



**AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES
NATIONAL VETERANS AFFAIRS COUNCIL #53
Affiliated with the AFL - CIO
Mid-Term Bargaining Committee**

Oscar L. Williams, Jr. Chairperson 3rd Exec. V-President, NVAC
29 S. Lake Street
Danville, IL 61832-8101

Patrick Russell, Member
8th Dist., Rep, NVAC
VA Black Hills, HCS
Hot Spring, SD 57747

Sandra Eggleston, Member
13th Dist., Rep, NVAC
VAMC Tucson
Tucson, AZ 85723

Bill Wetmore, Member
NVAC Nat. Rep.
2319 Alava Court
Waldorf, MD 20603

April 18, 2003

Ronald E. Cowles, Associate Deputy for
Office of Labor-Management Relations (LMR)
Department of Veterans Affairs, Suite 215
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Subject: Demand to Bargain – Implementation of VA Mandatory Training on ADR Awareness

Dear Mr. Cowles:

In accordance with Article 44, Section 2 C, of the Master Agreement, the National VA Council is formally demanding to bargain over the implementation of VA mandatory ADR Awareness Training in the Department. The Mid-Term Bargaining Committee is requesting a briefing over the cited subject above before sending any proposals. Negotiations of this matter should normally begin no later than ten (10) workdays after the management chief negotiator in this matter receives our demand to bargain.

Please cease and desist any implementation until the bargaining obligation has been met. If you have any questions please contact me at (217) 554-4866.

Sincerely,

Oscar L. Williams Jr.
Chairperson, Mid-Term Bargaining Committee
3rd Executive Vice President, National VA Council #53
Seventh VA District Council #59 Representative

cc: Alma L. Lee, President National VA Council #53
Executive Committee, NVAC
Mid-Term Bargaining Committee

**AFGE: The Future is Ours
Creating A Shared Vision for the 21st Century**

THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON

May 12, 2003

TO ALL EMPLOYEES:

On May 24, 2002, the Deputy Secretary, issued a VA's policy to Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries and Other Key Officials, stating strong commitment encouraging employees "to use mediation to help resolve workplace conflict and disputes, as early as feasible, to the maximum extent practicable, in an appropriate manner, and at the lowest organizational level." As Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), I am firmly opposed to any behavior that may hinder VA from achieving the Department's mission. This is a follow-up to share with you the initial steps being taken to achieve the ADR/Mediation goal.

The key proposals are described below:

- All current VA employees, managers and supervisors will receive a minimum of 2 hours training on ADR Awareness Training sessions. This mandatory training will be conducted in two Phases.
- Phase I – Starting May 12, 2003, 1 hr mandatory training will be conducted on the web and must be completed and certified before July 31, 2003.
- Phase II – Starting August 1, 2003, 1 hr mandatory training will be conducted by a facilitator and/or satellite broadcast and must be completed and certified before March 31, 2004, and thereafter must receive a minimum of 1 hour refresher ADR Awareness training every year.
- Employees new to VA must receive ADR Awareness training within 60 days of employment.
- Each VA organization is required to certify that all employees in their organization has received the 2-hour mandatory ADR Awareness training,
- VA's goals is to have a 100% participation rate in the ADR/mediation awareness training before March 31, 2004.

This training will ensure that all VA employees become aware of ADR and Mediation tools that will help them effectively resolve workplace conflicts and disputes. By employees being aware of and using these tools, VA anticipates

that this will effectively help reduce EEO complaints activity and workplace disputes, which is costly to the Departmental. VA also expects to derive intangible benefits such as improved morale and productivity, reduction in future disputes, repaired relationships, improved customer service, and employee trust.

My goal is to eliminate workplace conflicts, disputes and discrimination in the workplace. I am strongly committed to providing equal opportunity to all and to eliminating conflicts, disputes and discrimination. All employees will be expected to give the highest level of respect, courtesy, and support to one another and to those we serve.

To achieve my goal, it is necessary for all employees, all managers and supervisors to carry out an effective ADR program that will bring about further harmony in the workplace and help employees to achieve a VA workplace free from conflicts, disputes and discrimination. I will hold all managers and supervisors accountable for taking an active role in ensuring that employees under their supervision are treated fairly.

Now is the time, if it has not already been done, to assess the climate within your facility to determine where each and everyone of you are and what needs to be done to nurture an environment free from conflicts, disputes and discrimination. This is the right thing to do for our employees and our veteran patients and I know that I can depend on each of you to act with vigor and sensitivity.

Your assistance is appreciated in helping to ensure that all of our employees are afforded the opportunity to use mediation/ADR and that VA has a robust and effective mediation program.

I ask you to join me in this important effort. Working together, I am confident we will succeed.

Anthony J. Principi

Dist: RPC 6006

H/meg/All Employees/ADR Awareness