working.
- Confirm what time to meet the supervisor on day 2.

#### Onsite Sponsor

- Meet the new hire at the start of the first day.
- Escort the new employee to and from orientation; consider attending with him or her (optional).
- Have lunch with the new hire, coworkers and/or supervisor (optional).
- Tour the facility with the new hire.
- Introduce the new hire to colleagues on the Point of Contact list.
- Share the Onboarding Roles and Activities document with the new hire.
- Demonstrate how to locate the [Veterans and Military Service Members](#) onboarding materials for the new employee.
- Provide relevant contact information to the new employee, including how to reach the onsite sponsor, the supervisor and the HR professional.
- Provide information about the office phone and voicemail and technical support.

#### Supervisor

- Welcome the new hire.
- Consider having lunch with the new hire and the onsite sponsor and/or staff (optional).
- Meet with new hire at end of the day.
- Suggest a time to meet the new hire on day 2.



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#### New Hire

- Review information about the office phone and voicemail and technical support with onsite sponsor.
- Review the [Veterans Onboarding Program](#) website and set up your [VA for Vets](#) account.
- Discuss overall job responsibilities and performance expectations with the supervisor.
- Review relevant organizational charts, policies and procedures with supervisor.
- Select a mentor through the [Veterans As Mentors \(VAMS\) Program](#).

#### Onsite Sponsor

- Encourage the new hire to review the onboarding website and to set up a [VA for Vets](#) account.
- Check with the new hire daily to answer any questions.

#### Supervisor

- Discuss overall job responsibilities, performance goals and expectations with the new employee.
- Review relevant organizational charts, policies and procedures.
- Introduce initial work assignments and discuss short-term performance expectations.

#### Mentor

Prior to first meeting:

- Review the VAMS [Confidentiality Agreement](#).
- Arrange for your first meeting with the mentee.



## Veteran Onboarding Program

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#### New Hire

- Submit completed benefit forms to HR.
- Use the [VA Websites](#) list for on-the-job learning.
- Meet with the veteran mentor to discuss and sign the [Confidentiality Agreement](#).

#### Onsite Sponsor

- Check with the new hire weekly to answer any questions.
- Complete the onboarding program feedback form.

#### Supervisor

- Check the completion status of the onboarding checklists for Veterans and Military Service Members and the onsite sponsor.
- Make sure the new hire understands the relationship between the job and the success of the organization.
- Provide a list of [VA Websites](#) to the new hire.
- Conduct a [Job Performance Expectation Meeting](#).
- Conduct a weekly [Check-in Meeting](#).

#### Mentor

First Meeting:

- Review the VAMs [Confidentiality Agreement](#) with the mentee.
- Obtain signatures on the VAMs Confidentiality Agreement.
- Ask the mentee what he or she needs to discuss.
- Complete the VAMs [Mentoring Debrief Form](#) during the meeting.



## Veteran Onboarding Program

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#### New Hire

- Discuss preliminary performance feedback with the supervisor.
- Review the [Planning for Your Success at VA](#) resource with the supervisor.
- Take additional office or role-specific training, as directed.

#### Onsite Sponsor

- Continue to check with the new hire to answer any questions.

#### Supervisor

- Provide the new hire with preliminary performance feedback.
- Discuss the performance goal-writing process with the new employee.
- Review the [Planning for Your Success at VA](#) resource with the new hire.
- Discuss additional office or role-specific training requirements, if applicable.
- Check the completion status of the onboarding checklist for Veterans and Military Service Members.
- Conduct biweekly and 90-day [Check-in Meetings](#).

#### Mentor

Future Meetings:

- Use the VAMs [Mentoring Debrief Form](#) to guide the start of your future meetings.





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#### New Hire

- Review [MyCareer@VA](#) for more information about career planning and Individual Development Plans (IDPs).
- Work with supervisor to prepare an [IDP](#).
- Take additional office or role-specific training, as directed.
- Attend 6-month Check-in Meeting with supervisor.
- Complete the VAMs [Closure Form](#).
- Complete onboarding program feedback form.

#### Onsite Sponsor

- Continue to check with the new hire to answer any questions.

#### Mentor

Final Meeting:

- Ask the mentee to complete the VAMs Closure Form.
- Complete the VAMs [Closure Form](#).

#### Supervisor

- Coordinate the development of the [IDP](#) with the new hire (recommended).
- Consider discussing career development opportunities and performance feedback.
- Make sure the new employee is familiar with any annual training or certification requirements for the VA position.
- Check on the completion status of the onboarding checklist for Veterans and Military Service Members.
- Conduct 6-month [Check-in Meeting](#).
- Complete the onboarding program feedback form.



## VA Veterans Onboarding Program

### Onsite Sponsor Checklist

This checklist contains the onboarding activities that will help new Veteran and Military Service Member employees' transition to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). For more details, see the Onsite Sponsor Guide for Onboarding Veterans and Military Service Members on the *VA for Vets* website ([VAforVets.VA.gov](http://VAforVets.VA.gov)).

**Directions:** Complete each activity on this checklist.

#### Before the First Day

- Learn the correct pronunciation of the new hire's name.
- Ask your supervisor about sending a [welcome message](#) to the new hire.
- Review the Point of Contact list provided by the supervisor.
- Help the supervisor set-up the new office space, as requested.

#### Day 1

- Meet the new hire at the start of the first day.
- Escort the new employee to and from orientation; consider attending with him or her (optional).
- Have lunch with the new hire, coworkers and/or supervisor (optional).
- Tour the facility with the new hire.
- Introduce the new hire to colleagues on the Point of Contact list.
- Share the Onboarding Roles and Activities document with the new hire.
- Demonstrate how to locate the [Veterans and Military Service Members](#) onboarding materials for the new employee.
- Provide relevant contact information to the new employee, including how to reach the onsite sponsor, the supervisor and the HR professional.
- Provide information about the office phone and voicemail and technical support.

#### Week 1

- Encourage the new hire to review the onboarding website and to set up a [VA for Vets](#) account.
- Check with the new hire daily to answer any questions.

#### Month 1

- Check with the new hire weekly to answer any questions.
- Complete the onboarding program feedback form.