

STAFFING

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** To revise the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for the appointment of Social Workers, GS-0185, in VA.
2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This handbook contains mandatory procedures on staffing. The pages in this issuance replace the corresponding page numbers in VA Handbook 5005, Appendix G39. The revised standards are effective on the date of this publication. These changes will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005, Staffing, that is maintained on the [Office of Human Resources Management website](#). Significant changes include:
 - a. Clarifies the exception, paragraph 3c(1) and 3c(1)(a).
 - b. Adds definitions for small, moderate, and large social work service.
 - c. Adds new assignment for Social Worker (Research), GS-12.
 - d. Revises assignments and adds Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs) for Supervisory Social Worker, GS-12, Social Worker (Program Coordinator), GS-12, and Social Worker (Assistant Chief), GS-12.
 - e. Removes Social Worker Executive, GS-12 assignment.
 - f. Adds new assignment for Social Worker (Research), GS-13.
 - g. Revises assignments and adds KSAs for Supervisory Social Worker, GS-13, Social Worker (Program Coordinator), GS-13, Social Worker (Service Chief), GS-13, and Social Worker Executive, GS-13.
 - h. Revises assignments and adds KSAs for Social Worker (Program Manager), GS-14, Social Worker (Service Chief), GS-14 and Social Worker Executive, GS-14.
 - i. Adds new assignments for Social Worker (National Program Director), GS-15 and Social Work Manager, GS-15.
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059), Office of Human Resources Management.
4. **RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VA Directive 5005.
5. **RESCISSION:** VA Handbook 5005/50, Part II, Appendix G39, dated February 29, 2012.

Department of Veterans Affairs
Washington, DC 20420

VA HANDBOOK 5005/120
Transmittal Sheet
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CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/
Melissa S. Glynn, Ph.D.
Assistant Secretary for
Enterprise Integration

/s/
Daniel R. Sitterly
Assistant Secretary for Human
Resources and Administration/
Operations, Security, and Preparedness

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APPENDIX G39. SOCIAL WORKER QUALIFICATION STANDARD
GS-0185
Veterans Health Administration

1. **COVERAGE.** The following are requirements for appointment as a social worker in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). These requirements apply to all social workers in the GS-0185 series, including those assigned to VA medical centers, Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs), Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS)/Veteran Centers, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) offices, and VHA Central Office.
2. **DEFINITIONS.**
 - a. **Journey Level.** The full performance level for this qualification standard is at the GS-11 grade level.
 - b. **Creditable Experience.** The candidate must have knowledge of current professional social work practices. To be creditable, the experience must have required the use of knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics associated with current professional social work practice. The experience or education must be post-Masters of Social Work (MSW) degree. Experience and education satisfying this requirement must be active professional practice, which is paid/non-paid employment as a professional social worker, as defined by the appropriate state licensing board.
 - c. **Quality of Experience.** Experience is only creditable if it is obtained following graduation with a master's degree in social work and if it includes work as a professional social worker directly related to the position to be filled. Qualifying experience must also be at a level comparable to social work experience at the next lower level.
 - [d. **Facility Size and Complexity.** The size of the medical center, the type of program managed, and scope of responsibility are critical aspects of the assignments in the standard. The following definitions apply throughout the standard when discussing a small, moderate, and large social work service.
 - (1) **Small.** A small social work service is located in a VA facility which provides general medical services to Veterans, families, and caregivers and may have an affiliated health care system. Services include programs that are technical and complex. Services may be delivered at a variety of VA sites.
 - (2) **Moderate.** A moderate social work service is located in a complex VA facility which provides general medical and specialty services to Veterans, families and caregivers and may have an affiliated health care system. Services include multi-faceted specialty care programs that are technical and complex. Services may be delivered at a variety of VA sites.
 - (3) **Large.** A large social work service is located in a highly complex VA facility which provides diverse services to Veterans, families and caregivers, and is typically an affiliated tertiary care health care system. Services include multiple specialty care programs and VA Centers of Excellence that are highly technical and complex

across the continuum of care. Services may be delivered at VA sites spanning a large geographic area.]

- e. **Advanced Practice Level.** For all assignments above the full performance (journey) level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Advanced Practice Level is defined as the ability to provide independent and expert clinical psychosocial and case management services in a specialized area of practice to Veterans who tend to have serious and severe crises, may lack any familial and community support, may be poor self-monitors, may frequently fail to comply with instructions and treatment, or may have major deficits in coping skills and require continuing professional psychological support. The advanced practice or senior social worker has an increased depth and breadth of practice skills; has expertise in participating in the professional development of colleagues through mentorship and teaching; demonstrates leadership in developing and expanding professional intervention strategies; demonstrates leadership in defining and attending to professional practice issues; and has the ability to expand the conceptual knowledge of the profession. The advanced practice or senior social worker will make independent professional decisions and recommendations for agency action; the consequences to the Veteran of these decisions and actions may be quite serious. Work involves intensive social work services requiring the exercise of mature professional judgment and the flexible use of a wide range of complex social work practice skills not typically required in routine social work interventions. The advanced practice or senior social worker has mastered a range of specialized interventions and provides consultation to colleagues, renders professional opinions based on experience and expertise, develops new models of psychosocial assessment or intervention, and incorporates complex multiple causation in differential diagnosis and treatment. The advanced practice or senior social worker utilizes outcome evaluations to further treatment and designs system changes based on empirical findings.
- f. **Differentiating Independent Practice from Advanced Practice Level.** Experience must be evaluated to differentiate between independent practice and advanced practice levels. A social worker practicing at the independent level has a generalized knowledge of practice, (which is required for all social workers at the full performance level and above.), whereas the social worker practicing at the advanced level has specialized knowledge of practice typically related to a particular diagnosis or patient population. The advanced practice social worker can be further differentiated from the independent practice social worker by their ability to expand clinical knowledge in the profession, provide consultation and guidance to colleagues, role model effective social work practice skills, teach or provide orientation to less experienced social workers, develop innovations in practice interventions, and provide clinical supervision for social work licensure or certification. A social worker with advanced practice skills and personal qualifications that meet the standard for the senior social worker will have passed an advanced generalist or clinical Association of Social Work Boards (ASWB) examination and be assigned to a position that requires use of the advanced practice skills in order to be considered for the senior social worker grade.

- g. **Part-Time Experience.** Part-time experience is creditable according to its relationship to the full-time work week. For example, one week of full-time credit is equivalent to two weeks of part-time work.
 - h. **Fellowships or Post-Graduate Training.** Fellowship and post-graduate training programs are typically in a specialized area of clinical practice, i.e., group or family practice. Training as a fellow or post-graduate may be substituted for creditable experience on a year-for-year basis.
 - i. **Practicum in a VA Setting.** A VHA practicum experience may not be substituted for experience, as the practicum (field placement) is completed prior to graduation with a master's degree in social work.
3. **BASIC REQUIREMENTS.** The basic requirements for employment as a VHA social worker are prescribed by statute in 38 U.S.C. § 7402(b)(9), as amended by section 205 of Public Law 106-419, enacted November 1, 2000. To qualify for appointment as a social worker in VHA, all applicants must meet the following:
- a. **Citizenship.** Be a citizen of the United States. (Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified citizens in accordance with chapter 3, section A, paragraph 3g this part).
 - b. **Education.** Have a master's degree in social work from a school of social work fully accredited by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). Graduates of schools of social work that are in candidacy status do not meet this requirement until the School of Social Work is fully accredited. A doctoral degree in social work may not be substituted for the master's degree in social work. Verification of the degree can be made by going to <http://www.cswe.org/Accreditation> to verify that the social work degree meets the accreditation standards for a masters of social work.
 - c. **Licensure.** Persons hired or reassigned to social worker positions in the GS-0185 series in VHA must be licensed or certified by a state to independently practice social work at the master's degree level. Current state requirements may be found by going to <http://vaww.va.gov/OHRM/T38Hybrid/>.
- [(1) **Exception.** VHA may waive the licensure or certification requirement for persons who are otherwise qualified, pending completion of state prerequisites for licensure/certification examinations. This exception only applies at the GS-9 grade level. For the GS-11 grade level and above, the candidate must be licensed or certified. At the time of appointment, the supervisor, chief social work or social work executive will provide the unlicensed/uncertified social worker with the written requirements for licensure or certification, including the time by which the license or certification must be obtained and the consequences for not becoming licensed or certified by the deadline.]
- (a) For appointments at the GS-9 grade level, VHA social workers who are not licensed or certified at the time of appointment must become licensed or certified at the independent, master's level within three years of their appointment as a

social worker. Most states require two years of post-MSW experience as a prerequisite to taking the licensure/certification exam, and VHA gives social workers one additional year to pass the licensure/certification exam. In states such as California, Washington, and others where the prerequisites for licensure exceed two years, social workers must become licensed at the independent, master's level within one year of meeting the full state prerequisites for licensure.

- (b) A social worker who does not yet have a license that allows independent practice must be supervised by a licensed independent practitioner of the same discipline who is a VA staff member and who has access to the electronic health record.
 - (c) Different states have different levels of licensure or certification, making it difficult for VHA staff to determine the independent practice level. Each state, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia completed surveys identifying the level of licensure or certification allowing independent practice. Copies of the surveys are on file in the VHA Office of Care Management and Social Work Services, and a summary spreadsheet of the levels of licensure or certification is available to social work professional standards board members for purposes of determining whether the social worker's level of licensure or certification meets the VHA qualification standards. All states except California use a series of licensure exams administered by the ASWB. Information can be found at <https://www.aswb.org/>. The ASWB is the association of boards that regulates social work. ASWB develops and maintains the social work licensing examination used across the country and is a central resource for information on the legal regulation of social work. The ASWB offers three examinations. The master's examination is generally used by states for the independent practice level of licensure or certification, while the advanced generalist and the clinical examinations are used for the advanced practice level of licensure or certification. Differences between the master's and the advanced exams demonstrate the expectation that advanced practice social workers will have a more sophisticated knowledge of practice theory and its application.
- (2) **Failure to Obtain License or Certification.** In all cases, social workers must actively pursue meeting state prerequisites for licensure or certification starting from the date of their appointment. Failure to become licensed or certified within the prescribed amount of time will result in removal from the GS-0185 social worker series and may result in termination of employment.
- (3) **Loss of Licensure or Certification.** Once licensed or certified, social workers must maintain a full, valid, and unrestricted independent license or certification to remain qualified for employment. Loss of licensure or certification will result in removal from the GS-0185 social worker series and may result in termination of employment.
- d. **Grandfathering Provision.** The following is the standard grandfathering policy for all title 38 hybrid qualification standards. Please carefully review the qualification standard to determine the specific education and/or licensure/certification/registration requirements that apply to this occupation.

- (1) All persons employed in VHA in this occupation on the effective date of this qualification standard are considered to have met all qualification requirements for the title, series and grade held, including positive education and licensure or certification that are part of the basic requirements of the occupation. For employees who do not meet all of the basic requirements in this standard, but who met the qualifications applicable to the position at the time they were appointed to it, the following provisions apply:
- (2) Such employees in an occupation that requires a licensure or certification, may be reassigned, promoted up to and including the full performance (journey) level, or changed to lower grade within the occupation, but may not be promoted beyond the journey level or placed in supervisory or managerial positions.
- (3) Employees who are appointed on a temporary basis prior to the effective date of the qualification standard may not have their temporary appointment extended or be reappointed, on a temporary or permanent basis, until they fully meet the basic requirements of the standard.
- (4) Employees initially grandfathered into this occupation, who subsequently obtain additional education and/or licensure/certification/registration that meet all of the basic requirements of this qualification standard must maintain the required credentials as a condition of employment in the occupation.
- (5) If an employee who was retained in an occupation listed in 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3) under this provision leaves that occupation, the employee loses protected status and must meet the full VA qualification standard requirements in effect at the time of reentry to the occupation.

NOTE: If social workers covered under the grandfathering provision of the 1991 Federal law regarding licensure or certification of VHA social workers leave the GS-0185 social work series, they lose the grandfathering protection. If they choose to return at a later date to the GS-0185 series, they must be licensed or certified to qualify for employment as a social worker.

- e. **Physical Requirements.** See VA Directive and Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Services.
 - f. **English Language Proficiency.** Candidates must be proficient in spoken and written English to be appointed as authorized by 38 U.S.C. § 7403(f).
- 4. GRADE DETERMINATIONS.** In addition to the basic requirements for employment, the following criteria must be met when determining the grade of candidates.
- a. **Social Worker, GS-9 []**
 - (1) **Experience, Education, and Licensure.** None beyond the basic requirements.

- (2) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
- (a) Ability to work with Veterans and family members from various socioeconomic, cultural, ethnic, educational, and other diversified backgrounds utilizing counseling skills.
 - (b) Ability to assess the psychosocial functioning and needs of Veterans and their family members, and to formulate and implement a treatment plan, identifying the Veterans problems, strengths, weaknesses, coping skills, and assistance needed.
 - (c) Ability to implement treatment modalities in working with individuals, families, and groups to achieve treatment goals. This requires judgment and skill in utilizing supportive, problem solving, or crisis intervention techniques.
 - (d) Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships and communicate with clients, staff, and representatives of community agencies.
 - (e) Fundamental knowledge of medical and mental health diagnoses, disabilities, and treatment procedures. This includes acute, chronic, and traumatic illnesses/injuries; common medications and their effects/side effects; and medical terminology.
- (3) **[Entry Level] Assignments.** Individuals assigned as GS-9 grade level social workers are considered to be at the entry level and are closely supervised, as they are not yet functioning at the independent practice level conferred by independent licensure or certification. Social workers at the GS-9 entry level are typically assigned to program areas that do not require specialized knowledge or experience. Duties may include but are not limited to: identifying behaviors or symptoms of abuse, neglect or exploitation; providing education on advance directives and advanced care planning; providing social work case management; acting as an advocate with appropriate VA and community service providers/agencies when it serves the best interest of the Veteran and family members/caregiver; assessing the psychosocial functioning and needs of Veterans and their family members identifying the Veteran's strengths, weaknesses, coping skills and psychosocial acuity, in collaboration with the Veteran, family, and interdisciplinary treatment teams; maintaining a current network of internal and external resources to educate the Veteran and/or family members/caregivers and assist with the appropriate referrals. Since social workers at this level are not practicing at an independent level, they should not be assigned to program areas where independent practice is required, such as in a CBOC, unless there is a licensed social worker in the program area who can provide supervision for practice. GS-9 social workers provide psychosocial services in the assigned area under supervision.

b. Social Worker, GS-11 []

- (1) **Experience and Licensure.** Appointment to the GS-11 grade level requires completion of a minimum of one year of post-MSW experience equivalent to the GS-9 grade level in the field of health care or other social work-related settings, (VA or non-

VA experience) and licensure or certification in a state at the independent practice level.

NOTE: For appointment licensure or certification at this level please refer to paragraph 3c.

OR

- (2) **Education.** In addition to meeting basic requirements, a doctoral degree in social work from a school of social work may be substituted for the required one year of professional social work experience in a clinical setting.
- (3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, candidates must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Knowledge of community resources, how to make appropriate referrals to community and other governmental agencies for services, and ability to coordinate services.
 - (b) Skill in independently conducting psychosocial assessments and treatment interventions to a wide variety of individuals from various socio-economic, cultural, ethnic, educational and other diversified backgrounds.
 - (c) Knowledge of medical and mental health diagnoses, disabilities and treatment procedures (i.e. acute, chronic and traumatic illnesses/injuries, common medications and their effects/side effects, and medical terminology) to formulate a treatment plan.
 - (d) Skill in independently implementing different treatment modalities in working with individuals, families, and groups who are experiencing a variety of psychiatric, medical, and social problems to achieve treatment goals.
 - (e) Ability to provide consultation services to new social workers, social work graduate students, and other staff about the psychosocial needs of patients and the impact of psychosocial problems on health care and compliance with treatment.
- (4) **[Full Performance Level] Assignments.** This is the full performance level. Social workers at this level are licensed or certified to independently practice social work. Incumbents are assigned to all program areas, including but not limited to: inpatient or outpatient medicine, surgery, mental health, neurology, rehabilitation medicine, and geriatrics. Employees provide professional, independent social work services in the assigned area. Duties include but are not limited to: assessing and documenting identified behaviors or symptoms of abuse, neglect, exploitation and/or intimate partner violence; use of clinical social work skills and knowledge to maintain Veteran privacy and confidentiality per policies, handbooks or directives; and acts as an advocate with appropriate VA and community service providers and agencies when it serves the best interest of the Veteran and family members/caregiver. Incumbent independently assesses the psychosocial functioning and needs of Veterans and their family members, identifying the Veteran's strengths, weaknesses, coping skills, and

psychosocial acuity. In collaboration with the Veteran, family/caregiver, and interdisciplinary treatment team, the social worker facilitates the delivery of health care services. The social worker identifies family/caregiver stressors, conducts assessment and provides specific interventions. The incumbent provides case management and care coordination to facilitate appropriate delivery of health care services, incorporates complex multiple causation in differential diagnosis and treatment of Veterans, including making psychosocial and psychiatric diagnoses within approved clinical privileges or scope of practice. The social worker links the Veteran with services, resources, and opportunities, in order to maximize the Veteran's independence, health, and well-being. The social worker conducts timely assessment of at-risk Veterans in crisis to identify immediate needs, evaluate risk, and initiate safety plan as appropriate. The social worker provides interventions independently with Veterans and their families/caregivers who are experiencing a wide range of complicated medical, behavioral health, financial, legal, and psychosocial problems. They provide a range of interventions and treatment modalities which may include individual, group, and/or family counseling or psychotherapy. They independently formulate and implement a treatment plan including measurable, achievable goals identifying the Veterans' needs, strengths, weaknesses, coping skills, and psychosocial acuity. Social workers serve on committees, work groups, and task forces at the facility and VISN level or in the community. They provide subject matter consultation to colleagues and students on the psychosocial treatment of Veterans offering professional opinions based on experience, expertise and role modeling effective social work practice skills. The social worker establishes and maintains ongoing education programs for Veterans, community agencies, students, and staff, to facilitate understanding of social work interventions specific to the Veteran/Military population.

c. Senior Social Worker, GS-12

- (1) **Experience/Education.** The candidate must have at least two years of experience post advanced practice clinical licensure and should be in a specialized area of social work practice of which, one year must be equivalent to the GS-11 grade level. Senior social workers have experience that demonstrates possession of advanced practice skills and judgment. Senior social workers are experts in their specialized area of practice. Senior social workers may have certification or other post-masters training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship or equivalent supervised professional experience in a specialty.
- (2) **Licensure/Certification.** Senior social workers must be licensed or certified by a state at the advanced practice level which included an advanced generalist or clinical examination, unless they are grandfathered by the state in which they are licensed to practice at the advanced practice level (except for licenses issued in California, which administers its own clinical examination for advanced practice) and they must be able to provide supervision for licensure.
- (3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, candidates must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:

- (a) Skill in a range of specialized interventions and treatment modalities used in specialty treatment programs or with special patient populations. This includes individual, group, and/or family counseling or psychotherapy and advanced level psychosocial and/or case management.
 - (b) Ability to incorporate complex multiple causation in differential diagnosis and treatment within approved clinical privileges or scope of practice.
 - (c) Knowledge in developing and implementing methods for measuring effectiveness of social work practice and services in the specialty area, utilizing outcome evaluations to improve treatment services and to design system changes.
 - (d) Ability to provide specialized consultation to colleagues and students on the psychosocial treatment of patients in the service delivery area, as well as role modeling effective social work practice skills.
 - (e) Ability to expand clinical knowledge in the social work profession, and to write policies, procedures, and/or practice guidelines pertaining to the service delivery area.
- (4) **Assignments.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Senior social workers are licensed or certified to independently practice social work at an advanced level. Senior social workers typically practice in a major program area such as but not limited to: Polytrauma Rehabilitation Center or Polytrauma Network Site; a Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Center, or a national VHA referral center, such as a national Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or a national Transplant Center, or other program areas of equivalent scope and complexity. The senior social worker may be assigned administrative responsibility for clinical program development and is accountable for clinical program effectiveness and modification of service patterns. Assignments include clinical settings where they have limited access to onsite supervision such as CBOCs or satellite outpatient clinics. The senior social worker collaborates with the other members of the treatment team in the provision of comprehensive health care services to Veterans, ensures equity of access, service, and benefits to this population, ensures the care provided is of the highest quality. The senior social worker provides leadership, direction, orientation, coaching, in-service training, staff development, and continuing education programs for assigned social work staff. They serve on committees, work groups, and task forces at the facility, VISN and national level, or in the community as deemed appropriate by the supervisor, Social Work Executive or Chief of Social Work Services. This assignment is to be relatively few in number based on the size of the facility/service and applying sound position management. This assignment must represent substantial additional responsibility over and above that required at the full performance grade level and cannot be used as the full performance level of this occupation.

[d. **Social Worker (Research), GS-12**

- (1) **Experience and/or Education.** One year of experience equivalent to the GS-11 grade level. Experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills in administration, demonstrating progressively more professional competency skills and judgment. The candidate may have a certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience.
- (2) **Licensure/Certification.** The social worker performing research must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure.
- (3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Ability to implement social work research methodology, health services research, and the peer review processes in the preparation of study proposals meeting the guidelines of various funding agencies.
 - (b) Ability to formulate a research study, from conceptualization of the research problem through the implementation, analysis, interpretation, and reporting phases.
 - (c) Skill in the use of computer input and analysis of social science data including the use of statistical packages.
 - (d) Knowledge of the principles of scientific reporting for publications in peer reviewed journals and for presentation at scientific and professional meetings.
 - (e) Ability to develop realistic goals and objectives, translate management needs, and concerns into operational terms that can be subjected to empirical study and analysis, and communicate the results in both verbal and written form.
 - (f) Knowledge of current and standard literature in disciplinary field and literature sources, including VA reporting requirements, recurring and non-recurring statistical reports, as well as computer files, forms, and procedures created to support them.
 - (g) Skill in the critical review and synthesizing of large amounts of information into cogent presentations, translating management needs and concerns into operational terms that can be subjected to empirical study and analysis.
 - (h) Knowledge in preparing research project budgets, using VA guidelines in the management of funds, monitoring and evaluating the appropriateness of research funding requests in coordination with Fiscal Service and the R&D Administrative Officer.
- (4) **Assignments.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be

performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Social workers in this assignment are responsible for social work-related research and management information activities. They are responsible for identifying, initiating, developing, conducting, and testing hypotheses related to the operational efficiency and effectiveness of social work at the facility level. They serve as an expert consultant to health services researchers throughout the facility in their disciplinary area of expertise. Research social workers provide hospital-wide research technical support to other offices such as the Associate Chief of Staff (ACOS) for Research and Development and the ACOS for Education. They are responsible for planning, implementing, and consulting on joint social work and inter-disciplinary research projects conducted through the auspices of affiliated academic institutions. They identify deficits in information regarding optimum delivery of social work services relating to both patients and the health care delivery system. The research social worker develops proposals to address identified social problems, the execution of research projects, analysis of the results, and their dissemination to improve the effectiveness and organizational efficiency of social work service and the medical center it supports. They work independently and in collaboration with other health services research scientists to formulate and conduct research projects related to their disciplinary field. Duties include but are not limited to: consulting and assisting VA health services researchers in the integration of theoretical concepts and applied research issues; advising and assisting VA health services researchers in the selection and application of appropriate analytic methods and statistical procedures for projects involving their area of expertise; preparing and submitting scientific articles and research reports to journals, publication and professional meetings; participating in the scientific review and critique of health services research proposals; and serving on medical center research related committees as appointed (i.e., Research and Development committee, Animal Care and Use Committee and Human Studies Sub-committee). With direction from the social work chief/executive and other medical center leaders, the incumbent coordinates, assesses, and develops data elements, information systems, and reports that address the reporting requirements and information needs of social work service. The research social worker participates in the needs assessments and the development of program evaluation projects that address the department needs. They determine research project staffing needs. They submit complete progress and final reports to fulfill specified reporting requirements. Responsibilities may include clinical social work duties in patient care areas.]

d. **Supervisory Social Worker, GS-12 []**

- (1) **Education and Experience.** One year of experience equivalent to the GS-11 grade level. Experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills in a specialty area or in administration demonstrating progressively more professional competency and judgment. Candidate may have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience.

(2) **Licensure/Certification.** Individuals assigned as Supervisory Social Workers must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure.

[(3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:

(a) Ability to independently organize work, set priorities, and meet multiple deadlines.

(b) Knowledge of supervisory duties which includes clinical supervision, consultation, negotiation with other departments and quality improvement.

(c) Ability to ensure provision of clinical social work services.

(d) Ability to provide staff training and development.

(e) Skill in interpersonal relationships in dealing with employees, team leaders, and managers.

(4) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. At the GS-12 grade level, supervisory social workers typically have significant personnel management responsibilities for a small to moderate sized professional and non-professional staff, including support staff and professional staff at the GS-12 grade level and below. The supervisory social worker is responsible for the professional and administrative management of an area in a social work service, in a care/product line, or multiple facilities. They provide direct clinical services with or without program coordination responsibilities.]

f. **Social Worker (Program Coordinator), GS-12**

(1) **Experience and Education.** One year of experience equivalent to the GS-11 grade level. Experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills and judgment, demonstrating progressively more professional competency. Candidate may have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience.

(2) **Licensure/Certification.** Individuals assigned as social worker program coordinator must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure.

[(3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:

- (a) Knowledge of program coordination and administration which includes consultation, negotiation, and monitoring.
 - (b) Knowledge and ability to write policies, procedures, and/or practice guidelines for the program.
 - (c) Ability to supervise multidisciplinary staff assigned to the program.
 - (d) Skill in organizing work, setting priorities, meeting multiple deadlines, and evaluating assigned program area(s).
 - (e) Ability to provide training, orientation, and guidance within clinical practice.
- (4) **Assignments.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Program coordinators at the GS-12 grade level are administratively responsible for a clinical program providing treatment to Veterans in a major specialty area, such as but not limited to: Spinal Cord Injury, Homeless Continuum Veteran Program, Hospice and Palliative Care Program, Suicide Prevention Program, Veterans Justice Outreach, Caregiver Support Program and Community Nursing Home Program. The program coordinator may be the sole practitioner in this specialty at the facility and typically provide direct patient care services in the program area. The program coordinator oversees the daily operation of the program, develop policies and procedures for program operation, and prepare reports and statistics for facility, VISN, and national use. They may be responsible for the program's budget, developing and monitoring staff compliance with practice, standards and guidelines on documentation, workload, data entry, ethical practice and service delivery. The program coordinator provides analysis and evaluation of clinical program data and computerized programs to identify system-wide trends and needs to enhance the quality of service. They may be responsible for, or contribute to, the program's resource and fiscal management, monitoring control points developing the annual budget, operating within that budget, and accounting for appropriated funds. The program coordinator is administratively responsible for the clinical programming and prepares reports and statistics for facility, VISN, and national use. They provide leadership, direction, orientation, coaching, in-service training, staff development, and continuing education programs for assigned staff. They initiate and conduct a variety of program or service audits and complete designated clinical practice audits and reports, including productivity assessments. They oversee program operations and evaluations, identifying areas for improvement, gathering relevant data, assessing the data, developing and implementing ideas for improvement and evaluating efficacy of improvement efforts.]

g. Social Worker (Assistant Chief), GS-12 []

- (1) **Experience/Education.** Individuals assigned as assistant service chiefs must have the equivalent of at least one year of creditable experience comparable to the GS-11 grade level. The assistant service chief must evidence possession of supervisory

and management skills. Experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills in administration, demonstrating progressively more professional competency skills and judgment. Candidates may have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience.

(2) **Licensure/Certification.** Individual must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure.

[(3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:

(a) Knowledge of administrative and supervisory duties, which includes personnel actions, clinical supervision, consultation, negotiation with other departments, and quality improvement.

(b) Knowledge of legal, ethical, and professional standards applicable to social work practice.

(c) Ability to develop, maintain, and oversee social work programs in all settings. This includes identifying needs for social work assessment, evaluation, and treatment; determining priority needs for social work services; and recommending adjustments to staffing levels accordingly.

(d) Demonstrated global knowledge of social work practice in health care and mental health settings including resources, and the policies and procedures pertaining to home and community-based care, acute care, ambulatory care, long term care, performance measures, and clinical guidelines.

(e) Ability to provide consultation to care line managers and other staff on social work qualification standards, social work practice, social work competency, social work productivity, and social work continuing education.

(f) Ability to provide supervision for social work licensure and practice supervision for facility social workers.

(4) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. This position is restricted to those serving as a full assistant to the chief social work service for both administrative and professional practice. At the GS-12 grade level, individuals are typically assigned as an assistant chief of a small to moderately complex social work service within the organization. While the chief has full management and supervisory responsibility for clinical practice, program management, education, human resource management and supervision, and organizational stewardship for the social work program, the assistant chief is responsible for supporting these functions per the direction of the chief. In the absence of the social work chief, the assistant chief has full management and

supervisory responsibility of the social work program. Such facilities may offer specialty care and services and may be affiliated with academic institutions. Typically, there are no subordinate supervisory social workers at the facility.]

h. Social Worker (Research), GS-13 []

- (1) **Experience/Education.** One year of experience equivalent to the GS-12 grade level. Experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills in administration, demonstrating progressively more professional competency skills and judgment. Individual may have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience.
- (2) **Licensure/Certification.** The social worker performing research must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure.
- (3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Knowledge of social work research concerns, health services research, peer review processes, and experience in the preparation of study proposals meeting the guidelines of various funding agencies.
 - (b) Knowledge of the processes involved in formulating a research study, from conceptualization of the research problem through the implementation, analysis, interpretation and reporting phases; various types of needs assessments, their purpose, execution and interpretation to develop realistic goals and objectives.
 - (c) Skill in the use of computer input and analysis of social science data including the use of statistical packages.
 - (d) Knowledge of the principles of scientific reporting for publications in peer reviewed journals and for presentation at scientific and professional meetings.
 - (e) Ability to function as principal investigator and as a team leader in conducting health services research, communicate verbally and in writing with a wide variety of facility level clinical and administrative staff, and communicate results in both verbal and written form.
 - (f) Skill in communicating verbally and in writing with a wide variety of clinical and administrative staff on the VISN and national levels, and to critically review and synthesize large amounts of information into cogent presentations.
 - (g) Knowledge in preparing and managing research project budgets, using VA guidelines in the management of funds, monitoring and evaluating the appropriateness of research funding requests in coordination with national VHA fiscal and administrative requirements.

[(4) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. The research social worker serves as a subject matter expert to leadership at the VISN and national levels, for social work-related research and management information activities. They are responsible for identifying, initiating, developing, conducting, and testing hypotheses related to the operation efficiency and effectiveness of projects assigned at the VISN and national levels of the Veteran Health Administration. The research social worker serves as an expert consultant to health services researchers throughout the VA system in their disciplinary area of expertise. They provide VISN level and national research technical support to national program offices such as, but not limited to: Care Management and Social Work Services, Primary Care, Geriatrics and Extended Care, Office of Academic Affiliations, Homeless and Mental Health. They are responsible for planning, implementing, and consulting on national joint social work and inter-disciplinary research projects conducted through the auspices of affiliated academic institutions. The research social worker identifies deficits in information regarding optimum service delivery relating to both patients and the health care delivery system. They develop proposals to address identified system wide psychosocial and health care problems, the execution of research projects, analysis of the results, and their dissemination to improve the effectiveness and organizational efficiency of social work service and the greater health care system. The research social worker works independently and in collaboration with other health services research scientists to formulate and conduct research projects related to their disciplinary field. Duties include but are not limited to: consulting and assisting other VA health services researchers on a VISN and national level in the integration of theoretical concepts and applied research issues; advising and assisting VA health services researchers in the selection and application of appropriate analytic methods and statistical procedures for projects involving their area of expertise; preparing and submitting scientific articles and research reports to journals, publication and professional meetings; participating in the scientific review and critique of health services research proposals; and serving on medical center research related committees as appointed (i.e., Research and Development Committee, Animal Care and Use Committee and Human Studies Sub-committee). They coordinate, assess, and develop data elements, information systems, and reports that address national reporting requirements and information needs of program offices on the VISN and national levels. The research social worker participates in needs assessments, to include staffing needs and the development of program evaluation projects at the VISN and national level. Submits reports to fulfill specified reporting requirements. Responsibilities may include clinical social work duties in patient care areas as research projects permit.]

i. **Supervisory Social Worker, GS-13**

(1) **Experience/Education.** One year of experience equivalent to the GS-12 grade level. Experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills in a specialty area or in administration demonstrating progressively more professional competency and judgment. Candidate may have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university

that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience.

- (2) **Licensure/Certification.** Individuals assigned as supervisory social workers must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure.
- [(3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
- (a) Ability to independently organize work, set priorities, and meet multiple deadlines.
 - (b) Skill in a range of supervisory duties which includes clinical supervision, consultation, negotiation with other departments and quality improvement.
 - (c) Ability to ensure provision of clinical social work services by supervised social workers.
 - (d) Ability to delegate authority, manage priorities, coordinate work, and follow up on pending issues to complete duties in an accurate and timely fashion.
 - (e) Ability to analyze organizational and operational problems, develop and implement solutions that result in efficient operations, and use data effectively to manage workload, quality, performance, and productivity within the service.
 - (f) Ability to provide staff training and development.
- (4) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Supervisory social workers at the GS-13 grade level typically supervise professional and non-professional staff. They are responsible for the professional and administrative management of an area in a social work service, in a care/product line, or across multiple sites, (e.g., multi-division facilities and CBOCs). Incumbent may also provide direct clinical services.]

j. **Social Worker (Program Coordinator), GS-13 []**

- (1) **Experience/Education.** One year of experience equivalent to the GS-12 grade level. Experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills and judgment, demonstrating progressively more professional competency. Candidates may have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience.
- (2) **Licensure/Certification.** Individuals assigned as social worker program coordinator must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure.

- [(3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs.
- (a) Skill in coordinating and implementing one or more specialty program(s), across the facility.
 - (b) Skill in local policy and practice development, procedures, and/or practice guidelines for the program as prescribed by the program handbook or national directive.
 - (c) Skill in organizing work, setting priorities, meeting multiple deadlines, and evaluating assigned program area(s).
 - (d) Ability to collaborate with internal and external partners to further program goals and enhance patient centered care.
 - (e) Ability to provide the full range of supervisory duties including assignment of work to be performed; performance evaluations; and selection of staff, training, and recommendation of awards, advancements, and when appropriate, disciplinary action.
 - (f) Ability to oversee the fiscal matters of the functions supervised (including fund controls, contracts, and equipment expenditures), forecast resource and equipment needs, and administer the allocated budget.
 - (g) Knowledge of organizational structure and impact on program operations.
- (4) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. At this grade level, social worker program coordinators oversee the administrative and clinical aspects of a major specialty treatment program, such as, but not limited to: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Substance Abuse Treatment Program, Home-Based Primary Care, Mental Health Intensive Case Management, Caregiver Support Program or Transition and Care Management Program, or a combination of programs located at one facility or multiple divisions of a facility. They are responsible for coordinating interdisciplinary staffing, work assignments, budget, treatment services provided, and admission criteria for the program. The program coordinator may or may not have supervisory responsibilities. They have full responsibility for all phases of service delivery for a major specialty program. The program coordinator is responsible for the program's resource and fiscal management, monitoring control points developing the annual budget, operating within that budget, and accounting for appropriated funds. They are administratively responsible for the programming and operations of the program assigned, develop policies and procedures for program operation, and prepare reports and statistics for facility, VISN, and national use. Program coordinators provide leadership, direction, orientation, coaching, in-service training, staff development, and continuing education programs for assigned staff. They initiate and conduct program or service audits and complete designated clinical practice

audits and reports, including productivity. Program coordinators oversee program operations and evaluations, identifying areas for improvement, gathering relevant data, assessing the data, developing and implementing ideas for improvement, and evaluating efficacy of improvement efforts.]

k. **Social Worker (Assistant Chief), GS-13 [**

- (1) **Experience and Education.** One year of experience equivalent to the GS-12 grade level. Experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills in administration, demonstrating progressively more professional competency skills and judgment. Individual may have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience.
- (2) **Licensure/Certification.** The assistant service chief must evidence possession of supervisory and management skills, must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure.
- [(3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Knowledge of administrative and supervisory duties which includes personnel actions, clinical supervision, consultation, negotiation with other departments, and quality improvement.
 - (b) Knowledge of legal, ethical, and professional standards applicable to social work practice.
 - (c) Ability to develop, maintain, and oversee social work programs in all settings.
 - (d) Knowledge of social work practice, policy, and accreditation standards across the continuum of health care.
 - (e) Skill in providing consultation to facility leadership, managers, and other staff on social work qualification standards, practice, competency, productivity, and continuing education requirements.
- (4) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. This position is restricted to those serving as a full assistant to the chief social work service for both administrative and professional practice. These individuals share with the chief full responsibility for managing and supervising all aspects of social work service operations. At the GS-13 grade level, individuals are typically assigned as assistant chief of a large complex social work service within the organization that offers social work services at VHA facilities with one or more divisions. While the chief has full management and supervisory responsibility for clinical practice, program management, education,

human resource management and supervision, and organizational stewardship for the social work program, the assistant chief is responsible for supporting these functions per the direction of the chief. In the absence of the social work chief, the assistant chief has full management and supervisory responsibility for the social work program. The assistant chief provides supervision to a moderate social work service and staff, members of different grades that may include multiple disciplines; treatment sites are limited and in close proximity to the medical center, and programs are with limited administrative oversight responsibility. Such facilities may offer specialty care and services and may be affiliated with academic institutions. The assistant chief develops and maintains a system of internal reviews that ensure service programs operate at a satisfactory level of performance and are in compliance with regulations. The assistant chief has responsibility for utilization of resources and budget. They make selections, assign personnel, and serve as a mentor to help employees develop their full potential.]

I. **Social Worker (Service Chief), GS-13 []**

- (1) **Experience/Education.** One year of experience equivalent to the GS-12 grade level. The chief social work service must evidence possession of supervisory and management skills. Experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills in administration demonstrating progressively more professional competency skills and judgment. May have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience.
- (2) **Licensure/Certification.** Individual must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure.
- [(3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, candidates must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Skill in administrative and supervisory duties which includes personnel actions, clinical supervision, consultation, negotiation with other departments, and quality improvement.
 - (b) Skill in applying legal, ethical, and professional standards applicable to social work practice.
 - (c) Skill in developing, maintaining, and managing social work services in all settings.
 - (d) Ability to ensure compliance with social work practice, policy, and accreditation standards across the continuum of health care.
 - (e) Skill in providing consultation to facility leadership, managers, and other staff on social work qualification standards, practice, competency, productivity, and continuing education requirements.

(4) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. The chief social work at this level typically has responsibility for management of small to moderately complex social work service within the organization. The chief social work service is the highest level professional position at the facility with responsibility for the professional practice of all facility social workers and provision of social work services. The chief social work provides supervision to social work service staff members of different grades. Supervision may include multiple disciplines, treatment sites that are limited and in close proximity to the medical center, and programs are with limited administrative oversight responsibility. The chief social work has full responsibility for managing and supervising all aspects of social work service operations including clinical practice, program management, education, human resource management and supervision of the service.]

m. **Social Work Executive, GS-13**

(1) **Experience/Education.** One year of experience equivalent to the GS-12 grade level. social work executive positions are only established at facilities that do not have a chief social work service. In facilities with care/product lines, the social work executive is the highest level professional position at the facility with responsibility for the professional practice of all facility social workers and provision of social work services. The social work executive must evidence possession of supervisory and management skills. Experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills in administration, demonstrating progressively more professional competency skills and judgment. Candidates may have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience.

(2) **Licensure/Certification.** The social work executive must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure.

[(3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:

- (a) Ability to provide technical social work guidance in order to complete job assignments.
- (b) Skill in applying legal, ethical, and professional standards to social work practice.
- (c) Knowledge of social work practice, policy, and accreditation standards across the continuum of health care.
- (d) Skill in providing consultation to facility leadership, care/product line managers, and other staff on social work qualification standards, practice, competency, productivity, and continuing education requirements.

- (e) Skill in developing, implementing, and maintaining clinical social work practice standards.
 - (f) Skill in administrative oversight to ensure compliance with social work licensure requirements.
- (4) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. In the absence of a facility social work chief, the social work executive is typically responsible for clinical oversight of a professional social work practice in a small to moderate program at a VHA facility. The social work executive is responsible for overseeing the provision of social work services and the professional practice of all facility social workers to include participation in the selection and credentialing of social workers. Additionally, these are generally collateral assignments, determined by the needs of the local facility, the VISN, and/or VHA Central Office.]

n. **Social Worker (Program Manager) [], GS-14**

- (1) **Experience and Education.** One year of experience equivalent to the GS- 13 grade level. Experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills and judgment, demonstrating progressively more professional competency. Individual may have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience.
- (2) **Licensure/Certification.** Individuals assigned as social worker program manager must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure.
- [(3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all the following KSAs:
 - (a) Skill in large scale program coordination and administration across multiple sites, which includes consultation, negotiation, and monitoring.
 - (b) Ability to translate management goals and objectives into well-coordinated and controlled work operations.
 - (c) Ability to analyze organizational and operational problems and to develop and implement solutions that result in sound operation of the program.
 - (d) Ability to collaborate with internal and external partners to further program goals and enhance patient centered care.
 - (e) Ability to provide the full range of supervisory duties which would include responsibility for assignment of work to be performed; performance evaluations;

selection of staff, training, and recommendation of awards, advancements, and when appropriate, disciplinary action.

- (f) Ability to oversee the fiscal matters of the functions supervised (including fund controls, contracts, and equipment expenditures), forecast resource and equipment needs, and administer the allocated budget.
 - (g) Skill in developing policies, procedures, and/or practice guidelines for the program and in participating in national program development.
 - (h) Ability to collaborate with internal VHA partners, locally and on a national level, as well as external community partners to further program goals and enhance patient centered care.
- (4) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. At the GS-14 grade level, social worker program managers are assigned to manage, direct, and oversee a major specialty program(s) at the facility, VISN or VA Central Office level. As the facility level program manager, typical assignments include serving as a care/product line manager. Program managers may have responsibility for staffing, work assignments, budget, services provided, program criteria, day-to-day program operations, and all reporting requirements. Additionally, program managers at this grade generally have collateral assignments, determined by the needs of the local facility. The program manager provides analysis and evaluation of program data and computerized programs to identify system-wide trends and needs to enhance the quality of service. They develop and monitor staff compliance with practice, standards and guidelines. As the VISN level program manager, typical assignments include overseeing a VISN level program. The program manager serves as consultant to facilities in matters of program operations. They develop and monitor facility compliance with practice, standards, and guidelines across the VISN. The program manager reviews program status with facility leadership. Additionally, program managers at this grade generally have collateral assignments, determined by the needs of the VISN. The VISN program manager provides analysis and evaluation of program data and computerized programs to identify system-wide trends and needs to enhance the quality of service. As the national level program manager, typical assignments include supporting implementation of a national program. The national program manager reports to senior executive service equivalent or GS-15 grade level national program director. They may have responsibility for staffing, work assignments, budget, services provided, day-to-day program operations, and all reporting requirements. Program manager responsibilities also include developing and serving as a subject matter expert for program specific policy and regulations and interface with congressional representatives. Program managers at this grade generally have collateral assignments determined by the needs of VHA Central Office. The national program manager provides analysis and evaluation of program data and computerized programs to identify system-wide trends and needs to enhance the quality of service. They develop and monitor staff compliance with program standards, guidelines, and

service delivery. They develop and implement national training programs for internal and external partners. Program managers are responsible for ensuring program development, management, and evaluation that includes assessing the mission, goals, and programs of the organization in terms of psychosocial needs of Veterans, their families, and caregivers and establishing objectives consistent with organizational goals.]

o. Social Worker (Service Chief) [], GS-14

- (1) **Experience/Education.** One year of experience equivalent to the GS-13 grade level. The chief social work service must evidence possession of supervisory and management skills. Experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills in administration, demonstrating progressively more professional competency skills and judgment. May have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience.
- (2) **Licensure/Certification.** The chief social worker must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure.
- [(3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Skill in providing the full range of supervisory duties across multiple service divisions/sections, which would include responsibility for assignment of work to be performed, performance evaluation, selection of staff, and recommendations of awards, advancements, and when appropriate, disciplinary actions.
 - (b) Skill in applying legal, ethical, and professional standards to social work practice.
 - (c) Skill in developing, maintaining, and managing social work services in multiple divisions/sections.
 - (d) Ability to ensure compliance with social work practice, policy, and accreditation standards across the continuum of health care.
 - (e) Skill in providing consultation to facility leadership, managers, and other staff on social work qualification standards, practice, competency, productivity, and continuing education requirements
 - (f) Skill in administrative oversight to ensure compliance with social work licensure requirements.
- (4) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. At the GS-14 grade level, size, scope, significance and impact are greater than the GS-13 grade level. The

chief social worker responsibility includes management of large, complex, social work services within the organization. The chief social worker is the highest level professional position at the facility with responsibility for the professional practice of all facility social workers and provision of social work services. The chief social worker provides supervision to social work service, with multiple sections or programs across the health care delivery system as well as an assistant chief and supervisors. Social work service includes staff members of different grades, as well as multiple disciplines, various treatment sites and at locations close to and distant from the medical center. The chief social worker has full responsibility for managing and supervising all aspects of social work service operations including clinical practice, program management, education, human resource management and supervision of the service.]

p. **Social Work Executive, GS-14**

- (1) **Experience/Education.** One year of experience equivalent to the GS-13 grade level. Social work executive positions are only established at facilities that do not have a chief social work service. In facilities with care/product lines, the social work executive is the highest level professional position at the facility with responsibility for the professional practice of all facility social workers and provision of social work services. Social work executive must evidence possession of supervisory and management skills. Experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills in administration, demonstrating progressively more professional competency skills and judgment. Individual may have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience.
- (2) **Licensure/Certification.** The social work executive must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure.
- [(3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, candidates must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
 - (a) Skill in providing technical social work guidance in order to complete job assignments in multiple divisions/sections.
 - (b) Skill in applying legal, ethical, and professional standards to social work practice.
 - (c) Knowledge of social work practice, policy, and accreditation standards across the continuum of health care.
 - (d) Skill in providing consultation to facility leadership, care/product line managers, and other staff on social work qualification standards, practice, competency, productivity, and continuing education requirements.
 - (e) Skill in developing, implementing, and maintaining clinical social work practice standards in multiple divisions/sections.

(f) Skill in administrative oversight to ensure compliance with social work licensure requirements.

(4) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. At the GS-14 grade level the size, scope, significance, and impact are greater than at the GS-13 social work executive level. In the absence of a social work chief, GS-14, grade level, the social work executive is typically responsible for clinical oversight of a professional social work practice in a large program at a VHA facility. Social work executive is typically assigned to a care/product line management role at a VHA facility and has responsibility for overseeing the practice of social workers in the facility or of social workers in multiple divisions of a VHA facility. The GS-14 social work executive is responsible for overseeing the professional practice of all facility social workers and provision of social work services the professional practice of all facility social workers to include participation in the selection and credentialing of social workers. The position usually includes a management role, such as a care/product line manager/administrator.]

q. **Social Worker (National Program Director) [], GS-15**

- (1) **Experience/Education.** The national program director must have at least four years of experience as a VA clinical social worker with at least one-year equivalent to the GS-14 grade level, and evidence of at least two years of supervisory and management experience. Experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills in administration, demonstrating professional competency, skills and judgment including knowledge of the VHA System and operations. Individual may have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience.
- (2) **Licensure/Certification.** Individual must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure.
- (3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
- (a) Ability to lead a large, diverse group of clinical and administrative professionals to facilitate collaboration, and individual and organizational development.
 - (b) Knowledge of Department Level communication protocols to effectively communicate the program specific information, including regulatory changes and policies to VHA leadership, VA staff and community partners.
 - (c) Skill in advising high level officials in adoption of, and conformance to, performance measures, monitors, and other policy guidelines related to specific

- program areas; setting policy for national program(s) and directing VHA staff in the monitoring, assessment, and implementation of national program(s) throughout VHA.
- (d) Ability to develop education/training initiatives in concert with clinical and education officials; monitor key activities in program(s) and projects for timeliness, accomplishment of key milestones, and support of overall objectives outlined in directives and other publications of a specific program area.
 - (e) Ability to develop and sustain strategic partnerships with key internal and external VA stakeholders and community partners on a national level.
 - (f) Skill in providing technical consultation and support for various projects and special initiatives, including responses to Congressional inquiries; developing high level briefing papers to convey findings and VHA program positions.
 - (g) Ability to develop and maintain national program databases to track program data and trends across VHA.
 - (h) Ability to respond to inquiries from within the Department, the Administration, Congress, Office of Management and Budget, the Government Accountability Office, and others as appropriate.
- [(4) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. The national director position is characterized by the size, scope, and high level of complexity of the program; has significant impact on the VHA mission; and is of significant importance to the VA. Examples of positions may be similar to those listed under the GS-14 grade level program manager position heading, but, at the GS-15 grade level, the individual has full responsibility for the program or programs. The size, scope, significance, and impact of the programs at the GS-15 level are greater. The national program director serves as subject matter expert to VA senior leaders, including providing consultation to facility and network directors, and other VHA program offices. The national program director is responsible for all aspects of national program operations, including but not limited to managing the national program budget, responding to inquiries from within the Department, the Administration, Congress, and the Government Accountability Office. The incumbent is responsible for the development and implementation of program specific federal regulations and VHA policies impacting all of VHA and ensuring the national program meets VA mission requirements.]
- r. **Social Work Program Manager, GS-15**
- (1) **Experience/Education.** The social work program manager at the GS-15 grade level must have at least four years of experience as a VA clinical social worker with at least one-year equivalent to the GS-14 grade level. The social work program manager must evidence possession of progressively higher supervisory and

management skills. Experience must demonstrate possession of advanced practice skills in administration, demonstrating progressively more professional competency skills and judgment. The individual may have certification or other post-master's degree training from a nationally recognized professional organization or university that includes a defined curriculum/course of study and internship, or equivalent supervised professional experience.

- (2) **Licensure/Certification.** The social work manager must be licensed or certified at the advanced practice level, and must be able to provide supervision for licensure.
- (3) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs).** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must fully meet the KSAs for the GS-14 grade level and demonstrate all the following professional KSAs:
 - (a) Ability to manage and direct unusually large interdisciplinary programs, complex organizational units, apply effective management practices, plan, design, implement, and evaluate a program(s) that encompasses a wide range of facility/healthcare system/VISN/CO activities.
 - (b) Ability to oversee issues related to budget projections and participate with senior leaders from the governing body, management and staff in upholding the facility mission, vision, value and strategic plan to include directly interacting with elected officials on VA related issues/concerns (i.e., members of Congress, Veterans Service Organizations, State and Local entities).
 - (c) Knowledge in establishing policy, procedures and quality monitors while considering multiple priorities, funding sources, and varying resources.
 - (d) Skill in assessing need for basic and complex services across multiple programmatic patient care venues, coordinate and expand the efforts of multiple program elements across a complex system.
 - (e) Knowledge to complete all program evaluations and documents required by the medical center, VISN and VHA Central Office, ensuring compliance with appropriate accrediting bodies such as The Joint Commission (TJC), Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), and Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP).
 - (f) Ability to orient, teach and serve as a consultant to other medical center staff and trainees and assists in their formulation of the clinical social work characteristics and appropriate treatment expectations regarding Veterans, family members and caregivers.
 - (g) Skill in balancing responsibilities in a complex environment and to work with great autonomy, set priorities and delegate tasks, meet multiple deadlines; analyze complex organizational problems and develop and implement effective solutions for those problems.

- (h) Ability to promote and effectively manage a culturally diverse workforce which embraces the values and needs of all individuals through long-term commitment, strategic and business planning, education, experience which broadens the mindset and by fully managing human resources.

[(4) **Assignment.** For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and variety and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. At the GS-15 grade level, size, scope, significance and impact is greater than the GS-14 grade level. The broad responsibility includes management of a very large, significantly complex service within the organization. The social work program manager delivers a wide range of specialized professional services that significantly impact the health care provided to Veterans, their families, and caregivers. Provides direct oversight to services with multiple complex programs, located at multiple sites and sections across the health care delivery system. The social work program manager is typically located in a complexity level one Health Care System and is assigned as a service line director, associate chief of staff, or service chief within the facility. The service includes staff members of different grades, multiple disciplines, and various treatment sites at multiple locations close to and distant from the primary medical facility. The manager has full responsibility for managing and supervising all aspects of program operations, including clinical practice of an unusually large number of employees across multiple areas/sites, education, quality assurance for outcomes, human resource management and supervision of the extraordinarily large service. Professional staff under direct supervision may include psychiatrists, psychologists, physicians, social workers, nurses, health system specialists and patient services assistants. The social work program manager provides strategic planning, including establishment of long and short-range goals, and development of policies and procedures to ensure goal attainment management of administrative and programmatic resources (including budget and line authority within the service), and outcomes monitoring, using data-driven quality assurance processes. They may have the responsibility for managing and supervising additional facility wide programs outside of the Service including supervision, operations, clinical practice, and program management. The manager develops responses to controlled correspondence received by the Medical Center, from VISN, and VHA Central Office levels, inclusive of responding to elected representatives and the Office of Inspector General Hotline concerning Veteran care and other matters of public interest.]

5. DEVIATIONS.

- a. An approving official may, under unusual circumstances, approve reasonable deviations to the grade determination requirements for an employee whose composite record of accomplishments, performance, and qualifications, as well as current assignment, warrants such action based on demonstrated competence to meet the requirements of the proposed grade.

PART II

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- b. Under no circumstances will the educational requirements be waived. Under no circumstances will licensure requirements be waived for positions at the GS-11 grade level or above.
- c. The placement of individuals in grade levels or assignments not described in this standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health or designee in VHA Central Office prior to placement in the position.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. §§ 7402, 7403