

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist (VRS) Performance Standard

The following constitutes an agreement between the Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), AFL-CIO National VA Council (NVAC) #53 (Union) regarding the National Performance Plan for Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist (VRS).

1. The parties agree to a 90-day acclimation period from the date this new standard is implemented. No adverse performance action will be taken based solely on these new performance standards during this 90-day period.
2. The VBA AFGE Mid-Term Bargaining Committee will monitor and assess the implementation of the national performance standard. The parties agree to gather performance data regarding VRS performance under the new performance standard. The AFGE Mid-Term Bargaining Committee will be provided this data each month for the preceding month, for up to 12 months. If at any point during this 12-month period the Union has concerns with this information, they can elevate the concerns to the Mid-Term Bargaining Committee for consideration.
3. The Performance standard and its elements, to the maximum extent feasible shall be reasonable, realistic, attainable, and sufficient under the circumstances to permit accurate measurement of an employee's performance. For each element of the standard, there must be clear means of assessing whether objectives have been met.
4. The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) and any changes to the FAQ will be communicated to the Midterm Bargaining Committee prior to implementation.
5. Where the FAQs conflict with the plain written language of the standard, the standard will be followed.
6. Prior to implementation, local management will meet with the employees to discuss the critical and non-critical elements in this national standard. Management should communicate and provide the national performance standard and conduct meetings to address employee questions and concerns to all affected employees. The local union will be invited to attend the meetings.
7. The critical element of Quality provides that a random selection of work will be reviewed each quarter based on the VRS performance standard and that the selection will be reflective of the mix of work performed during the month.
8. The appropriate system of record will be the source to track cases available for random pull for quality review.

9. Individual timeliness will be measured in average days as reflected in the performance standard.
10. Employees will not be held accountable for the timeliness element while the claim is being processed or reviewed at a step outside of the employee's control.
11. Per the standard, extenuating circumstances affecting timeliness will be considered. The VRS is responsible for notifying the supervisor of the situation.
12. The VBA AFGE Midterm Bargaining Committee will be informed of any changes in working conditions affecting the VRS performance standard.
13. Employees will have a sufficient workload at all times in order to enable them to achieve the Output element of the performance standard. Employees will notify a supervisor if they do not have sufficient workload.
14. VBA will ensure that all affected employees' equipment is adequate to run all programs and applications in connection with employees performing their duties.
15. VBA is responsible for ensuring that all employees receive the training necessary for the performance of the employees' assigned duties.
16. All employees covered by this performance standard must receive training on the new standard, countable actions, and the systems that will be used to track their performance. This training is excluded time. An employee can request additional training if needed.
17. Local management will provide ongoing training related to manuals, regulations, and law changes. The time spent in training is excluded time.
18. Core technical requirements and station level training assigned to employees in TMS will have a reasonable completion date.
19. If an employee is unavailable for mandatory training, the employee will be provided the opportunity to attend a make-up or review the recorded training session. In the event a make-up training or recording is unavailable, the employee will be provided a copy of the training material, and an SME will be identified by local management for any employee questions.
20. Extenuating circumstances may be presented by the affected employee, which the supervisor will consider prior to determining the legitimacy of the incident/complaint.
21. If an employee requests a discussion with his/her rating official in writing to discuss his/her performance, it will be scheduled in a timely manner.

22. Where a critical element or sub element of a critical element is not applicable to the employee's assigned duties, the rating official may mark the element as "not applicable" on the Performance element on the Performance Appraisal Program (VA Form 0750), Actual Achievement, Section E., instead of "fully successful" so that the element does not affect the employee's Overall Rating, Section F.
23. Consistent with procedures set forth in the Master Agreement, local bargaining may take place at individual facilities and may include substantive bargaining that does not conflict with negotiated national policy and agreements.
24. Management will not hold employees accountable for factors extenuating-circumstances that affect performance and are beyond the employees' control.
25. After implementation, if either party is made aware of issues that may affect employees, both parties agree to discuss the issues and work to mutually resolve the issues for the employees. Should discussions not resolve the issues, the parties will implement the negotiating process to the extent required by statute.
26. Management shall provide a copy of this MOU to the local president and/or designee at each AFGE local within (10) ten days of the date this MOU is signed.

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Date