



# Hiring VA Health Professions Trainees

Trainee Recruitment and Hiring Workgroup  
Workforce Management & Consulting



Choose **VA**

# Purpose



All facilities are asked to **sunset** any previous material related to Health Professions Trainees (HPTs) and hiring flexibilities. This is the new approved standardized material.



To understand the **advantages** of hiring Health Professions Trainees (HPTs) to meet VA's clinical vacancies



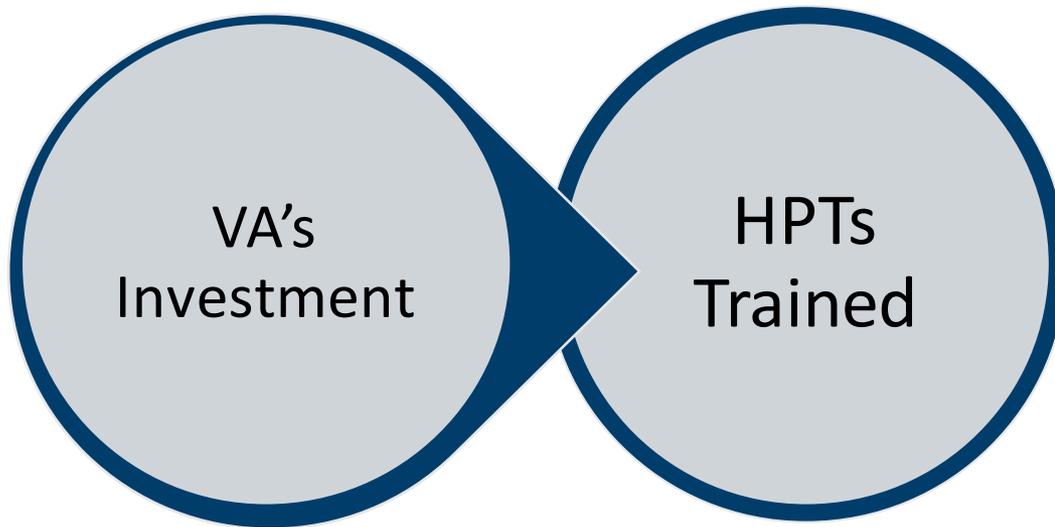
To identify and understand **hiring flexibilities** as they apply to health professionals and HPTs



To effectively **utilize flexibilities** in the recruitment and hiring processes to **maximize** HPT hiring

# Bottom Line Up Front

VA loses a significant number of HPTs to the private sector



- \$2 Billion Dollars

- ~122,000 HPTs

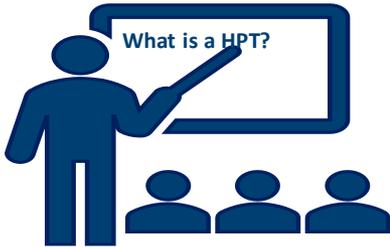


**Congress and the VA created hiring flexibilities to facilitate the hiring of Title 38 occupations**

# Agenda

- Health Professions Trainees (HPTs)
- Hiring Flexibilities (Title 38 and hybrid Title 38)
- Application of Veterans Preference
- Staffing Shortages
- Job Opportunity Announcements (JOAs)
- Qualifying HPTs
- Recruitment Incentives
- Tentative Job Offers
- Knowledge Check
- Summary
- Resources
- Points of Contact

# Health Professions Trainees (HPT)



**HPT** is a general term used to describe individuals appointed to temporary positions in one or more VHA medical facilities performing clinical or research training experiences to satisfy program or degree requirements. HPTs can be either VA-paid or Without Compensation (WOC). Trainee academic levels include undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate students, interns, residents, fellows, and VA advanced fellows; and pre- and post-doctoral fellows.

Did you know?

Both **current** and **former** trainees are eligible for hiring flexibilities based on their future projected qualifications.

Trainees can be recruited and offered positions **contingent** on completion of training and licensure by the date of appointment.

# Health Professional Scholarship Program (HPSP)

**HPSP** provides scholarship funding for non-employees and employees seeking to enter Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 occupations. FY2020 Graduating Specialties include:

- Nurses
- Medical Technologists
- Nurse Practitioners
- Physician Assistants, and
- Physical Therapists

Scholarships cover tuition, authorized fees, an annual book stipend, and a monthly cost-of-living stipend while in school in return for a **minimum 2-year commitment** following completion of their educational program and licensure/certification.

After graduation and completion of their licensure or certification, the applicant must be willing to fill a full-time VA employment obligation in a position within the occupation for which HPSP was awarded. This employment obligation may require a geographic relocation, at the applicant's expense.

Selection process is very competitive. Average select had GPA of 3.8 or higher



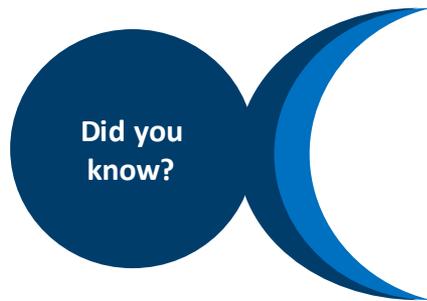
# Hiring Flexibilities (Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38)

## What HPTs are eligible?

- Any candidate that has successfully completed or is expected to successfully complete an affiliate sponsored or VA sponsored training program.

## What flexibilities exist to hire VA Residents/Trainee Candidates?

- All non-competitive hiring flexibilities and veteran's preference requirements that apply to Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 occupations apply to all **current** and **former** HPTs in those occupations.



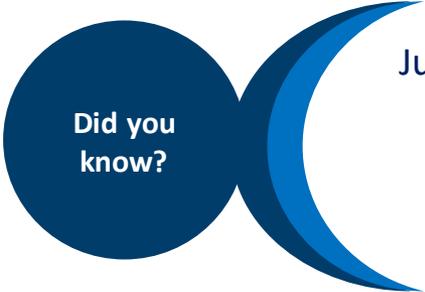
Did you  
know?

Clinical occupations in VA are considered either Title 38 or Hybrid Title 38 based on statutorily defined criteria (*38 USC 7401*).

# Hiring Flexibilities (Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38)

## HPT Recruitment Facts

- HPTs are considered “external candidates.” When using USAJobs to announce to internal candidates to meet bargaining unit requirements, applications from all external applicants, including HPTs (even when done outside of USAJobs), may be considered up until the point a selection is made (i.e., even if they apply after the announcement closed).\*
- Recruitment and hiring flexibilities apply at all times regardless of location of application.



Did you know?

Just like all other Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 applicants:

- HPTs DO NOT have to apply through USAJobs.
- HPTs can be manually uploaded into USAStaffing, if needed.
- HPTs may be considered up to the time of selection (i.e., even after an announcement closed)\*

- Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 recruitments are non-competitive, therefore, JOAs are not required. VISNs/Facilities should ensure consistent hiring practices are followed and utilization of hiring flexibilities are well documented with all non-competitive recruitment actions..
- The VA Secretary has the authority under 38 USC 7422 to declare any matter concerning direct patient care provided by pure T38 employees to be non-negotiable and outside the scope of collective bargaining requirements.
- Using this legal authority, in October 2019 the Secretary issued a formal decision invalidating the T38 Staffing article of the AFGE contract.
- We no longer have to follow any of the requirements of this contract article when we are hiring pure T38 AFGE bargaining unit employees for direct patient care roles. Specifically, we no longer have to comply with the minimum time period in the contract for posting vacancies for pure T38 positions.

# Application of Veterans Preference

- For **Title 38 occupations**, such as physicians and nurses, Veterans receive preference “when qualifications between candidates are approximately equal, the tie goes to the Veteran” (*VA Handbook 5005 PII chapter 3, page II-61*)
  - In all cases, the needs of the VA are the primary consideration.
  - If a non-Veteran is selected over a Veteran, non-equal qualification must be documented.
- For **Hybrid Title 38 occupations**, Title 5 USC rules apply. (*VHA 5005, Chapter 4*)

## Title 38 (Pure)

**VA Handbook 5005, Part II, Ch 3, Section A, Para 3a;**

In summary, Veterans will be given preference when qualifications of candidates are approximately equal. This includes qualified disabled Veterans’ and preference eligible as defined in 5 USC 2108.

## Hybrid Title 38

**VA Handbook 5005, Part 1, Chapter 4**

VA is required to follow T5 Veterans’ Preference rules when hiring for Hybrid T38. The above cited chapter sets forth the external hiring practices and Veterans’ preference.

See also 7938 U.S.C. 7403(f)(2)

# Staffing Shortages

## Office of Inspector General Determination of Veterans Health Administration's Occupational Staffing Shortages

- VA Office of Inspector General (OIG), required to report a minimum of five clinical and five non-clinical Veterans Health Administration (VHA) occupations with the largest staffing shortages within each VHA Facility.
- 7938 U.S.C. § 7412 waives the requirement to apply veterans preference for appointments made during the fiscal year to Hybrid Title 38 occupations reported among the occupations with the largest staffing shortages.
- FY2020 Hybrid Title 38 occupations approved for waiver of Veterans' Preference:
  - Diagnostic Radiologic Technologist (0647)
  - Medical Instrument Technician (0649)
  - Medical Records Technician (0675)
  - Medical Supply Aide and Technician (0622)
  - Medical Support Assistant (0679)
  - Medical Technologist (0644)
  - Practical Nurse (0620), and
  - Psychologist (0180)

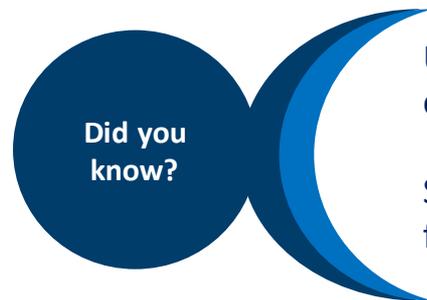
# Job Opportunity Announcements

Posting announcements on USAJobs is [not required](#) for Title 38 or hybrid Title 38 by law or VA Policy.

## If JOA is required by local/national labor master agreement:

JOA's should meet the below requirements to ensure trainees are not screened out:

- **Area of Consideration:** Internal Employees and Past/Current/Upcoming VHA HPT Graduates.
- **Assessment Questionnaires:** Ensure the language in the questionnaires do not screen out upcoming graduates. HPTs should be considered contingent upon HPTs meeting the grade requirements by the time of appointment, they can be considered.
- This flexibility applies to all grade requirements that will be necessary for the entry grade for the occupation, such as graduation, licensure, and certification..



Did you  
know?

Utilizing non-competitive hiring flexibilities will reduce the complexity for recruitment and hiring of HPTs.

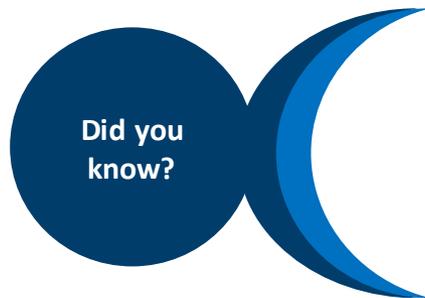
Some occupations allow for temporary graduate appointments for those pending licensure, such as psychologists and nurses

# Qualifying HPTs

Candidates should be evaluated based on **projected** qualifications at the time of appointment and not at the time of application.

## USAJobs Assessment Questionnaire...

An HPT should **not be disqualified** because they do not yet meet the requirements for a USAJobs assessment questionnaire or grade requirements in the qualification standards. The applications should be assessed based on **projected** qualifications at the time of appointment.



Did you  
know?

A best practice is to encourage HPTs to **apply outside of USAJobs** so that they are not erroneously disqualified.

# Recruitment Incentives

## Recruitment/Relocation Incentive:

- Must comply with Part VI, Chapter 2 of VA Handbook 5007 and Human Resources Management Letter (HRML) 05-18-08:
  - Form 10016 must be approved by MCD prior to initiating recruitment efforts.
  - Written justification must confirm the need, specify the estimated cost, and be signed by the Approving Official and Hiring Manager.
  - VA calls it a “recruitment” incentive when the selectee is not currently in the federal government; VA calls it a “relocation” incentive when the selectee is a current eligible full-time federal employee.
  - If announced at USAJOBS, the Job Opportunity Announcement (JOA) must include clear and concise language to convey that specific recruitment and relocation incentives either **“may be authorized” or “are not authorized.”**
  - Recruitment/Relocation incentives may be offered when non-competitively hiring without a JOA.

# Recruitment Incentives con't

## Education Debt Reduction Program (EDRP):

- Must comply with VA Handbook 1021.01
  - Health profession occupation/specialty must appear on the local “difficult to recruit and retain” list.
  - When EDRP is used as a recruitment tool, it must be documented in either the JOA **OR** commitment letter executed during the recruitment process.
  - EDRP may be offered when non-competitively hiring without a JOA.

## Permanent Change of Station (PCS) relocation allowance:

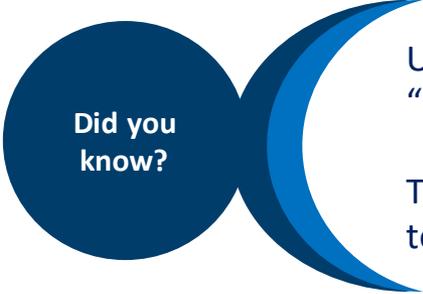
- Must comply with Human Resources Management Letter (HRML) 05-18-08:
  - Hiring Manager must prepare a written justification and obtain approval, prior to initiating recruitment efforts.
  - The written justification must confirm the need, specify the estimated cost, and be signed by the Approving Official and Hiring Manager.
  - Signed justification must support one or more of the eight key factors to substantiate a relocation allowance is in the best interest of the Government.

# Tentative Job Offers

HPT applicants should receive tentative/firm job offers if they are on track to meet grade requirements in the qualification standard at the time of appointment/EOD and must not be disqualified because **qualifications are not met at the time of application/recruitment**.

## What happens if the candidate is not qualified at the time of appointment?

Appropriate contingency language in tentative/firm job offers will protect VA if candidates fail to become fully-qualified at the time of appointment.



Did you know?

Use HPT-friendly language during job offer discussions. Terms like “appoint” may not be understood by the applicant.

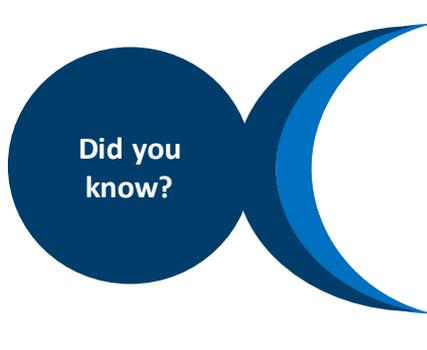
There is **no limit** on how early trainees can be considered and tentatively offered positions.

# Tentative Job Offers Continued

Facilities should use the **Prolonged Start Date Reasons** to appropriately document delays in USAS. **Student/Summer Hire** is the appropriate reason for trainee's pending education and/or program completion requirements.

## What happens if the candidate is not scheduled to graduate for 3 months?

By capturing the delayed start date appropriately in USAS, it will allow VHA to report on this type of known, permissible situation separately from the overall T2H.



The VHA USA Staffing Program Office has multiple resource centers to provide helpful information to HR professionals and Hiring Managers.

- [OPM USA Staffing Resource Center](#)
- [VHA USAS Intake Management System \(IMS\)](#)
- [VA Pulse – VHA USA Staffing Upgrade Support](#)
- [VA Time to Hire Community of Practice](#)
- [T2H](#)
- [USAS VHA Customer Portal](#)

# HRSmart Tip: Graduate Position Titles

- When the occupation allows for a temporary graduate appointment pending licensure, the **Official Position Title** on the position should reflect “Graduate”.

**Job Information**

*Business Unit	<input type="text" value="VA001"/>	VA Business Unit	Manager Level	All Other Positions
Job Code	<input type="text" value="200430"/>	Graduate Psychologist	*Full/Part Time	<input type="text" value="Full-Time"/>
*Reg/Temp	<input type="text" value="Regular"/>		Union Code	<input type="text"/>
*Regular Shift	<input type="text" value="Not Applicable"/>		Short Title	<input type="text" value="Graduate P"/> <a href="#">Detailed Position Description</a>
Title	<input type="text" value="Graduate Psychologist"/>			

- When the employee is meets the qualifications and is converted to a permanent appointment, the **Official Position Title** on the position needs to be updated.

**Job Information**

*Business Unit	<input type="text" value="VA001"/>	VA Business Unit	Manager Level	All Other Positions
Job Code	<input type="text" value="200419"/>	Psychologist	*Full/Part Time	<input type="text" value="Full-Time"/>
*Reg/Temp	<input type="text" value="Regular"/>		Union Code	<input type="text"/>
*Regular Shift	<input type="text" value="Not Applicable"/>		Short Title	<input type="text" value="Psychologi"/> <a href="#">Detailed Position Description</a>
Title	<input type="text" value="Psychologist"/>			

# Knowledge Check, Scenario 1



Your announcement for an Occupational Therapist Position which was posted up to the Full-Performance Level has closed and you are reviewing candidates for minimal qualifications. One of your candidates is a recent graduate from an accredited university and has completed the VHA HPT Program, but has not yet received their certification.

**Can you still refer this candidate?**

# Knowledge Check, Scenario 2



Your announcement for a Pharmacist position which was posted up to the Full-Performance Level has closed and you have referred all eligible candidates to the selecting officials. A former VHA HPT Program participant catches wind of the vacancy and contacts you to inform you they are interested in the position. What can you do?

- a) Tell them it's too late since you already referred the candidates. They will have to watch for a new posting on USAJobs.
- b) Tell them you can accept their resume, verification of school and licensure and refer them non-competitively to the selecting official for consideration.

# Summary

- Vacancies suitable for HPT Title 38 and Hybrid Title 38 occupations **do not require** public announcements, for example, on USAJobs (unless required by local BUA).
- HPTs in Title 38 or Hybrid Title 38 occupations have all the **same** recruitment and hiring flexibilities of non-HPT professionals in those occupations.
- HPT applicants may be considered if they will meet basic requirements for qualifications at the time of appointment and must not be disqualified because **qualifications are not met at the time of application.**
- Veterans receive preference “when qualifications between candidates are approximately equal” for all Title 38 occupations.
- Veteran Preference is applied to Hybrid Title 38 positions unless they fall within the shortage occupations.
- Veteran’s preference and public announcements are two distinct requirements. The requirement for application of veteran’s preference does not mean that a vacancy announcement must be public.

# Resources

- Recruitment and Hiring VA Trainees Flyer  
[https://www.va.gov/OAA/docs/VA\\_Hiring\\_Health\\_Professions\\_Trainees\\_Flyer.pdf](https://www.va.gov/OAA/docs/VA_Hiring_Health_Professions_Trainees_Flyer.pdf)
- [Myth Busters](#)
- TACLVA Job Search Guide for trainees  
[https://www.va.gov/OAA/docs/Job\\_Search\\_Guide\\_for\\_VHA\\_Health\\_Professions\\_Trainees.pdf](https://www.va.gov/OAA/docs/Job_Search_Guide_for_VHA_Health_Professions_Trainees.pdf)
- [TACLVA Website Homepage](#)
- OIG Report: <https://www.va.gov/oig/pubs/VAOIG-19-00346-241.pdf>

# Questions

For questions please go to the **Trainee Recruitment and Hiring Helpdesk Ticketing System** and submit a ticket.

Save this link! <https://htm2.va.gov/HelpDesk>



Choose **VA**