

**POSITION DESCRIPTION** (Please Read Instructions on the Back)

1. Agency Position No. **4972**

2. Reason for Submission <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Redescription <input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Establishment <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Show any positions replaced) <i>Replaces Patient Representative,</i> <i>GS-301-11, PD# 3947, dtd 5/28/03.</i>		3. Service <input type="checkbox"/> Hdqtrs <input type="checkbox"/> Field		4. Employing Office Location VA Medical Center		5. Duty Station Louisville, KY		6. OPM Certification <i>BUS</i> <b>8888</b>	
7. Fair Labor Standards Act <input type="checkbox"/> Exempt <input type="checkbox"/> Nonexempt		8. Financial Statements Required <input type="checkbox"/> Executive Personnel <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Employment and Financial Interests		9. Subject to IA Action <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No		10. Position Status <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Competitive <input type="checkbox"/> Excepted (Specify in Remarks) <input type="checkbox"/> SES (Gen.) <input type="checkbox"/> SES (CR)		11. Position <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neither	
12. Sensitivity <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1-Non-Sensitive <input type="checkbox"/> 3-Critical Sensitive <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Noncritical <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4-Special Sensitive		13. Competitive Level Code 301		14. Agency Use					

15. Classified/Graded by	Official Title of Position	Pav Plan	Occupational	Grad	Initials	Date
a. U.S. Office of Personnel Management						
b. Department, Agency or Establishment						
c. Second Level Review						
d. First Level Review	CONSUMER AFFAIRS SPECIALIST	GS	0301	11	<i>AC</i>	<i>3/3/06</i>
e. Recommended by Supervisor or Initiating Office	CONSUMER AFFAIRS PROGRAM SPECIALIST	GS	0301	11		

16. Organization Title of Position (If different from the official title)

17. Name of Employee (if vacant, specify)  
*O'Bannon*

18. Department, Agency, or Establishment DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS		c. Third Subdivision AD/PCS	
a. First Subdivision MEDICAL CENTER		d. Fourth Subdivision	
b. Second Subdivision ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR PATIENT CARE SERVICES		e. Fifth Subdivision	
Employee Review — This is an accurate description of the major duties and responsibilities of my position.		Signature of Employee (optional)	

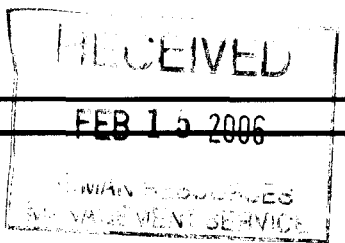
20. **Supervisory Certification.** I certify that this is an accurate statement of the major duties and responsibilities of this position and its organizational relationships, and that the position is necessary to carry out Government functions for which I am responsible. This certification is made with the knowledge that this information is to be used for statutory purposes relating to appointment and payment of public funds, and that false or misleading statements may constitute violations of such statutes or their implementing regulations.

a. Type Name and Title of Immediate Supervisor SILVANA HILL, AO/AD/PCS		b. Typed Name and Title of Higher-Level Supervisor or Manager (optional) KATHLEEN A. RAJCEVICH, AD/PCS	
Signature <i>Silvana Hill</i>	Date <i>2-15-06</i>	Signature <i>Kathleen Rajcevic</i>	Date <i>2/15/06</i>

21. <b>Classification/Job Grading Certification.</b> I certify that this position has been classified/graded as required by Title 5, U.S. Code in conformance with standards published by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management or, if no published standards apply directly, consistently with the most applicable published standards.		22. Position Classification Standards Used in Classifying/Grading Position <i>Miscellaneous Admin &amp; Program Series GS-301, Jan 79; Admin Analysis GEG, Aug 90.</i>	
Typed Name and Title of Official Taking Action <i>Angela J. Dutton</i> , CHIEF, HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT		Information for Employees. The standards, and information on their application, are available in the personnel office. The classification of the position may be and corrected by the agency or the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. Information on classification/job grading appeals, and complaints on exemption from FLSA, is available from the personnel office or the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.	
Signature <i>Andy Crews</i>	Date <i>3/3/06</i>		

23. Position Review	Initials	Date	Initials	Date	Initials	Date	Initial	Date	Initial	Date
a. Employee (optional)										
b. Supervisor										
c. Classifier										

24. Remarks  
*Low Risk*



25. Description of Major Duties and Responsibilities (See Attached)

## POSITION DESCRIPTION

### CONSUMER AFFAIRS PROGRAM SPECIALIST GS-11

#### INTRODUCTION

This position function as a specialist for the Consumer Affairs/Patient Representative Program functions and its positive relation and impact on Public/Consumer Affairs initiatives. The medical center is being challenged as never before to be a high quality health care deliverer in a manner that provides superior customer service and patient satisfaction for our veteran clientele. Our veterans must be made to feel special and welcome at this facility. We must focus on special needs and problems identified from our veterans' perspective. We must concentrate on the development and assessment of operational initiatives which are designed to attract new veterans, who will view our medical center as their health care provider of choice. As the consumer affairs program specialist, which includes the overall responsibility of the Patient Representative Program and it's relations to Public/Consumer Affairs programs, initiatives and special projects the incumbent is strategically involved with the following:

#### DUTIES

1. The consumer affairs program specialist supports and is actively involved with the development/assessment of Public/Consumer Affairs initiatives and medical center operational improvements regarding the manner in which veterans are received and treated at this facility. The incumbent manages and assesses patient feedback data, performed on either a national, regional or local level. Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative assessment methods, the consumer affairs program specialist provides management with customer feedback to be used to identify the dimensions of care that have the potential to make a difference in overall satisfaction, retention or other desired outcomes. Linking patient satisfaction measurement with new program proposals and outreach efforts and top management decisions results in superior service and identifies necessary service modifications that will receive favorable response from a highly competitive marketplace. This includes the design and operation of a marketing information system which assists with the development of appropriate market research tools, the marketing research process, analysis of the data to determine the customers' perception of the care/service delivered and makes recommendations for future marketing strategies. Participates in Total Quality Improvement actions related to customer satisfaction and gives presentations regarding progress made in improving customer satisfaction.

2. The consumer affairs program specialist serves as a liaison between the medical center, patients and staff of the facility and the community it serves regarding patients' rights and advocacy.
3. On a regular and recurring basis, the incumbent independently provides a channel through which patients can seek solutions to problems, concerns and unmet needs. Works with health care providers and administrative support staff throughout the medical center in preventing and resolving patient complaints. Ensures that all attempts to adhere to the customer service standards are reasonable and supported by staff.
4. Interprets the medical center's mission, policies, procedures and available resources/services to the patient and presents the patient's problems, opinions and needs to the appropriate staff and management.
5. Assists patients in understanding their rights and responsibilities.
6. Represents the Director and the Associate Director for Patient Care Services in ensuring that the ethical, statutory and constitutional rights of patients are adhered to.
7. Assists patients, their families and representatives and facility staff members in recognizing and removing institutional barriers to the provision of optimum health care to patients.
8. Identifies existing and potential problem areas, suggests solutions or alternatives to existing procedures which contribute to those problems. Acts on behalf of the facility Director and Associate Director for Patient Care Services to resolve problems, expedite services, or implement necessary corrective measures within established facility policies, and where appropriate, through committee participation.
9. Resolves complaints and grievances from patients or from individuals on their behalf. Has the authority to act on behalf of the facility Director and the Associate Director for Patient Care Services when investigating inquiries into patient concerns, then initiates action or changes necessary to correct problem situations and reports on corrective measures taken to the patient and or the patient's representative. Monitors and evaluates corrective measures taken. Acts as an advocate for patients using seasoned judgment to resolve problems.
10. Maintains a working liaison with veterans' service organizations, congressional representatives, community groups, and others whose interests are in helping and protecting veterans, their families and their representatives.

11. Serves as one of the facility's congressional liaisons, responding directly to their staff assistants, when appropriate, on a variety of matters involving patient dissatisfaction, general assistance and information relative to the medical center and veteran eligibility for medical care and benefits.

12. Prepares correspondence for the signature of the Director. This includes responses to Congressional, VAHQ and VISN inquiries as well as direct correspondence to patients, relatives, service organizations, etc. May also provide guidance and support to other staff members assigned to this responsibility.

13. Has the authority to review any files or records, and discuss with personnel or witnesses regarding any practice which appears to violate patient's rights or which causes unnecessary discomfort, embarrassment or inconvenience to patients, their families or the health care facility and reports such findings with recommendations for improvements to the facility Director and Associate Director for Patient Care Services. The consumer affairs program specialist has the authority to cross departmental lines, at all levels, in order to resolve the complaint or concern.

14. Identifies the elements of clinical or administrative practices which contribute to or create a positive atmosphere for patient satisfaction and recommends to the facility Director and Associate Director Patient Care Services, changes which will improve customer satisfaction.

15. Develops and provides in-service education, as necessary, to bring awareness to the medical center staff of the patient's perceptions of the patient's facility experience, thereby contributing to improved staff understanding and attitude. This may be through new employee orientation, a formalized guest relations program or other similar methods.

16. Has overall responsibility for the resolution of patient issues and serves as an "advocate" for patients.

17. The consumer affairs program specialist's participation in professional groups is encouraged for the purpose of improved communication, improved public relations, professional growth and the opportunity to share the experience of the VA health care system. Examples of such groups are:

a. National Society of Patient Representation and Consumer Affairs of the American Hospital Association.

b. Kentucky State Chapter of the Society of Patient Representation.

c. Other organizations concerned with patient and/or consumer affairs.

18. Utilizing the DHCP patient representative software program, the consumer affairs program specialist maintains records of all patient inquiries or inquiries on behalf of a patient. Produces, on a regular basis, a cumulative report, which includes categorization of patient inquiries in order to track and trend the patterns and to identify opportunities for improvement of care.

19. Assists with public relations involving customers to increase community and veterans awareness of VA health care resources. Participates in hospital-wide patient relations efforts aimed at improving the image which employees have of the facility and of themselves, and of the personal dignity of medical center's patients and guests. Efforts are aimed at improving the image of the medical center as seen by patients and guests, thereby promoting general public acceptance of the high quality of patient care and service programs.

20. The consumer affairs program specialist attends various medical center committees which review patient care and issues of quality improvement, to ensure that the patients' viewpoints are represented and understood. May attend the Director's morning meeting, Customer Service Board, Ethics Committee, Associate Director for Patient Care Services meetings, Women Veterans Committee, and any other committees deemed appropriate.

21. The consumer affairs program specialist oversees the coordination and supervision of the patient representative volunteer program.

22. Ensures JCAHO and/or other regulatory requirements pertaining to the patient representative program are met.

23. The consumer affairs program specialist provides general support to top management and may be delegated special duties and assignments by the facility Director and the Associate Director for Patient Care Services.

#### KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED BY THE POSITION

The consumer affairs program specialist must have a thorough knowledge of the medical center's marketing initiatives, along with the necessary application of marketing tools to assess the various initiatives and programs which impact on our veteran clientele.

The consumer affairs program specialist must have a thorough knowledge of Federal laws, VA regulations and directives governing medical benefits for veterans, facility policies, procedures and organizational structure, medical terminology, services available, capabilities of clinics, and must be aware of changes which affect veterans benefits. This knowledge is necessary to answer questions for patients, their families or their representatives

to perform the duties of the position and to meet the current standards of the JCAHO (Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Health Care Organizations) and any other regulatory bodies which may govern the VA system. This involves knowledge of complex policies for various agencies and organizations.

Is familiar and knowledgeable with the customer service standards and the Baldrige criteria relating to customer satisfaction. The incumbent must be able to act as an authority in these areas and train others in the content and intent of these criteria.

Knowledge of the policies, patterns and practices of regulated entities as they relate to the compliance programs of the various internal and external regulatory bodies. An example is the JCAHO requirement for an advance directive program and documented compliance with patients rights. These requirements must be coordinated with VA regulations as well as local jurisdictions which may have more stringent requirements.

The consumer affairs program specialist must possess knowledge of the duties, priorities, commitments and program goals of both administrative and clinical services in order to respond to concerns expressed by patients and their families relative to the health care services. A typical work situation would be a family who wishes to take a patient home AMA (against medical advice) and they engage the patient representative program specialist to assist them. The consumer affairs program specialist would have to be knowledgeable about the patient's rights, the patient's wishes and the administrative process involved in such a discharge. The knowledge and skills to discuss and negotiate with the family and to help determine what was in the best interest of the patient are necessary.

The work requires a high degree of skill in oral and written communication as well as interpersonal relations. The consumer affairs program specialist must possess skill in interviewing knowledge of the process of inquiry, knowledge of counseling principles and record keeping techniques. The utilization of analytical ability is required in reviewing policies, identifying existing problems and potential problem areas and suggesting solutions or alternatives to existing procedures which may contribute to those problems. Tracking, trending and analysis of data from the program activities, and the ability to evaluate those interventions which are effective are examples of this skill and knowledge. Documentation of these activities must be clearly and accurately written and communicated to the appropriate programs within the medical center for the continuous improvement of the care provided.

Must possess a thorough knowledge of the medical terminology and VA nomenclature used with a variety of administrative diagnostic and treatment procedures provided to all categories of patients. The ability to effectively review and interpret information contained in medical and administrative records is essential.

A thorough knowledge of various Public Laws as well as the Privacy Act/Freedom of Information Act, Advance Directives Act and others as required.

Tact, good judgment, empathy, flexibility and a positive attitude are required to work with the diversity of patients, family and staff and the complexity and sensitivity of issues which have the potential of controversy or legal action. The ability to comprehend and explain numerous government laws, directives and policies is required in order to provide information to individuals representing a myriad of educational and cultural backgrounds.

Knowledge and ability to analyze complex sets of policies, practices and operations involving the activities of the organization and the ability to integrate these into a humanitarian approach to dealing with the problems of the patient and family.

A thorough knowledge of and skill in selecting, adapting and applying investigative methods and negotiating techniques to obtain or reconstruct missing or withheld information, persuade reluctant persons to provide information or access to it, and in some instances, persuade subjects or respondents to agree to terms needed to achieve compliance and to conduct investigations or reviews where significant difficulties are encountered.

Must be knowledgeable about the current requirements of the JCAHO which relate to patient rights, advance directives, living wills and other issues relating to patient rights and medical ethics.

Must understand the extensive and complicated operations of the medical center and the specific treatment teams to recognize any discrepancies or inconsistencies which exist in the information provided by either staff, patients or patient's families.

#### SUPERVISORY CONTROL

Works directly for Administrative Officer to the Associate Director Patient Care Services, who establishes the overall objectives and, in consultation with the consumer affairs program specialist, determines the allocation of staff/other resources for an effective Patient Advocate Program. Performs duties and responsibilities independent of continuing supervision with the authority to operate independently within broad guidelines established locally by the Associate Director for Patient Care Services, the Director, and by VA Headquarters to ensure optimum support to the facility and to promote efficient dissemination of services to veterans. Independently plans and carries out program operations and determines the course of inquiries, reaches conclusions and negotiates with the involved parties to reach a

resolution or compromise. Must exercise judgment to recognize when situations must be referred to a higher authority or when other staff should be included to reach a resolution. The consumer affairs program specialist must make many independent decisions and take actions on own initiative. Informs the Director and Chief of Staff of the potential for any adverse publicity and makes recommendations for opportunities to improve care. Completed work may be reviewed for consistent application of policies, innovative resolution of problems, impact on facility and/or VA policy and practices and effectiveness in accomplishing program objectives.

#### GUIDELINES

Must have thorough knowledge of Federal laws, VA regulations and directives governing benefits for veterans, facility operating procedures and a comprehensive understanding of various health care services in order to serve the patients and their families. Interpretation and adaptation of guidelines to specific problems are frequently required, for example, in determining treatment entitlement and in resolving complaints. Frequently there are no clear-cut guidelines, therefore, the patient representative must make sound decisions and take appropriate action on issues related to patient concerns.

#### COMPLEXITY

Assessment of likely operational success or failure outcomes is a complex process integrating marketing research and forecasting techniques regarding veterans' responses and the incumbents experience and judgment with operational and program issues involving marketing initiatives, strategies and operational improvements to internal/external initiatives, prior to management's decisions to initiate change or curtail/eliminate programs impacting on veterans.

The consumer affairs program specialist, on a regular and recurring basis, deals with patient complaints and grievances requiring the use of standard procedures of inquiry. The work includes a variety of duties involving different processes and methods. Numerous variables are involved in the decision making. The chosen course of action may require the use of many alternatives some of which may be outside the usual facility procedures. The work requires that the consumer affairs program specialist analyze and interpret a variety of conditions and program elements in order to verify and clarify events that are the source of patient dissatisfaction. Seasoned judgment is required to provide optimum patient service. Assigned patient representative program responsibilities involve:

1. Initiation of inquiry of sources of patient dissatisfaction, grievances or complaints.



2. Identifying and analyzing problems and their sources, documenting barriers to the delivery of services and recommending changes in policies and/or procedures when appropriate.
3. Monitoring and evaluating corrective actions taken.
4. Maintaining records of inquiries made by patients and/or their representatives, and producing regular reports. These reports are analyzed and used to track and trend patterns and integrate the information into the facility's overall quality management information system.
5. Developing, implementing and monitoring employee and patient orientation and volunteer/patient relations programs.
6. Responding and assisting with responses to congressional, service organization, community group or other inquiries related to patient complaints, grievances or dissatisfaction, both orally and/or in writing.

#### SCOPE AND EFFECT

The work of the consumer affairs program specialist is to function as specialist for patient representative program functions and its positive relation and impact on Public/Consumer Affairs initiatives. The work affects the well-being and care of the patients, the reputation of the medical center and the VA at large as well as the efficient use of the facility's resources. Is delegated the responsibility for:

1. Assessment of patient needs/satisfaction outcomes which are positive and evaluating viability of programs and operational internal/external initiatives to attract and maintain veteran clientele and its impact on positive utilization of available resources.
2. Planning and implementing the full range of administrative support in providing a channel through which patients can seek solutions to problems associated with the provision of services.
3. Identifying facility wide, sources of patient complaints, grievances and dissatisfaction, reviewing problems and recommending to the Associate Director for Patient Care Services and Director the corrective action to improve patient care. Assisting in the development of protocols for new facility procedures and/or policies relating to patient related services.
4. Acting on behalf of the facility Director, Associate Director Patient Care Services, and the Administrative Officer to resolve problems related to patient treatment and/or to expedite services to patients within established guidelines.

5. Maintaining a working liaison with veterans' service organizations, other veterans' organizations and community groups concerned with the well being of veterans and their families.

6. Maintaining a diplomatic, caring and non-defensive attitude and approach in the face of frequent encounters with hostile, angry and accusatory clients, staff and occasionally, the media.

#### PERSONAL CONTACTS

Contacts are face to face, telephonic and written, with both clinical and administrative personnel from the health care facility, other VA health care facilities, VISN Office, VA Headquarters, congressional offices and community institutions and organizations. Personal contacts are made with patients and their families or friends who, for the most part, are coming to the patient representative office with unresolved problems or unmet needs. Therefore, many of the personal contacts are with people who are dissatisfied or angry as a result of experiences in the facility or whose expectations are unrealistic to the facility's mission. Consequently, the consumer affairs program specialist must exercise discretion and tactfulness in interpersonal relations. This is inherent in all contacts made by the consumer affairs program specialist. The consumer affairs program specialist is involved in meeting the requirements of the JCAHO and is responsible for interacting with internal and external groups who are involved in regulating the compliance with standards and regulations which protect the patient's rights and responsibilities.

#### PURPOSE OF CONTACTS

The purpose of the contacts is to receive inquiries and resolve complaints from veterans and other individuals acting on behalf of veterans. The consumer affairs program specialist must provide information and resolve problems for veterans who may be skeptical, uncooperative, unreceptive, and hostile. The consumer affairs program specialist must mediate controversial issues and arrive at solutions with veterans and family members who very frequently have different perceptions and viewpoints. Contacts are made with hospital staff for the purpose of preventing or resolving veterans' complaints, problems, and concerns. This may involve influencing and/or motivating staff to modify procedures that are barriers to optimum care and patient satisfaction.

Efficient and effective performance of the duties associated with the consumer affairs program specialist position is expected to impact positively on the quality of care provided and to enhance the image of the facility and VA.

Page10-Position Specialist GS-11	Description	Consumer	Affairs	Program
-------------------------------------	-------------	----------	---------	---------

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

Includes walking, standing, bending, carrying of light items such as medical records and occasionally assisting with a wheelchair. In some instances relationships with patients can become intense and the employee is constantly placed in a position of stress. This position demands emotional stability as the consumer affairs program specialist is deeply involved with many seriously ill, dying patients and their families.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The work environment involves the normal risks typical of an office with the additional risk of dealing with patients who may be hostile and/or are not in contact with reality. Visits are necessary to the wards and clinics as well as administrative offices in the facility. The consumer affairs program specialist may encounter medically emergent patients and those with infectious diseases.