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GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF  
**VETERANS SERVICE**

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## DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVES

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MAY 9, 2023

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Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

# ***Georgia Department of Veterans Service***

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June 1, 2022

## **Executive Management**

### **Department Directive 1.100**

**SUBJECT:** Directives and Manuals as the System for Disseminating Policy and Procedures for Department Operations

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Commissioner of Veterans Service

#### **GENERAL:**

1. The Department of Veterans Service is organized under the authority of the Constitution of the State of Georgia, at Article IV, Section V, Paragraph 1, and O.C.G.A. § 38-4, the Commissioner of Veterans Service is appointed by the Veterans Service Board for a term of office of four years.
2. The Commissioner of Veterans Service is the chief executive and chief administrative official of the Department of Veterans Service. In order to carry out the duties of the office the Commissioner of Veterans Service issues directives, policies and procedures necessary for the orderly operation of the Department of Veterans Service.
3. Policies and procedures in the form of department directives and manuals will periodically be issued under the authority of the Commissioner of Veterans Service.
  - a. Department directives will outline policy for the operation of various portions of departmental business and operations.
  - b. Some procedures may be provided in directives; however, department manuals will be procedurally oriented and implement policies outlined in directives.
4. Department directives and manuals will be arranged numerically by subject matter or topic. A complete listing of department directives and manuals will be published in an index of department directives, manuals, and forms.
5. Department directives and manuals will be published periodically, as needed. Once published, each department directive and manual will be reviewed at least every three (3) years and a change to the department directive or manual will be issued following the review documenting any changes to the publication and the currency of it, which will remain in effect for an additional three (3) years.
6. Changes to department directives and manuals will be published whenever a change to the policies and procedures contained in the documents or changes to procedures contained in the documents are implemented.

- a. Changes to department directives and manuals are encouraged to be used, rather than complete re-publication of the department directive or manual.
  - b. However, once it has been determined over one-third of a department directive or department manual has been substantively changed, or a department directive or department manual is older than six (6) years from the date of last publication, the department directive or department manual will be revised and re-published with any changes incorporated into the basic document to assure currency of the guidance provided in the document.
7. Department personnel are encouraged to bring policy matters to the attention of their supervisors that may lead to or require the publication of a directive or manual to provide necessary guidance to department personnel for their implementation throughout the department, or in specific areas.
8. Memoranda, emails and other written communications may be used by executive directors and division directors to disseminate policy guidance to department personnel that is short-term in nature or provided as immediate guidance pending the approval and publication of long-term guidance in the form of a department directive or manual. Department directives or manuals should be approved and published within 60 days of the issuance of memoranda, emails or other written communications related to long-term guidance.
9. The attachment to this directive is the template of how department directives will appear related to style, format, content outline and documentation of approval.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

10. The Commissioner of Veterans Service has overall responsibility for the approval and implementation of department directives. Executive directors of the department are authorized to approve and implement department directives on behalf of the Commissioner of Veterans Service for topics within their respective areas of responsibility. When the policies contained in directives extend across the functional lines of the executive directors, such as Human Resources, electronic claims processing, then coordination between the executive directors involved will take place and be documented in a case file for the respective directive.
11. Because department manuals outline procedures contained in department directives, executive directors of the department are authorized to approve and implement department manuals for topics within their respective areas of responsibility. When the policies contained in directives extend across the functional lines of the executive directors, such as Human Resources, electronic claims processing, then coordination between the executive directors involved will take place and be documented in a case file for the respective directive.
12. Offices of Primary Responsibility for topics will develop the contents for department directives and manuals and will write the documentation and coordinate it through administrative channels for approval of those documents.
13. The Executive Director, Health, Memorials Division, Finance and Development, or their designee, following approval of the document, is responsible for the publication of department directives, manuals, and changes to those documents.

14. The Chief Operations Officer, or their designee, will be responsible for ensuring the completion of the periodic reviews of department directives and manuals.
15. Department personnel are encouraged to bring matters to the attention of their supervisors that may lead to or require changes to directives and manuals with the goal of improving the guidance provided to department personnel.

**PROCEDURES:**

16. Department functions with responsibility for a topic will write the department directive or manual and submit it through channels to the respective executive director for approval and implementation.
17. The Chief Operations Officer, or their designee, will ensure appropriate edits are made to the document, ensure compliance with departmental style and formatting, and submit the document to the approving authority for approval, signature and implementation.
18. When the directive or manual has been approved, the Chief Operations Officer, or their designee, will arrange for printing, publication and distribution to all applicable department offices and functions.
19. Directives and manuals will be filed electronically and in hard copy in the department's Central Office. Electronic copies of directives and manuals will be posted on the department's website in a separate section for the use of department personnel.
20. Department personnel are encouraged to bring matters to the attention of their supervisors that may lead to or require changes to the procedures outlined in directives and manuals with the goal of improving the guidance provided to department personnel.

COMMISSIONER



PATRICIA M. ROSS

Attachment: As Stated

<p>This department directive replaces DD 1.100, April 1, 2014, which is hereby rescinded. It updates the guidance contained in that department directive and replaces the former commissioner's approval with the approval of the new commissioner.</p>
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Commissioner

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DATE (of approval/publication)

**Series (e.g.: Executive Management, Human Resources, etc.)**

**Department Directive #.#** (e.g.: 1.100, 24.109, etc.)

**SUBJECT:** (title of the directive/manual – should be self-explanatory)

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** (e.g., Health and Memorials, Field Operations and Appeals, etc.)

**GENERAL:**

1. (Outline the general policies contained in the directive; show attachments as needed)
2. (You can have as many of these as needed to communicate the policies)

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

3. (Outline who is responsible for doing what; for example the Commissioner will \_\_\_\_; the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals will \_\_\_\_; the Regional Directors will \_\_\_\_; the Office Managers will \_\_\_\_; Veterans Field Service Officers will \_\_\_\_; etc.; show attachments where needed)
4. (You can have as many of these as needed to communicate the responsibilities)

**PROCEDURES:**

5. (Outline what the procedures are for complying with the directives; try to show the procedures by the positions that are responsible to act; show attachments where needed)
6. (You can have as many of these as needed to communicate the procedures by position; outline all the procedures that are anticipated to occur)

COMMISSIONER  
FIRSTNAME MI. LASTNAME

Attachments: As Stated



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Commissioner

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June 1, 2022

**Executive Management**

**Department Directive 1.101**

**SUBJECT:** Index of Department of Veterans Service Directives and Manuals

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Operations Division

**GENERAL:**

1. There will be an index of department directives and department manuals.
2. The index will provide reference to the several directives and manuals used in the department to provide guidance related to policies and procedures used by the department in the conduct of its routine business and missions.
3. The listing of the current department directives and department manuals is provided in the attachment to this directive.
4. This department directive will be updated at least annually; however, quarterly updates are preferred. The number of updates per year in addition to the annual update will be predicated on the number of additional directives and manuals approved and published during a time period, changes made to existing directives and manuals during a time period, or deletions of directives and manuals during a time period.
  - a. If more than three department directives or department manuals are added, changed or deleted to the attached listing in a three-month period, at least a change to this directive will be published following the end of the three-month period.
  - b. If more than six department directives or department manuals are added, changed or deleted to the attached listing in a three-month period, this directive will be republished following the end of the three-month period.

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

5. The Chief Operations Officer is responsible to maintain and periodically update this department directive.

**PROCEDURES:**

6. The Chief Operations Officer will monitor the number of additional directives and manuals, changes to directives and manuals, and deletions of directives and manuals. When the numbers reach the publication thresholds indicated in Paragraph 4, the Chief



Operations Officer will take the appropriate action to publish a change to this directive or re-publish the directive.

7. The changes and re-published directives will be posted to the department's website for review and use of department personnel.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. M. Ross', written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS

Attachment: As Stated



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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June 1, 2022

**Public Information**

**Department Directive 10.131**

**SUBJECT:** Disclosure of Information

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Public Information and External Affairs Division

**GENERAL:**

1. This directive establishes a uniform standard to deal with open records requests to the Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) in accordance with the O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70, et. seq., related to the inspection of public records and O.C.G.A. § 50-18-90, et. seq., related to state records management, **which are incorporated by reference into this department directive.**

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

2. All department employees must keep current as to the status of exemptions regarding disclosure policies and will seek advice from their supervisors to ensure compliance with the protections of individual privacy, as set forth in the federal Privacy Act of 1974, the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), related federal laws implemented by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the State of Georgia's Open Records Act (cited herein) and the guidance contained in this department directive.

**PROCEDURES:**

3. All department records, except those specifically excluded by federal laws and the O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70, et. seq., are subject to review by the public through the department's compliance with "Open Records Requests."
4. An "Open Records Request" is a request for documents, papers, letters, emails or similar materials prepared, maintained, or received in the course of the operation of the department.
  - a. Research requests, requests to generate records that do not exist, or to assemble or compile a record that is not maintained in the course of operation of the department are not "Open Records Requests," under this policy.
  - b. Under state law, the department is not obligated to generate records that do not exist, or to assemble or compile records not maintained in the course of operation of the department.

5. In the event an "Open Records Request" is received in any office outside of the GDVS' Central Office in Atlanta, office personnel must immediately inform the requestor all requests are acted upon by the Department of Veterans Service, Attention: Director, Public Information and External Affairs, Floyd Veterans Memorial Bldg., Suite E-970, Atlanta, Georgia 30334-4800, for the proper attention and response.
  - a. This will be accomplished by the receiving office immediately advising the requestor in writing the request has been forwarded to the department's Central Office for action.
  - b. At the same time, the receiving office will forward the written request to the department's Central Office for action.
6. In accordance with state law the determination of whether a record is or is not able to be disclosed must be made within three (3) working days of receipt of the original request. If the original request was sent to a department office outside of the department's Central Office and thus forwarded to the Central Office for action, the individual in the Central Office will immediately (within 3-days) advise the requestor of the receipt of the request in the Central Office and a formal response will be forthcoming to the requestor.
  - a. The department official responding to the Open Records Request will provide an initial written response to the requestor within three days of receiving the request.
    - i. At a minimum, the initial response will acknowledge receipt of the request and advise the requestor that action to produce the requested records is underway.
    - ii. The initial response satisfies the requirement of the state law to respond within three days.
  - b. Subsequent responses to the request will be used to provide the actual information requested if that information is available and was not provided as part of the initial response. Every effort will be made to expeditiously provide the requested information.
  - c. Where there are questions concerning the request and whether information available should/should not be provided, consultation with the Georgia Department of Law will be undertaken.
7. Charges for providing records in compliance with "Open Records Requests" are governed by the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 50-18-71.
  - a. The department will impose a reasonable charge for the search, retrieval, redaction, and production or copying costs to produce records pursuant to law and the request.
    - i. The department official responding to the request (the Executive Director, Health, Memorials Division, Finance and Development, or designee) shall utilize the most economical means reasonably calculated to identify and produce responsive, non-excluded documents.
    - ii. Where fees for certified copies or other copies or records are specifically authorized or otherwise prescribed by law, such specific fee shall apply when certified copies or other records to which a specific fee may apply are sought.
    - iii. In all other instances, **the charge for the search, retrieval, or redaction of records shall not exceed the prorated hourly salary of the lowest paid full-time employee who, in the reasonable discretion of the Executive Director, Health,**

**Memorials Division, Finance and Development, has the necessary skill and training to perform the request; provided, however, that no charge shall be made for the first quarter hour.**

- b. A fee of \$.10 per page may be charged for material requested by the public provided that no specific fee is established by law.
- c. In any instance in which the department will seek costs in excess of \$25.00 for responding to a request, the department shall notify the requestor within a reasonable amount of time not to exceed three (3) business days and inform the requestor of the estimate of the costs and the department may defer search and retrieval of the records until the requestor agrees to pay the estimated costs, unless the requestor has stated in his or her request a willingness to pay an amount that exceeds the search and retrieval costs.
- d. In any instance in which the estimated costs for production of the records exceeds \$500.00, the department will insist on prepayment of the costs prior to beginning search, retrieval, review, or production of the records.
- e. Whenever any person who has requested to inspect or copy a public record has not paid the cost for search, retrieval, redaction, or copying of such records when such charges have been lawfully incurred, the department will require prepayment for compliance with all future requests for production of records from that person until the costs for the prior production of records have been paid or the dispute regarding payment resolved.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. M. Ross', is centered below the title 'COMMISSIONER'.

PATRICIA M. ROSS



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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June 1, 2022

### **Administration**

### **Department Directive 21.101**

**SUBJECT:** Weapons Law Implemented in Department Facilities and Offices

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Operations Division

#### **GENERAL:**

1. In the 2014 Session of the Georgia General Assembly a bill was passed and subsequently signed into law by the Governor of Georgia, commonly known as the "Georgia Carry Law," which, **effective July 1, 2014**, will permit individuals with Georgia weapons carry licenses to enter government buildings with firearm weapons. The Attorney General of Georgia was asked by several state agencies to provide advice, direction, and guidance on how state agencies should implement the new law within their areas of responsibility.
2. The direction and guidance provided in this directive is based on the response of the Georgia Department of Law and applies to all department employees and to other individuals entering or otherwise using any facility, office, or property controlled by this department.
3. The applicable guidance from the Georgia Department of Law was presented in a question-and-answer format and that format is used here for the portions of the Law Department's advice that apply to the Georgia Department of Veterans Service, its facilities, and offices.
  - a. Can a person with weapons carry license enter a government building (facility, office, etc.) with a weapon [firearm] if the government building is open to the public and has no security personnel manning a security checkpoint? ***Generally, yes, except as discussed below.***
  - b. Can a state agency have a policy that employees of the agency cannot have weapons on the premises of the agency? ***Yes. However, the agency may not enact rules or regulations restricting weapons possession by the general public nor may an agency maintain a policy of searching employees' privately owned vehicles nor may an agency maintain a policy that restricts employees from possessing weapons locked in personal vehicles parked in parking lots accessible to the public.***
  - c. Can an agency prohibit a member of the public who has a weapons carry license from entering an open government building by simply posting signs warning that weapons are not permitted in the government building? ***No. Weapons carry license holders***

*can enter open government buildings where ingress [entry] is “not restricted or screened by security personnel.”*

4. Accordingly, the following policies are hereby put in place for this department.
  - a. A department employee shall not bring a firearm weapon into a facility or office of this department, even if the employee possesses a valid Georgia weapons carry license.
  - b. A department employee who possesses a Georgia weapons carry license may bring a firearm weapon onto department premises (grounds) in a privately owned vehicle. **The weapon(s) must be locked in the privately owned vehicle and not removed from the privately owned vehicle, under any circumstance, during work/duty hours.**
  - c. Members of the public can enter state government buildings (facilities and offices) with a firearm weapon, where ingress (entry) is not restricted or screened by security personnel.
    - i. Since department facilities and offices generally are not restricted or screened by security personnel, entry will not be restricted.
    - ii. In those facilities and offices located in buildings that are secured by security personnel, who may or may not be “POST Certified,” entry may be restricted and the responsibility for the security personnel belongs to the host agency for the building (for example: local government buildings, federal [VA] buildings, etc.).
  - d. If a department employee becomes aware a member of the public is carrying a firearm weapon, the employee should not immediately be fearful of that individual.
    - i. Department employees should conduct their business in a routine manner.
    - ii. If a concern arises about the individual’s behavior, or when a department employee feels threatened by a member of the public, whether the individual is carrying a firearm weapon or not, and the employee is concerned for their physical well-being, **the department employee should immediately call for emergency law enforcement support by calling “9-1-1,” or by using such other security notification systems as may be in place.**
    - iii. The decision about whether to notify law enforcement personnel of such a situation should be handled carefully and discreetly.
    - iv. **The use of good judgment is imperative.**

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

5. Executive directors and division directors will provide oversight of the administration of this directive.
6. **Chief Operations Officer.** The Chief Operations Officer will ensure annually completed VS Forms 21-101 are filed in the individual Human Resources files of each department employee.
7. **Facility Directors and Office Managers.** Facility directors and office managers will enforce the policies contained in this directive.

8. Individual Department Employees.

- a. Comply with the policies contained in this directive.
- b. Annually, complete VS Form 21-101, Acknowledgment of Reading DD 21.101, Weapons Law Implemented in Department Facilities and Offices, and return the completed and signed form to operations@vs.state.ga.us.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. M. Ross', written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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Date

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge I have on this date received, read and  
Printed Full Name

understand the Georgia Department of Veterans Service Department Directive (DD) 21.101,

**Weapons Law Implemented in Department Facilities and Offices.** Further, I hereby state

I will comply with the policies contained in that Directive.

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Signature





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June 1, 2022

### **Administration**

### **Department Directive 21.102**

**SUBJECT:** Normal Duty Hours

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Operations Division

#### **GENERAL:**

1. This department directive applies to all department personnel / employees.
2. Normal duty hours for the Georgia Department of Veterans Service are:
  - a. Central Office: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
  - b. Operations Division: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
  - c. Public Information Division: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
  - d. Veterans Education & Training Division (State Approving Agency): 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
  - e. Field Operations and Appeals: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
    - i. Veterans Field Service Offices (VFSO):
      1. Free Standing: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
      2. Inside U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Facilities: 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
      3. Other Locations: As determined by the Executive Director, Field Offices and Appeals. These locations include functions located inside a facility where the facility has unique operating hours that affect the access to the GDVS functional space.
    - ii. Appeals Division: 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.
  - f. Health, Memorials, Finance, and Development: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
    - i. Health and Memorials Division: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.
    - ii. State Veterans Cemeteries: 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

- iii. State War Veterans Homes: These homes are operated for the department by the Augusta University and by a contract operator. Normal Duty Hours are established by the Executive Directors of the homes.

3. Office Hours:

- a. Office hours is a term related to department personnel providing customer service to veterans and veteran family members. Normal office hours will begin at the same time as the start of normal duty hours and end at the end of normal duty hours, Monday through Friday.
  - b. **EXCEPTION:** At the Appeals Division and VFSOs, the first hour of the workday is designated for administrative and training activities.
    - i. Consequently, the Appeals Division and VFSOs will open to provide customer service to veterans and/or their family members one-hour after the start of the normal duty hours indicated in Paragraph 1 of this directive.
    - ii. The conclusion of normal office hours for the Appeals Division and VFSOs will be at the end of the normal duty hours.
4. Department personnel are expected to be present for duty for the normal duty hours of the office or functional area to which they are assigned.
- a. DD 24.110, Absences from Work, governs the types of absences and leave employees may take, when approved by their supervisors. Employees who are not at work during normal duty hours will be placed in an absence and/or leave status for a period of time they are not present for duty at their workplace/location.
  - b. **Repeated late arrivals to work after the start of normal duty hours or early departures from work, without appropriate justifications, affect the morale of other employees and are by their nature adverse, damaging, and harmful to the effective operation of the GDVS workforce.** These repeated actions may result in disciplinary actions being taken against the employees, up to and including termination of employment.
5. Supervisors are authorized to charge absence/leave time to an employee to cover absences in accordance with DD24.110.
6. Supervisors are authorized to charge absence/leave time to employees **to cover absences related to late arrivals or early departures from the workplace.**
- a. When such actions are taken by the supervisor, they will be charged in “15 minute”/ “quarter-hour (0.25; 0.50; or 0.75) increments. (See DD24.110 for specific guidance.)
  - b. Supervisors may use discretion in charging absence/leave time when exigent conditions have occurred that prevent the timely arrival of employees to the workplace/location, such as: bad weather conditions, bad traffic conditions, etc.
    - i. When such situations cause the delay of opening offices or functional areas or require the early closing of offices or functional areas, managers/supervisors will notify their supervisors of the situations. Where possible, managers/supervisors will place a notice on the office/functional area door advising the public of the situation and the amount of time the office/functional area will not be operational.

- ii. Higher level supervisors are responsible to notify their supervisors to ensure senior GDVS personnel are aware of the situations.
- 7. Employees who find themselves in situations where they will be arriving late to their work place, due to exigent circumstances and conditions, are strongly encouraged, using proper safety considerations, to contact their managers/supervisors by telephone, text, email, or other appropriate means to advise them of their situation, location at the time of the notification and their estimated times of arrival at their work place (this includes office managers of VFSOs notifying their regional directors and other detached [from the Central Office] managers notifying their supervisors).
- 8. Lunch Period and Break Times:
  - a. By state rule, employees are authorized a 30-minute lunch period each day. Supervisors may authorize up to a 30-minute extension of the lunch period provided workload and customer service requirements permit such an extension.
    - i. Lunch time MAY NOT be combined to provide for a late arrival or an early departure from the workplace/location.
  - b. Depending on workload requirements, supervisors may authorize two 15-minute breaks each day, one in the morning between 9:30-10:00 a.m., and one in the afternoon between 2:00-2:30 p.m.
    - i. When authorized to take a break time, employees may elect to not take the break time. However, break times not taken will not be cumulated to be taken at a later date and time.
    - ii. Break times MAY NOT be combined to provide for a late arrival or an early departure from the workplace/location.
    - iii. The combining of break times with the lunch periods IS NOT permitted.
- 9. This Department Directive incorporates by reference Chapter 478-1-.16 of the current Georgia State Rules and Regulations, published by the Human Resources Administration of the Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) and listed on the DOAS website.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- 10. The Chief Operations Officer is responsible for the enforcement of this department directive.
  - a. The Chief Operations Officer is responsible for the day-to-day administration of this department directive.
  - b. This includes administration of the department's leave and accounting function.
- 11. Individual employees are responsible to comply with the requirements of this department directive and to ensure they are present for duty at their workplace/location to maximize their time to support completing work requirements of their respective positions.
- 12. Individual employees, using proper safety procedures, are responsible to keep their supervisors aware and notified of their status related to late arrival times to their workplace/location, absences and leaves.

13. Supervisors are responsible to enforce the duty hours for the employees assigned to their particular office or functional area and for approving absence and leave requests associated with normal duty hours in accordance with DD 24.110.
  - a. To the maximum extent possible, employees should advise their supervisors **IN ADVANCE** about needing to take time away from the workplace.
  - b. It is the courteous thing to do and allows for supervisors and other employees to better plan their workdays and carry out their duties.
14. Supervisors may establish procedures for documenting late arrivals and early departures from the workplace/location in order to ensure compliance with the intent and the letter of this department directive.
15. Follow the procedures outlined in Paragraph 12 of DD 24.110 for the use of VS Form 24-006, Request for Leave or Absence.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. M. Ross', written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

# ***Georgia Department of Veterans Service***

***Floyd Veterans Memorial Building  
2 MLK Jr. Drive SE, Suite E-970  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334-4800***

(404) 656-2300  
Fax (404) 656-7006  
[www.veterans.georgia.gov](http://www.veterans.georgia.gov)

June 1, 2022

## **Administration**

### **Department Directive 21.103**

**SUBJECT:** Department Services Provided at No Charge, Gifts and Honoraria

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Operations Division

#### **GENERAL:**

1. Unless otherwise authorized or required by Georgia state law, as provided in the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.), the services provided by this Department (GDVS) are delivered in the public interest at no cost to the veteran or family member, to entities seeking approval to provide and continue to provide educational services under auspices of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), or other eligible persons receiving the services.
2. Except as provided in Paragraph 1, no employee of this Department or the employee or agent of a contractor doing business with this Department will seek or obtain in any form financial or personal benefit, other than salaried compensation and employer provided benefits.
  - a. Any employees of this Department who in any manner seek to obtain in any form financial or personal benefits, other than salaried compensation and employer provided benefits are in violation of this policy and this Department Directive and will be subject to disciplinary action by this Department up to and including immediate termination of employment with this Department and the State of Georgia.
  - b. Any employees or agents of a contractor with this Department who in any manner seeks to obtain in any form financial or personal benefits, other than salaried compensation and employer provided benefits are in violation of this policy and this Department Directive. The appropriate Department official will notify the contractors' responsible individuals of the infraction(s) and will request the contractors subject the employees or agents to disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination of employment with the agency or the contractor.
3. No employees of this Department, nor any persons on their behalf, shall accept any monetary compensation to include gift cards. In addition, employees should not directly or indirectly accept any gift of anything of value exceeding \$75.00 (including, but not limited to, food, lodging, transportation, personal services, gratuities, subscriptions, memberships, trips, loans, extensions of credit, forgiveness of debts or advances or deposits of money) from any person with whom the employee interacts on official Department or state business, including without limitation lobbyists and state vendors.

- a. If a gift has been accepted, it must be either returned to the donor or transferred to a charitable organization within 30 days of the date of acceptance.
  - b. Where appropriate for purposes of tradition, ceremony, or inter-governmental relations, or when acting as a representative of the Commissioner of Veterans Service, an employee may accept a gift on behalf of the Department.
  - c. Employees of this Department who in any manner seek to obtain in any form a gift(s) are in violation of this policy and this Department Directive and will be subject to disciplinary action by this Department up to and including immediate termination of employment with this Department and the State of Georgia.
4. No Department employees may accept any honoraria (a payment usually for a service on which custom or propriety forbids a price to be set) whatsoever.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

5. All employees, as individuals, supervisors and managers, of this Department are responsible to comply with this Department Directive and to enforce the provisions of it.
6. Employees who become aware of alleged or potential violations of this Department Directive shall immediately report the alleged or potential violations, either through supervisory channels, or directly (anonymous, or by name), to the Chief Operations Officer at the GDVS Central Office. Direct reports shall be made to 404-656-7048, or if desired to the email address for the Chief Operations Officer.
7. The Chief Operations Officer will:
  - a. Include the procedures contained in Paragraph 9 in the Department's employee "In Processing Checklist" to ensure completion of this requirement for all new employees.
  - b. For alleged or potential violations of this Department Directive:
    - i. Take action to deal with the alleged or potential violations.
    - ii. The purpose of the first action taken will normally be to correct the alleged or potential violations by informing the individual(s) involved in the alleged or potential violations of the need for immediate corrective action and compliance with this Department Directive.
    - iii. If corrective action cannot be achieved or is not taken by the employee(s) involved in the alleged or potential violations, recommend appropriate disciplinary action to the applicable supervisor/manager.

#### **PROCEDURES:**

8. At least annually, by widest dissemination email, or other appropriate media, the Chief Operations Officer, will advise Department employees of this Department Directive and the policies contained in it.
9. Upon publication of this Department Directive, all employees of the Department will sign a copy of the attached letter acknowledging reading and understanding of the contents of the Department Directive and provide a statement of their intention to comply with the Department Directive and the policies contained in it.

- a. Subsequently, all new employees, during “in processing” into the Department, will be provided a copy of this Department Directive and the attached letter and will sign the letter. Failure to sign the letter and return it to the GDVS Human Resources Section will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment with the Department and the State of Georgia.
  - i. The original of the signed letter will be permanently placed in the employees’ personnel file/record.
  - ii. Employees should make and retain a copy of the signed letter for their own personnel file/record.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. M. Ross", written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS

Attachment: As Stated



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

## ***Georgia Department of Veterans Service***

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[www.veterans.georgia.gov](http://www.veterans.georgia.gov)

---

Date

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge I have on this date received, read and  
Printed Full Name

understand the Georgia Department of Veterans Service Department Directive (DD) 21.103,

**Department Services Provided at No Charge, Gifts and Honoraria.** Further, I hereby  
state I will comply with the policies contained in that Directive.

---

Signature





Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

## **Georgia Department of Veterans Service**

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June 1, 2022

### **Administration**

### **Department Directive 21.104**

**SUBJECT:** Claims and Lawsuits Against the GDVS

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Operations Division **AND** GDVS General Counsel  
(State Attorney General's Office)

#### **POLICIES:**

1. In most cases individuals desiring to file any legal action against the Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) will follow the tort claims requirements of the State of Georgia (O.C.G.A. § 50-21-26). The requirements of this Section of the O.C.G.A. are as follows:
  - (a) *No person, firm, or corporation having a tort claim against the state under this article shall bring any action against the state upon such claim without first giving notice of the claim as follows:*
    - (1) *Notice of a claim shall be given in writing within 12 months of the date the loss was discovered or should have been discovered; provided, however, that for tort claims and causes of action which accrued between January 1, 1991, and July 1, 1992, notice of claim shall be given in writing within 12 months after July 1, 1992;*
    - (2) *Notice of a claim shall be given in writing and shall be mailed by certified mail or statutory overnight delivery, return receipt requested, or delivered personally to and a receipt obtained from the Risk Management Division of the Department of Administrative Services. In addition, a copy shall be delivered personally to or mailed by first-class mail to the state government entity, the act or omissions of which are asserted as the basis of the claim. Each state government entity may designate an office or officer within that state government entity to whom a notice of claim is to be delivered or mailed;*
    - (3) *No action against the state under this article shall be commenced and the courts shall have no jurisdiction thereof unless and until a written notice of claim has been timely presented to the state as provided in this subsection;*
    - (4) *Any complaint filed pursuant to this article must have a copy of the notice of claim presented to the Department of Administrative Services together with the certified mail or statutory overnight delivery receipt or receipt for other delivery attached as exhibits. If failure to attach such exhibits to the complaint is not cured within 30*

*days after the state raises such issue by motion, then the complaint shall be dismissed without prejudice; and*

*(5) A notice of claim under this Code section shall state, to the extent of the claimant's knowledge and belief and as may be practicable under the circumstances, the following:*

*(A) The name of the state government entity, the acts or omissions of which are asserted as the basis of the claim;*

*(B) The time of the transaction or occurrence out of which the loss arose;*

*(C) The place of the transaction or occurrence;*

*(D) The nature of the loss suffered;*

*(E) The amount of the loss claimed; and*

*(F) The acts or omissions which caused the loss.*

*(b) No action may be commenced under this article following presentation of a notice of claim until either the Department of Administrative Services has denied the claim or more than 90 days have elapsed after the presentation of the notice of claim without action by the Department of Administrative Services, whichever occurs first.*

*(c) The Department of Administrative Services shall have the authority to examine and copy any records of any state government entity to facilitate the investigation of a claim. Each state government entity shall make available to the Department of Administrative Services, incidental to any investigation of a claim, all such records notwithstanding any other provision of law which designates such records as confidential or which prohibits disclosure of such records; provided, however, that the Department of Administrative Services shall be bound by such provision of law and shall not make further disclosure of such records except as permitted by such provision of law. The Department of Administrative Services may enforce the authority granted under this subsection by subpoena which may be enforced, upon application by the department, by the Superior Court of Fulton County, Georgia, in the same manner as subpoenas issued under Chapter 13 of this title, the "Georgia Administrative Procedure Act," may be enforced.*

*(d) Any document or information gathered or prepared by the Department of Administrative Services in connection with the investigation undertaken as a result of the notice of claim shall be considered privileged and confidential and shall not be subject to discovery by any claimant in any proceeding under this article except as otherwise provided by law.*

2. These requirements direct citizens to file a claim against the State of Georgia and specifically the agency involved.

a. When a claim is received by the GDVS in accordance with State law, the claim documents will be forwarded to the Department's Chief Operations Officer, who handles Risk Management issues.

b. Likewise, when a lawsuit is received by the GDVS, or the Department is "served" by a law enforcement officer (usually by a county sheriff's deputy or a county marshal's officer) in accordance with State law, the lawsuit documents will be forwarded to the Department's Chief Operations Officer or the Executive Director of Field Operations and Appeals, depending on the content of the lawsuit. Both individuals handle Risk Management issues.

- i. If the Chief Operations Officer is present in the office at the time of service or receipt of claim or lawsuit documents, the Chief Operations Officer will sign for the documents, officially acknowledging receipt of them.
- ii. If the Chief Operations Officer is not present in the office at the time of service or receipt of the claim or lawsuit documents, the individual manning the reception desk at the Central Office will sign for the documents and provide the documents and the receipt for the documents to the Chief Operations Officer or to the Commissioner at the earliest opportunity.
- c. If a claim or lawsuit is received by a GDVS office or function away from or outside of the GDVS Central Office (e.g., Field Service Office, State War Veterans Homes, State Veterans Cemeteries), the manager of that office or function will:
  - i. Immediately notify the Chief Operations Officer, the Executive Director, Health, Memorials, Finance and Development or the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals, and the Commissioner by telephone with follow-up email of the claim/lawsuit documents having been delivered/served at the manager's location.
  - ii. Mail by U.S. Postal Service Certified Mail (Return Receipt Requested) or Priority Mail with tracking number the documentation to the Chief Operations Officer at:
 

*Georgia Department of Veterans Service  
2 Martin Luther King, Jr., Drive, Suite E-966  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334 – 4800  
– ATTN Chief Operations Officer –*
  - iii. Inform the Chief Operations Officer, the Executive Director, Health, Memorials, Finance and Development or the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals, and the Commissioner by telephone with follow-up email of the Certified Mail (Return Receipt Requested) or Priority Mail with tracking number, so the GDVS Central Office can be on the lookout for the document mailing.
- 3. Upon receipt of the claim documents or lawsuit documents, the Chief Operations Officer will immediately make copies of the documents and notify and provide copies of the documents, as required, to the following officials in the GDVS and the following listed State of Georgia agencies having legal and risk management responsibilities for claims and lawsuits:
  - a. Commissioner of Veterans Service, GDVS (Copy for review, not for permanent retention).
  - b. Executive Director, Health, Memorials, Finance and Development, or the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals - GDVS (Copy for review, not for permanent retention).
  - c. Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) Risk Management Division (Copy required).
  - d. Department of Law, Legal Liaison Counsel (Copy required).
  - e. Director, Health and Memorials Division, GDVS for matters involving the Georgia War Veterans Home in Milledgeville and the state veterans' cemeteries (Copy required).
  - f. Executive Director, Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home in Augusta for matters involving that state war veterans' home (Copy required).

## **RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES:**

4. Commissioner of Veterans Service
  - a. Responsible for the operation of the GDVS and oversees GDVS actions related to risk management and legal activities.
  - b. Provides direction and guidance to GDVS personnel during the claim and lawsuit processes.
  - c. Advises the State Veterans Service Board of claims and lawsuits against the GDVS.
5. Chief Operations Officer
  - a. In conjunction with the Commissioner of Veterans Service, provides direction and guidance to GDVS personnel during the claim and lawsuit processes.
  - b. Provides overall supervision of the GDVS' risk management and legal activities in conjunction with the General Counsel, GDVS.
  - c. Notifies the Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) Risk Management Division of any claims or lawsuits received by the GDVS.
  - d. In coordination with the General Counsel, GDVS, notifies the Department of Law of the receipt of any claim or lawsuit.
  - e. Coordinates with GDVS personnel on claim and lawsuit issues.
  - f. Coordinates with General Counsel, GDVS as the matter progresses through the claim and lawsuit processes.
  - g. Maintains a detailed file of any and all relevant documents to ensure availability for compliance with discovery requirements of state law
  - h. Advises, assists and provides guidance, as appropriate, to GDVS personnel on matters related to risk management, legal requirements associated with claims and lawsuits against the agency.
6. Executive Director, Health, Memorials Division, Finance and Development
  - a. Supervises the activities of the Director, Health and Memorials in Milledgeville for dealing with claims and lawsuits related to the operation of the Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home in Milledgeville and state veteran cemeteries.
  - b. Supervises the activities of the Executive Director, Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home in Augusta for dealing with claims and lawsuits related to the operation of the Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home in Augusta.
7. Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals
  - a. Responsible for dealing with claims and lawsuits related to the operation of the Veteran Field Service offices across the state and the Appeals Division.
  - b. Supervises the activities of the Regional Directors overseeing veterans' field service offices and the Director, Appeals Division in matters related to claims and lawsuits related to the Department's Field Operations and Appeals functions.

8. General Counsel (provided by the State Attorney General's Office), GDVS
  - a. Provides legal advice and counsel to the GDVS staff regarding claims and lawsuits affecting the agency.
  - b. Coordinates with the Chief Operations Officer on all matters related to claims and lawsuits to advise and assist with compliance with state laws.
  - c. Advises and assists, as appropriate, GDVS personnel on matters related to risk management, legal requirements associated with claims and lawsuits against the agency.
9. Accounting and Budget
  - a. Ensures the GDVS financial statements reflect potential fiscal impacts related to claims and lawsuits against the Department, during the fiscal year and any required post fiscal year adjustments and/or note disclosures.
  - b. Notifies the State Accounting Office (SAO) of potential adjustments and/or note disclosures in accordance with SAO policies and SAO guidance to operating agencies.
  - c. Makes appropriate and necessary entries in the financial books and records of the GDVS to record potential/actual losses that may accrue/have accrued to the GDVS because of claims and lawsuits filed against the agency.
10. Director, Health, Memorials Division
  - a. Responsible for dealing with claims and lawsuits related to the operation of the Georgia War Veterans Home (GWVH) in Milledgeville and the state veterans' cemeteries in Glennville and Milledgeville.
  - b. Ensures the operations contract between the GDVS and the contractor for the operation of the GWVH contains provisions placing responsibility for defending the GDVS against any claims and lawsuits related to the operation of the GWVH on the contractor, ensures the contractor is responsible for payments of any liability judgements and/or associated costs assessed against the GWVH and ensures liability requirements of the DOAS State Purchasing Division are included in the contract and adhered to by the contractor.
11. Office / Facility Managers / Executive Director, Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home
  - a. Comply with the requirements of Paragraph 2.c. and the following:
    - i. Immediately notify the Chief Operations Officer or the Executive Director Health, Memorials Division, Finance and Development by telephone with follow-up email of the claim/lawsuit documents having been delivered/served at the manager's location.
    - ii. Mail by U.S. Postal Service Certified Mail or Priority Mail with tracking number the documentation to the Chief Operations Officer at:  
*Georgia Department of Veterans Service  
2 Martin Luther King, Jr., Drive, Suite E-966  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334 – 4800  
– ATTN: Chief Operations Officer –*

- iii. Inform the Chief Operations Officer and Executive Director Health, Memorials Division, Finance and Development, and the Commissioner by telephone with follow-up email of the Certified Mail (Return Receipt Requested) or Priority Mail with tracking number, so the GDVS Central Office can be on the lookout for the document mailing.

12. Department Personnel

- a. Department personnel who become aware of potential claims or lawsuits against the GDVS will immediately notify through supervisory channels the Chief Operations Officer.
- b. Comply with direction and guidance from GDVS Central Office officials regarding claims and lawsuits in accordance with state law and this Department Directive.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. M. Ross', written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS





Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

**Georgia Department of Veterans Service**  
*Floyd Veterans Memorial Building*  
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June 1, 2022

**Administration**

**Department Directive 21.105**

**SUBJECT:** Customer Service – Answering Telephone Calls

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Chief Operations Officer

**GENERAL:**

1. The Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) is a service agency of the State of Georgia.
2. Our missions are, to assist veterans with their state and federal claims for earned benefits, the provision of skilled nursing care and treatment for veterans in our state war veterans' homes and perpetual memorial services at our state veterans' cemeteries. These missions require our personnel to provide quality customer service to all our clients, veterans in the state, family members, fellow employees, personnel from other state agencies, etc. Quality service begins with the first impression we make when we have our first contact with our customers.
3. Our goal is to provide a positive first impression to all of our customers, Georgia's veterans and their family members, fellow employees, personnel from other state agencies, etc., in all situations ranging from person-to-person contact, telephone contact, and other forms of communication, such as written and electronic communication. This Department Directive focuses on telephonic communication.
4. When answering telephone calls, the proper way to answer them and start conversations is by saying the introductory statement and asking the basic question:  

***"Georgia Department of Veterans Service, this is [insert your {first & / or last} name]. How may I help you?"***
5. Offices and functions that may have a script or series of questions to follow in dealing with telephone callers will start off these local processes by asking the basic question outlined in Paragraph 4 of this Directive.
6. The callers are making the calls because they have a need, a want, a desire, etc. So, GDVS personnel asking if they *MAY HELP* is not the proper question. The callers want help, which is why they called. Personnel need to ascertain why the callers are calling in order to help them. That is why it is important and imperative to ask the question, "***How may I help you?***" Callers need to know to whom they are speaking, which is why GDVS personnel will identify themselves to callers – doing so is part of establishing a positive relationship and rapport.

7. GDVS personnel need to remember and understand, when they receive telephone calls, they are responsible for handling the requests of the callers. That means our personnel need to follow-up internally and even get back to the callers, as necessary, to ascertain the requests of the callers have been addressed and answers or actions have been provided to them. This is particularly important when dealing with phone messages taken from callers, or voice messages taken from answering machines or voice mail systems. If a caller is referred to another GDVS employee to address their issue, question, etc., the person who received the initial telephone call/message needs to check with the person to whom the call was referred to ascertain what the resolution was to the issue/matter.
8. GDVS personnel will not cut corners on the use of this opening statement and basic question, when answering telephone calls. The use of the full statement is essential to establish the proper rapport with callers and to let them know, **WE CARE**.
9. GDVS employees will respond to all customer inquiries by the next business day via email and/or return phone call to the customer, leaving a voicemail if there is no answer.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

9. All GDVS employees are responsible to comply with this Department Directive.
10. Each GDVS employee who properly follows the guidance and direction contained in this Department Directive ensures our customer service is high quality. When that happens, we are on the way to meeting our goal of providing quality customer service.
11. Although the GDVS does not operate customer service call centers, our Administrative Assistant/Receptionist (including backups) and the Public Information Division personnel at the Central Office function in that manner when dealing with telephone callers. In a similar manner each of our Veterans' Field Service Offices, state war veterans' homes and state veterans' cemeteries and other detached functions also serve in the same way, *assisting callers with their requests*.
12. Serving those who have served is what the GDVS is about. When we provide quality customer service to callers, we are doing a part of serving.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. M. Ross", written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS





Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

## **Georgia Department of Veterans Service**

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[www.veterans.georgia.gov](http://www.veterans.georgia.gov)

May , 2023

### **Administration**

### **Department Directive 21.106**

**SUBJECT:** Active Shooter Procedures

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Chief Operations Officer

#### **GENERAL:**

1. The Federal Bureau of Investigation defines an active shooter as “one or more individuals actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a populated area.”
2. The United States Department of Homeland Security defines an active shooter as “an individual actively engaged in killing or attempting to kill people in a confined and populated area; in most cases, active shooters use firearms and there is no pattern or method to their selection of victims.”
3. Most incidents occur at locations in which the killers find little impediment in pressing their attack. These locations are generally described as *soft targets*, meaning they carry limited security measures to protect members of the public.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

##### **Prepare Now:**

4. Identify nearby exits that could be used in the event of an active shooter event.
5. Map out places to hide. Rooms without windows, behind solid doors with locks, under desks, or behind heavy furniture such as large filing cabinets can make good hiding places.

##### **If an Active Shooter is Outside Your Building:**

6. Proceed to a room that can be locked or barricaded.
7. Lock all doors and windows, turn out the lights and stay away from the windows.
8. Call the appropriate authorities.
  - a. Dial 9-1-1 and advise the dispatcher of what is taking place and your location.
  - b. Call the appropriate security personnel for your building. Atlanta Central Office and Balcony Office should call Capitol Police at 404-624-7281.
  - c. For the offices that have panic buttons, activate your panic button.
9. Remain on the line to give the dispatcher any further information that may be needed.

10. Remain in the room until the situation is cleared by police.

**If an Active Shooter is Inside the Building with You:**

11. Lock all doors, stay away from the door, and stay very quiet.

12. Silence your electronic devices and make sure they won't vibrate.

13. If the room cannot be locked, determine if there is a nearby room that you could safely get to that can be locked. Consider barricading the door if you cannot lock it.

14. Try to communicate with police silently, such as through text messages. Dial 9-1-1 as soon as it is safe to do so.

15. Stay in place until law enforcement gives you notice that all immediate danger is clear.

**WHAT TO EXPECT FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT:**

16. Police are trained to proceed as quickly as possible to the sound of the gunfire.

17. Their focus is to stop the shooter(s) – the first responding police officers will not stop to assist injured people.

18. Officers may be in plain clothes, patrol uniforms or SWAT uniforms armed with long rifles, shotguns and handguns.

19. Obey law enforcement officers and keep your hands visible at all times.

20. If possible, tell the officers where the shooter(s) was last seen and a description of the shooter(s).

21. Keep in mind that once you are in a safe location, the entire scene is a crime scene. The police usually will not let anyone leave until the situation is completely under control.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Ross' with a stylized flourish at the end.

PATRICIA M. ROSS



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

## ***Georgia Department of Veterans Service***

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June 1, 2022

### **Administration**

### **Department Directive 21.201**

**SUBJECT:** Access Control Procedures for Visitors of the Department of Veterans Service Central Office

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Chief Operations Officer

#### **POLICIES:**

1. The Georgia Building Authority (GBA) has established visitor security and control measures for access in the Floyd Veterans Memorial Building to the floors above the Balcony level in the East and West Towers (floors 5 to 20). Two security stations are located on the Plaza level – one in each Tower adjacent to the elevators. The purpose of these stations is to control access of visitors to the working floors above the Balcony level.
2. In most cases, visitors to the Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) are here to receive assistance for benefits from the federal (Department of Veterans Affairs [VA]) and state governments. These visitors will be directed to the Veterans Field Service Office located in the building on the Balcony Level. Other visitors may have business with an employee of the department on the 9th floor, East Tower. Access for these visitors will be handled as outlined below (Procedures).

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

3. Security at the entry points for the Twin Towers is provided by the GBA and the Department of Public Safety – Georgia Capitol Police through a security contractor. Staff of the security contractor verifies badges issued to employees (blue for state employees and red for temporary, or contractor personnel). They also issue temporary passes for daily visitors.
4. Department employees in the Central Office must inform their visitors of the security protocols prior to visitors arriving at the Twin Towers. This applies to all visitors, regardless of the scope or nature of the visit.

#### **PROCEDURES:**

5. Scheduled Visitors to Central Office
  - a. Prior to arrival, the proponent office will inform the visitor of the security protocol for entering the East Tower. The visitor will be given an office telephone number of the

proponent office (with alternate). The visitor must bring either a state or federal identification (with photograph) to be presented at the security desk.

- b. The proponent office will complete a memorandum (see Attachment) and deliver this information to the East Tower security desk, with copies emailed to [operations@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:operations@vs.state.ga.us) and the Administrative Assistant at the reception desk. The memorandum will contain, at a minimum, the following information:
    - i. Name of visitor.
    - ii. Date and approximate time of visit.
    - iii. Visiting office and office point of contact (with telephone number).
  - c. Upon arrival at the security desk, the visitor will present appropriate identification to the security personnel and state he/she has business with the Department. The security personnel will verify access and issue a temporary pass. The visitor will proceed to the 9th floor.
6. Unscheduled Visitors to Central Office
- a. If a visitor desires access to the Central Office and is NOT listed on a memorandum, the following applies:
    - i. The security personnel will ask the visitor the following question: May I ask your business with Veterans Service?
      - 1. If the answer pertains to any VA or State veteran's benefit or claim, the visitor will be directed to the Veterans Field Service Office, Room 460, Balcony Level.
      - 2. If the answer is for specific business associated with the Department's Central Office on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor, East Tower, the visitor will be instructed to call 404-656-2300 by cell phone or regular telephone if a line is available at the security desk.
  - b. The person covering the Central Office reception desk will ask the visitor the nature of his/her business and the telephone call may be forwarded to the appropriate office section.
  - c. If the visitor has legitimate business with the department staff on the 9th Floor, the proponent section will send a representative to the security desk who will authorize the security staff to issue a visitor pass and then escort the visitor to the 9th floor.
  - d. If the visitor does not have legitimate business with Central Office, the visitor will be directed to the Veterans Field Service Office on the Balcony Level of the building.

COMMISSIONER



PATRICIA M. ROSS

Attachment: As Stated



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

***Georgia Department of Veterans Service***  
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June 1, 2022

**Administration**

**Department Directive 21.202**

**SUBJECT:** Employee of the Quarter Program

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Chief Operations Officer

**GENERAL:**

1. The Employee of the Quarter (EOQ) Award recognizes the accomplishments of Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) employees of the State of Georgia. The program is applicable to only permanent, full-time employees of this department.
2. Nominees can generally be recommended for EOQ by first line supervisors who serve in the role of Office Manager, Director, and Regional Director. However, all GDVS employees who are in good standing can be recognized as EOQ as determined by the Commissioner, GDVS.
3. The EOQ program will recognize one staff employee per quarter. The selected recipient will be recognized and presented with an award at a date to be determined.

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

4. This directive primarily applies to all full-time employees.
5. Nominees must be regular, full-time GDVS employees.
6. Quarterly nominations are due by the first business day of the month preceding the award month.
7. Nominations to be considered will be submitted on the EOQ Nomination Form.

**EOQ RECIPIENT AWARD AND RECOGNITION:**

- A personal engraved Employee of the Quarter award, trophy, or plaque.
- GDVS Certificate of Recognition.
- EOQ winners will be recognized through GDVS web blog and GDVS newsletter.

**EOQ RECOMMENDATIONS:**

8. The Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals is the final recommendation authority of GDVS personnel assigned to the Appeals Division, Field Operations Division, Training & Professional Development Division, the Women Veterans and Minority Coordinator and the Suicide Prevention and Outreach Coordinator.

9. The Executive Director Health, Memorials Division, Finance and Development is the final recommendation authority of GDVS personnel assigned to the Accounting, Budget, War Veterans Homes, and the Cemeteries.
10. The Chief Operations Officer is the final recommendation authority of GDVS personnel assigned to Operations and PID.
11. The Director, Veterans Education and Training Division, is the recommendation authority for GDVS personnel assigned to the State Approving Agency also known as VETD.
12. The Commissioner is the final approving authority for all EOQ candidate packets submitted to the Central Office. The Commissioner will also select the EOQ based on the candidate's packets sent for recommendation. In the event of a tie once the scores have been tallied, the Commissioner will also cast the deciding EOQ vote.

**SUBMISSION:**

13. All EOQ recommendations will be submitted on the EOQ Nomination Form (**Attachment A**) by first line supervisors who serve in the role of Office Manager, Director, or Regional Director.
14. Subsequently, the Office Manager, Director, or Regional Director will forward the completed EOQ Nomination Form to the respective recommendation authority as stated in paragraph numbers 8, 9, 10 and 11.
15. Pending the Chief Operations Officer's acknowledgment and receipt of all EOQ nominations for the quarter, submitted packets will be processed at the Central Office by our Human Resources Generalist. The Chief Operations Officer will review each packet to confirm eligibility and to ensure each nominee is in good standing with no current disciplinary actions.
16. Each EOQ candidate's packet will be presented to the Commissioner for his/her review, selection, and the announcement of the EOQ winner.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. M. Ross', written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS

Attachment: As Stated



## Employee of the Quarter Nomination Form (Attachment A.) Instructions Sheet

All EOQ recommendations will be submitted on the EOQ Nomination Form (see Attachment A) by first line supervisors who serve in the role of Office Manager, Director, or Regional Director.

[Enter Today's Date] Self-Explanatory

### Section I. Nomination Quarter

Please select the nomination quarter as explained on the Nomination Form and note the deadline for each period. [Write in nomination quarter].

### Section II. GDVS Employee Information (Nominee for Employee of the Quarter)

[Enter the Employee's Information] Self-Explanatory

[Complete summary question]

### Section III. Rating Instructions (5-Point Rating Scale)

For each question, **please (circle one)** of the corresponding numbers that best applies to the EOQ candidate.

Satisfactory	Meets or Exceeds Expectations	Exceptional Performer
1-2	3-4	5

1. **Satisfactory** - Performance is noticeably less than expected, may require additional supervision at times to accomplish tasks.
2. **Satisfactory** - Satisfied with daily performance, generally meets most job requirements, but struggles to fully meet all expectations of the position.
3. **Meets expectations** - Daily performance clearly and fully meets all the requirements of the position in terms of quality of work, timeliness, and has a positive attitude.
4. **Exceeds expectations** - Daily performance exceeds job requirements. Regularly accomplishes all tasks above expected levels. Can be groomed for future advancement and promotion to the next level.
5. **Exceptional Performer** - Employee goes above and beyond normal job expectations on a regular basis. Quality of work is easily recognized as exceptional and consistent with job requirements. Demonstrates outstanding future leadership potential.

### Section IV. Questions

There are a total of 5 category questions: **Teamwork, Customer Service, Communication, Accountability and Job Knowledge & Performance**. Remember, for each question (circle one) of the corresponding numbers that best applies to the EOQ candidate and complete the summary question.

**Please note:** You can attach a (Word document) to the Employee of the Quarter Nomination Form if you prefer to type your comments or additional space is needed for each summary question.

### Section V. Supervisor's Information

[Enter the Supervisor's Information] Self-Explanatory

[Complete summary question]

**END OF INSTRUCTIONS**





Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

## **Georgia Department of Veterans Service**

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June 1, 2022

### **Operations**

### **Department Directive 22.101**

**SUBJECT:** Statistical Data Reporting for Field Offices and Appeals Division

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Executive Director Health, Memorials Division, Finance and Development

#### **GENERAL:**

1. This Department Directive establishes the statistical data collection process and requirements for the Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) related to workload information to be collected and reported by Veterans Field Service Offices (VFSO or Field Office) and the Appeals Division. It provides for the standardized reporting of workload data by the reporting entities (see Paragraph 2) to the GDVS Central Office and the management and use of this data by GDVS personnel.
2. The statistical data reports from the Field Offices and the Appeals Division are used by the GDVS to document the workload experienced by the Field Offices and the Appeals Division.
  - a. The Statistical data is reported by the GDVS to the Veterans Service Board on a monthly, or as required basis.
  - b. In addition, the GDVS Central Office uses the statistical data:
    - i. For reports to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) in support of budget requirements.
    - ii. For reports to the members of the Georgia General Assembly for their use in working with legislation related to the annual operating budget of the State of Georgia and other legislative issues.
    - iii. For reports to the general public and the media in response to open records requests in accordance with state law and other purposes that enhance requirements of the O.C.G.A. § 38-4, et. seq.
    - iv. For support of press/news releases issued by the GDVS.
    - v. For other uses as required by one of the officials named in Paragraph 7.
3. Because the use of statistical data has high visibility within the GDVS and elsewhere in state government it is incumbent on the individuals collecting and reporting statistical data to do so in an accurate and timely manner. **Following the guidance and**



**definitions associated with the respective reporting forms (Paragraph 5 and the attachments to this Department Directive) these individuals will ensure the accuracy and consistency of the statistical data reported to the GDVS Central Office.**

4. Statistical data and workload data are documented for each week of the year and by each month of the calendar and/or fiscal year.
  - a. Therefore, the reports from the Field Offices and the Appeals Division will be submitted on the first workday of each week for the preceding week.
  - b. When the end of a month falls during a work week, the end of month report will be submitted at that time. The following day the new month's report will begin for the new month starting during the work week.
5. The following forms and attendant guidance (attached to this Department Directive) will be used for the collection and reporting of statistical data by the VFSOs and the Appeals Division.
  - a. **Daily Statistical Report – VFSOs & Appeals Division, VS Form 22-001, February 20, 2018:**
    - i. This form will be maintained on a daily basis by each field service officer in each VFSO. It will be retained for one (1) year following the end of the calendar year in which it is completed to serve as backup documentation to support the entries onto the VS Form 22-019 and VS Form 22-019A. After that period of time, the forms will be destroyed by deletion of the electronic file, or if filed as hardcopy, by shredding in accordance with this Department Directive, or in accordance with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) guidance and direction where the Field Office or Appeals Division is located within a VA facility, e.g., VA Regional Office, VA medical center, VA community clinic, etc.
    - ii. This form is an "Excel" document, so it can be completed electronically and filed electronically or in hardcopy. **Electronic completion of the form is encouraged and preferred.** However, the form may be completed by hand and if it is completed in this manner, it will be filed in hardcopy.
    - iii. The form is designed to automatically total the number and types of visits counted daily for each field service officer, based on the codes (F, T, WF or WT) entered in the code column for each line entry. If the form is completed by hand, strike through the totals for visit numbers at the bottom of the form and hand enter the correct numbers and total for the day.
    - iv. Use of the "**CHECKED BY**" block on the form is encouraged but optional and the decision to use it will be made by the manager of the VFSO or the Director of the Appeals Division. For one-person VFSOs, the block will not be use. If the form is completed electronically and this block is used, the name or initials of the individual checking the form should be entered in the block. If the form is completed manually and this block is used, then the name or initials of the individual checking the form will be entered by hand in the block.
    - v. The form is subject to being audited by GDVS staff, or by other state government agencies.
    - vi. In addition to the completion of this form all visits and individual services and transactions will be documented in the GDVS' electronic claims processing system

- (VetraSpec) in the appropriate notes documentation area, which will further document the visits, services and transactions provided to veteran clients and family member clients. **The electronic claims processing system will also support information on claims packaged for submission to the VA through the VA's Digits to Digits (D2D) portal, or by faxing the claim to the VA's regional intake center.**
- b. **VS Form 019, Weekly Statistics Report, January 13, 2016:** This form will be used by each of the Field Offices to report statistical data/workload on a weekly, or end of month basis to the GDVS Central Office by email transmission to the GDVS' [operations@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:operations@vs.state.ga.us) email address.
    - i. Weekly submissions to the GDVS Central Office are due by 9:00 a.m., the first workday of each week.
    - ii. End of month reports are due to the GDVS Central Office by 9:00 a.m., of the first workday of the following month where the end of the month falls during a work week.
  - c. **VFSOs Statistics Guidance and Definitions, VS Form 22-019, March 1, 2016:** The VS Form 22-019 will be completed in accordance with the guidance contained herein.
  - d. **Appeals Division Weekly Statistics Report, VS Form 22-019A, January 13, 2016:** This form will be used by the Appeals Division to report statistical data/workload on a weekly, or end of month basis to the GDVS Central Office by email transmission to the GDVS' [operations@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:operations@vs.state.ga.us) email address.
  - e. **Appeals Statistics Guidance and Definitions, VS Form 22-019A, March 1, 2016:** The VS Form 22-019A will be completed in accordance with the guidance contained herein.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- 6. This directive primarily applies to all Field Offices, the Appeals Division and the GDVS Central Office within the department. However, all GDVS personnel, regardless of the function in which they work, will follow the guidance contained in this directive.
- 7. Only the following officials of the GDVS are authorized to release statistical data outside the department:
  - a. Commissioner
  - b. Executive Director, Health, Memorials Division, Finance and Development
  - c. Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals
  - d. Chief Operations Officer
  - e. Director, Public Information and External Affairs Division
  - f. **All other GDVS personnel will submit requests for the release of statistical data through the appropriate supervisory channel to the Executive Director, Health, Memorials Division, Finance and Development for guidance on the release of this data, or for approval to release them.**
- 8. The Executive Director Health, Memorials Division, Finance and Development, when necessary, will issue supplemental guidance to the Field Offices and the Appeals Division

related to the collection and submission of the statistical data on workload. GDVS personnel will comply with the supplemental guidance and direction in the same manner as they comply with this directive.

9. The individuals listed in Paragraph 7 are authorized to request and/or require additional statistical data submissions from the Field Offices and the Appeals Division in order to meet reporting requirements placed on the GDVS by other state or federal government agencies.
10. The Executive Director Health, Memorials Division, Finance and Development will appoint one or more GDVS Central Office staff members to serve as the individual(s) entering and maintaining the statistical data reports for the GDVS Central Office.

#### **PROCEDURES:**

11. A GDVS Central Office staff member designated by the Executive Director Health, Memorials Division, Finance and Development will compile the weekly statistical data by Field Office and the Appeals Division based on the submissions from these reporting entities to the GDVS' [operations@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:operations@vs.state.ga.us) email address. This designated staff member will compile and update the periodic reports to the GDVS Central Office staff of the workload in the GDVS by Field Office, Region, Division, or other reporting criteria as requested/required by one of the officials named in Paragraph 7.
12. The Field Offices and the Appeals Division will collect and submit statistical data reports on a weekly and monthly basis to the GDVS Central Office in accordance with the requirements of Paragraph 5 of this Department Directive.
13. Statistical data reports will be electronically submitted by the Field Offices and the Appeals Division on a weekly and/or end of month basis to the following GDVS email address: [operations@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:operations@vs.state.ga.us). These reports WILL NOT be submitted to the GDVS' Central Office by fax or regular mail, except in an emergency situation where the email service is unable to send or receive an email and where the Field Office or the Appeals Division has notified the designated GDVS Central Office staff member (see Paragraph 11) in advance and obtained approval to use an alternative means of submission of the report.

COMMISSIONER



PATRICIA M. ROSS

#### **Attachments:**

1. Daily Statistical Report – Veterans Field Service Offices, VS Form 22-001, March 1, 2016
2. VS Form 019, Weekly Statistics Report, January 13, 2016
3. VFSOs Statistics Guidance and Definitions, VS Form 22-019, March 1, 2016
4. Appeals Division Weekly Statistics Report, VS Form 22-019A, January 13, 2016
5. Appeals Statistics Guidance and Definitions, VS Form 22-019A, March 1, 2016

### **SUMMARY OF CHANGES**

DD 22.101, dated March 1, 2016, is hereby rescinded. This directive changes Paragraph 5.a., on Page 2 to reflect the revised date, February 20, 2018, on the current version of the VS Form 22-001. Previous versions of the VS Form 22-001 are obsolete and ARE NOT TO BE USED.



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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June 1, 2022

**Operations**

**Department Directive 22.102**

**SUBJECT:** Cleanliness and Environmental Care in Department Facilities

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Chief Operations Officer

**GENERAL:**

1. Department (GDVS) facilities, to include Veteran Field Service Offices, State War Veterans Homes, State Veterans Cemeteries, Central Offices, etc., regardless of location and mission, will be kept clean, neat, and orderly in appearance to present positive images of the GDVS to all veteran clients, family members, visitors, and GDVS staff members.
2. Facilities will have clean, safe working environments free of potentially hazardous conditions that may cause harm to employees, veterans, family members and visitors. Waste receptacles (trash cans, etc.) will be emptied daily, along with light dusting and maintaining presentable office conditions.
3. In many GDVS facilities, environmental care (housekeeping) services are not provided by the property owners from whom the GDVS leases the facilities to provide service to veterans and their family members but are the responsibilities of the staffs of the facilities.
4. In some GDVS facilities, environmental care (housekeeping) services are provided through some form of agreement or contractual arrangement by the property owners from whom the GDVS leases the facilities for the GDVS to provide service to veterans and their family members. However, the fact some contracted entities/individual(s) are providing these services does not eliminate the individual responsibility placed on GDVS employees.
  - a. Individual GDVS personnel are responsible for the environmental care, neatness and appearance of their workstations and offices.
  - b. State War Veterans Homes in Augusta and Milledgeville provide these services based on the contractual agreements/contracts the GDVS has with the operators of these facilities. These facilities are budgeted and staffed to provide these services as part of their routine operations and are required to maintain the facilities to the standards set by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Health Administration, the Georgia Department of Community Health, and the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations.

- c. State Veterans Cemeteries in Glennville and Milledgeville provide these services as part of the operational model in which they operate. These facilities are budgeted and staffed to provide these services as part of their routine operations and are required to maintain the facilities to the standards set by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration.
- d. For Veterans Field Service Offices where these services are provided by the property owners (VA, county government, private property owner, another agency of the State of Georgia, etc.) the contractual arrangements between the GDVS through the State Properties Commission and the property owners outline the services to be provided by the property owners.
  - i. They provide baselines of expectations for the local facility managers to judge the performance of the persons providing the environmental services and to be able to report deviations/discrepancies to the property owners for appropriate actions.
  - ii. When local actions do not correct deviations/discrepancies by the property owners, Office Managers will report the issues through supervisory channels to the Chief Operations Officer for review and appropriate actions to rectify the issues.
  - iii. Local facility managers are not authorized or permitted to verbally or in writing alter or modify in any manner the requirements for environmental care services provided by agreements/contracts related to GDVS facilities.
    - 1. If local facility managers determine there are needs to make alterations or modifications to agreements/contracts for environmental services, local facility managers will request approvals from their regional directors outlining the proposed changes and reasons for them.
    - 2. The regional directors will forward through supervisory channels requests to the Chief Operations Officer for Central Office review and approval.
    - 3. Any changes to the agreements/contracts must be made in writing and approved by the Chief Operations Officer and the State Properties Commission in accordance with the Commission's policies.
    - 4. The Chief Operations Officer will forward through supervisory channels approved alterations/modifications to agreements or contracts to the Office Managers involved for their information and appropriate actions.
- 5. Items requiring repairs or replacements by property owners will be reported to the property owners for necessary actions.
- 6. Desks and other surfaces in GDVS facilities and offices should provide a neat appearance to the public to the maximum extent possible. This is particularly important in workstations where there is ongoing contact with the public.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

- 7. **All GDVS Personnel:** All GDVS personnel are responsible for the cleanliness and environmental care of their individual workstations/offices and to assist the facility's managers to maintain the cleanliness and environmental care of common areas (waiting rooms, hallways, restrooms, file rooms, break rooms, etc.).
- 8. **Facilities Managers:** Facilities managers, regardless of location or type of facilities, are responsible to ensure compliance with the policies outlined in this Department Directive



for their areas/facilities of responsibility. These responsibilities include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- a. Maintaining a clean, safe working environment free of potentially hazardous conditions that may cause harm to employees, veterans, family members and visitors.
- b. Report breakages of facilities related fixed items (blinds, cabinets, doors, leaks, standing water, etc.) needing repairs or replacements to the property owners and follow-up at least once each week until the issues have been resolved. If the issues are not resolved within a reasonable period of time, not to exceed two (2) weeks from the initial report, report the issues through supervisory channels to the Chief Operations Officer for appropriate actions.
- c. These environmental services can be provided entirely by facility staff or by property owners in accordance with approved agreements/contracts.
  - i. If the environmental care duties are handled entirely by the facility staff, make sure the necessary supplies and equipment are available for use to achieve the necessary tasks. Equipment and supplies are ordered through the Department's supplies request process (DD 24.201, Receiving Reports).
    1. Dusting includes light dusting of horizontal surfaces (desks, tables, chairs, etc.). In addition, it includes regular high-level dusting of walls, ceilings, corners, etc.
    2. Carpeted areas should be vacuumed at least weekly and shampooed at least annually. Shampoo equipment will be rented locally from vendors with advance approval by the Chief Operations Officer. Payments will be handled by reimbursements to GDVS employees upon presentation of receipts documenting the expenditures and payments by the employees.
    3. Floor tile areas should be swept or vacuumed at least weekly, or more often as necessary.
      - a. Mopping should occur at least monthly, or more often as necessary.
        - i. If the floor surface is of a modern material that has a built-in shine, then appropriate floor cleaning solutions and finish products should be used.
        - ii. AVOID the use of old-fashioned wax because it can cause safety hazards and requires considerable work to maintain the shine, which involves valuable time to apply and maintain.
    4. Windows should be washed at least two times per year, or more often as necessary. For offices that have store front windows and doors, more frequent attention to these surfaces may be necessary, due to ongoing touching of these surfaces.
  - ii. If the environmental care duties are handled by the property owners:
    1. Make sure the terms of the agreements or contracts are known and understood, so compliance with them can be monitored and deviations/discrepancies can be reported to the property owners and/or through supervisory channels to the Chief Operations Officer for corrective actions.

2. There will still be some day-to-day cleaning actions for which the property owners are not responsible, such as horizontal surfaces of furniture, etc.
  - a. Make sure the necessary supplies and equipment are available for use to achieve these tasks.
  - b. Equipment and supplies are ordered through the Department's supplies request process (DD 24.201, Receiving Reports).
9. Executive Directors of the state war veterans' homes are responsible for compliance with this Department Directive in their respective facilities.
10. Cemetery Directors of the state veterans' cemeteries are responsible for compliance with this Department Directive in their respective facilities.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. M. Ross", written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS





Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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June 1, 2022

**Human Resources**

**Department Directive 24.101**

**SUBJECT:** GDVS In/Out Processing Checklist

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Chief Operations Officer

**GENERAL:**

1. An in/out processing checklist, VS Form 24-101, February 1, 2018 (in Excel spreadsheet format/file attached), will be completed for each new employee of the department and for each department employee in the event of a promotion or transfer to a new position in the department.
2. The VS Form 24-101 documents the actions to be taken for each employee at the time of employment or separation, retirement, termination or otherwise departing employment with the department.
3. An in/out processing checklist (VS Form 24-101) will be completed for each department employee being promoted, transferred separated, retired, terminated, or otherwise leaving employment with the department.
  - a. The form will be completed prior to the date the department employee actually departs employment.
  - b. In the event of a short notice separation, retirement, termination, or otherwise leaving employment with the department the in/out processing checklist (VS Form 24-101) will be initiated by the Human Resources Section of the Operations Division and completed by the departing employee's immediate supervisor. It will be completed prior to the date the department employee actually departs employment.
  - c. The form consists of two (2) pages and may be completed as an Excel spreadsheet or printed out and completed by hand.
4. Upon completion of the form for new employees and recently promoted or transferred employees of the department, the form will be filed and maintained in the employee's personnel file located in the Human Resources Section of the Operations Division at the Central Office.
5. At the time an employee separates, retires, terminates, or otherwise departs employment with the department, the VS Form 24-101 used at the time of employment may be used to document out processing, or a new VS Form 24-101 may be initiated by the Human

Resources Section of the Operations Division to document completion of the required actions associated with leaving employment.

6. TeamWorks Travel and Expense (TTE) Reporting (Concur)
  - a. The State of Georgia has consolidated the making of travel arrangements and reporting of completed travel for all state agencies by using the online *Travel and Expense Management System (Concur)*. This system allows users to make travel arrangements (book airfare, hotel accommodations, car rental, and business travel by privately owned vehicle, etc.) and to claim and report expenses associated with official business travel. In conjunction with the use of Concur, **Travel Inc.**, is the designated travel agency in the TeamWorks Travel & Expense system for the State of Georgia and the GDVS.
  - b. In addition, TTE is used for tracking and reconciling employee business travel and reimbursable out-of-pocket business travel expenses. **It is mandatory for all GDVS employees to make travel arrangements through Concur and to submit travel expense reports via Concur.**
  - c. Consequently, all new employees are required (as part of in-processing) to go to the Georgia State Accounting Office website, <https://sao.georgia.gov/teamworks-travel-and-expense-training>, and select “Request TeamWorks Travel and Expense Training”. Each employee will complete the online TTE request form and the SAO Travel team will schedule a training session for the employee at their convenience. Completion of this training by employees makes them ready to complete all the tasks associated with GDVS travel and expense reporting.
  - d. In addition, employees are encouraged to use the TTE System User Reference Guide, when completing travel expense reports, which is available at <https://sao.georgia.gov/reference-materials>.

#### RESPONSIBILITIES:

7. The Human Resources Section of the Operations Division:
  - a. Initiate the VS Form 24-101 at the time of in processing and out processing.
  - b. Maintain the VS Form 24-101 on file in the personnel record of each employee and former employee, as documentation of completion of in processing and out processing.
8. Field Operations & Appeals (FO&A):
  - a. Serve as the department’s single point of contact/control for the issuance and turn-in of PIV Cards by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) regardless of where the PIV Card is actually issued.
  - b. Initiate the request for issuance and return of PIV Cards for all department functions. This includes field service offices, Appeals Division, Finance and Development, Health and Memorials functions (e.g., state veterans’ cemeteries) and the Veterans Education and Training Division.
  - c. Physically turn in PIV Cards to the VA Regional Office for departing employees.
  - d. Submission of IRM-294 for VA system access.

- e. Applications of service organization accreditations.
- f. TMS and TRIP training.

9. Immediate Supervisors:

- a. Oversee and/or complete the in/out processing form (VS Form 24-101) for all new and departing employees of their office, division, etc.
- b. Ensure all items are completed on the form. In the event an item cannot be completed, the immediate supervisor will document in the remarks section of the form the reason[s] for an item not being completed and include a statement about the reason[s] for the failure to complete the item and if/when it is expected the item will be completed.
- c. Turn in the completed form to the Human Resources Section of the Operations Division within 72 business hours following the departure of the employee.
- d. Turn in the employee's returned PIV Card to FO&A for processing back to the VA Regional Office (VARO).

10. Employees:

- a. All new and departing employees are responsible to provide all documentation required by the in/out processing form (VS Form 24-101) to their immediate supervisor, or other appropriate department official or section at the time of employment or departure.
- b. Employees who require PIV Cards issued by the VA in order to perform their duties will be responsible to arrange with the appropriate VA issuing facility (e.g., Lake City VAMC, Dublin VAMC, Augusta VAMC, Atlanta VAMC, Charleston VAMC, Atlanta VARO) to:
  - i. Provide fingerprints
  - ii. Obtain official photograph for the card
  - iii. Provide necessary information and forms required for the initiation and completion of required background investigation
  - iv. Physically pick up/obtain the PIV Card issued by the VA
- c. Upon departing employment with the department, turn in the PIV Card to their immediate supervisor prior to final departure from the work area.
- d. In addition, turn in to their immediate supervisor prior to final departure from the work area any official keys, state badges, passes, etc. issued by the department or another state agency.

COMMISSIONER



PATRICIA M. ROSS

#### **SUMMARY OF CHANGES**

DD 24.101, April 20, 2016 is hereby rescinded and superseded by this department directive, effective February 1, 2018. The previous department directive is updated and the requirement for all new GDVS employees to complete State Accounting Office (SAO) TeamWorks Travel and Expense (TTE) Training within 30 days of employment and/or prior to submitting a travel and expense report (whichever period is shorter) is added.



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

# **Georgia Department of Veterans Service**

*Floyd Veterans Memorial Building  
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June 1, 2022

## **Human Resources**

### **Department Directive 24.102**

**SUBJECT:** Resignation and Retirement Notification

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Chief Operations Officer

#### **GENERAL:**

1. Employees of the Department (GDVS) who voluntarily decide to resign or retire from the GDVS must notify in writing through their supervisory channels the Human Resources Section of the Operations Division in an ***orderly and timely*** manner well in advance of the projected date of their resignation or retirement.
  - a. Advance notices of these actions by GDVS employees are essential for the GDVS to continue to provide service to Georgia's veterans and their families.
    - i. Advance notices of these actions by GDVS employees are the professional and courteous thing to do by employees who are planning to leave their employment with the GDVS. These actions by GDVS employees are essential for the GDVS to continue to provide high quality service to Georgia's veterans and their families.
    - ii. Advance notices of these actions allow the GDVS the necessary time needed to initiate hiring and replacement actions through the state Human Resources Administration of the Department of Administrative Services and other recruitment methods and tools.
  - b. ***Orderly and timely*** manner means the **minimum time** for notifications to supervisors should occur as follows:
    - i. **Executive Managers** (Executive Directors, Chief Operations Officer, Director, Veterans Education & Training Division): Six (6) – Eight (8) Weeks
    - ii. **Senior Managers** (Division Directors [Accounting & Finance, Appeals, Health & Memorials, Public Information and External Affairs, Veterans Training & Development, Veterans Benefits Regions,]): Four (4) – Six (6) Weeks
    - iii. **Office/Facility Managers/Directors** (Offices / Cemeteries): Two (2) – Four (4) Weeks
    - iv. **Office/Facility Personnel** (Central Office Staff, Field Office Staff, Cemetery Staff Personnel): Two (2) – Four (4) Weeks
  - c. In the event a GDVS employee is not able to meet the orderly and timely requirements contained in Paragraph 1.b., of this Department Directive employees


must notify the immediate supervisors in writing of the need for expedited resignation or retirement actions and provide the reason(s) for the need for the exception to the policy.

2. In addition to notifying the Human Resources Section of the Operations Division of pending resignations or retirements employees must advise the Employee Retirement System of Georgia (ERSGA) of their proposed actions, especially for retirements.
3. Employees may withdraw notices of proposed resignations or retirements **up to the day immediately preceding the projected dates of resignations or retirements.**
4. Employee resignations or retirements in lieu of terminations of employment may be exempted from the policies outlined in this Department Directive. Approval/disapproval of exemptions will be made by the Commissioner, or designee.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

5. Each GDVS employee is responsible to provide orderly and timely notifications of proposed resignations or retirements in accordance with the requirements of Paragraph 1 of this Department Directive. Likewise, each GDVS employee is responsible to provide orderly and timely notification of withdrawal of proposed resignations or retirements in accordance with Paragraph 3 of this Department Directive.
6. When supervisors receive notices of proposed dates of resignations or retirements and/or withdrawals of resignations or retirements, they will process these notices on a high priority basis and forward them to the next level in the supervisory chain immediately and without delay.
  - a. The first supervisor notifications should be made by telephone to the next level supervisor.
  - b. Then the supervisor should immediately follow-up by sending a copy of the written notification to the next level supervisor by facsimile or email.
  - c. The immediate supervisor should then forward the original written notification, signed by the employee, to the GDVS Central Office, ATTN: Human Resources Section.

COMMISSIONER



PATRICIA M. ROSS



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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June 1, 2022

**Human Resources**

**Department Directive 24.104**

**SUBJECT:** Americans with Disabilities Act

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Chief Operations Officer

**POLICY:**

1. The Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) has established an agency-wide policy to abide by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public.
2. A federal law, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), requires most businesses and facilities to provide reasonable access and accommodation for all disabled customers, clients, and members of the general public. The ADA applies to almost all businesses that are open to the public, regardless of size.
3. It is the policy of the Georgia Department of Veterans Service to comply with all federal and state laws concerning employment of persons with disabilities and to act in accordance with regulations and guidance issued by the State ADA Coordinator's Office and by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC).
4. GDVS will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in regard to application procedures, hiring, advancement, discharge, compensation, training or other terms, conditions and privileges of employment.

COMMISSIONER

PATRICIA M. ROSS



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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June 1, 2022

**Human Resources**

**SUBJECT: ADA Grievance Procedure**

The purpose of the ADA Grievance Procedure is to promptly and fairly resolve a conflict or dispute when an individual believes that the Georgia Department of Veterans Service is not in compliance with its requirements under the Americans with Disabilities Act and implementing regulation 28 C.F.R. 35.107 Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in State and Local Government Services.

The grievance procedure is established to meet the requirements of the ADA. It may be used by anyone who wishes to file a complaint alleging discrimination based on disability in the provisions of services, activities, programs, or benefits by the Georgia Department of Veterans Service.

The complaint should be in writing and contain information about the alleged discrimination such as name, address, phone number, and email address of complainant, location of the GDVS office, date, and description of the problem. Alternative means of filing complaints, such as personal interviews or an audio recording of the complaint will be made available for persons with disabilities upon request.

The complaint will be submitted as soon as possible, preferably within 60 calendar days of the alleged violation to:

**Primary**

Shareka-Monday Robinson  
HR, Director/GDVS ADA Coordinator

Floyd Veterans Memorial Bldg.  
Suite E-970  
Atlanta, GA 30334-4800  
[Shareka.Monday-Robinson@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:Shareka.Monday-Robinson@vs.state.ga.us)  
404-463-3076

**Secondary**

Kerry Dyer  
Chief Operations Officer/GDVS ADA  
Coordinator

Floyd Veterans Memorial Bldg.  
Suite E-970  
Atlanta, GA 30334-4800  
[Kerry.Dyer@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:Kerry.Dyer@vs.state.ga.us)  
404-656-7048

If a satisfactory resolution to the complaint is reached, a letter will be forwarded to the complainant(s) that states: (a) the description of the complaint; and (b) how the complaint was resolved.



If the agency is unable to resolve the complaint, you will be notified in writing why the agency was unable to resolve the complaint. Such notification shall include (a) a description of the complaint; and (b) a statement concerning the issues which could not be resolved; and (c) the steps necessary to file a formal complaint with the appropriate enforcement agency: State of Georgia ADA Coordinator's Office.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. M. Ross", written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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June 1, 2022

### **SUBJECT: ADA GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE - COMPLAINT FORM**

<b>NAME:</b>	
<b>ADDRESS:</b>	
<b>HOME PHONE:</b>	(       )
<b>CELL PHONE:</b>	(       )
<b>EMAIL ADDRESS:</b>	
<b>WHEN DID THE ACT OF DISCRIMINATION OCCUR?</b> <b>DATES(S)</b>	
<b>PLEASE DESCRIBE THE ACTS(S) THAT YOU BELIEVE WERE DISCRIMINATORY.</b>	
<b>PLEASE BE SPECIFIC. ATTACH ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS IF NECESSARY.</b>	

**SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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June 1, 2022

### **Human Resources**

#### **SUBJECT: ADA Public Notice Statement**

In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), the Georgia Department of Veterans Service does not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in its programs, services, activities and employment practices.

**Employment:** GDVS does not discriminate based on disability in its hiring or employment practices and complies with all regulations promulgated by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under Title I of the ADA.

**Policies and Procures:** GDVS will make all reasonable modifications to policies and programs to ensure that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to enjoy all its programs, services and activities.

Employees who need assistive technology aids and services for effective communication (such as text-to-speech software, speech recognition devices, headphones, screen magnifiers, height-adjustable work desks, an assistant listening device, a sign language interpreter or material in large print) can request such items and services through the ADA Coordinator as soon as possible, preferably 7-10 business days before the activity or event.

GDVS will make reasonable accommodations for anyone who requires an auxiliary aid or service for effective communication, or a modification of policies or procedures to participate in a program, service, or activity. Employees should contact the agency's ADA Coordinator(s) (see below), as soon as possible but no later than 72 hours before the scheduled event. All assistive technology requests will be submitted through the ADA Coordinator (HR) and forwarded for consideration of approval by the Commissioner, GDVS.

#### **Primary**

Shareka-Monday Robinson  
HR, Director/GDVS ADA Coordinator

Floyd Veterans Memorial Bldg.

Suite E-970

Atlanta, GA 30334-4800

[Shareka.Monday-Robinson@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:Shareka.Monday-Robinson@vs.state.ga.us)

404-463-3076

#### **Secondary**

Kerry Dyer

Chief Operations Officer/GDVS ADA  
Coordinator

Floyd Veterans Memorial Bldg.

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Atlanta, GA 30334-4800

[Kerry.Dyer@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:Kerry.Dyer@vs.state.ga.us)

404-656-7048



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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April 10, 2023

**Human Resources**

**Department Directive 24.106**

**SUBJECT:** Personal Visitors to the Office

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Chief Operations Officer

**GENERAL:**

1. From time to time an employee may be visited by friends or family during business hours. This is permissible; however, personal visitation time should be kept to a minimum. Visitors must remain with the employee at all times and may not use any equipment, to include computer access.
2. An employee's child may not remain at the workplace for an extended period of time. During school holidays or vacations, the employee must ensure necessary arrangements for childcare have been made.

COMMISSIONER

PATRICIA M. ROSS



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---

Date

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge I have on this date received, read and  
Printed Full Name

understand the Georgia Department of Veterans Service Department Directive (DD) 24.106,

**Personal Visitors to the Office.** Further, I hereby state I will comply with the policies  
contained in that Directive.

---

Signature



## **Georgia Department of Veterans Service**

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February 7, 2023

### **Human Resources**

### **Department Directive 24.107**

**SUBJECT:** Dress Code and Personal Appearance

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Chief Operations Officer

#### **GENERAL:**

1. The Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) seeks to create a safe environment that conveys professionalism. **We will never get another chance to make a first impression on our veteran clients.**
  - a. Personal appearance of the GDVS employees contributes toward creating this work environment and toward molding client perceptions of the GDVS.
  - b. While the effect of wearing comfortable clothing contributes to employee morale, guidelines are established and enforced to ensure compatibility and conformity with this dress code, but still allowing employees flexibility and choice.
  - c. This directive establishes standards for personal appearance intended to maximize safety, foster client confidence in the GDVS and minimize disruption.
2. The Commissioner of Veterans Service has designated Friday as **casual day** for the GDVS. The Commissioner, or designee, may authorize other casual days based on particular work assignments or events.
3. **General Expectations:**
  - a. Employees are expected to be clean and neat in appearance and to dress appropriately for their work settings and work assignments.
  - b. Employees must not report to work dressed in a manner that is disruptive, unsafe for the work setting, or otherwise out of compliance with this policy.
  - c. If there is any doubt whether an article of clothing, hair style, or accessory is acceptable for the work setting or work assignment, employees and/or supervisors are expected to seek clarification from the Human Resources Section (HR) of the Operations Division before taking administrative action(s) against a subordinate.

- d. Supervisors are responsible for providing guidance, based on this department directive to their subordinate employees and for ensuring compliance with this directive.
- e. Employees of the GDVS having direct and/or routine contact with clients, veterans, etc., will wear the current department issued name tags/name badges during the performance of their normal duties. (NOTE: Department employees with duty locations in U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities will also wear/display VA issued identification, as directed by the VA facility in which the department's operations are located [e.g., VA Regional Office, VA medical centers, VA community clinics, etc.]). This requirement is imperative for employees working in the following functions:
  - i. Veterans Field Service Offices
  - ii. Appeals Division
  - iii. Central Office staff members when meeting with members of the General Assembly individually, in group settings (committee hearing, etc.), or at public functions around the state – where appropriate as determined by the function invitation
  - iv. State Veterans Cemeteries (Paragraph 4b)
- f. Department employees with duty locations inside VA facilities will comply with dress code requirements of those facilities. If there are conflicts between the requirements of this directive and the requirements of the VA facilities, these conflicts will be reported through supervisory channels to the Chief Operations Officer for appropriate action and guidance.
- g. **Clothing:**
  - i. GDVS employees are generally permitted to report for work in either business attire or business casual attire. The attachment to this policy is the ***Attire Guidelines***. They provide examples of ***business, business casual, and casual attire***.
  - ii. On designated casual days, attire may be less formal, but must always be neat, clean, and within policy standards.
    - 1. More formal attire may be required on designated casual days based on the assigned duties for the day.
    - 2. Managers or supervisors, with the approval of their respective executive director, may revoke casual day privileges, in whole or in part, for their offices or for specific employees for business reasons or in response to repeated dress code/appearance violations.
    - 3. The wear of footwear is dictated by the attire of the day. Open toe/strap heel shoes and sandals may be worn by women only; however, wearing of these shoes is discouraged. Closed toe/closed heel shoes are preferred because of safety implications. If an employee is injured because of an incident caused by wearing an open toe/open heel shoe, Worker's Compensation may not be applicable. **For appearance and/or safety reasons flip flops (appearance and safety), open heel sandals (safety), or any footwear without heel**

**straps (safety) (e.g., Birkenstocks, clogs, Crocs, Jellies, etc.) should not be worn at any time in the workplace.**

iii. Work assignments dictate appropriate work attire.

1. Employees are required to wear business attire for certain functions or events (e.g., making formal presentations, meeting with clients, or otherwise representing the GDVS.) The only exception is when the event attended by an employee stipulates a specific attire (e.g., an employee is invited to a BBQ and the expressed attire is golf shirt and Docker-style slacks.)
2. Managers and supervisors may establish stricter dress code standards, but the standards may never be lower than the published dress code for that particular day or event, provided the stricter standard is in compliance with this directive.
3. Employees who work in either the Glennville or Milledgeville cemeteries (does not include the Veterans Field Service Office co-located with the Glennville cemetery) wear specified uniform items provided by the department (see Paragraph 4b).

iv. Employees are not permitted to wear the following items at any time while at work or representing the GDVS:

1. Clothing with the names or logos of state vendors, contractors, or suppliers (e.g., AT&T, Pruitt, Staples, etc.). **NOTE:** *GDVS-issued items and clothes with simple manufacturers' names/logos are permitted (e.g., Hollister, Polo, Nike, etc.).*
2. Provocative clothing that reveals undergarments, cleavage, midriff, or back (including exposed shoulder blades), skin-tight shirts or pants/skirts, or clothing that exposes bare legs more than two inches above the top of the kneecap.
3. Ill-fitting clothing (baggy or skin-tight clothing).
4. Clothing that may reasonably be considered offensive, discriminatory, harassing, or inflammatory (e.g., statements supporting or denouncing a specific person, political party, activity, organization, religion, etc.; sexual innuendo pictures or words; obvious slander words using special characters; etc.).
5. Clothing that is dirty, stained, torn, or frayed.
6. Hats or other head coverings, to include skull caps, unless required for safety, medical, religious, or other business reasons.
7. Clothing not suitable for an office environment (e.g., clothing worn at the beach [includes tropical or Hawaiian shirts], for yard work, at dance clubs, participating in sports events; shorts; halter tops; t-shirts; leggings; hoodies; slippers, etc.).
8. Clothing that is inappropriately formal (tuxedos, cocktail dresses, etc.). Employees attending formal events as GDVS representatives will wear appropriate formal attire, or appropriate business attire, if formal attire is not available.

h. **Accessories:** Accessories including earrings, bracelets, rings, and necklaces may be worn in limited quantities but should be conservative and complement the attire.



Exposed body piercing jewelry (excluding post-style earrings) is not permitted, **if it is unsafe for the work setting, disruptive in the workplace, or detracts from the professional image the GDVS presents to clients.**

**i. Hair Styles:**

- i. Employees are expected to maintain clean and neat hair and facial hair styles while at work or otherwise representing the GDVS.
  1. Long hair worn by men is permissible, but the hair must be pulled back and secured.
  2. Facial hair (beards) must be conservative, neatly groomed around the face (not longer than three [3] inches), and not distracting.
  3. Handle-bar mustaches or other “fad” facial hair styles are not permitted.
  4. If a beard or mustache looks or appears unkempt, a supervisor may request the employee trim the facial hair.
- ii. Hair styles that are unsafe for the work setting, disruptive in the workplace, or detract from the professional image the GDVS presents to clients are not permitted. Examples of non-authorized hairstyles include Mohawk, pompadour, and punk-style with shaved sides and long top. Hair highlights are permissible but must be conservative and not cause a distraction.

**j. Fragrances/Odors:** Fragrances (perfume, cologne, etc.) may be worn, but must be conservative and not overpowering to other employees or clients.

**k. Tattoos:** Tattoos that can be reasonably perceived as offensive, harassing, discriminatory, inflammatory, or otherwise detract from the professional image the GDVS presents to clients, must be covered. Therefore, tattoos should be conservative and normally not visible to others and concealed wherever possible.

**l. Consequences for Violations:**

- i. Employees are required to remove accessories that are unsafe, disruptive, or otherwise determined to violate this policy.
- ii. Employees are required to cover tattoos that violate this policy.
- iii. Employees may be required to change inappropriate clothing. A determination will be made based on health and safety, client contact, complaints received, or history of prior dress code/appearance violations.
- iv. Time away from work in order to change clothes/correct policy violations will be charged as annual leave.
- v. Repeated or severe violations of this policy may result in additional administrative actions up to and including termination of employment.

**m. Accommodation:**

- i. The GDVS will grant reasonable accommodation in accordance with laws related to this directive. Supervisors at all levels should adhere to the requirements of this directive. Questions concerning application of these requirements should be addressed to the supervisor at the next higher level of supervision. Whenever appropriate, supervisors may consult directly with the HR section of the Operations Division at the Central Office regarding the application of this directive to situations occurring in activities of the department.

ii. If an employee wishes to contest a part of this directive, the employee must first comply with this directive and then send an email through the proper supervisory channels addressing the employee's concern(s) to the Chief Operations Officer.

1. The Chief Operations Officer will render a final determination about compliance with this directive.

2. As appropriate the Chief Operations Officer will report findings to the Commissioner for final disposition.

**4. Applicability:**

a. This directive is applicable to all GDVS employees with the exception, as noted in Paragraph 4b.

b. The State Veterans' Cemeteries' dress code will be specified by the Director, Health and Memorials Division and approved by the Executive Director, Health, Memorials Division, Finance, and Development. This exception is made because of the nature of the duties and responsibilities of the personnel assigned to these facilities being different from the GDVS employees working in other activities and offices of the department.

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

5. All GDVS employees are responsible for complying with this directive.

a. Annually, employees will acknowledge in writing using the attached acknowledgment form they have reviewed this DD 24.107, understand its requirements and will comply with the requirements.

b. These acknowledgment forms will be permanently filed in each employee's personnel file maintained in the Human Resources Section of the Operations Division.

6. Supervisors at all levels of the GDVS are responsible for enforcing the requirements of this directive.

a. First line supervisors are authorized to take necessary actions to enforce this directive on a one-on-one basis with their employees.

b. When disciplinary actions related to compliance with this directive are needed to gain compliance, the first line supervisors will seek the approval of the applicable division director and/or executive director, as appropriate.

c. Disciplinary actions up to and including termination of employment must be approved by the Commissioner.

7. The Chief Operations Officer is responsible for providing interpretations of the requirements of this directive and providing appropriate guidance to department personnel on the implementation of it.

**PROCEDURES:**

8. Direct communication by department employees with the Chief Operations Officer is permitted by telephone, email, etc., concerning questions of interpretation of provisions of this directive to particular situations, advice related to compliance with this directive, and related matters.

9. Employees desiring to recommend additions, changes or deletions to this directive may submit them through their supervisory channels to the Chief Operations Officer.
  - a. Recommendations should contain a statement of the wording for the addition, change or deletion and the reason for it.
  - b. Recommendations will be reviewed by staff at the GDVS Central Office.
  - c. When recommendations are acted upon, the employees making them will be advised of the action taken.
10. This directive will be reviewed by the Chief Operations Officer for currency in accordance with Paragraph 5, DD 1-100, or more often as necessary.

COMMISSIONER



PATRICIA M. ROSS

Attachment: As Stated

#### SUMMARY OF CHANGES

This DD 24.107, March 22, 2019 supersedes DD 24.107, February 12, 2016.

Paragraph 3.g.iv.7.: Clothing not suitable for an office environment now includes tropical or Hawaiian shirts. The attachment, **Attire Guidelines**, now requires men's shirts to be buttoned at least to the next to the top button and tucked into slacks. Paragraphs 5. a. and b., are added to annually require employees to acknowledge (see the second Attachment) they have reviewed this DD 24.107 and these acknowledgments will be permanently filed in the Human Resources Section of the Operations Division. Other editorial changes were made.



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

# Georgia Department of Veterans Service

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## Attire Guidelines

Employees are responsible for complying with GDVS Directive 24.107 – *Dress Code & Personal Appearance*. Below are standards of acceptable business attire, business casual attire, and casual attire.

Business	
Men	Women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business suit</li> <li>• Sport coat / blazer; dress slacks</li> <li>• Dress shirt and tie</li> <li>• Lace-up dress shoes; polished loafers</li> <li>• Name plate / badge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business suit</li> <li>• Dress; dress skirt</li> <li>• Dress slacks</li> <li>• Dress blouse</li> <li>• Dress shoes (close toe / close heel)</li> <li>• Name plate / badge</li> </ul>
Business Casual	
Men	Women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any combination above, or</li> <li>• Casual suit; blazer</li> <li>• Casual slacks (e.g., khaki pants, corduroy pants, Docker-style pants)</li> <li>• Casual shirt with collar, Polo shirt; GDVS logo shirt (short or long sleeve, buttoned at least to the next to the top button)</li> <li>• Shirts will be tucked into slacks</li> <li>• Turtleneck shirt; sweater; vest</li> <li>• Boots; loafers; lace-up casual shoes</li> <li>• Name plate / badge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any combination above, or</li> <li>• Casual suit; blazer</li> <li>• Skirt</li> <li>• Casual slacks (e.g., khaki pants, corduroy pants, Docker-style pants, Capri style pants, etc.)</li> <li>• Casual blouse; Polo shirt; GDVS logo shirt (buttoned at least to the next to the top button)</li> <li>• Turtleneck shirt; sweater; vest</li> <li>• Boots; loafers; lace-up casual shoes / flats (open toe / close heel [strap])</li> <li>• Name plate / badge</li> </ul>
Casual Attire (Casual Days ONLY)	
Men	Women
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any combination above, or</li> <li>• Casual slacks; denim pants (no holes, patches, frays, including “designer” holes or frays)</li> <li>• Collared casual shirt; GDVS logo shirt</li> <li>• Knit shirt (with or without collar)</li> <li>• Deck shoes; athletic shoes</li> <li>• Name plate / badge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any combination above, or</li> <li>• Casual dress, skirt, slacks, Capri style pants, cargo slacks; denim clothing (no holes, patches, frays, including “designer” holes or frays)</li> <li>• Collared casual shirt; GDVS logo shirt</li> <li>• Knit shirt (with or without collar)</li> <li>• Deck shoes; athletic shoes</li> <li>• Name plate / badge</li> </ul>



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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**Attachment, DD 24.107**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, DD 24.107**

I, (print your full name) \_\_\_\_\_, hereby  
acknowledge I have read and reviewed the Georgia Department of Veterans Service  
Department Directive, DD 24.107, Dress Code and Personal Appearance, dated  
\_\_\_\_\_ and further acknowledge I understand the requirements of this  
Department Directive and will to the best of my ability comply with these requirements as  
part of my employment with the Georgia Department of Veterans Service.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

***Georgia Department of Veterans Service***  
***Floyd Veterans Memorial Building***  
***2 MLK Jr. Drive SE, Suite E-970***  
***Atlanta, Georgia 30334-4800***

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June 1, 2022

**Human Resources**

**Department Directive 24.108**

**SUBJECT:** Notary Public Services

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Executive Director, Health, Memorials Division,  
Finance and Development

**GENERAL:**

1. Generally, veteran clients may obtain the services of a notary public from someone who is licensed by the State of Georgia to provide these services in accordance with state law. These services are readily available from licensed individuals in some form of private practice, or through some local banks or other institutions that provide these services. Usually, there is a nominal charge for these services paid to the notary public or to the employing institution/company for whom the notary public is regularly employed.
2. Occasionally, veteran clients will request notary public services while they are receiving regular veteran benefits services from the department (GDVS) in one of the veteran field service offices (VFSO). **Normally, these services are not provided by the GDVS** because the forms required to apply for federal and/or state benefits do not require authentication by a notary public.
3. There are some situations involving veterans and/or their immediate family members that require the services of a notary public. In most cases these situations involve veterans who are patients at one of the department's state war veterans homes (Augusta or Milledgeville), where the veterans are not able to easily travel to the locations away from the homes in the communities where notary public services are available. Accordingly, they may be provided as a convenience to the veteran and/or immediate family member[s].
4. Therefore, the department may from time to time approve and authorize the provision of notary public services to be provided in a VFSO, or elsewhere, by a department employee licensed by the State of Georgia as a notary public. Documents to be notarized will generally be limited to those related to a veteran's claim[s] for federal or state benefits.
  - a. Part of the authorization will be for the expenditure of department funds to reimburse approved department employees for the costs and fees associated with the application to obtain a notary public license and to pay for the cost of the "equipment" required for the authorized notary public to perform the duties of that office.

- b. When those duties are performed at the VFSO, or elsewhere, during normal duty hours, the notary public will not charge for the notary public services provided to veterans or the family members of veterans.
  - c. The notary public services provided by a department employed notary public at a VFSO, or elsewhere, during normal duty hours will be provided only to veterans and the immediate family members of veterans.
5. Requests for approval to provide notary public services will be in writing (see Paragraph 12) and provide the following information:
- a. Name of the employee to provide notary public services.
  - b. Location of the employee and where the services will be provided.
  - c. Reason[s] for the department to provide notary public services at the indicated location (answer the question, why these services cannot be obtained from another provider of them in a community). (NOTE: The fact veterans have to pay a fee to another notary public is not sufficient justification to support the request to provide these services.)
  - d. Individuals who will provide the notary public services will provide written statements, attached to the requests, indicating they have read and understand this department directive and will comply with it.
6. **Department employed notaries public will not provide these services to members of the general public at a VFSO, or elsewhere, during normal duty hours while performing duties as a department employee.** During non-duty hours and outside of the VFSO, or elsewhere, department employees who are notaries public may provide these services and may charge for them, as long as the services are in no way related to the GDVS, or the operations at a VFSO, or elsewhere the authorized department notary public may be working.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

7. Commissioner of Veterans Service or designee:
- a. The Commissioner of Veterans Service or designee will be the approving and authorizing authority for which department employees may function as a notaries public representing the department.
  - b. Only those individuals approved and authorized in accordance with Paragraph 4 will be reimbursed in accordance with that paragraph and permitted to provide notary public services within the GDVS and its facilities.
8. Executive Directors will request and/or recommend approval of requests for approval and authorization to provide notary public services at certain locations within their respective areas of responsibility and forward them to the Commissioner or designee for approval and authorization.
9. Division Directors (includes regional directors) may request or recommend approval of requests for approval and authorization to provide notary public services at certain locations under their respective areas of responsibility. These requests/recommendations for approval will be submitted to their respective executive director for action as indicated in Paragraph 8.

10. VFSO managers/cemetery directors/etc., may request approval and authorization for notary public services to be provided at locations within their area of responsibility. These requests will be submitted to their respective division directors for action as indicated in Paragraph 9.
11. **Only department employees approved and authorized to provide notary public services within the department's areas of responsibility may do so in accordance with Paragraphs 3 and 4.**

**PROCEDURES:**

12. Requests to provide notary public services will be made in writing on department letterhead, forwarded by email and processed in accordance with Paragraphs 7 – 10.
13. A copy of the request and associated approval/authorization will be filed in the employee's personnel file maintained in the Human Resources Section at the Central Office.
14. Reimbursements to employees for fees and costs associated with obtaining notary public licenses and the purchase of the needed "equipment" will be made by the department's Accounting and Finance Division, based on the provision of the approval documentation as backup for the payment.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. M. Ross', written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS





Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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June 1, 2022

**Human Resources**

**Department Directive 24.109**

**SUBJECT:** Court Leave (Jury Duty)

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Chief Operations Officer

**GENERAL:**

1. This Department Directive conforms to the State of Georgia/Department of Administrative Services/Human Resources Administration Rule and Regulation 478-1-.16, Absence from Work. This rule and regulation is incorporated as an attachment into this Department Directive by reference. Any differences between the rule and regulation and this GDVS Department Directive will be governed by Rule and Regulation 478-1-.16.
2. The Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) recognizes and respects employees' obligations to perform civic duties when summoned as a potential juror or witness and grants employees leave for this purpose.
3. Employees will not be discharged, disciplined or otherwise penalized because they are absent from employment for the purpose of attending a judicial proceeding in response to a subpoena, summons for jury duty, or other court order or process, which requires the attendance of employees.
4. Because employees will typically not know in advance how much time will be required to fulfill their court obligation, employees are required to update their supervisor at reasonable intervals (at least every three days) concerning the time needed for absence from duty.
5. Paid Court Leave **IS NOT** charged to an employee's accrued leave balance (478-1-.16 (5)).
6. Paid Court Leave is granted to eligible non-temporary employees, as follows:
  - a. **Requesting Leave:** An employee who is summoned to perform jury duty or to serve as a witness must provide a copy of the summons or subpoena to his/her immediate supervisor when he/she first receives it. Likewise, an employee who is summoned in response to a court order must provide a copy of that order to his/her immediate supervisor when requesting leave.
  - b. **Pay While on Court Leave:**
    - i. **Jury Duty:**
      1. Eligible employees will receive pay while on jury duty for the days they are otherwise scheduled to work. Employees will be paid only for the time they

are required to appear by the court, plus any additional time that is reasonable and necessary, in the opinion of the GDVS (see Paragraphs 8 and 9 below for specific guidance), for the employee to prepare for or return from jury duty.

2. Employees will not receive any compensation from the GDVS for time spent serving as a juror that exceeds the employee's regularly scheduled duty hours.
  3. Eligible non-exempt (hourly) employees will receive their straight time base pay rate times the number of hours they would otherwise have worked up to a maximum of eight (8) hours for each day of required jury duty.
  4. Exempt employees will receive their normal salary.
  5. Employees may keep any juror fees and travel allowances they receive from the Court.
  6. Employees are required to provide documentation to their immediate supervisor (see Paragraph 9 below for specific guidance) supporting the need for leave to serve as a juror.
  7. Further, employees are required to keep in contact with their immediate supervisor at reasonable intervals (at least every three days) during the time the employee is absent from duty.
  8. In the event an employee is notified to be on standby to report for jury duty, but is excused on one or more days, the employee is expected to report for normal duty, unless actually called to report to the court.
- ii. **Court Attendance and Witness Duty Leave:** An employee summoned to appear as a witness or required by a court to attend a proceeding will be paid in the same manner as an employee serving on a jury. However, an employee will not receive paid leave to attend a trial or an arbitration hearing in which he/she:
1. Is charged with a crime;
  2. Is a plaintiff or defendant;
  3. Voluntarily appears as a witness;
  4. Is a witness in a case arising from or related to his/her outside employment or outside business activity;
  5. Is testifying for a fee as an expert witness;
  6. Has any other personal or familial interest in the proceeding;
- In such circumstances, the employee must use annual leave, personal leave, or take leave without pay.
- iii. **Return from Court Leave:** Employees are required to report back to work as soon as they are released from jury duty or other court ordered appearances.
1. Immediate supervisors may require verification from the court showing the time served (see Paragraph 8 below for specific guidance).
  2. Failure to make a timely return from Court Leave is treated as an unexcused absence.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

### **7. Individual.**

- a. Enter approved Court Leave into the Team Georgia system, as appropriate.
- b. File the GDVS leave request in the approved location, as documentation of the approval of the requested leave.

### **8. Immediate Supervisors.**

- a. Approve and grant Court Leave to subordinate employees when requested and appropriate documentation has been provided.
- b. Submit the approved Court Leave along with appropriate documentation through applicable supervisory channels to the GDVS Leave Email Address.
- c. Inform employees to make a timely return to work from Court Leave.
- d. May require verification from the court showing the time served. This action will be used sparingly by supervisors and should be taken only when there is supervisory concern the policy to return to work may have been exploited or misused.

### **9. Individual Employees.**

- a. Request Court Leave from their immediate supervisor in a timely manner prior to the date the leave is to begin.
- b. Provide appropriate documentation as outlined in Paragraph 3, of this directive.
- c. Submit requests for Court Leave, etc., on a VS Form 24-006, along with all necessary documentation.

COMMISSIONER



PATRICIA M. ROSS

Attachment: As Stated



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

# **Georgia Department of Veterans Service**

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June 1, 2022

## **Human Resources**

### **Department Directive 24.110**

**SUBJECT:** Absences from Work

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Operations Division

#### **GENERAL:**

1. This Department Directive implements the following State of Georgia Rules and Regulations and Policy Memorandum. In addition, it supplements the statewide guidance and requirements contained in these documents for use in the Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS). They are incorporated and attached by reference to this Department Directive.
  - a. 478-1-.07: Outside Employment
  - b. 478-1-.16: Absence from Work
  - c. 478-1-.17: Leave Donation
  - d. 478-1-.15: Changes to Employment Status
  - e. 478-1-.19: Military Leave
  - f. 478-1-.23: Family and Medical Leave
  - g. 478-1-.28: Voluntary Separations for Exempt Employees
  - h. Policy Memorandum Number 7 (Governor's Office of Planning and Budget and the Human Resources Administration of the Department of Administrative Services): Rules, Regulations and Procedures Governing Working Hours, the Payment of Overtime and the Granting of Compensatory Time
2. The GDVS policy on Court Leave is found in DD 24.109: Court Leave.
3. Definitions:
  - a. The definitions prescribed in the statewide regulations and policy memorandum (Paragraph 1) apply in this Department Directive.
  - b. The term **Commissioner** means the Commissioner of Veterans Service, as prescribed in the O.C.G.A. § 38-4. The term **designee** means an official(s) of the GDVS appointed, delegated, or selected by the Commissioner to make a decision(s) on behalf of the Commissioner, during the absence of the Commissioner or at the Commissioner's specific action or direction.

- c. **Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA):** A Federal law that applies to the State of Georgia.
  - i. Exempt employee: A GDVS employee to which the FLSA do not apply.
  - ii. Non-exempt employee: A GDVS employee to which the FLSA does apply.
- 4. **General Leave Administration Provisions:** The provisions of 478-1-.16 are supplemented as follows:
  - a. All requests for leave or absence will be submitted by employees using VS Forms 24-006, Request for Leave or Absence (formerly known as the ***VSO-6***) (see attachment). ***An employee absent from the normal duty location on official business is not considered to be on leave.***
    - i. Requests for Leave or Absence via TeamWorks will be submitted in a timely manner.
      - 1. Normally, requests for leave or absence will be submitted by the employee in advance of the start date for the leave or absence.
        - a. Requests for Annual Leave and Personal Leave should be submitted by the employee to the immediate supervisor for approval/disapproval action not later than one (1) workday prior to the start of the leave or absence period.
          - i. Requests for leave in conjunction with ***vacations*** should be submitted to the immediate supervisor as early as possible (at least a minimum one-three [1-3] months) in advance of the start date, so appropriate staffing actions, as needed, can be arranged to ensure mission accomplishment.
          - ii. Immediate supervisors may require longer lead times, provided the policy for doing so is approved and issued in advance by at least the second line supervisor or higher supervisory level.
          - iii. Executive Directors may require longer lead times by issuing a blanket policy to cover their areas of supervision. When this occurs, local policies issued in accordance with “ii” above will be negated.
        - b. Requests for other forms of leave or absence including Compensatory Time, will be handled in the same manner as for Annual Leave and Personal Leave.
      - 2. The only exception to this policy is for Sick Leave, or for Annual Leave or Personal Leave taken in an emergency situation, such as the death of an immediate family member. When any of these situations occur, upon the return of the employee to work the employee will complete their time and labor submission in TeamWorks within two (2) workdays of the return to work.
    - ii. All requests for absences or leaves will be in quarter-hour increments (15 minutes) and stated as in the following example for hours requested: “1.25; 1.5; 1.75; 2.0, etc.” Any absence for a portion of a quarter of an hour will be documented to the next quarter hour (Example: 1 hour 20 minutes will be documented as 1.5 hours).
  - b. When an employee submits a leave request in TeamWorks, the system certifies there is an appropriate amount of time accrued for the requested leave or absence. If the

individual has not accrued sufficient leave, they may not take leave. If an emergency situation occurs, the individual through their supervisory chain must identify the emergency along with documentation to the Human Resources Section and the Chief Operations Officer

- i. Charge the leave to another form of leave, such as from Annual Leave to Personal Leave, to Sick Leave, or Compensatory Time (since Compensatory Time should be taken before any other form of leave or absence is taken, there should not be any or minimal Compensatory Time available for use).
- ii. **If there are no available sources of leave or absence available to be used and leadership approves emergency leave, the employee will be charged Leave Without Pay (LWOP) for the period of time.**
  1. The Human Resources Section will notify through supervisory channels the immediate supervisor of the situation and the need to use LWOP for the employee.
  2. The immediate supervisor should document the matter and **counsel with the employee in writing about proper leave management.**
  3. If this is a recurring situation, the immediate or second line supervisor may take appropriate disciplinary action up to and including recommending termination of employment for the employee.
- c. If a request for leave or absence is denied, the employee is expected to work, as scheduled. Failure of the employee to do so will result in leave without pay and/or other employment action deemed appropriate by the Commissioner, or designee, up to and including termination of employment.
- d. Extensions to approved leave or absence will be requested PRIOR to the expiration of the currently approved period of leave or absence. Failure to obtain approval for additional time off beyond the expiration of an approved absence may result in separation from employment or other employment action deemed appropriate by the Commissioner, or designee.
- e. At a minimum, every 30 days employees on leave with an uncertain end date will provide **a periodic report of their status and intent to return to work from their attending physician** for Sick Leave, or another appropriate individual(s) for other forms of leave or absence. The Commissioner, or designee, may require more frequent reports be provided, based on circumstances of a particular situation regarding an employee.
- f. The GDVS requires, as a condition of return from Sick Leave or other related medical/surgical absence, an employee who is absent from work because of illness or injury for more than 17 work hours to supply an appropriate medical release or certification on appropriate letterhead or stationery. The employee is able to return to work with concurrence by an attending physician or other competent medical authority. The release or certification must explain the extent to which the employee is able to perform the essential functions of the employee's position with or without reasonable accommodation.

- i. The GDVS will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) related to employees returning to work and will provide **reasonable** accommodation to its qualified employees with disabilities.
  - ii. A limitation exists for employees returning to work from using intermittent or reduced schedule Family and Medical Leave (FMLA, as amended), the Commissioner, or designee, may require a **fitness-for-duty** certification when the Commissioner, or designee, reasonably believes the return could pose significant risk or harm to the employee or others. Such certification may be required more often than every 30 calendar days by the Commissioner, or designee.
  - iii. If the medical certification does not release the employee to perform essential functions and there is no available reasonable accommodation, as defined in the ADA, as amended, or if the employee fails to provide the required release, the Commissioner, or designee, may take the employment action deemed appropriate, up to and including termination of employment.
  - g. Prior to engaging in other employment, including self-employment, while on leave, employees must comply with the notice and other requirements set forth in Rule 478-1-.07 (Paragraph 1).
  - h. Misrepresenting reasons for requesting or continuing a leave or absence may result in disciplinary action as determined by the Commissioner, or designee, up to and including termination of employment.
5. **Types of Paid Leave are as enumerated in Paragraph 1 to this Department Directive.**
- a. The State's paid leave program offers a combination of accrued, personal and administrative leave for eligible employees. **Employees may not use paid leave before it is actually earned.**
  - b. The following employees (Rule 478-1-.16) are not eligible for any paid leave benefits:
    - i. Temporary employees,
    - ii. Hourly employees, and
    - iii. Rehired retirees during the first 1,040 hours of work performed in the calendar year.
    - iv. **Eligibility for other GDVS employees is defined in the applicable leave sections that follow, below.**
  - c. **Accrued leave:**
    - i. Accrued leave includes annual leave and sick leave. Both forms of leave are earned based on time in pay status and automatically accrue to eligible employees.
    - ii. The minimum period of annual and/or sick leave to be charged for any use which is only a fraction of one hour cannot be greater than fifteen (15) minutes.
    - iii. Dual Eligibility: See Rule 478-1-.16.
  - d. **Administrative leave:** State law provides paid administrative leave to eligible salaried employees for certain activities. Such leave is in addition to and not charged



against an employee's accrued leave. Administrative leave is available for/during the following:

- i. Absence due to emergency office closures: See Rule 478-1-.16.
  - ii. Blood donation leave: See Rule 478-1-.16.
  - iii. Bone marrow donation leave: See Rule 478-1-.16.
  - iv. Organ donation leave: See Rule 478-1-.16.
  - v. Court leave: See Rule 478-1-.16 and DD 24.109: Court Leave
  - vi. Employee voting leave: See Rule 478-1-.16.
  - vii. Education support leave: See Rule 478-1-.16.
  - viii. Disaster volunteer leave: See Rule 478-1-.16.
  - ix. Line-of-Duty injury leave: See Rule 478-1-.16.
  - x. Leave for contracting TB or infectious Hepatitis on the job: See Rule 478-1-.16.
  - xi. Military leave: See Rule 478-1-.16.
- e. **Annual Leave:**
- i. The GDVS provides paid annual leave for non-temporary **salaried employees** who are scheduled to work 20 or more hours a week.
  - ii. Employees listed in Paragraph 5.b. of this Department Directive are **not eligible** to accrue annual leave.
  - iii. Uses and limitations of annual leave:
    - 1. For vacation or other personal reasons.
    - 2. Employees may not take annual leave BEFORE it is actually earned.
    - 3. Employees are required to use compensatory time and/or deferred holiday time **before** using annual leave.
    - 4. Employees are required to use available sick leave before using annual leave when the absence involves medical reasons that would qualify for sick leave. Final determination will be made by the Commissioner, or designee.
    - 5. In scheduling annual leave, supervisors will TRY to accommodate employee preferences. However, employees who request annual leave during busy periods, or at times when co-workers have already requested leave, should make alternate plans. Supervisors will weigh the department's business/mission needs and the timeliness of the requests in approving annual leave.
  - iv. In accordance with Rule 478-1-.16, an employee may accrue up to 360 hours of annual leave. Any annual leave balance in excess of 360 hours is forfeited at the end of each month.
  - v. Annual leave that is forfeited may be restored as sick leave by the Commissioner, or designee, if an employee exhausts all paid leave and compensatory time and must be absent because of a personal or family medical condition. The restoration of leave is limited to:



1. The amount required by the circumstances of the medical condition; and
  2. The leave forfeited during the current period of employment. Forfeited leave accrued prior to a break in service cannot be restored except as outlined in Rule 478-1-.16.
- vi. In accordance with Rule 478-1-.16 employees are paid for their accrued leave and unused leave, which have not been forfeited, upon separation from State employment. See the Rule for details.

**f. Sick Leave:**

- i. The GDVS provides paid sick leave for non-temporary employees who are scheduled to work 20 or more hours a week.
- ii. Employees listed in Paragraph 5.b. of this Department Directive are **not eligible** to accrue sick leave.
- iii. Provided the employee adheres to the procedures for approval of leave, an employee may use accrued sick leave for any absence due to:
  1. Personal illness, injury, or disability.
  2. Adoption of a child by the employee where the employee's presence is required for health-related reasons.
  3. Dental or medical care.
  4. Illness, injury, or disability in the employee's immediate family which requires the employee's presence.
  5. Death in the employee's immediate family which requires the employee's presence; however, sick leave used for this purpose shall be limited to five (5) workdays or the equivalent of one workweek.
  6. Sick leave may also be used to allow an employee paid time off from work because the employee has been exposed to a contagious disease and may reasonably expose other coworkers and endanger their health by being present at work.
  7. Employees **MAY NOT** use sick leave before it is actually earned.
  8. An employee will be required to furnish evidence to support the use of sick leave if the employee uses seventeen 17 or more hours of sick leave in a thirty (30) calendar day period or has demonstrated excessive or abusive use of sick leave.
  9. Employees using sick leave during a period of FMLA are also subject to the medical certification provision associated with the FMLA (see Paragraph 1, above).
- iv. Excessive or abusive use of sick leave is defined as a pattern of intermittent, short-term usage that includes, but is not limited to, the following:
  1. Frequent use of sick leave in conjunction with holidays, scheduled off days, weekends, or pay days.
  2. Frequent use of sick leave when scheduled for undesirable temporary shifts or assignments, or during periods of peak workload.

3. A request for sick leave for an absence for which other paid leave has previously been denied.
  4. Frequent occurrences of illness during the workday.
  5. Peculiar and increasingly improbable excuses.
  6. Repetitive use of fewer than 17 hours of sick leave in 30-day periods.
  7. Prior written notification of failure to adhere to procedures for approval of leave, inappropriate attendance, or inappropriate use of leave (e.g., written warning, active attendance plan, etc.).
- v. If an employee is ill for three (3) workdays or more during a period of annual leave, the period of illness may be charged to sick leave if the employee provides satisfactory written evidence supporting the illness during annual leave. A request for substitution of sick leave for annual leave must be made to the GDVS supervisor within two (2) weeks after the employee has returned to duty. Following receipt of an employee's request, the Commissioner, or designee, will make the decision to substitute sick leave for annual leave. **NO SUBSTITUTION** will be allowed for illness that does not last for three (3) or more workdays.
- vi. If an absence because of illness, injury, or disability extends beyond available sick leave, the absence may be charged to available annual leave, personal leave, compensatory time, or deferred holiday time, unless the employee applies for and the Commissioner, or designee, approves a leave without pay.
1. Leave donations may be available to an employee who must be absent for an extended period of time after exhausting all paid leave and compensatory time (Rule 478-1-.17).
- vii. Carryover and forfeiture of sick leave:
1. An employee may accrue up to 720 hours of sick leave. Any sick leave balance in excess of 720 is forfeited at the end of each month.
  2. Sick leave that is forfeited may be restored by the Commissioner, or designee, if an employee exhausts all paid leave and compensatory time and must be absent because of a personal or family medical condition. The restoration of sick leave is limited to:
    - a. The amount required by the circumstances of the medical condition; and
    - b. The leave forfeited during the current period of employment. Forfeited leave accrued prior to a break in service cannot be restored, except as provided in Rule 478-1-.16.
- g. **Personal Leave:** Each year, an employee who has accumulated an accrued sick leave balance of more than 120 hours as of November 30 may convert **up to** 24 hours of the excess sick leave to personal leave. This conversion is handled through the State of Georgia's Team Georgia Internet portal.
- i. **The employee must have a remaining sick leave balance of at least 120 hours AFTER conversion.**
  - ii. The conversion must occur no later than the conclusion of the window provided through the State of Georgia's internet portal. The GDVS will ensure employees

who are absent in a protected leave status (e.g., FMLA, Military leave, etc.) during the election period are advised of any eligibility to convert sick leave to personal leave and provide a reasonable opportunity to make the conversion.

- iii. Sick leave converted during December becomes personal leave on January 7th and cannot be reversed after it is converted. Personal leave is available for use **ONLY** during the calendar year following conversion.
- iv. The minimum period of personal leave to be charged for any use which is only a fraction of one hour will be in 15-minute increments.
- v. Personal leave may be used for any reason, upon receiving supervisory approval, with the following exceptions:
  - 1. Employees cannot use personal leave while they are receiving Georgia State-funded wage substitutes, such as Worker's Compensation wage loss benefits.
  - 2. Employees will use available sick leave before using personal leave when the absence involves medical reasons that would qualify for sick leave.
  - 3. Supervisors will make every reasonable effort to accommodate requests to utilize personal leave. Employees are expected to give as much advance notice as possible to minimize disruptions.
  - 4. Personal leave not used by December 31st of the year the leave was available will be divested and cannot be restored. Any unused personal leave at the time of an employee's break in State service of at least one full workday is divested and not paid to the employee.
  - 5. When an employee transfers into a position not entitled to earn leave, any unused personal leave is divested and not paid.

**h. Absence due to emergency office closures:**

- i. When the Governor, or the Commissioner or designee, upon delegated authority by the Governor, closes an office or facility because of weather conditions or other emergency circumstances, affected employees are excused from duty without loss of pay. Employees who are not directly affected by an emergency office closure will not be excused from work.
  - 1. Employees considered directly affected by a closure:
    - a. Employees scheduled to work.
    - b. Non-temporary salaried employees affected by the closure are paid for the scheduled work time they do not work because of the closure. The paid time off is not charged against their accrued leave.
    - c. The following employees are not eligible for compensation for absences due to emergency closures:
      - i. Unaffected employees.
      - ii. All temporary employees.
      - iii. All hourly employees.
      - iv. Active salaried, non-temporary employees who are rehired retirees of Georgia's retirement system while receiving retirement annuity

payments during the first 1,040 hours of work performed in the calendar year.

2. Employees considered unaffected by a closure:
  - a. Employees who were not scheduled to work in an affected area during an emergency office closure are considered unaffected by the closure.
  - b. Employees scheduled to use leave or compensatory time during an emergency office closure WILL BE CHARGED for that pre-approved leave or compensatory time because they are considered unaffected by the closure.
3. Essential staff:
  - a. The Commissioner, or designee, may determine it is essential to continue certain functions during an emergency office closure. Employees whose functions are deemed essential may be required to work, rather than be excused from duty.
  - b. Such employees will be compensated as usual for the time worked during their normal work schedule and do not have any right to additional absence or compensation for this time as a result of paid absence authorized for non-essential staff.
  - c. Essential employees who are required to work additional time because of an office or facility closing will be compensated in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 1 of this Department Directive.
4. If an employee is absent from duty because of severe weather conditions or other emergencies, which do not cause the employee's office to close, the Commissioner, or designee, may permit the employee to:
  - a. Make up time lost from work. To comply with the FLSA, non-exempt employees must make up time during the same workweek as the time lost.
  - b. Charge the period of absence to accrued compensatory time.
  - c. Charge the period of absence to accrued annual leave.
  - d. Charge the period of absence to deferred holiday time.
  - e. Telework, with specific approval of the Commissioner, or designee.
  - f. If none of the above options are available, the employee(s) will be placed on leave without pay (LWOP) for the period of absence.
- i. **Blood donation leave:** See Rule 478-1-.16.
- j. **Bone marrow donation leave:** See Rule 478-1-.16.
- k. **Organ donation leave:** See Rule 478-1-.16.
- l. **Voting leave:** The State encourages employees to exercise their right to vote in all federal, state and local elections. Non-temporary salaried employees may be granted paid time off to vote, up to a maximum of two (2) hours per election day, as provided herein. Paid voting leave is not charged to an employee's accrued leave.

- i. Paid voting leave is available to employees when their work schedule does not allow them at least two (2) hours (including travel) to vote either before or after work. Employees who are scheduled to begin work at least two (2) hours after the polls open or end work at least two (2) hours before the polls close are not eligible for voting leave.
- ii. Paid voting leave IS NOT available for voting midday. It must be used either at the beginning or end of the employee's regular workday.
- iii. Voting leave covers only the time necessary to give an employee two (2) hours either before or after work to vote.
- iv. For those employees not eligible for voting leave supervisors have the discretion to arrange flexible work schedules for voting purposes. Supervisors may also allow employees to use other available paid leave, other than sick leave, if they are not eligible for voting leave or need more than two (2) hours to vote.
- v. Supervisors may allow employees paid voting leave on early voting days if they determine doing so minimally disrupts normal operations.
- vi. Employees are responsible for requesting and obtaining approval from their supervisor in advance of taking time off to vote and should schedule the time off in a manner that minimally disrupts normal agency operations.
- m. **Education support leave:** See Rule 478-1-16. (NOTE: Each employee is provided with eight (8) hours of education support leave per calendar year and the amount of this leave provided and/or remaining is reflected on the employee's leave balance found in the Team Georgia system.) Prior approval must be obtained from the employee's supervisor before taking this leave.
- n. **Disaster volunteer leave:** See Rule 478-1-16.
- o. **Line of duty injury leave:** See Rule 478-1-16.
- p. **Leave for contracting TB or Hepatitis on the job:** See Rule 478-1-16.
- q. **Military leave:** See Rule 478-1-19.
  - i. When a GDVS employee performs ordered military duty, the employee is entitled to his/her base pay and other compensation for up to a total of 144 hours (18 workdays) of military leave in any one federal fiscal year while he/she is on military leave.
  - ii. GDVS employees applying to use military leave will provide maximum advance notice to the employee's supervisor with the projected time the military leave will be taken. In the event of a State or Federal emergency, the notice requirement will be waived by the Commissioner, or designee.
- r. **Leave without pay (LWOP):**
  - i. Uses:
    - 1. When an employee is authorized for absence but does not have available paid leave to cover the absence.

2. When an employee is authorized for absence but foregoes the use of available paid leave for a Workers' Compensation-related absence or for other absence with the concurrence of the Commissioner, or designee.
  3. When an employee does not have approval for an absence.
  4. When there is insufficient funding for salaries.
  5. When there is insufficient work available.
- ii. LWOP is not included as service time for purposes of computing retirement or pension benefits, unless otherwise specified herein, or in Rule 478-1-.16.
  - iii. The Commissioner, or designee, may grant an employee who is absent, but does not have accrued leave to cover the period of absence, LWOP for a period of not more than ten (10) consecutive workdays in any one continuous absence. At the expiration of the approved LWOP, the employee shall be returned to the same position without any loss of rights provided the employee returns within the terms of the leave granted.
  - iv. Regular LWOP: A regular LWOP allows an employee to take unpaid time off for up to 12 continuous months and be granted return to work if the employee returns within the terms of the leave approval. See Rule 478-1-.16.
  - v. Contingent LWOP: See Rule 478-1-.16.
  - vi. Extending a LWOP:
    1. The Commissioner, or designee, may extend an approved LWOP when such extension is properly requested in writing through the employee's supervisory chain.
    2. The employee must submit the written request for extension BEFORE the expiration of approved leave. If approved, a written notice specifying the terms and conditions of the extension, including any rights to reinstatement, will be provided.
    3. A continuous LWOP may not exceed 24 months, unless otherwise required as a reasonable accommodation.
  - vii. Unauthorized LWOP:
    1. An employee who is absent without approval may be placed in non-pay status and may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment (See Rule 478-1-.16).
    2. **A non-exempt employee who is absent from duty for three (3) consecutive workdays or equivalent without proper authorization may be considered to have voluntarily resigned (See Paragraph 1).**
    3. **An exempt employee who is absent from duty for five (5) consecutive workdays or the equivalent of a scheduled workweek without proper authorization may be considered to have voluntarily resigned (See Paragraph 1).**
  - viii. Furlough-Insufficient Funding:



1. Due to a curtailment of funds, the Commissioner, or designee, may place employees in a non-pay status as a temporary reduction-in-force pursuant to a plan filed with the Human Resources Administration of the Department of Administrative Services.
2. On furlough days an employee does not perform work and does not receive pay.
3. Employees may not be placed in non-pay furlough status for more than a total of 30 workdays in any 12-month period (See Rule 478-1-.16).
4. Absences under these circumstances will not be charged against accrued leave or compensatory time, will not be considered a break in service, and will not affect eligibility for salary increases.

**s. Compensatory Time:**

- i. Avoidance of Overtime and Prompt Payment: A non-exempt employee who has worked the maximum allowable hours prior to the end of the work period may be given equivalent time off for the remainder of the work period in lieu of allowing the employee to work at overtime rates (See Paragraphs 1.b. and 1.h. of this Department Directive).
- ii. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Compensatory Time (for Non-exempt FLSA Employees):
  1. Overtime for non-exempt employees will be governed by the provisions of the FLSA. Overtime worked by non-exempt employees will normally be credited as FLSA compensatory time at a rate of ***one-and-one-half hours of compensatory time for each hour of overtime worked*** (See Paragraph 1).
  2. Supervisors at all levels are responsible for the control of all overtime worked in the GDVS and for accurately approving and recording such overtime worked in the GDVS' time and leave system.
  3. Overtime is credited when the employee works more than forty (40) hours in a defined workweek.
  4. Time worked does not include paid time off, such as leave, holidays or suspension.
  5. Unscheduled and unauthorized overtime worked by non-exempt employees will be compensated. However, disciplinary action determined appropriate by the Commissioner, or designee, may be taken against a non-exempt employee who works unscheduled or unauthorized hours.
  6. Use and limitation of FLSA Compensatory time:
    - a. An employee must be granted FLSA compensatory time off within a reasonable time after making the request if the use of such time off does not unduly disrupt operations.
    - b. Employees will use accumulated FLSA compensatory time **before** using annual leave.

- c. By federal law and regulation, the maximum FLSA compensatory time accrual is 240 hours at any given time. Compensatory time in excess of 240 hours will be paid out.

**However, in the GDVS compensatory time will be used before reaching this level.**

7. Payment for overtime:

- a. Employees receive pay for overtime ONLY in the following situations:
  - i. When the Commissioner, or designee, approves payment in lieu of FLSA compensatory time.
  - ii. Upon exceeding the accumulation limits of FLSA compensatory time.
  - iii. Upon separation from employment with the GDVS, including transfer from the GDVS to another state employer.
- b. Payment for overtime is typically made the pay period following the pay period in which the overtime is earned.

iii. State Compensatory Time:

- 1. State compensatory time is hour-for-hour paid time off for employees who work longer than the normally assigned hours in a work period but do not qualify for FLSA compensatory time. **In accordance with Paragraph 1 of this Department Directive, GDVS employees eligible for State Compensatory Time are FLSA exempt employees.**
- 2. The maximum State compensatory time accrual allowed is 240 hours at any given time.

**However, in the GDVS compensatory time should be used before reaching this level.**

Any State compensatory time in excess of 240 hours is **lost and not paid out.**

- 3. State compensatory time not used within one (1) year of the date it is earned is lost and not paid out. **However, in the GDVS compensatory time should be used before reaching this level.**
- 4. Unused State compensatory time is lost upon separation from employment. The employee WILL NOT BE COMPENSATED for such time in any manner, and it WILL NOT transfer with the employee to another State entity.

- t. **Holidays:** The State observes 13 public holidays each calendar year on dates declared by the Governor.
  - i. GDVS offices are closed, and employees do not report for work on declared holidays, except as indicated (below).
  - ii. GDVS staff members with duty locations at or in U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities (Atlanta VA Regional Office, VA medical centers, VA outpatient clinics, etc.) will follow the federal holiday schedules for those facilities.



1. State holidays not observed by the VA WILL NOT be observed by the GDVS employees working at or in the VA facilities.
2. Conversely, Federal holidays not observed by the State WILL BE observed by the GDVS employees working at or in VA facilities.
- iii. Eligibility for Paid Holiday: See Rule 478-1-.16.
- iv. Pay for holidays and provision for employees on alternative work schedules: See Rule 478-1-.16. v. Equivalent time off or deferred holiday payout: See Rule 478-1-.16.
- vi. Request to observe other religious holiday:
  1. An employee making this request will submit it through their supervisor to the Commissioner, or designee, who will take the final approval action.
  2. An employee may request priority consideration for time off from work to observe a religious holiday that is not observed as a State holiday. To receive priority consideration, the request should be made at least seven (7) calendar days in advance.
  3. An employee may request priority consideration for up to three (3) workdays in each calendar year.
  4. In accordance with Rule 148-1-.16 a request by an employee for time off for religious observance **cannot be denied UNLESS:**
    - a. The duties performed by the employee are urgently required and the employee, in the judgment of the Commissioner, or designee, is the only person available who can perform the duties, or
    - b. The Commissioner, or designee, can otherwise show accommodating the request would be an undue hardship.
  5. Any paid time off granted to observe a religious holiday will be deducted from the employee's accrued annual leave, personal leave, compensatory time, or deferred holiday time available at the time of the observance. If the employee does not have sufficient annual leave, personal leave, compensatory time, or deferred holiday time to cover the period of absence, the Commissioner, or designee, will consider LWOP for the absence.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

6. The Commissioner, or designee, is responsible for certain actions as outlined in this Department Directive. The Commissioner may designate one or more individuals in the GDVS to act for and on the Commissioner's behalf related to leaves and absences.
7. A Designee is an official(s) of the GDVS appointed, delegated, or selected by the Commissioner to make decision(s) on behalf of the Commissioner during the absence of the Commissioner or at the Commissioner's specific action or direction.
8. Supervisors at all levels will make decisions to approve or disapprove requests for leave or absences from work. In these actions the supervisors must ensure the needs of the GDVS to perform its mission are met, while at the same time making every effort to

accommodate the needs and desires of the employees requesting leaves or absences. Supervisors may establish annual leave schedules for employees under their supervision to ensure operations under their supervision are met to the maximum extent possible during the year.

9. Employees will comply with the requirements of this Department Directive to the maximum extent possible. Employees at all levels will project their leave and absence requirements to the maximum extent possible to ensure the operations in which they work are met during the year.
10. The Chief Operations Officer supervises the Human Resources (Payroll) Section related to the documentation of leaves and absences into the State's leave accounting system. Chief Operations Officer will ensure GDVS personnel are informed on leave policies and relevant actions.
11. The Human Resources (Payroll) Section of the Operations Division enters approved and unapproved leaves and absences into the State's leave accounting system. The Section will keep supervisors, managers and employees informed of leave balances and other relevant information on employees.

#### **PROCEDURES:**

12. The VS Form 24-006, Request for Leave or Absence (which is an Excel spreadsheet in "xlsx" format), most current edition, will be used to request leave and absences and for the approval of them by the appropriate supervisor. Requests for Leave or Absence will be submitted by the employee to their immediate supervisor by email for approval/disapproval.
  - a. If the request is approved, the supervisor will email the approved request directly, or through supervisory channels for information purposes (depending on guidance from the "director level" supervisor), to the [leave@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:leave@vs.state.ga.us) email address for processing into the state payroll system.
  - b. If the request is disapproved by the immediate supervisor, the supervisor will complete the "Remarks" block and return the request to the employee by email.

COMMISSIONER



PATRICIA M. ROSS

Attachment: As Stated

#### **SUMMARY OF CHANGES**

**This Department Directive, dated June 1, 2022, replaces and updates the previous edition of the Department Directive, dated April 6, 2018, which is hereby rescinded.** It clarifies and provides additional detailed guidance in the new Paragraph 4.b. It incorporates the requirement in Paragraph 4a.iii., and Paragraph 12 for ALL absences, not just for Personal Leave (formerly listed in Paragraph 5.g.), paid or unpaid, to be requested on the VS Form 24-006 and to be made in quarter-hour (15 minute) increments. The former Paragraphs 4.b. through 4.g., are renumbered 4.c. through 4.h. There has also been included general updating of formatting.



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

# **Georgia Department of Veterans Service**

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June 1, 2022

## **Human Resources**

### **Department Directive 24.111**

**SUBJECT:** Recruiting, Screening, Hiring and Changes to Employment Status

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Operations Division

#### **GENERAL:**

1. The Commissioner of Veterans Service is authorized and directed to employ competent personnel to assist in the administration of the Department of Veterans Service. **As the executive officer of the Department of Veterans Service, the Commissioner shall have exclusive authority to employ personnel necessary to carry out the purposes of the department and shall define the duties of employees, assign their official stations, and fix their compensation subject to the state merit system and its successors. [emphasis added]** (Official Code of Georgia Annotated [O.C.G.A.] § 38-4-9)
2. The Commissioner shall give reasonable preference to veterans, their surviving spouses, and dependents in the matter of employment in the department; provided however, competency and efficiency shall not be sacrificed because of veteran affiliation, relationship, or service. (O.C.G.A. § 38-4-9)
3. The following Rules of the State Personnel Board are incorporated into this Department Directive by reference and as necessary and appropriate by direct quotation or citation.
  - a. 148-1-.02: Terms and Definitions
  - b. 148-1-.06: Recruiting, Screening and Hiring
  - c. 48-1-.12: Salary
  - d. 148-1-.16: Changes to Employment Status
4. Filling a vacancy.
  - a. The following are the authorized options for filling a vacancy:
    - i. Through the promotion, transfer, or demotion of a qualified employee; or
    - ii. Through the competitive selection of a qualified individual;
    - iii. Positions that are currently fully occupied may be filled (i.e., double-encumber a position) for a period of time determined reasonable to allow for the current occupant to provide needed instruction to the incoming successor. The time determined reasonable will be decided based on, among other factors, the availability of funding for personal services (salary and benefits) to support more

than one person working in the same position. Normally, this will be limited to no more than 30 days.

- b. These three options provide flexibility for department management to select the option for filling a vacancy based on circumstances related to each vacancy situation. The option to be used will be approved by the Commissioner (Paragraph 9b) and may vary.
5. When recruiting is used, the Chief Operations Officer will determine the length of time a recruitment action remains open for individuals to apply. Normally, internal recruitment will be initiated at the same time or before outside recruitment is undertaken to provide for internal preference for transfers and promotions.
  - a. Internal recruitment will normally last for up to seven (7) calendar days.
  - b. Normally, external recruitment will last for up to seven (7) calendar days; however, the length of time may be curtailed or extended based on the number of applications received to ensure a good list of candidates is available for management consideration and/or interview.
  - c. Internal recruitment and external recruitment may be conducted at the same time. If a qualified candidate emerges from internal recruitment, the external recruitment may be discontinued or terminated.
6. Interviews and Records Reviews:
  - a. Basically, there are two types of interviews: in person and through the use of electronic means (i.e., telephone, Teams, etc.). The type of interviews to be conducted will be determined by the interviewing manager, after consultation with the Chief Operations Officer.
  - b. Records reviews are usually conducted in conjunction with transfers or demotions to positions. Use of records reviews will be done after consultation with the Chief Operations Officer.
7. Changes to Employment Status:
  - a. A promotion is the advancement of an employee to a job on a higher pay grade. Employees determined to be qualified for the higher job may be promoted through a competitive promotion process.
    - i. When an employee is promoted, the employee's salary **should be** raised to any salary in the new pay range that provides an increase of at least 5.0 percent.
    - ii. When an employee is promoted, ***and the new pay range overlaps the old pay range***, the employee's salary **should be** raised to an increase of at least 5.0 percent. 478-1-.12 (5a)
    - iii. **Salary raises can only be made when there are sufficient funds in the appropriation for the fiscal program to which the employee's position is assigned to support the pay raise.**
    - iv. In addition, when freezes have been imposed on pay raises and salary increases in accordance with State law, the department will not be able to provide pay raises and salary increases until after such freezes are removed. Depending on availability of funds, pay raises may or may not be granted after the freeze period is over.

- b. A demotion is the movement of an employee to a job on a lower pay grade. Demotions may be voluntary or involuntary. In all cases the employee must be qualified for the lower job at the time of demotion. (See Rule 478-1-.15(2) for details)
  - c. A transfer may be made to fill a vacancy by a qualified employee from another position on the same job, as long as such transfer is not otherwise prohibited by this directive. An employee may be transferred to any vacancy in another job on the same pay grade, provided the employee meets the qualifications for the job and the transfer is not otherwise prohibited by this directive.
  - d. A relocation of an employee from one duty station to another may be made by the department, as a result of transfer, promotion, direct appointment, or demotion. (See Rule 48-1-.15 (4) (b) for details)
8. Other Changes to Employment Status include:
- a. Suspensions:
    - i. Suspension with Pay: Supervisors may suspend an employee with pay when it is determined by the Commissioner to be in the best interest of the department. A written notice will be provided to the employee.
    - ii. Suspension without Pay:
      - 1. Supervisors may recommend suspension of a non-exempt employee without pay for disciplinary purposes. Such suspension will be proportional to the offense and will not exceed 30 days for one offense, or for multiple offenses arising out of the same incident.
      - 2. Pending Criminal Court Action: The department may suspend a non-exempt employee without pay due to pending criminal court action. The suspension will not exceed the period of time necessary for the disposition of the court action. (See Rule 478-1-.15 (5)(a) (2) for details)
      - 3. Suspensions without pay will be approved by the Commissioner, or designee (Paragraph 9c).
  - b. Voluntary Separations: The Department may consider a non-exempt employee to have voluntarily resigned from employment with the department when any of the following occur:
    - i. The employee is absent from duty for three (3) consecutive workdays, or equivalent, without proper authorization.
    - ii. The employee fails to return from approved leave and has not received approval for an extension.
    - iii. A suitable vacancy is not available at the expiration of a contingent leave of absence.
  - c. Involuntary Separations: The department may terminate a non-exempt employee as deemed necessary to meet the needs of the department and in keeping with State and Federal laws and guidelines. The Commissioner, or designee, will approve all involuntary separations (9c). (See 478-1-.25 and 478-1-.26 for details)
  - d. Position Level Reduction: When the department determines the responsibilities of a position have been reduced to the extent the position would be more appropriately

assigned to a job on a lower pay grade, the department will reallocate the position to the appropriate job. (See 478-1-.15 (8) for details)

- e. Staff Reduction: At times, staff reductions may be undertaken as necessary due to lack of work, lack of funds, economic slowdowns, technological or structural changes in the department's operations, or to ensure the financial health and viability of the department. (See 478-1-.15 (9) for details)

## **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

### **9. Commissioner of Veterans Service:**

- a. Serves as the final and/or ultimate approving authority in the department for actions provided for in this Department Directive.
- b. Approves the option to be used for filling a vacancy (Paragraph 4).
  - i. Competitive selection is the preferred option for filling vacancies at the entry level. However, competitive promotions, transfers or demotions may be used at the discretion of the Commissioner.
  - ii. Normally, for working level positions, competitive promotion, transfer, or demotion will be used.
  - iii. Normally, for division director level positions and above, competitive promotion of a qualified individual will be used. However, depending on the circumstances surrounding filling the vacancy, other appropriate options may be used.
- c. The Commissioner has designated the Chief Operations Officer to act on behalf of the Commissioner for matters outlined in this Department Directive. The designee shall act in situations where the Commissioner is:
  - i. Unable to personally act in or on a situation due to limited time for action,
  - ii. The Commissioner is not available in a long-term basis to make a decision, or
  - iii. As specifically provided for by the Commissioner.
  - iv. The Chief Operations Officer, wherever possible, will coordinate with the Commissioner **prior to approval** all actions to be taken on behalf of or during the absence of the Commissioner.
  - v. The Chief Operations Officer will brief the Commissioner upon the Commissioner's return to duty or to the office of all actions taken during his/her absence approved by the designee.

10. The Chief Operations Officer is responsible for the daily activities associated with the implementation of this Department Directive. The Chief Operations Officer will advise the Commissioner of the activities required to support compliance with this directive, or as directed by the Commissioner. The Chief Operations Officer will oversee compliance with this directive.

11. The Chief Operations Officer will ensure completion of the necessary activities. The Chief Operations Officer will advise the on the activities required to support compliance with this directive.

**PROCEDURES:**

12. VS Form 24-105, Personnel Action Form (PAF), Revised April 2022 (attached), will be used to document the requested action for the employee/individual, appropriate reviews and approval of the Commissioner.
- a. When the Commissioner's designee (Paragraph 9c) signs the form as the Approving Official and indicates the appropriate action, the designee will indicate on the form the action is "for" the Commissioner.
  - b. The Chief Operations Officer will brief the Commissioner upon return to duty or to the office of all actions taken during his/her absence requiring the approval of the designee.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. M. Ross', written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS



**Georgia Department of Veterans Service  
Personnel Action Form (PAF)**



**1. Requestor**

<b>Employee Name</b>	
Location	
<b>Requestor</b>	
Date	
Action (one per request)	Select Action
Employee/Requestor Signature	

**2. Reviewer**

Name	
Date	
Remarks	
Signature	

**3. Reviewer (If not required, leave blank)**

Name/Title	George Canavaggio, Executive Director, FO&A
Date	
Remarks	
Signature	

**4. Reviewer (If not required, leave blank)**

Name/Title	Mark Bannister, Executive Director, HMF&D
Date	
Remarks	
Signature	

**5. Budget Review**

Name/Title	Camala Ball, Budget Analyst 2
Date	
Remarks	
Signature	

**6. Human Resources**

Name/Title	Kerry Dyer, Chief Operations Officer
Date	
Remarks	
Signature	

**7. Approving Official**

Name/Title	Patricia Ross, Commissioner
Date	
Remarks	
	Approved Disapproved
Signature	



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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June 1, 2022

**Human Resources**

**Department Directive 24.115**

**SUBJECT:** Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Chief Operations Officer

**GENERAL:**

1. This Department Directive gives instructions for compliance with and implements the following documents incorporated by reference:
  - a. Executive Order of the Governor of Georgia, Preventing Sexual Harassment in the Executive Branch of Government, 01.14.19.02, issued January 14, 2019.
  - b. Statewide Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy issued by the Department of Administrative Services and the Office of the State Inspector General (OIG), distributed on March 1, 2019.
  - c. Statewide Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy Appendix – Investigation Procedures, March 1, 2019.
2. This Directive applies to all GDVS personnel, offices and functions.
3. While there are multiple types of workplace harassment, as references 1.a. and 1.b. recognize, incidents of sexual harassment present unique challenges that warrant special emphasis and the implementation of a particularized approach to the prevention, detection and elimination of sexual harassment from Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) workplaces.
4. Purpose:
  - a. **The GDVS promotes respect and dignity and does not tolerate sexual harassment in the workplace.** The GDVS is committed to providing workplaces and an environment free from sexual harassment for its employees and for all persons who interact with the GDVS. All GDVS employees are expected and required to interact with all persons including other employees, contractors, and customers in a professional manner that contributes to a respectful work environment free from sexual harassment.
  - b. This Directive sets standards for GDVS personnel in furtherance of this commitment and to protect individuals from sexual harassment and retaliation.
5. Definitions. For purposes of this Policy, the following definitions apply:

- a. "Employee" is a person who is hired to provide services to the State on a regular basis in exchange for compensation and who does not provide these services as part of an independent business. "Covered Employee" is a person who is hired to provide services to the GDVS on a regular basis in exchange for compensation and who does not provide these services as part of an independent business.
- b. "Investigator" is a person appointed by the Commissioner of Veterans Service, or designee, to conduct investigations related to sexual harassment complaints or reports.
- c. "Retaliation" is an act or omission intended to, or having the reasonably foreseeable effect of, punishing or otherwise negatively impacting an individual for submitting (or assisting with submitting) a complaint of or reporting sexual harassment, for participating in a sexual harassment investigation or proceeding, or for otherwise opposing sexual harassment.
- d. "Sexual harassment" is physical, verbal, or non-verbal/visual conduct that is either (i) directed toward an individual or (ii) reasonably offensive to an individual because of his or her sex. Therefore, for purposes of this Department Directive, "Sexual harassment" includes physical, verbal, or non-verbal/visual conduct constituting:
  - i. Unwanted sexual attention, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually explicit comments, and other conduct of an expressed or obviously implied sexual nature, by an individual who knows, or reasonably should know, such conduct is unwanted and offensive.
  - ii. Conduct that is hostile, threatening, derogatory, demeaning, or abusive or intended to insult, embarrass, belittle, or humiliate an individual because of his or her sex – regardless of whether the underlying reason for the conduct is apparent.

**This Policy purposefully prohibits all sexual harassment and is not limited to conduct that would rise to the level of unlawful conduct under state or federal anti-harassment laws.**

- e. "Supervisor" or "Manager" is a Covered Employee who has the authority to oversee, hire, fire, demote, or to effectively recommend hiring, firing, or demotion, or to make or effectively recommend other material changes to the working conditions of at least one employee.

#### 6. Prohibited Conduct:

- a. All Covered Employees are strictly prohibited from engaging in sexual harassment as defined herein.

**This prohibition applies to conduct occurring in or otherwise affecting the workplace. As such, it includes conduct occurring both on and off the work premises and during or outside of work hours.**

While sexual harassment encompasses a wide range of conduct, *some examples of conduct specifically prohibited* by this Department Directive include, **but are not limited to:**

- i. Denying (directly or indirectly) an employment benefit or employment-related opportunity to an employee for refusing to comply with a sexually-oriented request;

- ii. Threatening (directly or indirectly) to deny an employment benefit or an employment-related opportunity to an employee for refusing to comply with a sexually-oriented request;
  - iii. Providing or promising (directly or indirectly) to provide an employment benefit or employment-related opportunity to an employee in exchange for complying with a sexually-oriented request;
  - iv. Engaging in sexually explicit or suggestive physical contact, including touching another employee in a way that is unwelcome or restricting an employee's movement;
  - v. Displaying or transmitting pornographic or sexually-oriented materials (such as photographs, posters, cartoons, drawings, or other images) **or storing or accessing such materials on State-owned, or federal provided equipment for personal use or consumption;**
  - vi. Engaging in indecent exposure;
  - vii. Making obscene gestures (i.e., hand or bodily gestures);
  - viii. Making romantic advances and persisting despite rejection of the advances;
  - ix. Using sexually-oriented language or making sexually-related propositions, jokes, or remarks, including graphic verbal commentary about an individual's body or clothing; and,
  - x. Sending sexually suggestive or obscene messages by mail, in person, by telephone, or by electronic communication.
- b. Covered Employees are further prohibited from engaging in retaliation against an employee for submitting (or assisting with submitting) a complaint of or reporting sexual harassment, for participating in a sexual harassment investigation or proceeding, or for otherwise opposing sexual harassment.
  - c. **A Covered Employee found to have engaged in sexual harassment and/or retaliation in violation of this Department Directive will be subject to corrective and/or disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.**
  - d. A third party (such as a contractor or contractor's employee or subcontractor) found to have engaged in sexual harassment and/or retaliation may be subject to appropriate corrective action. Such action may include, but is not limited to, termination of contract, removal from GDVS premises, restricted access to GDVS premises and/or personnel, or notification to the third party's employer.
  - e. The GDVS will immediately refer any reported criminal conduct to the appropriate law enforcement agency. Such referral shall not prohibit the GDVS from pursuing its own investigation of the complaint or report. If criminal activity is suspected, the GDVS will confer with the OIG regarding how to proceed with the GDVS investigation.

## 7. Training:

- a. All Covered Employees, including part-time, temporary, seasonal, and independent contractors who are regularly on GDVS premises and/or regularly interact with the GDVS will complete employee sexual harassment prevention training **on an annual**

**basis.** An independent contractor may waive state-mandated training upon acknowledgment of this Department Directive and provision of documentation he/she has completed sexual harassment prevention training offered by his/her employer within the last year.

- b. The GDVS will ensure sexual harassment prevention training is provided to all new or transferred Covered Employees within thirty (30) calendar days of hire or transfer.
- c. The GDVS will require sexual harassment prevention training for supervisors and managers on an annual basis. New supervisors and managers must complete this training within thirty (30) calendar days of employment or promotion to a supervisory or managerial position.
- d. The GDVS will utilize the statewide training provided by the DOAS/HRA and the OIG to fulfill the obligations under this Department Directive for employee and manager training.
- e. Appointed investigators (see Paragraph 9, Investigations) will complete statewide investigator training provided by the OIG to ensure consistency in sexual harassment investigations across the State.
  - i. Appointed investigators will complete the statewide training within thirty (30) calendar days of the effective date of this Department Directive.
  - ii. Newly selected investigators appointed subsequent to the effective date of this Department Directive shall complete such training as soon as practicable.

8. Complaint Procedure:

- a. Covered Employees who believe they have been subjected to sexual harassment or retaliation in violation of this Department Directive are **strongly encouraged to promptly submit a complaint** regarding the incident(s) directly (use of the supervisory chain) to one of the following officials:
  - i. The Covered Employee's supervisor or manager;
  - ii. The Covered Employee's division director;
  - iii. The Covered Employee's executive director;
  - iv. The Chief Operations Officer (Human Resources), GDVS; or,
  - v. Office of the State Inspector General (OIG).
- b. To the extent any of the above officials are the alleged harasser or retaliator, or if a Covered Employee has a reasonable fear of retaliation by one of the above officials, the Covered Employee may submit a complaint or report of sexual harassment or retaliation directly to the OIG.
- c. Covered Employees who have witnessed or otherwise have reason to believe another employee is being or has been subjected to sexual harassment or retaliation shall promptly report the same to one of the officials listed above.
- d. While written complaints and reports of sexual harassment or retaliation are preferred, the GDVS will accept all complaints and reports, whether written, verbal, or

anonymous, and will ensure each complaint or report is promptly and appropriately investigated and resolved.

- e. All complaints and reports of sexual harassment and retaliation received by the GDVS will be reviewed. The GDVS will notify the OIG of the same within two (2) business days of receipt.

9. Investigations:

- a. The Commissioner, or designee (Paragraph 12), will appoint in writing at least two GDVS employees, not of the same gender, to conduct investigations under this Department Directive.
  - i. Investigators will serve in this capacity as an additional duty and remain as investigators until relieved of the assignment by the appointment of a new investigator.
  - ii. Employees directly supervised by appointed investigators have the ability to submit complaints or reports of sexual harassment to an individual other than their direct supervisor or manager.
- b. The Chief Operations Officer will report to the OIG the names and contact information for the appointed investigators and the HR contact via the OIG's online portal within seven (7) business days of the vacancy via the OIG online portal.
- c. GDVS personnel will cooperate with any determination by the OIG that a complaint or report cannot be handled internally by the GDVS. **GDVS personnel will cooperate fully with the impartial investigator assigned by the OIG to handle the complaint or report.**
- d. The appointed investigator will complete the investigation and issue a report of findings as promptly as possible, but at least within forty-five (45) calendar days of investigation assignment. The Commissioner, or designee, may consider and approve an extension of time due to extenuating circumstances.
- e. Investigators will follow the procedures outlined in Attachment – 1 to this Department Directive.

10. Resolution:

- a. Final determinations, and if necessary, implementation of appropriate corrective or disciplinary actions and remedial measures depending upon the nature of the violation will be completed, as soon as possible but in no event more than twenty-one (21) calendar days of receipt of the investigative report.
- b. The Chief Operations Officer will consult with and provide updates to the OIG as requested and promptly produce any information related to a sexual harassment or retaliation complaint or report or the investigation upon the OIG's request.
- c. To the extent consistent with completing a thorough investigation and with the procedures outlined in this Department Directive, all involved in the process are expected to maintain confidentiality of information reported to the Department. Complaints and reports of sexual harassment or retaliation, investigative reports, final determinations, and other related documents will be subject to disclosure under the Open Records Act upon completion of the investigation.

11. Acknowledgment and Record keeping:

- a. This Department Directive will be made available to all Covered Employees. The Chief Operations Officer will retain documentation of each Covered Employee's acknowledgment of receipt of the Department Directive in his or her personnel file pursuant to the statewide record retention schedule.
- b. All complaints, reports, investigative documents, acknowledgments, and records of training attendance will be retained pursuant to the statewide record retention schedule and as otherwise required the OIG, DOAS/HRA policy, by law and pursuant to specific requests for preservation.

**RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES:**

12. Commissioner:

- a. Responsible for the operation of the GDVS and oversight of GDVS actions related to sexual harassment prevention and related disciplinary actions.
- b. Appoints by name in writing (VS Form 24-105, Personnel Action Form) the Human Resources point of contact and two investigators (one male and one female) in accordance with the State Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy.
- c. Provides direction and guidance to GDVS personnel regarding sexual harassment prevention.
- d. Ensures compliance with and implementation of this Department Directive and the Statewide Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy.
- e. Ensures the OIG is advised of sexual harassment claims and reports and ensures these situations are appropriately investigated and ensures appropriate disciplinary actions are taken following the completion of investigations.
- f. Approves final reports and approves disciplinary actions (VS Forms 24-105), as appropriate, up to and including termination of employment.

13. The Chief Operations Officer:

- a. In conjunction with the Commissioner provides direction and guidance to GDVS personnel regarding sexual harassment prevention related to GDVS operations. Serves as the "designee" of the Commissioner in the absence of or at the direction of the Commissioner.
- b. Provides overall supervision of the implementation of this Department Directive throughout the GDVS.
- c. Supervises the activities of the Human Resources Director related to sexual harassment prevention.

14. Chief Operations Officer (through the Human Resources Director):

- a. Leads and implements the provisions of DD 24.115, Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy, to ensure employees, supervisors and managers comply with established procedures. This responsibility includes developing internal processes, creating channels of communication for all agency employees, and clearly defining expectations, thereby **creating a culture of transparency and accountability**.



- b. Is designated the Human Resources Contact for the GDVS in accordance with the Statewide Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy.
- c. Reports to the State OIG the names and contact information for the appointed investigators and the HR contact via the OIG's online portal within seven (7) business days of the vacancy.
- d. Serves along with investigators as the primary point of contact with the OIG and with the DOAS/HRA regarding this Department Directive and the Statewide Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy and Investigation Procedures.
- e. Supports GDVS efforts to effectively implement the Policy using the library of resources available on the DOAS/HRA website under the **Sexual Harassment Prevention, HR Professionals, Areas of Focus**, which includes a toolkit of forms and documents, links to information about employee, supervisor, manager and investigator training awareness materials and FAQs.
- f. Notifies appointed investigators of a complaint of or report of sexual harassment involving one or more GDVS employees and directs the initiation of an investigation in accordance with the guidance in Attachment 1 to this Department Directive.
- g. Tracks and maintains records pursuant to the statewide record retention schedule documenting attendance of employees and managers at training events. Such records are subject to audit by the OIG.

15. Director, Public Information and External Affairs Division:

- a. Assists the Chief Operations Officer in providing information to GDVS personnel regarding this Department Directive.
- b. Assists the Training and Professional Development Director in providing training to GDVS personnel regarding this Department Directive.
- c. Provides a platform within the GDVS website(s) for the dissemination of guidance and information to GDVS personnel.

16. Training and Professional Development Director:

- a. Provides time allocations in the GDVS' annual training and other venues to provide access to the various training materials and modules provided by the DOAS/HRA and other sources, as may from time to time be provided.
- b. Assists the Chief Operations Officer in implementing various training requirements required by this Department Directive and the Statewide Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy.

17. General Counsel, GDVS

- a. Provides legal assistance, advice and counsel to GDVS managerial staff and investigators on sexual harassment prevention issues in the GDVS.
- b. Coordinates with the Chief Operations Officer on all matters related to compliance with this Department Directive and the State Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy with state and federal laws.
- c. Advises and assists, as appropriate, GDVS personnel, including investigators, on matters related to this Department Directive.



18. Appointed Investigators:

- a. Under the Statewide Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy, employees appointed as investigators for the GDVS will complete sexual harassment prevention training for investigators. Initial investigator training must have been completed by March 31, 2019.
- b. Newly appointed investigators, subsequent to the initial establishment of the Policy, will complete this training within 30 days of their appointment, or at the first available opportunity based on the provision of the training by the OIG.
- c. The ***Sexual Harassment Prevention Training for Investigators***, provided by the Office of the State Inspector General (OIG), is a 3-hour instructor-led training session. A major goal of the training is to ensure consistency in responding to and investigating allegations of sexual harassment and retaliation throughout State Government.
- d. Upon notification by the Chief Operations Officer of a complaint of or report of sexual harassment involving one or more GDVS employees and the direction to initiate an investigation in accordance with the guidance in Attachment 1 to this Department Directive, proceed to conduct the investigation.

19. Supervisors / Managers / Division Directors / Executive Directors / Other Managerial Personnel:

- a. In accordance with this Department Directive and the Statewide Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy, supervisors and managers will complete sexual harassment prevention training on an annual basis.
- b. The Policy also requires new supervisors and managers to receive training within thirty (30) days of hire or promotion to a supervisory or managerial position. All current supervisors and managers in place on or before March 1, 2019, must have completed the initial training by June 1, 2019.
- c. The ***Sexual Harassment Training for Supervisors and Managers*** is an online training course available through Team Georgia Learning, the DOAS Learning Management System (LMS).
  - i. It is designed for supervisors and managers with direct reports and
  - ii. It contains six modules that focus on:
    1. Identifying sexual harassment as defined by this Department Directive and the Statewide Policy.
    2. Preventing sexual harassment.
    3. Properly responding to allegations of sexual harassment and retaliation.
    4. It also stresses the importance of creating safe, respectful workplaces and environments for employees and others.
- d. Supervisors and managers will complete the Sexual Harassment Prevention for Employees training prior to enrolling in the training for supervisors and managers, as this training course is a prerequisite to the ***Sexual Harassment Prevention for Supervisors and Managers*** training.

20. Employees:

- a. Employees play a critical role in creating and maintaining safe, respectful workplace environments for their colleagues and others who interact with the GDVS in its several and various functions.
- b. Employees are required to adhere to and acknowledge understanding of this Department Directive and understanding of the statewide Policy.
- c. Employees are expected to conduct themselves professionally and to exercise good judgment in the workplace, whether with fellow employees, business colleagues, or members of the public with whom they come into contact in the performance of official duties.
- d. Employees are required to take/receive mandatory training annually.
- e. Employees should direct any questions or concerns about these Policies to their supervisor or manager, or the Chief Operations Officer.
- f. Employees will acknowledge they have read, reviewed and understand GDVS DD 24.115 by using the attached acknowledgment form letter. The completed form letter will be permanently filed in each employee's personnel file maintained in the Human Resources Section of the Operations Division.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. M. Ross', written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS

Attachment:

- 1. Investigation Procedures, March 15, 2019
- 2. FAQs for Employees
- 3. Acknowledgement of Reading and Reviewing DD 24.115

**GDVS DD 24.115, SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION POLICY**  
**ATTACHMENT – 1, INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES**  
**March 15, 2019**

These procedures are promulgated in accordance with the Governor of Georgia's Executive Order 01.14.19.02, and outline procedures developed by the Governor's Office, Office of the State Inspector General (OIG) and issued by the Georgia Department of Administrative Services Human Resources Administration (DOAS/HRA) regarding investigation and resolution of complaints and reports of sexual harassment.

To ensure impartial, consistent and transparent investigations, the GDVS will follow these guidelines to the extent practicable.

**Appointment of Investigator(s)**

Investigators are appointed in accordance with Paragraph 9.a., of DD 24.115.

Upon receipt of a complaint or report of sexual harassment, the Chief Operations Officer will notify the OIG of the complaint or report and assign at least one of the Agency's appointed investigators to investigate the matter.

When selecting the investigator, the Chief Operations Officer will consider any actual or perceived conflict, the investigator's workload and any other factor(s) that could affect the investigator's actual or perceived ability to conduct a prompt, thorough, and impartial investigation. Two investigators may be designated to investigate a complaint where deemed appropriate.

If the OIG determines no appointed investigator within the GDVS should investigate a given complaint or report of sexual harassment submitted by an employee of the GDVS, the OIG will appoint an investigator from another agency.

**Interim Protective Measures**

Upon receipt of a complaint or report of sexual harassment (or retaliation), the Chief Operations Officer will consider whether interim protective measures are warranted.

- Interim protective measures are non-disciplinary administrative actions or steps taken to ensure:
  - a. The alleged conduct underlying the complaint or report does not continue, and/or
  - b. The employee submitting the complaint or report is protected from actual or perceived retaliation.
- Interim protective measures are taken prior to or during the investigation. Therefore, they are not premised on any determination the allegations of the complaint or report are true.
- If interim protective measures are not taken prior to commencement of the investigation, investigators will consult with the Chief Operations Officer if at any point during their investigation they determine such measures are warranted.

- Interim protective measures should be no broader than reasonably necessary to accomplish their purpose. Whenever possible, any such measures should be designed to avoid undue hardship and minimize the burden on both the alleged victim (or employee submitting the report) and the respondent.
- The Commissioner, Executive Director, Health, Memorials Division, Finance and Development, or the Chief Operations Officer may issue interim protective measures that may include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Issuance of a “no contact” directive.
  - b. Changes in employment arrangements, schedules or supervision.
  - c. Temporary insertion of another employee into the workplace to serve as a passive monitor.
  - d. Non-disciplinary suspension with pay; provided, however, the alleged victim or employee reporting sexual harassment (or retaliation) should not be placed on non-disciplinary suspension with pay without his/her consent.
  - e. Other reasonable measures designed to ensure the alleged conduct underlying the complaint or report does not continue and/or to prevent actual or perceived retaliation.

### **Initiation of Investigation**

Upon review of the complaint or report of sexual harassment (or retaliation), the investigator will:

- Determine the scope of the investigation (identify issues to be investigated).
- Provide copies of DD 24.115, the GDVS Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy to the employee submitting the complaint or report and to the alleged victim (in the case of a report).
- Notify the respondent of the complaint or report and provide a copy of the Policy to him/her.
- Inform all parties of the Policy’s non-retaliation provisions.

### **Secure Potential Evidence**

The investigator will take reasonable steps to secure and/or obtain any evidence potentially relevant to the complaint or report, including such items as emails, text messages or other correspondence, electronic files, voicemail and other audio recordings, surveillance video, previous complaints, etc.

### **Prepare for and Conduct Interviews**

The investigator will identify witnesses to be interviewed in addition to the complainant and respondent. Witnesses may include:

- Those identified by either party.
- Employees or former employees, including supervisors/managers or subordinates of the complainant and respondent.
- Vendors or non-employees.

- If a complainant requests to be interviewed by an investigator of a particular gender, that request shall be accommodated whenever possible.

When conducting interviews, the designated investigator will:

- Explain the purpose of the interview to each witness and that the investigator is not an advocate or representative for either the complainant or the respondent.
- Explain zero tolerance for retaliation against witnesses and encourage witnesses to report any alleged retaliation he/she experiences as a result of participating in investigation.
- If a witness is a current employee, explain he/she is required to cooperate with the investigation.
- Explain the importance of preserving the integrity of the investigation by not discussing the interview(s) with others.

If one or more of the acts underlying the sexual harassment (or retaliation) complaint or report is the subject of a criminal investigation, or the act(s) alleged in the complaint or report could potentially expose the respondent to criminal liability, the investigator will inform the Chief Operations Officer who will confer with the OIG regarding how to proceed with the investigation.

### **Investigative Report**

The designated investigator will complete the investigation and issue a written report of factual findings and conclusions as promptly as possible, but at least within forty-five (45) calendar days of assignment. If the investigator is unable to complete an investigation and/or the report within forty-five (45) days, the investigator will notify the Chief Operations Officer, as well as the complainant and respondent and provide a progress update(s), as appropriate.

Each investigation should conclude with one or an appropriate combination of the following determinations:

- **Without Merit.** The investigation revealed the act(s) complained of either did not occur or was not committed by the respondent.
- **Exonerated.** The investigation revealed the act(s) complained of did occur, but it does not constitute a violation(s) of the DD 24.115, Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy.
- **Not Sustained.** The investigation failed to reveal evidence sufficient to support a conclusion whether the act(s) complained of occurred or did not occur or whether the act(s) was committed by the respondent.
- **Sustained.** The investigation revealed sufficient evidence to support the conclusion the act(s) complained of occurred, it was committed by the respondent, and it constitutes a violation(s) of DD 24.115, Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy.

The investigative report will be shared with the complainant and the respondent.

- The parties will be given at least three (3) business days to submit written responses to the investigative report.

- The investigator will review and consider any response(s) received and determine whether any additional information provided therein warrants continuing the investigation or making any modifications to the investigative report.
- Otherwise, the investigator will finalize the investigative report and submit it to the Chief Operations Officer without further action.
- If an external investigator is designated by the OIG, the investigator will coordinate with the OIG regarding delivery of the investigative report.

Upon closing an investigation, the Chief Operations Officer will report to the OIG the closing date and the conclusion of the investigation.

### **Resolution of Complaint or Report**

The Chief Operations Officer will:

- Consult with and provide updates to the OIG as requested.
- Upon the OIG's request:
  - a. Promptly produce any information or documentation related to a sexual harassment (or retaliation) complaint or report or the investigation into same.
  - b. Promptly produce the investigative report, any evidence collected or identified by the investigator and any written responses to the report submitted by the parties.

## **GDVS DD 24.115, SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION POLICY**

### **ATTACHMENT – 2, FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES**

*Your guide to preventing and identifying sexual harassment in the workplace*

**QUESTION:** How do the Statewide Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy and the GDVS DD 24.115 define sexual harassment?

**ANSWER:** Sexual Harassment is defined as physical, verbal, or non-verbal/visual conduct either directed toward an individual or reasonably offensive to an individual because of his or her sex.

- This includes physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct, actions of a sexual nature, including unwanted sexual attention, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually explicit comments, and other conduct of a sexual nature whether it is direct or implied, by an individual who knows, or reasonably should know, such conduct is unwanted and offensive.
- It also includes conduct that is hostile, threatening, derogatory, demeaning, or abusive, or intended to insult, embarrass, belittle, or humiliate an individual because of his or her sex.

In addition, sexual harassment is not only a male harassing a female. It may include any gender combination of offender and target. For example, harassment may happen to anyone by anyone including:

- Male to female
- Female to male
- Male to male
- Female to female

**QUESTION:** What are unwelcome sexual advances?

**ANSWER:** Unwelcome sexual advances constitute sexual harassment when submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment.

**QUESTION:** What course of action should an employee take if he/she believes that he/she has been the target of sexual harassment?

**ANSWER:** Anyone can report sexual harassment. This includes the victim of the harassment or a third party who observes behavior they find offensive. As a State of Georgia employee, you are strongly encouraged to promptly submit a complaint if you believe you have been subjected to sexual harassment or retaliation. You may submit a complaint or report regarding sexual harassment or retaliation to your supervisor or manager, your division director, or the Chief Operations Officer.



To the extent any of these individuals are the alleged harasser or retaliator, you may submit a complaint or report of sexual harassment or retaliation directly through the Office of the State Inspector General (OIG) by calling:

1-866-HELPOIG (1-866-435-7644). While written complaints and reports of sexual harassment or retaliation are preferred, you may submit a complaint or report verbally.

If you verbally report sexual harassment or retaliation, the contacted person will document the facts of the incident in writing.

**QUESTION:** Can an employee submit a complaint or report of sexual harassment anonymously?

**ANSWER:** Yes, employees may submit complaints or reports of sexual harassment anonymously. Although the GDVS will make every effort to investigate the complaint, the investigation may be limited if sufficient information is not provided. Furthermore, the investigator may need information from you to do a thorough investigation; therefore, it may become impossible for you to remain anonymous.

**QUESTION:** What do you do if you witness another employee being subjected to sexual harassment or retaliation?

**ANSWER:** If you witness or otherwise have reason to believe another employee has been subjected to sexual harassment or retaliation, you are required to promptly report it to an appropriate GDVS designee(s).

**QUESTION:** If an employee files a sexual harassment complaint or participates in a sexual harassment investigation, is he/she protected from retaliation?

**ANSWER:** Yes. Retaliation is an act or omission intended to punish or otherwise negatively impact an individual for submitting or assisting with submitting a sexual harassment complaint or report. The law, the Statewide Policy and GDVS DD 24.115 prohibit retaliation against an employee for any of the following reasons:

- Submitting or assisting with submitting a complaint of or reporting sexual harassment;
- Participating in a sexual harassment investigation or proceeding; or
- For otherwise opposing sexual harassment.

**QUESTION:** What happens after an employee has filed a complaint or report of sexual harassment?

**ANSWER:** When an employee submits a complaint or report of sexual harassment, a trained investigator will promptly investigate the situation. This investigator may come from within the Department or may be assigned by the OIG.

The Department may take interim measures while the investigation is ongoing. Interim measures are non-disciplinary administrative steps taken to ensure alleged conduct does not continue and/or you are protected from retaliation.



After an investigation begins, a report of findings will be provided to the GDVS leadership within 45 calendar days. A final determination based on the investigative report will be made by the GDVS within twenty-one (21) calendar days of the report of findings being issued.

It is important to remember complaints and reports of sexual harassment or retaliation, investigative reports, final determinations, and other related documents will be subject to disclosure under the Open Records Act after the investigation closes.

**QUESTION:** What can employees do to help prevent sexual harassment and to build and maintain a respectful workplace?

**ANSWER:** As a State of Georgia and GDVS employee, it is vital you take a proactive approach in creating and maintaining a respectful and harassment free workplace. This can be accomplished by demonstrating the appropriate behavior, following the Statewide and GDVS Sexual Harassment Prevention Policies and complying with federal, State of Georgia, and local employment laws. Thus, it is important you:

- Understand what constitutes sexual harassment and retaliation in the workplace.
- Model appropriate workplace behaviors.
- Attend the trainings required by the Statewide and GDVS Sexual Harassment Prevention Policies.

**QUESTION:** How do I go about registering and attending Sexual Harassment Prevention training?

**ANSWER:** The Chief Operations Officer is responsible for providing information related to Sexual Harassment Prevention training for employees, supervisors and managers, investigators and other GDVS designees. Most of the training required by the State Sexual Harassment Prevention and the GDVS Policies is available through the Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) Human Relations Administration website. Individual training will be scheduled through the Operations Division and group training opportunities may be provided at the GDVS' annual training sessions and other venues, as appropriate.

Contact the Chief Operations Officer, or the GDVS Human Resources Section for guidance and assistance in registering for this training.



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

## ***Georgia Department of Veterans Service***

***Floyd Veterans Memorial Building  
2 MLK Jr. Drive SE, Suite E-970  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334-4800***

(404) 656-2300  
Fax (404) 656-7006  
[www.veterans.georgia.gov](http://www.veterans.georgia.gov)

### **Attachment 3, DD 24.115**

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, DD 24.115**

I, (print your full name) \_\_\_\_\_, hereby acknowledge I have read and reviewed the Georgia Department of Veterans Service Department Directive, DD 24.115, Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy, dated \_\_\_\_\_ and further acknowledge I understand the requirements of the Department Directive and the statewide Sexual Harassment Prevention policy, and will to the best of my ability comply with these requirements as part of my employment with the Georgia Department of Veterans Service.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

## **Georgia Department of Veterans Service**

*Floyd Veterans Memorial Building  
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(404) 656-2300  
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June 1, 2022

### **Human Resources**

#### **Department Directive 24.130**

**SUBJECT:** Compliance with Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) Requirements

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Chief Operations Officer

#### **GENERAL:**

##### **1. REFERENCES AND AUTHORITY:**

- a. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), 29 USC 201, et. seq, and the Federal Regulations issued pursuant to it (incorporated by reference).
- b. State of Georgia Rules, Regulations, and Procedures Governing Working Hours, the Payment of Overtime, and the Granting of Compensatory Time, Policy No: 7, Revision NO: 6 and as revised, Office of Planning and Budget and Department of Administrative Services (incorporated by reference).
2. Guidance for implementation of the FLSA in the Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) is outlined in Attachment – 3 to this Department Directive, ***Implementation of New “FLSA” Overtime Regulations in the GDVS, November 22, 2019.***
3. Overtime for NON-EXEMPT employees is compensated at the rate of 1.5 times (1 ½ times) the time worked in overtime and is calculated in increments of 5.0 minutes of overtime worked, which is 0.083 hours.
4. Overtime work is compensated **through compensatory time** or through payment for overtime. Compensatory time is the preferred method of compensation for State of Georgia agencies, as there are no funds available to support payment for overtime. This means overtime payments in cash take funds away from GDVS functions and have negative impacts on GDVS operations.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

5. The Commissioner is responsible for GDVS compliance with the federal law (FLSA) and State of Georgia implementation within the GDVS.
6. All GDVS personnel are responsible for compliance with the FLSA, state implementation guidance and rules, and this Department Directive.
7. Executive Directors or the Chief Operations Officer must review and approve via the VS Form 130, FLSA Work Report, if the grand total hours worked for any employee exceeds 40 hours in any one-week period (not the same as bi-monthly pay period) and overtime pay in cash is

to be requested. Such reviews should be rare to non-existent, as **immediate supervisors will, to the maximum extent possible, manage their personnel to ensure hours worked with offset time, or necessary compensatory time off, do not exceed a grand total of 40 hours during a work week.**

8. Immediate supervisors who have NON-EXEMPT employees as direct reports are responsible for the review and approval of each VS Form 130, FLSA Work Report, Attachment – 2 to this Department Directive, completed by each NON-EXEMPT employee under their supervision, as outlined in Attachment – 3. Immediate supervisors will retain the VS Forms 130 for each employee supervised for a period of five [5] years, as they are subject to review and inspection by the U.S. Department of Labor, or their agencies.
9. Individual employees who are FLSA **NON-EXEMPT**, as defined by the current FLSA criteria, are responsible for the accurate reporting and completion of VS Forms 24 – 130, FLSA Work Report (Attachment – 2).
10. Questions regarding this Department Directive and the FLSA implementation should be addressed to the Chief Operations Officer, or the Human Resources Director of the Operations Division.

#### **PROCEDURES:**

11. VS Forms 130, FLSA Work Report, are based on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.
  - a. They will be completed electronically (PREFERRED), or by hand, by individual employees of the GDVS, immediate supervisors and, as necessary, Director level supervisors, and/or Executive Directors or higher-level supervisors.
  - b. Completed forms will be retained by immediate supervisors electronically and in hardcopy for a period of five (5) years.
  - c. In the event of a change of an immediate supervisor within the GDVS, the retained VS Forms 130 will be passed onto the new immediate supervisor for file.
12. In the event of the departure of an employee due to resignation, retirement, promotion, or other change, the VS Forms 130 for the time the employee was in the current job will continue to be retained at the immediate supervisor level for the remainder of the 5-year period where the work occurred.

COMMISSIONER



PATRICIA M. ROSS

#### **Attachment:**

1. Acknowledgement Letter
2. VS Form 24-130
3. Guidance Briefing, November 22, 2019



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

## **Georgia Department of Veterans Service**

*Floyd Veterans Memorial Building  
2 MLK Jr. Drive SE, Suite E-970  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334-4800*

(404) 656-2300  
Fax (404) 656-7006  
[www.veterans.georgia.gov](http://www.veterans.georgia.gov)

### **Acknowledgement of Receipt and Understanding of FLSA Overtime Regulations**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I, (print your full name) \_\_\_\_\_, under penalty certify I have read the entire Attachment – 1 to DD 24.130 on *Implementation of New FLSA Overtime Regulations in the GDVS*.

1. I further certify I understand the contents of DD 24.130 and will comply with the guidance contained in it.
2. Finally, I understand my failure to comply with the guidance contained in the DD 24.130 will result in progressive disciplinary action from my immediate or second-line supervisor up to and including termination of employment with the Georgia Department of Veterans Service.
3. ***Finally, I do hereby acknowledge and agree that as part of the terms and conditions of my employment with the Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) (herein also referred to as my employer), I understand I may be required to work more than forty hours in a work week. I further understand, in lieu of overtime compensation in cash, I may receive compensatory time off as an EXEMPT employee at the rate of one-hour, or as a NON-EXEMPT employee at the rate of one and one-half hours for each hour of employment for which overtime compensation is required by the Fair Labor Standard Act of 1938 (FLSA). Further, I understand the compensatory time may be preserved, used, or cashed out consistent with the provisions of the FLSA. However, I understand the State of Georgia and the GDVS prefer I should use the compensatory time off as soon as possible after it is earned.***

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Office/Work Location



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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June 1, 2022

**Human Resources**

**Department Directive 24.201**

**SUBJECT:** Receiving Reports

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Chief Operations Officer

**GENERAL:**

1. When supplies are delivered by a vendor through a delivery service (e.g., UPS, FedEx, USPS, etc.) or other means to an office or departmental location, **the supplies must be received by a department employee**. The department employee receiving the supplies will sign documentation from the delivery service, when available, and the employee will ask to obtain a copy of the document with their signature on it, which will indicate the delivery was received.
2. Inside the delivered package there may be shipping documentation from the vendor indicating what items are in the delivery package. The department employee will inventory the package to ensure all the items indicated on the shipping documents were actually delivered. If all items were delivered, the department employee will indicate on the shipping documents the order shipped was received. **Now, the shipping document has become a receiving report.**
3. If some items indicated on the shipping document were not in the package, the department employee will indicate which item[s] were not contained in the shipment and then sign the shipping document indicating receipt of the item[s] in the package and noting those items not received.
4. The department employee will turn the now receiving report into the supervisor/office manager. The supervisor/office supervisor/office manager will then forward the receiving report to the purchasing officer at the department's Central Office by creating a "PDF," attaching the PDF to an email that is then sent **ONLY** to the [supplies@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:supplies@vs.state.ga.us) email address **[DO NOT USE GDVS BY NAME EMAIL ADDRESSES!!!]**.
5. If there are no shipping documents in the package to use as a receiving document/report, the employee will create a receiving document/report and send it to the supervisor/office manager. The employee will identify the name of the company/vendor from whom the shipment was received, list all the items contained in the package/shipment and send the receiving report to the supervisor/office manager. The supervisor/office manager will forward the receiving report to the purchasing officer at the department's Central Office at [supplies@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:supplies@vs.state.ga.us) in accordance with

Paragraph-4. The supervisor/office manager will communicate with the purchasing officer at the Central Office about missing items, or other related issues regarding receipt of items and completion of receiving reports.

6. The receiving report will then be submitted by the purchasing officer to the Accounting and Finance Division for payment to the vendor for the items received. If there are items noted as missing from the package based on the listing on the receiving report, the purchasing officer will contact the vendor to determine the reason for the discrepancy and ensure the shipment is completed.
7. Payment to the vendor will only be made for the items actually documented on the receiving report, as being received. So, it is imperative the receiving reports be completed when the items are actually received, and the receiving reports are forwarded to the purchasing officer at the department's Central Office within two [2] business days of receipt of the shipment.
8. Only department employees will sign for supply items addressed to offices and locations operated by the department.
  - a. No temporary staff members (non-paid individuals, trainees, etc.) will sign for delivery of supply items.
  - b. For offices co-located with other organizations, e.g., VA community clinics, courthouses, VAMCs, etc., the supervisor/office manager will coordinate with the director/manager of the other organization to implement a procedure to ensure supply deliveries are made to our offices/locations and signed for by department employees.
  - c. It is essential our supply orders are not signed for by personnel of other agencies because accountability for the items can easily be lost, supplies taken or used by others rather than by our personnel and this creates a misuse situation that contributes to waste of State of Georgia monies, possible abuse and/or the potential for fraud or theft.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

9. Supervisors/Office Managers are responsible for ensuring shipments/deliveries of supplies to their offices or locations are properly signed for by a designated department employee[s]. Supervisors/Office Managers will ensure the receiving reports are turned into "PDF" documents and emailed to the [supplies@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:supplies@vs.state.ga.us) email address within two [2] business days of receipt of the shipments, so the receiving documents can be processed and used as documentation for payments to the vendors.
10. Supervisors/Office Managers will coordinate with directors/managers of other organizations where our offices/locations are co-located to ensure procedures are agreed to and in place to ensure deliveries of our shipments are made to department employees. Communicate with the Purchasing Officer at the Central Office about missing items, or other related issues regarding receipt of items and completion of receiving reports in accordance with Paragraph 3.
11. Department employees will:
  - a. For Receiving Reports:
    - i. Sign for the receipt of supplies on delivery paperwork, as appropriate.



- ii. Obtain copies of that paperwork when available.
  - iii. Inventory the shipment in accordance with Paragraph-2.
  - iv. Annotate on the shipping document the items received making that document now a receiving report.
  - v. Turn that receiving report over to the supervisor/office manager in accordance with Paragraphs 4 and 5.
- b. When requested by the purchasing officer, Accounting and Finance Division, or other official at the Central Office, provide only the information/documents requested. Providing additional information/documentation or incorrect information/documents will delay Central Office actions needed to make payments to vendors.
  - c. Annually, review DD 24.201, complete and sign the Memorandum at the attachment to it and forward it by email to [supplies@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:supplies@vs.state.ga.us). The Department's Central Office will file the memorandum in each individual's personnel file maintained in the Human Resources Section of the Operations Division.
12. The purchasing officer will review all receiving reports and verify with the vendors any discrepancies from the shipping documents and the items actually received. Then the purchasing officer will forward the receiving reports to the Accounting and Finance Division to be used as documentation for payment to the vendors.
13. Accounting and Budget will ensure timely payments are made to the vendors based on the receiving reports provided by the purchasing officer. Payments to the vendors will only be made for supply items actually received.

#### **PROCEDURES:**

14. Department employees will physically inventory all supply shipments in accordance with Paragraphs 2 and 11 to verify the items on the shipping documents have been received.
- a. Items missing from the shipment will be annotated on the now receiving report.
  - b. The receiving report will be provided to the supervisor/office manager.
15. The supervisor/office manager will convert the receiving report into a "PDF" and forward it within two [2] business days of receipt of the package/shipment, as an attachment to an email and send the email to the purchasing officer at the department's Central Office using ONLY the [supplies@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:supplies@vs.state.ga.us) email address. In accordance with Paragraph 3, communicate with the purchasing officer at the Central Office about missing item(s) not received in shipments/packages.
16. The purchasing officer will review the receiving report and ascertain the reason[s] for and status of all discrepancies between the documentation and the items actually received by contacting the vendor.
- a. Arrange for the vendor to ship missing items to the office or location.
  - b. Any other adjustments for the order, or the Purchase Order, will be made at this time.
  - c. The purchasing officer will provide the verified receiving report to the Accounting and Finance Division for payment to the vendor.



17. Accounting and Budget will ensure payments are made to vendors for those items actually received in accordance with State of Georgia accounting rules.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Ross', written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS

**This directive replaces and supersedes DD 24.201, May 1, 2014, which is hereby replaced.**



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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(Date)

### **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Chief Operations Officer

**FROM:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed Name and Office Location)

**SUBJECT:** Department Directive 24.201, Receiving Reports

**I have read and fully understand DD 24.201, Receiving Reports, and the information in this Memorandum. In addition, I understand failure to comply with the guidance contained in DD 24.201 and this acknowledgement may result in administrative action up to and including termination of employment. My signature below affirms acknowledgement of this statement.**

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(Signature)

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(Date of Signature)

**After completing this form, scan and email it to [supplies@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:supplies@vs.state.ga.us).**



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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June 1, 2022

**Field Operations and Appeals**

**Department Directive 40.101**

**SUBJECT:** Requirements and Uses of VA Personal Identification Verification (PIV) Cards in the Performance of Department (GDVS) Functions

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals

**GENERAL:**

1. Certain department employees who have daily contact with veterans and assist those veterans to obtain compensation and/or pension benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are issued a Personal Identity Verification (PIV) card by the VA. The primary function of the PIV card is to encrypt or code data to strengthen the security of both employees' and veterans' information and physical access to secured areas and functions under the control of the VA. The PIV card encrypts data and verifies identity to ensure:
  - a. Confidentiality — Data can only be used by the cardholder.
  - b. Integrity — Only the cardholder may change the data.
  - c. Authenticity — There is a guarantee on the origin of the data.
  - d. Non-repudiation — There is no possibility of falsified data.
2. PIV cards are required:
  - a. Incumbents of the following positions within the GDVS require possession and use of active PIV cards in order to perform their duties.
    - Field Service Officer 1 (EL) \*
    - Field Service Officer 2 (WL) \*
    - Senior Field Service Officer (AL) \*
    - Field Service Officer Supervisor (SP) \*
    - Claims and Appeals Officer 1 (EL) \*
    - Claims and Appeals Officer 2 (WL) \*
    - Senior Claims and Appeals Officer (AL) \*
    - Claims and Appeals Officer Supervisor (SP) \*

- Regional Director \*
  - Economic Support Specialist \*
  - Director, Appeals Division \*
  - Assistant Director, Appeals Division \*
  - Administrative Support Specialist, Office of the Executive Director for Field Operations and Appeals\*
  - Executive Director for Field Operations and Appeals \*
- b. In addition, an executive director or the Chief Operations Officer may designate other positions and/or employees within their area of responsibility to possess active PIV cards in order to perform their duties.
    - i. When this occurs, the executive director will designate in writing, using a Personnel Action Form (PAF), the position and the name of the incumbent in the position.
    - ii. When the incumbent in such a position changes, the executive director of the functional area will designate the new incumbent of the position to possess and use a PIV card in the performance of their duties, provided there is a continued need for the possession and use of the card.
    - iii. A copy of the completed PAF will be filed in the employee's personnel file maintained in the GDVS' Central Office.
  3. The obtaining and possession of a PIV card is a condition of employment for the positions in Paragraph 2 of this department directive identified with an "\*".
  4. PIV cards, along with log-on credentials, to include passwords, are issued by the VA to GDVS employees after the successful completion of a National Agency Check (with Inquiries) (NAC-I), finger printing and/or other requirements, as may from time to time be imposed by the VA.
    - a. Card holder employees will comply with all VA rules and regulations related to the possession and use of PIV cards, as well as this department directive. Employee conduct that warrants disciplinary action will be a direct result of unacceptable behavior, poor performance, misuse of PIV cards and materials leading to violations of Information Security/HIPPA policies, practices or procedures. These violations are defined in the VA's Talent Management System (TMS) training provided to every GDVS staff member who will possess and use active PIV cards in order to perform their duties and every staff member who is issued PIV credentials.
    - b. Card holder employees will maintain positive control and possession of the cards at all times. After receipt of the PIV cards, card holders will not surrender the cards or log-on credentials (including passwords) to any other persons, or for any reasons.
    - c. Upon terminating employment with the GDVS or moving to other positions in the department where PIV cards are not required to be able to function in those positions, employees will surrender/turn-in their PIV cards to their immediate supervisors. The immediate supervisors will forward the cards to the Office of the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals, which will return the cards to the Director,

Appeals Division, which will return them to the appropriate VA office for appropriate actions.

- d. Termination of employment with the GDVS may result in instances of misconduct that involve dishonesty, violations of the law, as they pertain to the VA Regional Office (VARO) Information Systems Office (ISO) Rules of Behavior/HIPPA policy, or significant risks to department operations or to the violation of policy and procedures of electronic communication.
- e. Failure to comply with these requirements by employees will subject the employees to disciplinary actions, which will include as a minimum a written Letter of Reprimand to be issued by the immediate supervisor, or any supervisor in the supervisory chain, to be filed in the employees' permanent records maintained at the GDVS' Central Office.
  - i. Generally, disciplinary actions are issued using the *concept of progressive discipline*. The facts of each individual situation will determine the amount and level of disciplinary action to be taken. Disciplinary actions related to PIV card matters will be considered along with any other previous or concurrent disciplinary actions and may affect and influence the type of disciplinary actions taken in an individual situation.
  - ii. Warning letters may be issued in matters involving violations of VA and GDVS rules and regulations involving PIV cards. Warning letters will be issued by secondary supervisory level supervisors, or higher. When immediate supervisors consider the issuance of warning letters is indicated, the supervisors will recommend that action to his/her immediate supervisor.
  - iii. Additional levels of disciplinary action may also be imposed, such as: suspensions from work without pay for periods not to exceed five workdays (as approved by the Commissioner, or designee, based on the significance of the incidents), or termination of employment (as approved by the Commissioner, or designee).
5. In the event a determination is made a violation of VA or GDVS rules and regulations related to PIV cards may have occurred, the immediate supervisor of the employee(s) involved in the situation will report the matter to their immediate supervisors, and so forth, up the supervisory chain to the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals. Any supervisor in the supervisory chain may recommend suspension with pay and the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals, or another Executive Director in his/her absence, may suspend any employee involved in such situations with pay for periods of one to five days, pending resolution of the matter and a determination is made regarding violations of rules and regulations.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

6. Individual employees will comply with the VA and GDVS rules and regulations regarding the possession and use of PIV cards, as outlined in VA rules and regulations and this department directive.
7. Under the supervision of the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals, the Director, Appeals Division serves as the GDVS' "office of primary responsibility" for the issuance, control, monitoring and all other matters related to PIV card usage within the GDVS, except for disciplinary actions outlined elsewhere in this department directive.

8. The Chief Operations Officer serves as the Human Resources/Personnel advisor to the Commissioner and subordinate supervisors and is responsible to ensure compliance with the State of Georgia and GDVS personnel policies related to personnel actions associated with the implementation of this directive.
9. As prescribed in Paragraph 2b of this directive, executive directors may designate positions and employees within their areas of responsibility to require possession of active PIV cards in order to perform their duties.
10. The Commissioner, or designee, is responsible for policy guidance and administrative actions, to include disciplinary actions.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. M. Ross', written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

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June 1, 2022

## **Field Operations and Appeals**

### **Department Directive 40.110**

**SUBJECT:** Veterans Field Service Officers and Veterans Claims and Appeals Officers Training and Accreditation

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals

#### **GENERAL:**

1. The Georgia Department of Veterans Service (GDVS) Veterans Training and Professional Development Division (VTDD) will provide continuous and ongoing training to department employees. The primary function of the VTDD is to ensure department Veterans Field Service Officers (VFSO), Veterans Claims and Appeals Officers (VCAO), and Regional Directors are updated with the latest guidance and changes in the regulations and maintain a high quality of claims assistance consistently across the state.
2. Obtaining and maintaining accreditation with the GDVS and the Service Organizations the Department represents is a condition of employment for the positions requiring accreditation. Applications for accreditation with the VA will be submitted to the VA Office of the General Counsel using VA Form 21a ***Application for Accreditation as a Claims Agent or Attorney***, (available on the [www.VA.gov](http://www.VA.gov) website).
3. The following positions within GDVS require accreditation in order to perform their duties with the GDVS and the Service Organizations the GDVS represents.
  - a. Veterans Field Service Officer 1 (EL) (VFSO)
  - b. Veterans Field Service Officer 2 (WL) (VFSO)
  - c. Senior Veterans Field Service Officer (AL) (VFSO)
  - d. Veterans Field Service Officer Supervisor (SP) (VFSO)
  - e. Veterans Claims & Appeals Officer 1 (EL) (VCAO)
  - f. Veterans Claims & Appeals Officer 2 (WL) (VCAO)
  - g. Senior Veterans Claims & Appeals Officer (AL) (VCAO)
  - h. Veterans Claims & Appeals Officer Supervisor (SP) (VCAO)
  - i. Regional Directors
  - j. Director, Appeals Division
  - k. Assistant Director, Appeals Division

- l. Veterans Training and Development Officer (VTDO)
  - m. Women and Minority Veterans Coordinator
  - n. Suicide and Prevention and Outreach Coordinator
  - o. Administrative Support Specialist, Office of the Executive Director, Field Operations & Appeals
  - p. Executive Director, Field Operation & Appeals
  - q. Optional positions in the GDVS that may need to be accredited:
    - i. Commissioner
    - ii. Other positions designated by the Commissioner
4. GDVS accreditation must be submitted for award of accreditation within sixty (60) days of employment.
- a. Applicants who fail the examination will be afforded an opportunity for remedial training and re-testing provided sufficient time remains for submission of the necessary paperwork and documentation to the VA within 60 days of employment.
  - b. Individuals in positions requiring accreditation who do not submit the necessary paperwork and documentation to obtain it within the 60 days will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
  - c. The Commissioner, or designee, is the final approving authority for any termination action.

#### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

5. The Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals is authorized to certify applications for GDVS accreditations for GDVS employees.
- a. In the absence of the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals, the Commissioner, or designee, will appoint a senior level department official to certify applications for GDVS accreditation for GDVS employees.
  - b. Accreditation with other service organizations represented by the GDVS must be certified by those specific organizations.
  - c. Employees seeking accreditation with organizations other than the GDVS must submit an individual VA Form 21a to each requested organization and meet the accreditation requirements established by that organization. **The Office of the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals will assist, coordinate, and monitor the submissions of all VA Forms 21a to the VA for approval.**
6. As required in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 38 Chapter 1 Part 14.629, all veteran service organizations and their representatives, agents and attorneys must be accredited with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in order to assist claimants in the preparation, presentation, and prosecution of claims for VA benefits.
7. The GDVS is a state government agency accredited with the VA. The GDVS is required to certify applications for accreditation with the VA General Counsel for each employee the department recommends for accreditation as a representative of the GDVS.



8. All GDVS employees listed in Paragraph 3 of this directive shall successfully complete training and submit the necessary documentation to the VA for them to issue accreditation within sixty (60) days from the first working date of employment. Any of these employees who does not complete the required training and submit the necessary paperwork to the VA within sixty (60) days of employment will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with Paragraph 4 of this directive.
9. In accordance with VA regulations and guidance for a GDVS employee to assist veterans in filing claims for benefits or appeals, they must be recommended by a recognized organization, such as GDVS, for accreditation with the VA and must meet the following criteria:
  - a. Be a paid employee of the State of Georgia, working in one of the positions outlined in Paragraph 3 of this directive.
  - b. Successfully completed a course of training and an examination, which has been approved by VA Regional Counsel with jurisdiction for the state.
  - c. Receive both regular supervision and monitoring, as well as mandatory training, to assure continued qualification as a representative in the claims process.
  - d. Is not employed in any civil, military department (does not include members of the Reserves or the National Guard) or agency of the (federal) government of the United States.
  - e. Is of good character and reputation and has demonstrated ability to represent claimants before the VA.
  - f. Obtain and possess a federal VA issued Personal Identification Verification (PIV) card after the successful completion of a National Agency Check (with inquiries) (NAC-I), finger printing and/or other requirements, as may from time to time be imposed by the VA.
10. Requirements for Maintaining Accreditation:
  - a. 38 CFR 14.629(a) requires the GDVS certifying official, for each of its accredited representatives, to sign and file with the VA Office of General Counsel, not later than five (5) years after initial accreditation through the GDVS or the most recent recertification by that organization, a VA Form 21a to certify the representative continues to meet the criteria for accreditation. In recommending a person, the GDVS certifies the designee continues to meet the criteria stated for initial accreditation.
  - b. GDVS employees hired after January 2017 will not be required to pass the annual examination, until they have completed one (1) year of service in claims assistance.
  - c. GDVS employee: The GDVS Chief Operations Officer will inform the Office of the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals of changes in employee status, which will serve as the basis for a request to the VA Office of the General Counsel to rescind the accreditation for employees no longer serving in a claims assistance capacity.
  - d. The GDVS provides proficiency training for all accredited employees, which consists of two (2) one-hour training sessions per month. Annual testing of all accredited service officers will be conducted at the conclusion of the GDVS Annual Training event that will normally be held during the month of July.

- e. The Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals may require additional or other training for accredited employees when a need is determined. The same attendance requirements apply to additional training as for other training requirements.
- f. To ensure all GDVS employees are adequately trained to prepare, present, and prosecute claims before the VA, attendance is mandatory at all proficiency training events.
  - i. Except in cases of emergencies, GDVS employees who are unable to attend a training session must submit justification to their regional directors more than forty-eight (48) hours prior to the training event. The regional directors will submit the justification to the Office of the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals for review and approval/disapproval.
  - ii. Except in cases of emergencies, failure of an employee to complete a required training event without prior approval will subject the employee to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.
  - iii. The Commissioner, or designee, is the final approving authority of any termination action.
- g. GDVS employees are required to attain a minimum passing score of “70” on annual and periodic examinations, when required as part of a training presentation. Those who fail to attain a passing score will be afforded remedial training by the Veterans Training and Professional Development Division and will re-test within sixty (60) days of the last failed examination. Although a re-test may include comparable questions, the actual examination will be a different version.
- h. Veterans Training and Professional Development Division will monitor and recommend revocation of accreditation to the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals when an employee listed in Paragraph 3 of this directive:
  - i. Did not attend two (2) or more mandatory one-hour training sessions in a 12-month period,
  - ii. Failed to maintain a minimum passing score of “70” percent on any examinations, or
  - iii. Failed to follow the prescribed department training subject matter and procedures.
- i. GDVS employees who fail to maintain a minimum passing score of “70” percent will be placed on a two-year probation period.
- j. GDVS employees who fail to maintain a minimum passing score of “70” percent on their training examinations will not receive a performance rating of “2” (Successful) on their Performance Management Form (Annual Evaluation).
- k. GDVS employees who fail to get or maintain accreditation for GDVS or from any of the service organizations represented by the GDVS, will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. For positions requiring accreditation (Paragraph 3), accreditation is a requirement for employment. The Commissioner, or designee, is the final approving authority of any termination action.

## PROCEDURES:

11. GDVS employees: Accreditation requests will be submitted after completion of required training (Paragraph 13) by the Veterans Training and Development Division.
  - a. Employees through coordination with the Veterans Training and Professional Development Division, which will coordinate training for:
    - i. Phase One: Responsibility, Involvement and Preparation of claims (TRIP), VA Talent Management System (TMS)
    - ii. Phase Two: Service-Connected Compensation Disability
    - iii. Phase Three: Non-Service-Connected Pension
    - iv. Phase Four: Notice of Disagreement (NOD) / Appeals training.
  - b. Upon completion of Phase Four training, the GDVS Training and Professional Development Division will administer an accreditation examination to newly hired GDVS employees. Newly hired GDVS employees must achieve a minimum score of "70" to receive accreditation from GDVS.
12. The Veterans Training and Development Division will maintain a file on each applicant for accreditation and maintain the associated documentation and official correspondence for future use.
13. The names of newly hired GDVS employees with passing accreditation examination scores will be forwarded to the Office of the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals for preparation/certification of the VA Form 21a.
  - a. Within five (5) business days of receipt of the passing grade, the Office of the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals will prepare a letter to the VA General Counsel, prepare and certify the VA Form 21a with appropriate GDVS employee information and forward it to the applicant for their signature.
    - i. The requesting GDVS employee will sign the VA Form 21a and return it to GDVS Central Office for processing.
    - ii. The requesting GDVS employee will allow at least ninety (90) days for approval of accreditation by VA Office of General Counsel.
  - b. Upon receiving credentials from VA Office of General Counsel, the recipient (requesting GDVS employee) will email or mail an information copy of the credentials to Office of the Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals, at the address listed above.
  - c. The Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals will submit accreditation approvals within five (5) days of receipt to the Atlanta VA Regional Office (VARO). The VARO grants applicants access to information for claimants who have elected the GDVS as their Power of Attorney (POA).

COMMISSIONER



PATRICIA M. ROSS



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Patricia M. Ross  
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June 1, 2022

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**Field Operations and Appeals**

**Department Directive 40.115**

**SUBJECT:** Certificates of State Business License/Tax Exemption

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals

**POLICIES:**

1. The following sections (§) of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.) (the Code) provide the authority in the State of Georgia for exempting certain veterans who own their own businesses from having to pay certain taxes or fees at the local level.
  - a. § 43-12-1. Exemption from payment of occupation tax, administrative fee, or regulatory fee.
  - b. § 43-12-2. Qualifications; proof of blindness or disability.
  - c. § 43-12-3. Application for certificate of eligibility; ten-year period of validity.
  - d. Other related sections of the O.C.G.A. (§§ 43-12-4 through 43-12-9) provide requirements applicable to veterans and other state government officials but are not directly germane to the policies and guidance contained in this Department Directive).
2. Georgia veterans are eligible for an exemption from any occupation tax, administrative fee, or regulatory fee ***imposed by local governments*** for peddling, conducting a business, or practicing a profession or semi-profession, if they meet all of these conditions.
  - a. Discharged under honorable conditions.
  - b. Service-connected disability rating of at least 10 percent for wartime veterans, or at least 25 percent for peacetime veterans.
  - c. The veteran's income is not liable for state income taxes.

**RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES:**

3. The veteran desiring to have a local business license/tax exemption issued will provide the necessary evidence in the form of the letter from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) of the award of service-connected disability at the appropriate level required based on service during time of war recognized by the VA, or peacetime service, as appropriate.
4. A Veterans Field Service Officer (VFSO) in the field office providing assistance to the veteran will assist the veteran in completing the VS Form 40-025, Application [Affidavit]

for Veteran's Certificate of State License/Tax Exemption (See Attachment). The veteran will take the completed form and sign it in front of a Notary Public and then take the signed/notarized form to the Probate Court judge of the county in which the veteran resides for the issuance of the ***Certificate of Eligibility***.

5. The Probate Court judge of the county in which the veteran resides issues the ***Certificate of Eligibility*** required by O.C.G.A. § 43-12-3.
6. The veteran will bring the signed ***Certificate of Eligibility*** back to the field office.
7. The Office manager of the field office will forward the ***Certificate of Eligibility*** to the GDVS Central Office (attn.: Field Operations and Appeals).
8. At the GDVS Central Office, the ***Veteran's Certificate of State License/Tax Exemption, VS Form 40.026*** (See Attachment) will be completed and signed on behalf of the Commissioner. The completed and signed VS Form 40-026 will be submitted by the GDVS Central Office to the Office of the Secretary of State for the State of Georgia for filing, as appropriate.
  - a. In accordance with the Code, the Certificate of Exemption is valid for up to ten (10) years from the date of issuance.
  - b. In accordance with the Code, the Certificate of Exemption may be cancelled if:
    - i. It appears the holder has become physically or financially ineligible to claim the exemption.
    - ii. The certificate was procured through fraud or mistake.
    - iii. The person to whom the certificate was issued has permitted another to enjoy the benefits of such exemption.

COMMISSIONER



PATRICIA M. ROSS

Attachments:

1. Example: VA Disability Determination Letter
2. VS Form 40-025
3. Example: Probate Court Certificate of Eligibility
4. Example: VS Form 40-026



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

**Georgia Department of Veterans Service**  
*Floyd Veterans Memorial Building*  
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June 1, 2022

**Claims and Appeals**

**Department Directive 42.101**

**SUBJECT:** Use of the Disclaimer Form (VS Form 42-101) in Veterans Field Service Offices and the Claims and Appeals Division

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Executive Director, Field Operations and Appeals

**POLICIES:**

1. This directive establishes guidance and the process to use the Disclaimer Form (VS 42-101) in department operations. A copy of the form is attached to this directive.
2. The use of the form is intended to
  - a. Insulate and protect the department (GDVS) and GDVS employees from responsibility in the event a fraudulent statement of income, net worth, or expenses of any type is made, or attempted to be made, by a veteran claimant who was served by a GDVS representative.
  - b. In addition, it is a means to impress upon any and all veteran claimants the importance of reporting truthful financial data to the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to be used as the basis for an award or for reimbursement purposes.

**RESPONSIBILITIES:**

3. Veterans' Field Service Officers and Veterans' Claims & Appeals Officers will ensure the VS Form 42-101 is used when individuals ask for assistance in completing various forms, particularly relative to pension benefits, required by the VA, **such as, but not limited to the following:**
  - a. Applications for compensation or pension.
  - b. VA forms that require a statement of income or net worth.
  - c. VA forms that require the reporting of medical expenses for reimbursement.
  - d. VA forms submitted by a veteran, his family or survivor, which affect the expenditure of government funds relative to eligibility or entitlements to veterans' benefits.

**PROCEDURES:**

4. Typed entries are preferred, but legible printing in ink is acceptable.
5. The original of the form will be retained by the Veterans Field Service Office.

6. A copy of the form will be provided to the claimants for their records.
7. In the event a claimant refuses to sign the VS 42-101, the veterans' field service officer will check and initial the "Veteran Refuses to Sign" box at the bottom of the form.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. M. Ross", written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS





Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

# ***Georgia Department of Veterans Service***

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June 1, 2022

## **Communications and Information Technology**

### **Department Directive 50.141**

**SUBJECT:** Computer, Internet, and Electronic Mail Use

**OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:** Chief Operations Officer

#### **GENERAL:**

1. This directive establishes policy and guidelines regarding appropriate business usage of Internet access and electronic mail (email) accounts provided by the Georgia Department of Veterans Service ("GDVS" or "the department").
  - a. It applies to all employees, contractors, vendors, and others who utilize, possess or have access to GDVS-provided Internet access and email accounts.
  - b. This directive is not all-inclusive. Other applicable state (e.g., GTA) and federal (e.g., VA) guidelines and regulations pertaining to the use of computers, Internet access and responsibilities, and use of email may be referenced.
  - c. This directive rescinds/supersedes all previous instructions and guidelines about office computers, internet, and electronic mail use regardless of source.
2. The department will provide Internet access and email addresses as necessary to employees, contractors, vendors and others for the efficient and effective performance of their duties.
  - a. Internet access is provided to facilitate business-related research and access to information.
  - b. Email addresses are provided to enhance communication with customers, vendors, colleagues, and others receiving services from, doing business with, or seeking information from the GDVS.
3. Computer equipment and other resources required for Internet access and email accounts is provided at significant cost to the department, and as with other state property, employees must ensure these resources are not misused. Although valuable business tools, Internet and email access are considered privileges and, as such the GDVS reserves the right to revoke access to either or both for inappropriate usage.
4. Data and files composed, transmitted, or received on GDVS equipment, including Internet data and email messages, may be considered part of the GDVS' official records.



- a. Employees will ensure all data accessed with or stored on GDVS equipment are appropriate, ethical, and lawful.
  - b. Email users will be careful how they represent themselves, since any message or data sent through the GDVS email system clearly identifies the message as coming from the department and could be interpreted as a statement of GDVS opinion, position, or policy.
  - c. Data composed, transmitted, accessed, or received via GDVS Internet resources must not knowingly contain content that could be considered discriminatory, offensive, threatening, harassing, intimidating or disruptive to any employee or person.
    - i. For example, the display or transmission of sexually explicit images, messages, and cartoons is not allowed.
    - ii. Other such misuse includes, but is not limited to, ethnic or racial slurs, jokes that could be considered offensive, or anything that may be construed as harassment or showing disrespect for others.
5. GDVS equipment or resources will not be used for:
- a. Business or solicitations related to commercial, religious, or political causes, or any matters related to outside organizations.
  - b. Illegal activity.
  - c. Knowingly downloading or distributing pirated software, data, or malicious program code (e.g., viruses).
  - d. Any activity that would reflect discredit on the department.
  - e. While the GDVS respects the privacy of its employees, ensuring compliance with this policy is of utmost importance.
    - i. Therefore, the GDVS reserves the right to retrieve and read any data composed, transmitted, or received through online connections and stored on GDVS property.
    - ii. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment.
6. Internet Usage Guidelines:
- a. The popularity of the Internet has greatly enhanced access to information and some information formerly distributed in print is now available only on the Internet. To take advantage of the wealth of information available, Internet access is provided to GDVS employees who have a legitimate business-related need.
  - b. The use of state-provided Internet access imposes certain responsibilities and obligations on users and is subject to state government policies and local, state, and federal laws. As a condition of being granted Internet access by the department, each employee must comply with this directive and refrain from inappropriate use at all times, including access during breaks or outside of regular business hours.
  - c. Examples of appropriate Internet usage includes: access to federal, state, or local government Internet sites; job related research; and access to sites related to professional organizations or other professional development information.

- d. Examples of inappropriate Internet use include (but are not limited to):
  - i. Private or personal for-profit activities. This includes Internet use for private purposes such as business transactions, private advertising of products or services, and any activity meant to foster personal gain.
  - ii. Unauthorized not-for-profit business activities.
  - iii. Conducting illegal activities as defined by federal, state, and local laws or regulations.
  - iv. Accessing or downloading pornographic material.
  - v. Accessing or downloading material that could be considered discriminatory, offensive, threatening, harassing, or intimidating.
  - vi. Gambling.
  - vii. Uploading or downloading commercial or agency software in violation of copyright or trademark protections.
  - viii. Downloading any software or electronic files without ensuring GDVS provided virus protection is active.
  - ix. Performing an action or activity that could cause the loss or corruption of data or the degradation of system/network performance.
  - x. Conducting an activity or solicitation for political or religious causes.
  - xi. Unauthorized distribution of state data and information.
  - xii. Attempts to subvert the security of the department's network or other networks.
- e. Employees should seek policy clarification from the Chief Operations Officer prior to Internet usage, if there are questions about whether such usage meets the conditions of this policy.
- f. The GDVS recognizes occasional personal use of Internet connectivity may occur. Any such use must be brief and infrequent and limited to lunch periods, breaks, or other non-work time.
  - i. Examples of appropriate personal usage include checking weather forecasts, accessing traffic reports and accessing deferred compensation or other benefit information.
  - ii. Employees are reminded inappropriate use of GDVS Internet access as defined above is prohibited at all times.
- g. Unnecessary Internet usage causes network and server congestion, slows other users, takes away from work time, and could over burden other shared resources. Because of this accessing or downloading large audio or video files is strictly limited to business purposes.

## 7. Email Usage Guidelines:

- a. The email system is a State resource provided to improve information flow and its use is subject to high professional and ethical standards. As such, only the following email accounts are authorized for business use by GDVS employees:

- i. Email accounts with suffix “.vs.state.ga.us”
  - ii. Email accounts with suffix “.va.gov”
  - iii. Email accounts in locations, such as city or county government locations, with suffixes like “cherokee.com.”
  - iv. Email accounts issued by internet service providers (ISP), due to service and geographical location of ISP (e.g., “Windstream.net”).
  - v. Personal email addresses are not authorized for official GDVS electronic correspondence.
- b. The effective use of email can enhance communication between GDVS staff, customers, vendors and others.
- i. Employees are encouraged to use email whenever possible in conducting routine business. GDVS email addresses should be freely distributed along with the office addresses and phone numbers.
  - ii. Employees should check and respond to email routinely, during the course of the business day (See DD 21.105, paragraph 9).
- c. The GDVS acknowledges the use of email for personal messages may occur.
- i. Such use must be infrequent and personal messages must not involve the operation of a private business endeavor or solicitation for religious or political causes.
  - ii. Personal messages must not contain material that could be considered discriminatory or offensive, must not interfere with the operations of the agency and must not reflect discredit on the GDVS. For example, messages to arrange a luncheon may be acceptable, but messages to advertise products for sale are not acceptable.
- d. When using email for correspondence (including correspondence with other GDVS staff), professional behavior is expected of GDVS employees in all communications as any message sent from or to a GDVS email address reflects on the agency. The email system is a State resource provided to improve information flow and its use is subject to high professional and ethical standards. The following guidelines are intended to assist employees with the appropriate use of the agency email system and will be followed:
- i. The email system may not be used in violation of any state or federal law. The system may not be used to harass, threaten, or intimidate any employee or person.
  - ii. Employees may not access another user’s email account to access or send messages unless explicitly authorized.
  - iii. Messages that could be considered discriminatory based on race, national origin, sex, age, disability, or religious or political beliefs are prohibited.
  - iv. Sending or forwarding “chain mail” messages is an unacceptable use of the system. Email is not private communication, since others may be able to access and read it.

1. Both the nature of email and the public nature of our business make email less private than users may anticipate.
2. Employees are cautioned to remember, although email is an informal method of communication, it is becoming more formal as time progresses.
3. Email messages composed, transmitted, or received on GDVS computers are considered public documents and as such are subject to Open Records requests and discovery.
4. Employees should not put something in an email message they would not put in a letter or other form of communication.
- v. Employees should also remember email is easily forwarded and individuals outside of the intended audience may have the opportunity to read the messages. Because email messages are easily forwarded, employees should ensure the confidentiality of the material transmitted will not be compromised and consider and use other methods of communications for sensitive materials or communications.
- vi. If an email message contains personal opinions that might be mistaken as agency policy, a disclaimer, such as “the opinions expressed here are my own and do not represent the official policy of the Department of Veterans Service,” should be added to the message.
- vii. Email provides an avenue for sending messages to large audiences with ease, and there are many messages for which this feature is appropriate. However, it is important to consider what audience is appropriate and direct the message accordingly. Unnecessary email is disruptive to business activities.
- viii. Email is a limited resource and users will only have a total capacity of 250 megabytes of storage space in the state’s email system.
  1. Users are required to periodically review saved messages and eliminate messages no longer needed, provided such messages are not considered part of the GDVS’s official records.
  2. Messages that may be needed later should be archived.
  3. Under no circumstances should any messages related to pending or potential requests under the Open Records Act or messages that may be part of an ongoing investigation or litigation be deleted.
- ix. The department’s information technology staff will establish and maintain standards for usage of email accounts, including deletion/storage of messages and virus protection. Employees are expected to adhere to these standards.
- x. If a closing salutation (signature block) is used in the body of an outgoing email, the following is acceptable: cursive font or actual signature, full name, job title, professional address, telephone numbers, email address, and hyperlinks to the GDVS Facebook, Twitter, and GDVS website accounts.
  1. The style and size of font should be a generic block print (e.g., Calibri, Times Roman, Comic Sans, etc.) and not exceed 10 font (minimum) to 12 font (maximum). Cursive or archaic style (e.g., Old English, Vivaldi, etc.) will not be

used. The signature in a cursive font not to exceed 16 font (maximum) may be used.

2. Adding inspirational or motivational phrases, comments, quotations, symbols or other cited sources that have no bearing on the content of the message, the recipient, or sender will not be used. Examples of these statements include, but are not limited to, inspirational passages, quotes from historical figures, theological passages, or theological symbols.
3. The background page layout will be plain, with no added watermarks, colors, or borders.
4. An example of a signature and signature block is:

*Joe*

Joe Employee  
Senior Field Service Officer  
123 Main Street, Any Town, Georgia 12345  
770-234-5678 (Office)  
470-345-6789 (Fax)  
[joe.employee@vs.state.ga.us](mailto:joe.employee@vs.state.ga.us)  
[www.veterans.georgia.gov](http://www.veterans.georgia.gov)



8. Email and Internet Usage Monitoring:

- a. All information accessed, downloaded, or transmitted may be reviewed by systems staff or department management. While the GDVS respects the privacy of its employees, the importance of ensuring appropriate use of State resources requires the occasional monitoring of email messages transmitted and Internet sites visited by department employees. Inappropriate Internet or email usage can expose the department to significant legal liability and reflect discredit on it.
- b. **When using GDVS computers and resources to send or receive email or to access Internet sites, employees are consenting to the monitoring of their use and have no reasonable expectation of privacy in the use of these resources.**
  - i. Therefore, any computer may be inspected at any time, if such need is warranted due to suspected or malicious behavior while using GDVS property for Internet or email usage.
  - ii. The department officials will make every effort to ensure monitoring is limited and done in an ethical and respectful manner.

9. Penalties for Misuse of Internet or Email Resources:

- a. Employees using GDVS-provided Internet and email resources agree to adhere to the policies and guidelines established by the department.
  - i. This includes not allowing an unauthorized user to have access to an employee's specific login credentials for systems and subsystems used during day-to-day operations, to include VetraSpec, VBMS, MAP-D, etc.

- ii. Alleged violations of this policy will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Internet, email access, and log-in credentials to electronic systems and subsystems can be revoked at any time.
- b. Clear and willful violations or abuse of what is considered to be acceptable use will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment. Additionally, criminal or civil action may be initiated in appropriate instances.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

10. The Chief Operations Officer, under the direction and supervision of the Commissioner, provides administrative direction and oversight of IT activities for the department.

### **11. Information Technology (IT):**

- a. The IT section of the Operations Division will provide Internet access and email addresses to employees, contractors, vendors and others for the efficient and effective performance of their duties.
- b. Coordinate the administration of all technical aspects of providing Internet services and serve as the email postmaster for the agency.
- c. This includes establishing and maintaining guidelines for the technical aspects of usage, including:
  - i. Security and virus protection.
  - ii. Acceptable downloading of software or electronic files.
  - iii. The electronic publication of official GDVS communications.
- d. Guidelines will be provided to each user at the time Internet and email access is provided.
- e. All contractors, vendors and others with access to GDVS-provided Internet access or email accounts will be given a copy of this directive for guidance regarding appropriate usage.
- f. Notify agency management when inappropriate material is discovered on department computers, or when a review of Internet sites visited indicates misuse.

### **12. Supervisors/Managers/Division Directors:**

- a. Maintain an awareness of department Internet and email usage by employees, contractors, vendors, or others to ensure such use is appropriate.
- b. Ensure employees who are unfamiliar with the Internet or email are provided training at the earliest opportunity. Training can include informal training by systems staff or formal training sessions.

### **13. Employees:**

- a. All employees, regardless of position in the department will comply with the guidance in this directive.

- b. Each employee will annually complete VS Form 50.141, Computer Internet and Electronic Use Acknowledgement Statement and email a copy to the IT section. These signed statements will be filed in the employee's individual personnel file.

COMMISSIONER

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. M. Ross", written in a cursive style.

PATRICIA M. ROSS



Patricia M. Ross  
Commissioner

## ***Georgia Department of Veterans Service***

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Date

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge I have on this date received, read and  
Printed Full Name

understand the Georgia Department of Veterans Service Department Directive (DD) 50.141,  
**Computer, Internet, and Electronic Mail Use.** Further, I hereby state I will comply with  
the policies contained in that Directive.

---

Signature