



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Dr. Linda S. Schwartz, RN, FAAN  
Commissioner

### AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLAN

#### POLICY STATEMENT

##### Purpose and Need for Affirmative Action

"The ultimate purposes of the affirmative action program are to ensure equality at the Department of Veterans' Affairs, avoid discrimination, intentional or inadvertent, and develop a work force that is truly representative of all segments of our population.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs subscribes without reservation to these goals, recognizes the need and pledges continued strong support for affirmative action. To these ends, the agency will continue its long-standing policy of applying affirmative action criteria to all its personnel actions."

##### Distinction Between Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity

Affirmative Action is a program of positive action, undertaken with conviction and effort, designed to overcome the present effects of the past policies, practices and barriers to equal employment opportunity. It identifies, in an affirmative action plan, the causes of imbalance and achieves, through the application of aggressive, good faith effort, the full and fair participation of all persons in the work place and in all agency undertakings.

Equal Employment Opportunity means the chance to obtain employment without consideration of race, color, religious creed, age, sex, marital status, national origin, ancestry, physical disability (including blindness), past or present mental disability, sexual orientation, mental retardation, learning disability, prior conviction of a crime and genetic information. Equal Employment Opportunity is the primary purpose and goal of Affirmative Action under section 46a-68-31 of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Toward these ends, the Department of Veterans' Affairs recognizes that Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity are immediate and necessary agency objectives.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs reaffirms its commitment to the right of every person to apply and be evaluated for opportunities in all phases of the employment process solely on the basis of individual merit and qualifications. The Department of Veterans' Affairs accepts its responsibility to recruit, appoint, assign, train, evaluate and promote employees without regard for any factor that cannot lawfully serve as the basis for discussions affecting employment. The Commissioner of the Department of Veterans' Affairs assures the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities that the

Department of Veterans' Affairs will continue to take positive steps to ensure that members of protected groups are so recruited, appointed, assigned, trained, evaluated and promoted.

In addition, the Department of Veterans' Affairs recognizes the hiring difficulties experienced by the physically disabled and by many older persons. The Department of Veterans' Affairs sets program goals for action to overcome the present effect of past discrimination, if any, and to achieve the full utilization of such persons in Section 44 of this plan submission. Moreover, the Department of Veterans' Affairs recognizes sexual harassment as a form of seriously harmful discrimination and is pledged to ensure that such harassment does not occur within the Department, giving the full protection of Connecticut and federal laws and regulation in this area to all staff members.

**Outline of Each Step of the Employment Process/Role Affirmative Action Concerns Itself With**

1. Employment applications: vehicle by which all applicants are subjected to a uniform preliminary screening designed to ascertain minimum qualifications in the area of experience and training and to gather the demographic and other information necessary for the administration of affirmative actions programs. Affirmative Action asks that a race conscious determination be made from among qualified applicants.
2. Job Qualifications: vehicle by which the abilities and skills actually required to do the work are determined in terms of minimum basic need. Applicants who meet the essential level preparations are not to be excluded by any other factors. The Human Resources Administrator must work to bring as many protected members into the system.
3. Job Specifications: a written document which carries out the above (2) by incorporating the knowledge, skill and abilities mentioned above with a description of duties and other information about both the field of endeavor and level anticipated including compensation level, in that field. Affirmative Action means, when necessary, re-writing specifications to eliminate barriers to advancement.
4. Recruitment practices: series of approaches, which vary according to the specific needs of the Department, to secure the services of the finest available staff commensurate with the demands of the position. For affirmative action purposes, the processes followed may not exclude, and must actively seek out, persons from groups adversely impacted in the past.
5. Personnel policies: ways of managing the entire range of actions taken with regard to employees, including all rights and privileges attendant to the workplace. Under affirmative action guidelines the protection of appointing

authority is extended throughout the Department to ensure that these rights, opportunities, and privileges are equally offered and enjoyed by all workers.

6. Job structuring: throughout reinterpretation and emphasis, a way of meeting the needs of the Department while accomplishing the forward progress of existing staff and the encouragement and enlightenment of new staff. By offering a flexible program of restructuring and review, the Department can bring along all its members in a growth-oriented environment. Including training and planning for the success of all individuals will enhance the performance of all groups.

7. Orientation: the method by which the transition into a specific workforce is accomplished. For affirmative action purposes, the effectiveness of orientation is determined by how well the needs and obstacles encountered by protected group members are anticipated and how effectively all rights, privileges and available avenues of redress are conveyed to them.

8. Training: an opportunity to diversify, restructure and grow into the best possible staff in order to accomplish Department goals and missions.

9. Counseling: it is important that all protected group members have access to career and other counseling. Liaison personnel are available to discuss problems involving labor relations, health and medical problems, business matters, harassment, unfair labor practices and discrimination.

10. Grievance procedures: it is essential for equal treatment under the law that Department members know of their options when confronted with a violation of their civil rights. The Affirmative Action Program provides written procedures and policies to ensure that employees know of their options and are free to exercise them in a non-intimidating atmosphere.

11. Evaluations: the Affirmative Action Program constantly seeks methods to evaluate personnel based solely on merit requirements.

12. Layoffs: affirmative action and labor have competed to protect their clients in matters concerning layoffs. Ultimately, seniority will be given first consideration, but without regard to any other factors that cannot be considered.

13. Terminations: the work of the Human Resources Administrator includes the responsibility to monitor all separations to ensure the rights of protected individuals are honored.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs' commitment to equal employment opportunity includes the responsibility to affirmatively provide services and programs in a fair and impartial manner and to take affirmative action with respect to all issues in the Policy Statement. The Department is aware that affirmative action consists of specific

actions designed for and taken in all phases of the employment process for the purpose of eliminating the effects of past discrimination. The Department of Veterans' Affairs is further cognizant of the fact that the intent of affirmative action is to achieve equal employment opportunity. We accept our obligation and shall continue to take positive steps in this regard.

**Assignment of Overall Responsibility for Affirmative Action Program**

Commissioner Linda S. Schwartz is the Appointing Authority and assumes ultimate responsibility for administering the Affirmative Action Plan.

**Human Resources Administrator**

The Human Resources Administrator reports directly to the appointing authority in all matters concerning the Department's Affirmative Action Plan and has access to all records and personnel necessary for the effective performance of his/her duties. The person assigned affirmative action responsibilities for the Department of Veterans' Affairs is: Noreen R. Sinclair, 287 West Street, Rocky Hill, Connecticut 06067, Telephone (860) 616-3634.

**Provision for Evaluation of Managers/Supervisors in Terms of Affirmative Action Duties**

The Commissioner meets with Agency managers and department heads regularly to encourage their cooperation, review their progress, and evaluate their performance in terms of affirmative action obligations. It is made clear to managers and supervisors that equal employment and affirmative action are consistent with good management and merit system requirements, are basic to their jobs, and will have a bearing on their careers and/or economic advancement. In the latter regard, managers and supervisors who meet all other management goals but fail to meet assigned affirmative action goals will not be considered for promotion unless the failure was due to circumstances beyond their control.

**Plan to be Posted and Distributed Annually to Employees**

The Policy Statement and a summary of the objectives of the plan are posted and distributed at least annually to all employees, who are encouraged to read both the policy statement and the entire plan. Employees have the right to review and comment on the plan. All written recommendations are brought to the agency administration for review and possible incorporation into succeeding plans.

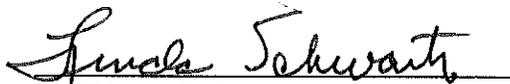
**Laws Referenced and Attached**

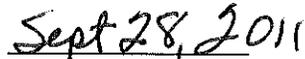
Equal employment opportunity as summarized above is guaranteed by various state and federal laws. A list of anti-discrimination statutes, submitted in accordance

with the requirements of Section 46a-68-38 of the Administrative Regulations of Affirmative Action by State Government, is inserted directly following this section.

**Summary**

The Department of Veterans' Affairs is aware that affirmative action consists of specific actions designed and taken in all phases of the employment process for the purpose of eliminating the effects of past discrimination. We are further cognizant that the ultimate purpose of affirmative action is to achieve equal employment opportunity. Towards these ends, I pledge my own personal commitment and that of the Department to make every good faith effort to achieve the goals, objective, and timetables as set in the Affirmation Action Plan.

  
Dr. Linda S. Schwartz  
Commissioner of Veterans' Affairs

  
Date