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DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Office of Inspector General
Washington DC 20420

May 2, 2013

Re: Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Case No. 13-00491-FOIA

This is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request dated March 28, 2013 and received in this office on April 2, 2013 in which you requested an electronic copy of the following records stored on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) internal website:

OIG Directives

D305
D307
D308
D309
D314
D315
D320
D321
D329
D330

You also requested a copy of the printout of the home page of the VA OIG Portal internal website. While printing the VA OIG Portal internal website, the left menu bar does not print. Therefore, we have also included a screen shot of the website that shows the left menu bar in addition to the printout of the website. Further, the OIG Directives requested are enclosed (85 pages released).

The documents include individuals' names and other identifying information. We balanced these individuals' privacy interests against any public interest and concluded that the privacy interests of the individuals included in the documents outweigh any public interest. Therefore, we are redacting the individuals' names and other identifying

FEES ASSOCIATED WITH FOIA REQUESTS

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: To establish OIG policy on fees associated with FOIA requests.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS: This directive sets forth specific policies for charging requesters for records under the FOIA. The directive contains:

- a. Categories of requesters who will not be charged;
- b. Citation of the statute(s) and VA regulations governing the charging of requesters;
- c. Categories of requesters where fees will be charged and the basic formula for determining the applicable fee;
- d. Circumstances under which the waiving of fees will be considered; and
- e. Responsibilities for managing the fees and waiver provision of this directive.

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Freedom of Information Act Section of the Policy, Follow-up, and Operational Support Division, Office of Departmental Reviews and Management Support (53B).

JON A. WOODITCH
Acting Assistant Inspector General for
Departmental Reviews and Management Support

Distribution:

Counselor to the Inspector General (50C)
Assistant Inspector General for Investigations (51)
Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Investigations (51A)
Assistant Inspector General for Auditing (52)
Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Auditing (52A)
Director, Contract Review and Evaluation Division (53C)
Director, Resources Management Division (53D)
Director, Hotline and Special Inquiries Division (53E)
Assistant Inspector General for Healthcare Inspections (54)
Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Healthcare Inspections (54A)

SEPTEMBER 25, 1997

OIG GM DIRECTIVE 305

FEES ASSOCIATED WITH FOIA REQUESTS

1. PURPOSE. To establish OIG policy on fees associated with FOIA requests.

2. POLICY

a. There will be no charges assessed for processing the disclosure of records/documents to the following categories of requesters:

- (1) Media requests
- (2) Requests from the subjects of cases (first 100 one-sided pages free, \$0.15 per page for all additional pages)
- (3) Requests from the complainants of cases (first 100 one-sided pages free, \$0.15 per page for all additional pages)
- (4) Requests from Congress
- (5) Veterans service organizations
- (6) Requests from veterans concerning VA benefits or VA medical care
- (7) Federal agencies (which are not subject to the FOIA)

b. All other requesters will be charged as mandated in the Department's regulations. See 38 C.F.R. Sections 1.526, 1.555, 1.577(f) and (g). The Privacy Act provides that fees may be charged to any individual for making copies of his/her record, excluding the cost of any search for and review of the record. 5 U.S.C. Section 552a(f)(5).

c. FOIA requests from a commercial requester (or from an individual with commercial interests) for OIG reports/records requiring initial redactions will be charged for search and review time and duplication costs. The second and any subsequent FOIA requesters will only be charged duplication fees and will not be charged for the same search and review time as the first commercial requester. In other words, there will be a one-time charge for search and review time, but there will always be a reproduction cost unless it is waived.

d. We will charge a requester when the requester is asking for information/records not pertaining to himself or herself. If a commercial firm (or an attorney representing the firm) requests a copy of a report or other documents, we will charge the firm a duplication fee of \$0.15 per one-sided page, as well as search and review fees, when applicable. We will also charge an individual covered in paragraph 2a(2) and (3), above, after the first 100 one-sided pages at a cost of \$0.15 per page for each additional page in excess of 100.

e. Written notification to requesters advising them of the fees associated with their request will be signed by the Assistant Inspector General for Departmental Reviews and Management Support (53).

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. The Assistant Inspector General for Departmental Reviews and Management Support (AIG for DRMS) is the FOIA Officer, and is responsible for the OIG FOIA Program.

b. The AIG for DRMS will:

(1) Manage and monitor the implementation of this directive and make appropriate change(s) when deemed necessary.

(2) Approve a request for the waiver of fees when disclosure of the requested information is in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of government operations or activities.

c. The Chief, Freedom of Information Act Section of the Policy, Follow-up and Operational Support Division is responsible for determining the FOIA requests subject to fees and the amount of fees to be charged.

4. LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

a. Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. Section 552).

b. 38 C.F.R. Section 1.526, 1.577(f) and (g).

c. Office of General Counsel, Information Law Guide, Chapter 5, Fees for Providing Records and Fee Waivers.

(b)(6)

FOIAPOL.doc/50C rev.

53B

50C

53

EMPLOYEE DEPARTURE

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish Office of Inspector General (OIG) policy and procedures regarding employee departures.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:** This directive outlines employee and supervisory responsibilities related to the departure of an employee from OIG service. Appendix A provides departing employees with a checklist of tasks to be completed and items to be surrendered on or prior to the employee's last day in the office. Appendix B requires the departing employee to certify that he or she has not destroyed, removed, or retained any Federal records or sensitive information.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Director, Operations Division (53B), Office of Management and Administration (53).
- 4. RELATED DIRECTIVES:**
 - a. OIG GM Directive 302, Transit Benefit Program.
 - b. OIG GM Directive 345, Employee Exit Interviews.
 - c. OIG GM Directive 340, Credentials.
- 5. RESCISSION:** OIG GM Directive 307, Employee Departure Policy, dated July 26, 2007.

CERTIFIED BY:



Richard Ehrlichman
Assistant Inspector General for
Management and Administration

**BY DIRECTION OF THE
INSPECTOR GENERAL:**



for:

George J. Opfer
Inspector General

Distribution: Electronic Distribution to all OIG Employees

EMPLOYEE DEPARTURE

1. PURPOSE:

This directive establishes out-processing procedures for departing OIG employees. A departing employee is considered to be any employee who retires, resigns, is terminated, or transfers within VA or to another Federal agency. The departing employee and his or her first-line supervisor each have distinct responsibilities during this process, which are to be completed on or prior to the departing employee's last day of service in the office with OIG. Failure to comply with this policy and all requirements therein may result in the employee's last paycheck being delayed.

2. POLICY:

Every employee separating from OIG service will complete the list of tasks shown in Appendix A, Employee Check-Out List. Appendix A provides a list of Government-issued equipment that must be surrendered at the time of departure; however, this list may not be exhaustive. Employees are required to surrender all equipment issued to them by OIG even if it is not explicitly listed in Appendix A.

Federal law and regulations require that the Government maintain records of its operations and activities for sound business and historic preservation purposes. Appendix B, Certification of Protection of Federal Records, requires employees to certify that they have not removed any such records or documents containing sensitive information from their worksite. Personal papers and non-records (personal notes and extra copies of reports, drafts, documents, etc.) are not Government records. Employees are encouraged to seek guidance about what constitutes a Government record by referring to OIG's Guidance on Records Management, available on the OIG Portal at: <https://vaww.teamshare.va.gov/oig/referenceddocuments/20081208-guidance-on-record-management.pdf>.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES:

- a. Assistant Inspectors General and Counselor. The Assistant Inspectors General and Counselor to the Inspector General (IG) will ensure that all assigned staff within their respective directorate are aware of and follow the contents of the directive.
- b. First-line supervisors. First-line supervisors will communicate with the Operations Division (53B) immediately upon learning of a subordinate's pending departure. First-line supervisors will also ensure that all personnel assigned to his or her area of supervision follow the instructions contained herein.
- c. Human Resources (HR) Liaison. The HR Liaison staff is responsible for notifying other staff on a need-to-know basis about the pending separation, and providing information related to out-processing tasks to the departing employee and his or her

supervisor. HR Liaison staff is responsible for contacting the Bureau of Public Debt (BPD) in the event a paycheck must be delayed as a result of the departing employee failing to comply with the instructions in this directive.

d. Information Technology (IT) Division Staff. IT staff will ensure the departing employee's information systems access is timely deactivated.

e. The Administrative and Financial Operations Division Staff. Administrative and Financial Operations Division (53D) staff are responsible for destroying the departing employee's OIG credentials; deactivating and shredding the departing employee's travel, training, and/or supply credit cards; and collecting and inventorying the employee's office keys, Techworld gym keys, Techworld Kastle card, calling card, Emergency Telecommunications Service card, and OIG Blackberry, if applicable.

f. All OIG employees. All OIG employees will comply with the contents of this directive upon notification of separation from the organization.

4. PROCEDURES:

a. First-line supervisors will notify the HR Liaison staff via e-mail immediately upon learning of an employee's pending departure. First-line supervisors will offer the departing employee the opportunity to complete a voluntary exit interview. OIG GM Directive 345, Employee Exit Interviews, provides additional information and options regarding employee exit interviews.

b. If the employee is departing for retirement, first-line supervisors will contact the HR Liaison staff via e-mail to request a retirement certificate. The HR Liaison staff will coordinate with BPD to prepare and present the retirement certificate to the departing employee's first-line supervisor prior to the employee's last day of service. The first-line supervisor, or his or her designate, will present the retirement certificate to the employee prior to or on the departing employee's last day of service.

c. The HR Liaison staff will e-mail a copy of OIG GM Directive 307, Employee Departure, including Appendixes A and B, to the employee and his or her immediate supervisor.

d. HR Liaison staff and BPD staff will inform the appropriate OIG staff about the pending departure via e-mail and OIG portal updates. Notifications will be sent to the departing employee's chain of command as well as any necessary OIG support services staff.

e. The departing employee will complete all items in Appendixes A and B and submit them to his or her first-line supervisor for review and signature on or prior to the employee's last day of work in the office. Any Government property sent to OIG

Headquarters should be sent via a mail carrier with tracking controls.

f. The first-line supervisor will receive and assume responsibility for all equipment issued to the departing employee as designated in Appendix A. The supervisor will ensure this equipment is inventoried or forwarded to the appropriate OIG staff.

g. After discussing the appendixes with the departing employee, the first-line supervisor will certify that all required tasks have been completed by signing and forwarding Appendixes A and B to the HR Liaison staff via facsimile transmission or a personal visit. The first-line supervisor should also submit the results of any exit interview conducted. The appendixes must be forwarded to the HR Liaison staff no later than the employee's last day in the office.

h. The HR Liaison staff will file the appendixes and forward all other official documents to BPD, with the exception of the exit interview. All exit interviews are maintained in a separate file by the Director, Operations Division (53B).

i. The HR Liaison will return the following materials surrendered by the departing employee to VA Headquarters:

1. VA identification card and/or field facility identification card, if applicable, and

2. All unused transit subsidy fare media or personal checks written to reimburse VA for nonreturnable transit subsidies.

j. The Administrative and Financial Operations Division (53D) staff will destroy the departing employee's OIG credentials; deactivate and shred the departing employee's travel, training, and/or supply credit cards; and collect and inventory the employee's office keys, Techworld gym keys, Techworld Kastle card, calling card, Emergency Telecommunications Service card, and OIG Blackberry, if applicable.

k. The Information Technology Division (53C) staff will deactivate the departing employee's information systems access. IT staff will also retrieve and log, if appropriate, the employee's computer hardware and OIG cell phone.

Employee Check-Out List

Tasks to Complete Prior to Departure	Contact	✓	N/A
Provide forwarding address and telephone number	53B		
Submit a personal check payable to OIG for transit subsidy reimbursement	53B		
Complete and submit the Certification of Protection of Federal Records (see Appendix B)	53B		
Request a letter of certification for Federal law enforcement service with OIG	53B/BPD		
Remove voicemail system password	N/A		
Cancel any scheduled training and send notification of the cancellation to supervisor	Supervisor		
Complete the Employee Exit Interview	Supervisor ¹		
Complete performance evaluations (summary ratings) for all employees (Supervisors only)	53B		
Complete and submit this Employee Check-Out List	53B		
Determine if all service obligations have been fulfilled for recruitment/retention/relocation agreements, Permanent Change of Station, and student loan repayments	53B/BPD		

Item To Surrender	Surrender To	✓	N/A
VA Identification Card	53B		
VA Field Facility Identification Card	53B		
All Unused transit subsidy fare media	53B		
OIG Credentials	53D		
Credentials Wallet	53D		
Government Travel Card	53D		
Government Supply Purchase Card	53D		
Government Training Purchase Card	53D		

¹ Employees are highly encouraged to complete an exit interview prior to departure. The interview can be conducted in person or electronically. For more information, please refer to OIG GM 345, Employee Exit Interviews, available at: https://vaww.teamshare.va.gov/oig/oig_library_directives/Forms/AllItems.aspx.

Item To Surrender	Surrender To	✓	N/A
Government Calling Card	53D		
Government Emergency Telecommunications Service Card	53D		
Office Keys	53D		
TechWorld Gym Keys	53D		
TechWorld Kastle Card	53D		
Blackberry	53D		
Cellular Phone	Supervisor		
Computer	Supervisor		
Scanner	Supervisor		
Printer	Supervisor		
All Official Records, Supplies, and/or Miscellaneous Equipment	Supervisor		
Law Enforcement Badge	Supervisor		
Law Enforcement Belt Badge	Supervisor		
Belt Badge Clip	Supervisor		
Firearm	Supervisor		
Holster	Supervisor		
Pistol Cleaning Kit	Supervisor		
Pistol Lock Box (for home)	Supervisor		
Magazine Pouch	Supervisor		
Ballistic Vest	Supervisor		
Baton	Supervisor		
Baton Holder	Supervisor		
Flashlight	Supervisor		
Handcuff Case	Supervisor		
Handcuffs	Supervisor		
Range Bag	Supervisor		
Safety Glasses	Supervisor		

Item To Surrender	Surrender To	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A
Hearing Protection	Supervisor		
Pepper Spray	Supervisor		
Pepper Spray (inert unit)	Supervisor		
Pepper Spray Holder	Supervisor		
GPS Navigation Unit and Accessories	Supervisor		
Government vehicle	Supervisor		

I hereby certify that I have returned all Government property issued to me from the list above. I am not in possession of any other Government property.

Signature of Separating Employee

Date

Signature of First-Line Supervisor (or designate)

Date

Signature of Human Resources Liaison

Date

Certification of Protection of Federal Records

I hereby certify that I have not destroyed, removed from the work-site, or retained any Federal record, or copies of files or documents containing sensitive information.

Signature of Separating Employee

Date

Signature of First-Line Supervisor (or designate)

Date

For purposes of this certification,

(1) "Federal record" is any document in electronic or paper form (including e-mails) that has historical value and is required to be maintained as part of official records of Government activities, such as the official recordkeeping copy of final OIG reports, original working papers, signed contracts, completed forms, final correspondence, final memoranda, databases, and other records of official activities.

(2) "Federal record" does not include extra copies in addition to the official recordkeeping copy for personal convenience or reference, nor does it include personal records unrelated to transaction of official business. It does not include drafts of the documents listed in (1) above unless the drafts contain unique information not otherwise retained. Editorial revisions are not unique information and are assumed to be incorporated into the final version.

(3) Sensitive information is defined under the Federal Information Security and Management Act (FISMA) as personally identifiable information on individuals other than the employee and proprietary information. The term also includes any information that would not be released by the agency under the Freedom of Information Act. Proprietary information, also referred to as "trade secrets" includes data submitted by or obtained from third parties that could affect their competitive position. Examples include: contract bids and proposals, contractor cost or pricing data, commercial customer pricing, manufacturing processes, etc. It also includes internal Government information such as configuration of IT systems or IT security systems.

(4) Destruction includes the physical destruction of a document, hard drive, media device, or the destruction of an electronic file. Removal means removing the record from the Federal worksite in hard copy or electronic format. Retained means that electronic or hard copy records that were previously removed from the worksite were not maintained at another location.

(5) The supervisor is witnessing the departing employee completed the certification, not attesting to the truth of the employee's certification.

COMMENTS TO DRAFT REPORTS

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: To establish organization-wide Office of Inspector General (OIG) policy on comments to draft reports.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS: This directive provides Office of Inspector General (OIG) policy about the timeliness and nature of program management comments to OIG draft reports. It also outlines steps to prevent or reduce late comments and to resolve differences over OIG recommendations for action.

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Operational Support Division (53B), Office of Management and Administration.

4. RECISSION: Partial recission of Policy and Procedure Guide, Part II, Chapter 14, dated October 1994.

CERTIFIED BY:

BY DIRECTION OF:

Jon A. Wooditch
Assistant Inspector General for
Management and Administration

Richard J. Griffin
Inspector General

Distribution:

Assistant Inspector General for Investigations (51)
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Director, Operational Support Division (53B)

COMMENTS TO DRAFT REPORTS

1. PURPOSE

This directive provides Office of Inspector General (OIG) policy about the timeliness and nature of program management comments to OIG draft reports. It also outlines steps to prevent or reduce late comments and to resolve differences over OIG recommendations for action.

2. BACKGROUND

OIG reports are most useful when they are issued in a timely manner. One cause of delay in issuing reports is the timeliness of management comments. When an organizational element of the OIG does an audit, inspection, or administrative investigation, they first prepare a draft report and send it to VA management for comment. This process provides VA management an opportunity to comment on the factual content and findings of the report. Comments also document and define management's position on implementing OIG recommendations. If management is extremely slow to provide comments, or if the comments are not responsive to the issues addressed in the report, this can significantly delay issuance of the final report and postpone corrective action on reportable problems. This policy defines timeliness standards, the nature of comments, and assigns responsibilities with the overall objective of reducing cycle times.

3. POLICY

A. Timely Receipt of Comments

1. VA management officials in the client organization have up to 30 calendar days from the issue date of a draft report to reply. If the client requests an extension, and it is determined to be justified, a maximum of 15 additional days may be granted by the issuing office. (See supplemental guidance for special types of projects, such as Combined Assessment Program [CAP] reports.) No further extensions will be approved at that level.
2. Each office issuing reports will identify and report overdue comments. The Master Case Index (MCI) system will develop the capacity to provide the necessary data to each office issuing reports. Each office issuing reports shall designate an individual to maintain, run and review this report in order to bring overdue responses to the attention of the Assistant Inspector General (AIG) of the issuing office for appropriate action.
3. For those instances where no comments have been received by the approved due date, the AIG must review the circumstances and bring the matter to the

attention of the appropriate VA program management official in order to expedite management's response and secure comments. The date of all followup contacts with VA program management will be documented in the file.

4. If VA management's comments are not received after a short but reasonable period, given the extent and complexity of the report, the AIG should discuss the matter and their recommendation with the Inspector General (IG).
5. Based on the circumstances of each case, the IG may (1) grant an extension, (2) raise the matter with the appropriate VA official, (3) issue the final report without VA management comment, or (4) if the severity of the problem warrants it, the IG may then forward the final report without management comments to the Deputy Secretary for final resolution.

B. Nature of Comments

1. Transmittal letters to draft reports should state that the only options available to management are to concur or non-concur with OIG recommendations. Previously used options such as "concur in principle" or "concur with comment" are no longer acceptable. The use of such phrases made it difficult to ascertain management's true position. For example, the OIG previously accepted a "concur with comment" as a concurrence from management even though the comment portion of the response might imply that they did not concur. This has led to lengthy delays in resolving matters during the followup process for implementation of recommendations. It is important for comments to make clear whether management concurs or non-concurs with findings, as well as with specific recommendations. If management concurs with a finding but non-concurs with a recommendation, they should provide an alternative course for corrective action that they believe is responsive to satisfying the intent of the OIG recommendation. If the issuing office agrees with management's proposal, followup will be on the agreed-to corrective action.
2. Efforts to resolve a non-concurrence by management to an OIG recommendation will also have timeliness standards. The issuing office will have 10 days to address management's non-concurrence. Management will have 10 days to review relative positions and forward final comments. If management continues to non-concur with an OIG recommendation, the AIG of the issuing office will discuss the matter with the IG for a decision on whether to submit the unresolved issues to the Deputy Secretary for final resolution. Final reports will be issued within 10 days of receipt of final comments.

**OMBUDSMAN* PROGRAM
PROCEDURES AND GUIDES**

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This handbook provides procedures and other guidance to implement the policies contained in OIG GM Directive 309.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:** This handbook provides information relative to the Ombudsman Program, its purpose, exclusionary provisions, definition and roles, and processes and functions.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of Inspector General, Assistant Inspector General for Management and Administration
- 4. RELATED DIRECTIVE:** OIG GM Directive 309, Ombudsman Program
- 5. RESCISSION:** None

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE
INSPECTOR GENERAL:**

(original signed by:)

(original signed by:)

Jon A. Wooditch
Assistant Inspector General for
Management & Administration

Richard J. Griffin
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Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Management and Administration (53A)
Director, Resources Management Division (53D)
Assistant Inspector General for Healthcare Inspections (54)
Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Healthcare Inspections (54A)

*The term "Ombudsman" is recognized internationally as a generic term whose original meaning is agent or representative. It is non-gender specific, and is intended to include all other forms of the word, such as ombudsperson, ombuds, and/or ombuds officer.

**OMBUDSMAN PROGRAM
PROCEDURES AND GUIDES**

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Part A. The Purpose

1. Purpose.

a. The OIG Ombudsman Program is designed to encourage open communications among all elements of the OIG in an atmosphere in which human relationships may be improved. The program will provide a mechanism through which employees at all levels may raise concerns and seek answers to questions involving worksite issues without fear of reprisal.

b. VA OIG employees may contact any of the appointed Ombudsmen to discuss, or seek assistance in resolving, a workplace problem. The selected Ombudsman will act as a neutral, impartial, confidential, and independent alternative to the formal complaint-handling systems available to VA employees. He/she will focus and attempt to resolve the issue in the most direct and equitable way, while preserving the confidentiality of the person(s) who initiate the contact. The Ombudsman will determine the best method for resolving a particular issue, including the options of offering suggestions and recommendations, negotiation, or mediation*.

2. Exclusionary Provision. This program is designed to be an alternative method of addressing employee concerns, and is not intended to replace/circumvent any formal complaint resolution process. An Ombudsman has no direct authority to personally resolve issues. He/she is not authorized to make, change, or set aside a law, policy or administrative/managerial decision, or to force anyone else to do so. An Ombudsman will seek technical, regulatory, and legal advice and guidance from the VA OIG Office of Human Resources (53D3) and/or from the Office of the Counselor (50C) to the Inspector General, as deemed appropriate.

3. Program Development and Support. Program development and support will be provided by the Assistant Inspector General for Management and Administration (53) or his/her designee.

Part B. The Ombudsman Coordinator and the Ombudsmen

1. The Program Coordinator. The Inspector General (IG) will designate an Ombudsman Program Coordinator, who will serve in this capacity indefinitely and report directly to the IG. The Coordinator will have primary responsibility for managing the success of the program and for reporting program results to the IG.

2. Ombudsmen Appointments. The IG or a designated representative will make initial appointment of Ombudsmen. Appointments of Ombudsmen will be made for a period of one year.

3. Supervisory Controls. Ombudsman duties and responsibilities will be collateral to their current regular assignments and are under the direction of the Program Coordinator. Duties performed as an Ombudsman will not serve as a basis for the annual performance appraisal. Recognition of these collateral duties will come from the IG.

*Mediation is a more formal type of dispute resolution than others that may be utilized by an Ombudsman. It is a process that is agreed to and participated in by both parties of a disagreement. An impartial neutral party mediates in a meeting between the parties, where the parties themselves discuss and suggest possible solutions in an attempt to achieve resolution of the issue and enter into a settlement agreement that satisfies them both. 3

Part C. Definitions and Roles

1. The Ombudsman Program Coordinator. A neutral party who, while in the role of program coordinator, is responsible for compiling data and statistics reported by the Ombudsmen, providing regular briefings to the Inspector General, and for representing the OIG in VA Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) meetings. The Ombudsman Program Coordinator may not disclose identities of any of the parties involved when compiling and reporting program data and statistics.

2. The Ombudsman. A neutral party who, while in the role of Ombudsman, may serve as a go-between and/or informal factfinder, counselor, facilitator, negotiator, or mediator. Ombudsman duties and responsibilities include the following -

a. Provides a forum for listening to employees' and managers' work-related concerns and as needed, provides informal and impartial assistance in an attempt to resolve those concerns. Utilizes facilitation, counseling, conciliation, mediation or other methods to attempt resolution.

b. Takes interests of all parties involved into consideration when attempting to resolve a concern or dispute.

c. Maintains neutrality and discretion so that employees will have full confidence in the security of the information being exchanged. The Ombudsman will not disclose an employee's identity unless the consent of the employee is obtained. The Ombudsman will request a release of an employee's identity when disclosure is necessary to resolve a problem. However, under extreme circumstances such as those mentioned in the section on Processes and Functions, disclosure of an employee's identity without consent may occur. In such cases, the Ombudsman will consult with the Program Coordinator.

d. Where applicable, makes employees aware of specific deadlines for filing a complaint with the appropriate formal complaint resolution agents.

e. Confers, consults with, and as determined to be in the best interests of the employee and/or the agency, refers the employee to the OIG Office of Human Resources or other appropriate office.

f. May occasionally be required to travel to field units to accomplish the Ombudsman role.

NOTE: The Ombudsman does not have decision-making authority with respect to the issues brought to his or her attention.

Part D. Processes and Functions

1. Contacts. All employees, including supervisors, may contact any of the appointed Ombudsmen to discuss a concern and request assistance in resolving it. Appropriate brochures and other materials that provide a current list of Ombudsmen and their phone numbers will be posted on organizational bulletin boards.

2. Initial Steps to Problem Resolution. An employee with a concern should first discuss the matter with those involved. If the problem is not resolved, the employee should next discuss the situation with his/her immediate supervisor. If a contacted Ombudsman determines that an appropriate supervisor has been bypassed without good reason, the Ombudsman will suggest to the employee that he/she talk with that supervisor first, to allow an opportunity for the supervisor to attempt to resolve the issue.

3. Privacy Act and Need-to-Know. In compliance with the Privacy Act or other legal or regulatory control requirements, the Ombudsman may be granted access to information that is directly related to a concern from official records. This access may be granted only upon request to the custodian of those records, if there is substantial reason to believe that the information contained in the requested records will aid in the informal resolution of the issue.

4. Confidentiality.

a. Under ordinary circumstances, the confidentiality to which an Ombudsman commits will not be broken. However, if (for example) an Ombudsman receives information deemed to be credible, which indicates an imminent threat of physical harm to persons or property or to the mission of the agency, the Ombudsman will encourage the employee to notify the appropriate officials. If the employee refuses, the Ombudsman will offer to notify the appropriate officials and will seek a release of the employee's identity to do so. In the event the employee refuses, the Ombudsman will consult with the Program Coordinator before making the appropriate notice.

b. Ombudsmen are not to keep any written or voice-recorded records of individual cases. However, they will report certain statistical data to the Ombudsman Program Coordinator, without disclosing the identity of the complainant or related specific case information. The Coordinator will compile statistical data and provide the Inspector General with regular briefings of program statistics and trends.

c. Except as provided in paragraphs 1 and 2, all communications to an Ombudsman will be confidential and privileged and will not be the subject of testimony in any judicial or administrative proceeding. This policy exists so that OIG employees will trust and utilize the program as an alternative dispute resolution process. Sensitive and ethical issues may be reported and resolved via an Ombudsman only if it is agreed and understood that the Ombudsman will function in a neutral, independent, and confidential manner. To ensure confidence in the program, an Ombudsman will not testify about communications that he/she has when acting as an Ombudsman. Similarly, witnesses or others with whom the Ombudsman communicates will not testify about such matters. This privilege rests in the office of the Ombudsman and cannot be waived by any party. A protective order will be sought to prevent any testimony that is contrary to this policy.

5. Data Gathering and Reporting. Ombudsmen are not to retain any written documentation or voice-recordings of individual cases. However, they will report certain statistical data to the Program Coordinator, without disclosing the identity of the complainant or related specific case information. The Program Coordinator will compile statistical data such as gender, occupational series and grade, category of complaint, and outcome. From time to time, the Program Coordinator will provide the IG with regular briefings of program statistics and trends.

6. Travel. If travel is required to perform in the role of Ombudsman, the Ombudsman must discuss the situation and receive prior approval from the Program Coordinator.

Part E. Ombudsman Requirements

1. Training. The OIG Office of Human Resources (53D3) will ensure that each Ombudsman appointee is scheduled for initial, refresher, and/or new concepts training. This will include training in such topics as the role of Ombudsman, general conflict resolution, and mediation.

2. Attributes/Competencies. Ombudsmen must:

- a. have good agency knowledge
- b. be neutral; unbiased
- c. have exceptional listening skills
- d. maintain strict confidentiality of the specific identities of those who come to them for assistance and in all related communications
- e. be able to ascertain when to refer the issue to another official/formal source
- f. be a trained Ombudsman/conciliator/counselor/mediator

**COMMENTING ON AND COORDINATING
LEGISLATION AND POLICY PROPOSALS**

1. REASON FOR ISSUE: The Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended, requires the Inspector General (IG) to review existing and proposed legislation and regulations relating to the programs and operations of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). As a result, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) receives documents from VA and other Federal organizations with a request to provide concurrence and/or comments on a variety of items such as correspondence, policy directives, reports, regulations, and legislation. This directive establishes a standardized OIG policy for processing these requests.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS: This directive provides information regarding the proper procedures for controlling, coordinating and responding to documents sent to the OIG for review and comment. This includes the designation of the office responsible for overseeing the process; what should be considered when reviewing documents; what types of comments are required; and how an office should respond to a request. It also explains what happens if the OIG initiates a proposed directive, regulation, or legislation that needs VA review and comment.

3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Operational Support Division (53B), Office of Management and Administration (53).

4. RESCISSION: OIG Policy and Procedures Guide, Part I, Chapter 23.

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BY DIRECTION OF:

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COMMENTING ON AND COORDINATING LEGISLATION AND POLICY PROPOSALS

1. PURPOSE

The OIG regularly receives requests to review and comment on a wide variety of documents. These documents include draft correspondence, legislative initiatives, proposed regulations, and imminent reports. These requests come from numerous sources, including VA, Congress, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and other Federal agencies. They generally involve issues relevant to the OIG and/or VA. Requests are generally received through the Department's Electronic Document Management System (EDMS). We also occasionally receive requests through the mail system, personal hand-carries, electronic mail, and other means. This directive sets forth the actions that should be taken when a request is received from any source and official OIG comment or concurrence is required.

2. POLICY

Who is responsible for overseeing this procedure?

The Operational Support Division (53B) is responsible for the overall management and coordination of the OIG review and comment process. This includes reviewing requests and determining if a direct response of no comment should be provided, whether to route the request to OIG offices for review and comment, or to simply release the package to OIG offices for informational purposes only.

The Director, Operational Support Division will:

- Determine if the matter falls within the purview of the OIG.
- Maintain a database of controlling all OIG responses.
- Coordinate the request, if necessary, with any and all relevant OIG offices.
- Use the uniform concurrence form to obtain concurrence and/or comments on all issues (see Appendix A).
- Prepare and submit the proper OIG response.
- Provide informational copies of packages not requiring a response, to appropriate OIG offices having an interest in the issue (see Appendix B).

If another OIG operating element directly receives a request for official review and comment, the Operational Support Division should be notified immediately so they can properly control and process the request.

What should be considered when reviewing these issues?

The primary basis for reviewing and commenting on issues will be previous OIG reports and ongoing work. Technical expertise or a historical working knowledge of the program can also provide a basis for comments, providing they reflect the views of the OIG. Comments based on personal preferences should be avoided.

What types of comments are required?

Responses will fall into one of the following categories:

- **Concur** – Agree with the proposal as written.
- **Concur with Comment** – Agree with the proposal, but have suggested wording changes for clarity. These are suggestions only and may be disregarded by the source originating the proposal.
- **Non-Concur** – Disagree with the proposal. The basis for the non-concurrence needs to be explained fully, including any relevant OIG work or projects. If a wording change would make concurrence possible, provide the acceptable wording. (Note: Recommendations for non-concurrences must be submitted through the respective Assistant IG. The Operational Support Division is responsible for coordinating with the Deputy IG and IG on all recommended non-concurrence responses.)
- **No Comment** – To be used when you believe the proposal is not relevant to the work of your office, or that you have no basis to comment on the proposal.

Offices should be aware that the Department on some requests requires short turn-around times. When the OIG is given a specific time by which a response is needed, that time restraint is passed on to OIG operating elements. A non-response by OIG within the required time can result in OIG's comments not being considered by the originating office.

A "no comment" response is not acceptable on proposals that cannot be reviewed within requested timeframes. If the issue is relevant to OIG work and the responding office cannot review it within the requested timeframe, the OIG office should contact the Operational Support Division without delay so an extension can be requested. If an extension is not possible, every attempt should be made to develop a response within the requested timeframe. Note that some due dates are determined by OMB or Congress and cannot be changed.

Packages requiring review for concurrence and/or comment will be delivered to offices as soon as possible after their receipt within the Operational Support Division. In addition to a hard copy package, assignments may also be made to reviewing offices via EDMS, especially when the package is extremely large and only a portion of it relates to the OIG office reviewing it. In those instances, the

Operational Support Division will notify the principals by e-mail that they are receiving only a portion of the package in hard copy and that the balance is available in a particular EDMS folder. Offices are also encouraged to check their EDMS in-boxes on a regular basis to ensure timely receipt and review of all assignments, especially in those instances when an EDMS assignment may be made directly to them from an office external to the OIG.

How should an office respond to a request for concurrence or comments?

Concurrence or comments should be submitted either in hard copy format or electronic mail (e-mail) to the Operational Support Division. Hard copy responses should be on the Concurrence and Comment Sheet (Appendix A). E-mail responses should include the same information. Responses should be addressed to the staff member who originally requested the review. When responding by e-mail, a courtesy copy to the Director, Operational Support Division, will ensure receipt by the office should the individual with primary responsibility for coordinating a consolidated OIG response be unavailable due to leave, training, etc. The Operational Support Division will be responsible for input of the final OIG response into EDMS and for clearing all EDMS controls.

What happens if the OIG initiates proposed directives, regulations or legislation needing VA review and comment?

All proposed VA directives, Federal regulations, or legislation initiated by the OIG should be forwarded to the Operational Support Division once it has been reviewed and approved by the appropriate Assistant IG. The Operational Support Division will advise on the appropriate formatting, obtain any internal OIG and/or external concurrences from appropriate Departmental officials, ensure the completion of all administrative matters associated with the required processing of these items, and ensure that proper EDMS control is established. The Operational Support Division will then forward the document to the appropriate VA office for final processing and issuance.

VA OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
LEGISLATION AND POLICY PROPOSALS
CONCURRENCE AND COMMENT SHEET

Subject:				
Tracking/EDMS Number:				
Date Sent by 53B:		Response to 53B Due By:		
To	OIG Official	Office Symbol	Date Received	Date Completed
	AIG-INVESTIGATIONS	51		
	AIG-AUDITING	52		
	AIG-MGMT & ADMIN	53		
	AIG-HEALTHCARE	54		
	COUNSELOR	50C		
RECOMMENDATION: <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 10px;"><div><input type="checkbox"/> Concur</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> Non-Concur (see below)</div></div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 10px;"><div><input type="checkbox"/> Concur with comment (see below)</div><div><input type="checkbox"/> No Comment</div></div>				
Comment (or attach a separate sheet):				
Signature (AIG/Counselor/Approving Official)			Date:	

**VA OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
LEGISLATION AND POLICY PROPOSALS
INFORMATION ONLY REFERRAL SHEET**

Subject:			
Tracking/EDMS Number:			
To	OIG Official	Office Symbol	Remarks
	AIG-INVESTIGATIONS	51	
	AIG-AUDITING	52	
	AIG-MGMT & ADMIN	53	
	AIG-HEALTHCARE	54	
	COUNSELOR	50C	
 F Y I No Response Required 			
Director, Operational Support (53B)			Date:

FOLLOW-UP ON REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish Office of Inspector General (OIG) policies, procedures, and responsibilities for follow-up on report recommendations.
2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:** This directive describes OIG follow-up activities for recommendations in OIG reports. It outlines responsibilities of OIG staff and, specifically, the Office of Management and Administration (53).
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Office of Management and Administration (53).
4. **RELATED DIRECTIVES:**
 - a. Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Circular A-50, "Audit Follow-up," September 29, 1982.
 - b. OIG Office of Audit Directive 203, "Monetary Benefits," January 21, 1998.
5. **RECISSION:** OIG Policy and Procedures, Part I, Chapter 28, "Resolution, Follow-up Review, and Follow-up Inspection on OIG and GAO Reports," July 1991.

CERTIFIED BY:

BY THE DIRECTION OF:

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FOLLOW-UP ON REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. PURPOSE: This directive provides policy and procedures for OIG staff to help ensure OIG report recommendations for improvements in VA programs and operations are implemented in a timely manner. This directive implements the Inspector General Act of 1978, as amended (5 U.S.C. App. 3), and OMB Circular A-50, "Audit Follow-up" to the extent that OIG has assumed follow-up on OIG recommendations in VA.

2. SCOPE: This directive applies to follow-up activities by OIG on all OIG report recommendations, with the exception of Office of Contract Review (OCR) preaward and postaward reviews. OCR follows up on its own reviews and provides the results to 53 for entry into the OIG Master Case Index (MCI).

3. BACKGROUND: Implementation of recommendations made in OIG reports for improvements in VA programs and operations is the ultimate outcome sought when OIG undertakes an audit, healthcare inspection, administrative investigation, joint review, or other review. To achieve this outcome, OIG follows a deliberate process in issuing draft reports to the Department to obtain comments on report findings and concurrence in proposed recommendations. Whenever VA management disagrees with findings and recommendations in draft reports, OIG works with management to attempt to resolve differences in a manner that produces management concurrence while still preserving essential OIG independent oversight. Should OIG and management negotiations not produce resolution, OIG has three options: (1) seek resolution at higher levels within VA, up to and including the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, prior to issuing the final report; (2) issue a final OIG report containing recommendations that have not been resolved, which may or may not be raised with higher level VA officials for resolution after report issuance; or (3) withhold issuing final recommendations that have not been resolved.

OIG operates a centralized follow-up process to track and ensure implementation of all OIG report recommendations. To ensure timely implementation of recommendations, OIG Follow-up staff must be involved prior to issuing the draft report for significant reports, and OIG report issuing offices must be cognizant of follow-up issues while formulating recommendations and remain actively involved in the follow-up process even after report issuance. Should a report be issued containing an unresolved recommendation, no follow-up activities will be taken as to that recommendation and the recommendation will be reported in the Semiannual Report to Congress (SAR) as unresolved.

4. DEFINITIONS:

a. Issuing office. The office within OIG responsible for issuing a specific OIG recommendation and for approving or disapproving corrective action, implementation plans, and closure on that recommendation reported by an action office. For example, the Office of Healthcare Inspections is the issuing office for Combined Assessment

Program (CAP) reviews, healthcare inspection reports, and health care recommendations contained in joint reports issued by other OIG components.

b. Action office. The office within VA responsible for ensuring implementation of OIG recommendations.

c. Follow-up staff. OIG employees designated by the Assistant Inspector General (AIG) for Management and Administration (53) to conduct centralized follow-up activities.

d. Draft report. An OIG report that is issued to VA management for comment and concurrence on the findings and recommendations. All OIG reports are submitted in draft to VA prior to being issued in final, unless specifically exempted from this requirement by the Inspector General.

e. Final report. An issued OIG report. Also referred to as a published OIG report.

f. Significant report. For purposes of delineating which reports require pre-draft Follow-up consultation, a significant report is a nationwide audit, healthcare inspection, joint review, or other report designated by the Inspector General as significant. CAP reviews, hotline reviews, administrative investigations, and reviews involving only one facility/station or simple issues are not considered sufficiently significant to require consultation with Follow-up staff prior to issuing the draft report.

g. Resolution. The process in which OIG and VA management resolve differences when the action office and OIG cannot agree to findings, recommendations for improvement, and/or an implementation plan for OIG recommendations. Generally, when OIG cannot reach agreement with the action office, OIG has the discretion to elevate the dispute within VA up to the Deputy Secretary, who is the final VA resolution official, or to issue the report with the nonconcurrence. In those cases when the Deputy Secretary renders a final resolution decision, it is the Inspector General's decision to publish the final report in compliance with or in dispute with the final agency decision. OIG may or may not seek resolution before or after publishing the final report.

h. Resolved recommendation. A recommendation in which VA management and OIG agree on the OIG recommendation for improvement in VA programs and operations. A recommendation may be resolved by VA concurrence in response to a draft report, after negotiations and modifications during the draft report stage, and/or following decision of a higher level VA official which OIG accepts.

i. Resolved report. A report which includes only resolved recommendations.

j. Unresolved recommendation. A recommendation in which VA and OIG have not agreed to findings, recommendation for improvement, or an implementation plan.

k. Unresolved report. A report which includes at least one unresolved recommendation.

l. Corrective action. Measures taken by VA to implement a resolved recommendation.

m. Management decision. The evaluation by VA management of the findings and recommendations included in an OIG report and the issuance of a final decision by VA management concerning its response to such findings and recommendations, including implementation plans for corrective action. Generally, management decisions are communicated to OIG by action offices in comments to draft reports and published in final reports. Where there is disagreement between OIG and the action office, the recommendation proceeds to resolution in the discretion of OIG.

n. Implementation plan. A written document submitted by the Department to OIG addressing report recommendations. The plan includes planned corrective actions and, where appropriate, dates for achieving actions. Generally, the initial implementation plan is provided to OIG in VA's comments to the draft. OIG reviews the implementation plan to determine if it satisfies the intent of the recommendation.

o. Follow-up status request. A written request sent by OIG Follow-up staff to the action office for status of implementation of open recommendations. The action office response is called the implementation status report. When the action office does not submit an implementation plan in response to the draft report, Follow-up staff is responsible for obtaining the implementation plan and having it reviewed by the issuing office.

p. Implementation status report. A written response by the action office to a follow-up status request indicating what progress has been made in implementing open recommendations and making requests for closing recommendations that the action office believes have been fully implemented. The implementation status report contains documentary evidence, such as issued policies, certifications, or other material supporting requests for closing recommendations.

q. Open recommendation. A recommendation that has not been implemented. Also referred to as unimplemented recommendation.

r. Open report. A report in which at least one recommendation is open/unimplemented. Also referred to as unimplemented report.

s. Closed recommendation. A recommendation that has been implemented. Also referred to as implemented recommendation.

t. Closed report. A report in which all recommendations have been closed. Also referred to as implemented report.

5. POLICY:

a. Timely implementation of OIG recommendations for improvement in VA programs and operations enhances the impact of OIG work on the Department to the benefit of veterans, their families, and taxpayers.

b. OIG's goal is to implement all recommendations in OIG reports within 1 year of issuance of the final report.

c. In order to meet the 1-year implementation goal in as many reports as possible, OIG staff will plan and execute work with this goal in mind. Managers and staff will plan projects in appropriate phases or segments so as to produce recommendations that can be implemented within 1 year. Report drafters will consult with 53 to ensure that proposed recommendations in significant reports are capable of timely implementation. OIG recognizes that some issues are so complex that VA implementation of recommendations may take more than a year, but such instances should be rare. OIG will require implementation plans that include milestones of at least quarterly increments to measure progress towards ultimate implementation.

d. While 53 will primarily track, monitor, and report on follow-up activities, OIG staff who prepare and issue report recommendations will remain involved with the recommendations after the final report is issued. These individuals are the subject matter experts on the meaning and intent of the recommendations they issued. In particular, they will assist 53 in meetings and discussions with action offices to monitor implementation plans and determine when a recommendation may be closed. 53 will only close a recommendation with the concurrence of the issuing office. Issues requiring internal OIG resolution should be elevated to the Inspector General on significant issues. All other issues should be resolved between the respective AIGs.

e. Maintaining an up-to-date, comprehensive, and accurate tracking system for all OIG report recommendations is essential to sound management of OIG follow-up activities and serves as the basis for preparing timely and accurate reports pursuant to statutory requirements, such as the Inspector General Act requirement to issue the SAR. 53 will use MCI as the primary automated tracking system for these activities.

6. PROCEDURES:

a. Standard recommendation format. All OIG recommendations will be numbered and stated in complete sentences. Actions requiring multiple action offices will be stated in separate recommendations for each action office. Recommendations will not include numbered or lettered subparts.

b. Consultation on report recommendations prior to issuing significant draft reports. Issuing offices will consult with 53 on proposed recommendations prior to issuing a draft to VA in significant reports to ensure that they are clear, capable of implementation, and in the standard recommendation format. Consultation shall be

documented in the project work papers, and may be by e-mail. Issuing offices will seek consultation from the Deputy AIG for Management and Administration, or designated 53 staff member. 53 will respond to requests for consultation within 1 business day. Consultation concerns will be elevated to the respective AIGs for resolution. AIGs will consult with the Deputy Inspector General on significant concerns.

c. Implementation plans. Issuing offices will not accept, except in extraordinary circumstances, implementation plans that will require more than 1 year from the date of final report issuance for implementation of all recommendations. In the rare instances of recommendations that will require implementation over a longer period, issuing offices and 53 will require measurable milestones of not greater than quarterly increments by which OIG staff can track progress towards implementation.

d. Final reports. OIG has the prerogative to publish a final report, and may delete or amend findings and recommendations based on comments received from the action office. For example, Department comments may disclose additional evidence that would change OIG findings in a report. OIG may publish a final report stating that VA failed to comment. Pursuant to its statutory independence as an oversight organization, OIG reserves the right to publish a final report without the concurrence of VA on all findings and recommendations or without an implementation plan acceptable to OIG, or in the absence of any comments or response from VA. To ensure compliance with statutory reporting requirements, such a final report will be identified in the SAR as a report in which no agency management decision was made. After all attempts to resolve nonconcurrence between the AIGs and the action office have been exhausted, the Inspector General will determine whether OIG will seek resolution at the Deputy Secretary level prior or subsequent to issuing the final report.

e. Closure of recommendations upon issuance of final report. The issuing office will determine at the time of issuance of the final report whether any recommendation has been implemented, and, if so, indicate the recommendation is considered closed and implemented in the final report. Generally, such recommendations will be closed based on the comments, and documentation supporting assertions made in those comments, provided by the action office in response to the draft report. As with closing any recommendation, closure of a recommendation at this time will not be based on mere assertion of implementation by the action office, but will be based on supporting documentation or independent information obtained by OIG from the action office or other sources that indicates the corrective action has occurred or has sufficiently progressed to close the recommendation as implemented. For example, a recommendation to train employees on a particular issue will not be closed on a mere promise by the action office to conduct the training, but may be closed prior to completion of all training if the action office has demonstrated through documentation, (e.g., a directive, training syllabus and schedule, etc.), it has established a training program and begun the training in a systematic fashion—thereby indicating it is meeting the intent of the recommendation.

f. Follow-up on open reports. 53 will follow up on open reports until all recommendations have been fully implemented. They will enter the report information (report name, title, date, number and summary of recommendations, action office, etc.) into the MCI tracking system within 30 days of issuance of the report. 53 will conduct follow-up activities on a quarterly basis commencing 90 days after report issuance. At each follow-up interval, 53 will send a follow-up status request to the action office asking for an implementation status report that summarizes what actions the Department has taken within the preceding 90 days towards implementing open recommendations and whether the action office believes that any recommendations should be closed. The action office will be provided a suspense date of 30 days that OIG will not extend. If the suspense date is not met, Follow-up staff will call for an explanation of the delay within a few days. If no answer is received within 45 days of the follow-up status request, Follow-up and issuing office staff will meet with action office officials to obtain status information and a modified implementation plan. Should problems persist after this meeting, the issuing office AIG will elevate the issue within the action office chain-of-command to the organization (i.e., Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or staff office head) until a response is received. Only after this process is exhausted and implementation progress remains unsatisfactory to the involved AIGs will the issuing office AIG and AIG for Management and Administration inform the Inspector General and Deputy Inspector General and Follow-up staff will add the issue to the quarterly follow-up report.

g. Quarterly reports and reviews. Every quarter, to coincide with the SAR preparation and mid-SAR period, 53 will prepare a report for the Inspector General listing all reports unimplemented for more than 1 year and those reports issued within the past year where problems with implementation have arisen. As part of the preparation of these reports, 53 will meet with the issuing offices to review open reports and recommendations to determine whether any problems exist in implementation or whether circumstances would allow closure of any recommendations. For all reports over 1 year old and those newer reports with problems identified in implementation, Follow-up and issuing office staff will meet with action office staff to determine the issues and attempt to establish an acceptable revised implementation timetable. If this meeting fails to result in an acceptable plan, the issuing office AIG will work through the action office chain of command culminating with the issuing office AIG meeting with that organization head (i.e., Under Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or staff office head) to resolve implementation issues. If progress satisfactory to OIG does not result from these efforts, the issuing office AIG and AIG for Management and Administration will consult with the Inspector General concerning whether the issue will be elevated to the Deputy Security for resolution. In those rare cases where OIG has accepted an implementation plan that will require more than 1 year to complete, OIG will not consider these reports overdue so long as the implementation remains on schedule. Meetings on implementation and follow-up issues may involve teleconference in lieu of travel.

h. Notification of closed reports. 53 will notify the action office when OIG closes a report as implemented. Issuing offices will not notify the action office prior to 53

making the closure determination in order to avoid any confusion about the status of open recommendations. While no recommendations are closed without concurrence of the issuing office, no issuing office has authority to close a recommendation on its own initiative.

i. SAR and other required reports. Follow-up staff will prepare the required information on report follow-up for the SAR and other required reports. In those rare cases where OIG has accepted an implementation plan that will require more than 1 year to complete, OIG will annotate required listings of reports that are open more than 1 year that these reports are not considered overdue because of a longer-than-1-year implementation schedule.

j. Follow-up, closure, and reporting of unresolved recommendations. Generally, OIG receives concurrence on or otherwise resolves recommendations prior to issuing the final report. If this does not occur, one option available to OIG is to publish a final report containing unresolved recommendations. In such instances, no follow-up activity will be taken as to unresolved recommendations. OIG will report unresolved recommendation in the next SAR and close those recommendations upon publication of that SAR, unless the Inspector General determines to seek further resolution.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. The Inspector General ensures the implementation of the Inspector General Act and OMB Circular A-50 as they relate to reporting on the progress of corrective actions and follow-up activities on recommendations in OIG reports. The Inspector General will make determinations as to whether to seek resolution from the Deputy Secretary on recommendations where negotiations between AIGs and undersecretaries, assistant secretaries, and staff office heads have failed to resolve follow-up issues.

b. The AIG for Management and Administration is responsible for the overall implementation of follow-up activities on OIG report recommendations and ensuring that 53 staff comply with the requirements of this directive.

c. The AIGs for Auditing, Investigations, and Healthcare Inspections are responsible for ensuring that:

(1) Their staff understand the OIG goal of closing reports within 1 year of issuance and incorporate this goal into planning the scope of projects to meet this goal.

(2) Their staff consult with 53 in drafting recommendations on significant reports that can be clearly understood and fully implemented and conform to established formats as stated in this directive.

(3) Recommendations that can be closed at final report issuance are identified as closed in the final report.

(4) Issuing office staff respond timely to 53 requests for evaluation of implementation status reports (i.e., whether the issuing office agrees with Follow-up staff's preliminary assessment on which recommendations to close and to keep open) to attend meetings with action offices on unimplemented recommendations, and to promptly inform 53 of information they receive that would allow closure of recommendations or that indicates a delay in implementation.

(5) All reports are submitted by stated cut-off dates for timely reporting requirements such as the SAR and other required reports.

d. All OIG employees involved in the report issuing and follow-up process will comply with the requirements of this directive.

TEMPORARY DUTY TRAVEL

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish organization-wide Office of Inspector General (OIG) policy on temporary duty (TDY) and local travel.
2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:** This directive updates and provides OIG policy regarding employees who are on official travel from their official duty station and local travel at the official duty station.
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Director, Administrative and Financial Operations Division (53D), Office of Management and Administration.
4. **REFERENCES:**
 - a. OIG GM Directive 312, "Travel Home Policy While on TDY," dated March 1, 2001.
 - b. OIG GM Directive 313, "VA Travel Savings Award Program," dated September 30, 2002.
 - c. OIG GM Directive 319, "Mandatory Use of Travel Cards," dated March 27, 2009.
 - d. OIG Directive 51-304, "Management and Use of Government Owned and Leased Vehicles," dated September 2, 2011.
 - e. VA Financial Policy, Volume XIV, Chapter 7, Local Travel, dated January 2013.
5. **RECISSION:** OIG GM Directive 320, dated December 7, 2009.

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE
INSPECTOR GENERAL:**

(original signed by:)

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Distribution:

Electronic Distribution to All OIG Employees

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TEMPORARY DUTY TRAVEL

1. PURPOSE: To establish Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) policy, responsibilities, and procedures for temporary duty (TDY) and local travel at Government expense. OIG policy regarding TDY and local travel is consistent with VA policy except where noted. The terms "TDY" and "official" travel are used interchangeably in this directive.

2. BACKGROUND: OIG requires travel by employees in order to accomplish the OIG mission. Travel should be fair and reasonable for both the Government and the employee. The Federal Travel Regulation (FTR) states employees must exercise the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business. TDY involves the movement of an employee from the official duty station to a temporary place of duty and return to the official duty station. The FTR is promulgated by the General Services Administration (GSA) under applicable authorities, and governs TDY and local travel allowances. The GSA Travel Homepage is located on the World Wide Web at <http://gsa.gov/travelpolicy>. FTR amendments and Travel/Per Diem Bulletins are officially published in the *Federal Register* and the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).

3. AUTHORITY: Title 5, United States Code, Chapter 57, as implemented by 41 CFR 301–304, provides authority for the payment of travel and transportation expenses, including per diem incurred by Government employees.

4. HELP AIDS: OIG employees are encouraged to submit questions to vaigtravelinquiries@va.gov, also found in Outlook as VAOIG Travel Inquiries. For convenience and to eliminate duplication, applicable materials are referenced and hyperlinks are provided throughout this directive. For purposes of this directive, certain terms are defined in Appendix G - Definitions.

5. POLICY:

a. OIG staff on TDY and local travel should be knowledgeable of and must comply with all applicable rules, regulations, and applicable travel issuances relating to the FTR and OIG directives.

b. OIG employees must use the Travel Management System (TMS) to provide travel services such as airlines, vehicle rental, and lodging for official travel. In order to comply with the FTR, VA has contracted with FedTraveler to provide travel services. Throughout this directive these services will be referred to as TMS.

c. Employees will not be reimbursed for unauthorized travel or travel expenses. The OIG is not bound by the erroneous approval of its supervisors and managers, and any payments made are recoverable. Employees will be held responsible for excess costs and any additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience.

d. Supervisors delegated the authority to approve travel are responsible for ensuring that only essential official travel is approved, travel is carefully and prudently planned, funds are available prior to approving an employee's travel request, and the number of travelers is kept to the minimum necessary to accomplish the purpose of the travel. Excessive costs, circuitous routes, delays, early arrivals, luxury/premium accommodations, and services unnecessary or unjustified in the performance of official business that lead to additional costs will not be reimbursed.

e. In order for employees to be eligible for per diem allowance, the following criteria must be met:

(1) Travel must be 12 hours or more, and

(2) TDY is at least 50 miles from the official duty station and residence from which the employee regularly commutes to and from work on a daily basis.

(3) No per diem may be authorized within the official station unless a function qualifies under the Government Employee Training Act.

f. Employees who do not have a rental vehicle may be reimbursed for using public transportation systems (bus, subway, shuttle service, or other modes of public transportation) when:

(1) Seeking meals at the nearest available place where the nature and location of work at the TDY station are such that meals cannot be obtained there.

(2) Traveling from place of lodging to work site, or

(3) Whenever courtesy transportation (e.g., free airport shuttle) is not available.

Employees must enter a statement on their Travel Authorization, in the comment section, explaining why such travel was necessary. Additional reimbursement information is in FTR 301-10.190 and 301-10.420 and can be found at <http://gsa.gov/travelpolicy>.

6. AUTHORIZATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS:

a. Travel Authorization. Legal authority for all official travel is provided in a travel authorization each fiscal year. Unlimited Open Travel Authorization is issued for the Inspector General, Deputy Inspector General, and Assistant Inspectors General (AIG). Limited Open Travel Authorization is issued for all other OIG employees. Each OIG directorate receives their allotment of travel funds each quarter. The AIG or designees are responsible for ensuring travel authorizations do not exceed quarterly allocations.

b. Travel Approval. No OIG employee may approve his or her own travel. OIG employees must complete a Travel Authorization and have it approved by an OIG

supervisor prior to travel with the exception of local travel. OIG supervisors who are delegated authority to approve travel may do so for those employees under their supervision. OIG employees shall contact their immediate supervisor in emergency circumstances when an advance authorization cannot be completed in FedTraveler.

Note: Written (electronic) requests will be submitted by the respective AIG to the Special Assistant to the Inspector General in all instances where advance written approval is required at the IG or DIG level.

Other policy provisions include:

(1) Domestic Travel and Local Travel. Requires approval by the employee's immediate supervisor.

(2) Foreign Travel. Requires approval by the employee's applicable AIG or the Counselor to the IG who will then provide courtesy notification to the IG/DIG. Travel must comply with the Fly America Act (FTR 301-10.131 thru 143).

(3) Use of Premium-Class on Common Carrier Transportation. Requires advance written approval by the IG with concurrence of the Counselor to the Inspector General (50C) as appropriate. Additional reporting requirements are involved.

(4) Use of Non-Contract Carrier. Requires advance approval by the supervisor authorized to approve travel. The employee must include a statement on the Travel Authorization citing the FTR exemption code (see Appendix A), a detailed explanation for non-use of a contract carrier, and the date of approval. GSA requires Federal travelers on official business to use City Pair Contract Carriers unless a specific exception applies such as space on a contract carrier is not available. This required use is the incentive necessary to obtain airline participation in the City Pair Program and allows the airlines the business volume necessary to offer discounted rates. Federal employees have a contractual obligation to use contract carriers absent a specific exemption.

Employees canceling tickets for personal preference will be responsible for reimbursing the Government for all additional costs associated with the rebooking of a new ticket along with reimbursement of any portion of the unused ticket.

(5) Use of Cash of More than \$100 to Pay for Common Carrier Transportation. Requires immediate supervisor's advance approval. The threshold is per transaction, not per whole trip.

(6) Use of Rental Vehicle. Requires immediate supervisor's approval in FedTraveler and coordination with other colleagues as appropriate. Personally rented vehicles will not be authorized to use for official TDY travel.

(7) Payment of Reduced Per Diem Rate. This applies when all or part of the lodging or meals is furnished at no cost or a reduced cost to the employee by the Government. Requires immediate supervisor's advance approval.

(8) Travel Advance. Requires immediate supervisor's approval on the Travel Authorization in FedTraveler. Supervisors must ensure the amount requested is limited to expenses that cannot be charged to the travel card and is proportionate with the number of days in travel and the amount of per diem for the TDY location.

(9) Acceptance of Cash or In-Kind Payment to Cover Travel Expenses. Requires advance AIG approval and if approved, employee must report the details to 53D.

c. Approval Process Requirements.

(1) Ordinarily, approval for all travel plans is given to employees orally, by their supervisor, prior to entering a Travel Authorization in FedTraveler.

(2) When complete, Travel Authorization must be submitted and approved by the approving supervisor before travel is performed and any expenses are incurred.

7. EXCEPTIONS TO USE OF TMS: The FTR requires Government agencies to utilize TMS to provide travel services such as air transportation, lodging, and vehicle rental for official travel unless one of the following conditions exists:

a. A Government agency sponsors a conference or arranges for a block of rooms to be available for Federal attendees at a specified rate in one or more specific hotels and the rate is less than the TMS can provide.

b. An unusual circumstance such as the TMS not listing a Government approved hotel or an urgent requirement makes it impossible to use the TMS for arranging common carrier, lodging, or vehicle rental. Employees must provide a justification in the Travel Authorization explaining the circumstances for not using the TMS and ensure it is approved by their supervisor.

8. CONTRACT AIR CARRIERS: GSA requires Federal travelers on official business to use City Pair contract carriers unless a specific exception applies. Appendix A provides additional guidance for air travel and contract carriers.

9. VEHICLE RENTAL: The FTR requires travelers to use the TMS when renting vehicles for official OIG business. Rental vehicles are a "Special Conveyance" by FTR definition and require separate justification and approval in the Travel Authorization. Using the TMS ensures vehicles are rented with vendors who participate in the U.S. Government Rental Car Agreement. Entitlements under this agreement include collision damage insurance, unlimited mileage, and reduced age restrictions.

NOTE: In case of an accident using a rental vehicle, employees must immediately report the accident to the police, the rental car agency, and their supervisor. If possible, a police report should be obtained and a copy turned in along with the rental agency accident report. Employees will also be required to complete an SF 91, Motor Vehicle Accident Report, and forward the report along with the police report to their supervisor and the Counselor to the Inspector General (50C) for review and action. Additionally, it is recommended that employees keep good records of anything that occurred in the accident.

Employees are prohibited from using rental vehicles when on TDY for training assignments unless approved in advance by their AIG. Use of the Government issued travel credit card is mandatory for vehicle rental. Additional guidance on vehicle rentals is included in Appendix B and additional information regarding the entitlements under the agreement can be found at <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Docs/CarRentalAgreement.pdf>.

In addition to requirements in the FTR, OIG has implemented its own specific guidance to ensure that travel funds for vehicle rentals are prudently spent. Vehicle size authorized must meet mission requirements. Supervisors can approve larger vehicle types based on official needs of the assignment such as additional equipment or supplies to be transported, or for medical or special needs accommodations. Convertibles, high-performance, and exotic vehicles are prohibited. Number of vehicles rented will be commensurate with the nature of the assignment. In projects conducted jointly by multiple components, coordination and cooperation must occur concerning vehicle rental approval in order to realize travel savings. The listing below applies to all employees regardless of grade level or destination.

- Compact—One or two travelers
- Mid-Size—Three travelers
- Full-Size—Four travelers
- Mini-Van—Five travelers
- Full-Size Van—Six or more travelers

10. LODGING REQUIREMENTS: The FTR requires travelers to use the TMS when booking lodging reservations. Using the TMS ensures hotels selected comply with the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act and the GSA FedRooms Federal Premier Lodging Program. You can view the Hotel/Motel Fire Safe List at www.usfa.dhs.gov/applications/hotel/ and the GSA FedRooms program at www.fedrooms.gov. Guidance for lodging requirements is included in Appendix C.

11. COMBINING OFFICIAL TRAVEL WITH PERSONAL TRAVEL: The FTR prohibits using Government contract airline fares for personal travel. Any deviation or interruption (layover resulting in additional cost) of travel for personal convenience must be booked using a fare other than a Government fare. Additionally, employees are prohibited from using FedTraveler to book any portion of the trip that is personal and prohibited from using their Government issued travel credit card to purchase any portion

of the ticket that is for personal travel. Employees must provide cost comparison (reconstruction) information in the comments section of the Travel Authorization for reimbursement. A copy of the cost comparison worksheet must be faxed or attached as a PDF file to the Travel Authorizations and Expense Report. Appendix F provides an example of a cost comparison when an employee is combining official travel with personal travel. See FTR 301-10.110 for additional information. Questions may be addressed to 53D at vaogitravelinquiries@va.gov.

Note: An employee on extended TDY authorized to return home pursuant to OIG GM Directive 312, "Travel Home Policy While on TDY," will be entitled to use the Government contract airline fare from their TDY to home and return.

12. REIMBURSEMENT: Receipts for travel expenses must be maintained by the employee for 6 years and 3 months. It is the responsibility of all OIG traveling employees to maintain and produce copies of any and all receipts upon request. Approving officials have the authority to request documentation and/or receipts for expenses under \$75. Failure to produce suitable or acceptable documentation may result in denial of reimbursement. Travelers must prepare and submit an accurate expense report within 5 business days after completing travel. Travelers must use the FedTraveler Receipt Imaging feature to scan all air, hotel, rental car, and/or authorized expenses over \$75. Approving supervisors must review the expense report within 3 business days.

Special travel situations such as the acceptance of payment from non-Federal sources for travel expenses must be coordinated and approved by the AIG or DAIG for Management and Administration, who will consult with the Counselor to the Inspector General as appropriate.

Expenses incurred for laundry, cleaning, and pressing of clothing at a TDY location are reimbursable as miscellaneous expenses. However, employees must incur a minimum of 4 consecutive nights lodging on official travel to qualify for this reimbursement. Additionally, the number of articles cleaned must be commensurate with time remaining on TDY assignment.

13. TRIP CANCELLATION: Upon notification of trip cancellation, employees must do the following:

- a. Cancel travel plans in FedTraveler and contact the TMS to ensure airline tickets have been cancelled and a refund has been requested. The TMS should not charge any additional fees to cancel a reservation.
- b. Ensure credit is received for airline or train ticket.

14. PRIVATELY OWNED VEHICLE AND GOVERNMENT OWNED VEHICLE: Employees must obtain advance approval from their supervisor and document the approval in the Travel Authority to use a Privately Owned Vehicle (POV), or a

Government Owned Vehicle (GOV) when doing so is the most expeditious and cost-efficient means of transportation. When use of a POV is not the most cost-efficient mode of transportation, all additional expenses are the responsibility of the employee and are not reimbursable. See FTR 301-10.309-310 at <http://gsa.gov/travelpolicy> for additional information. The employee requesting travel by POV for medical reasons must provide written documentation by a competent medical authority to the supervisor and add the justification to the Travel Authority in FedTraveler. Employees must provide cost comparison (reconstruction) information in the comments section of the Travel Plan for reimbursement. Appendix E provides an example of a cost comparison between using a POV or a contract carrier airline. Supervisors must consider the factors listed below when deciding whether to approve travel by POV. A copy of the cost comparison worksheet must be faxed or attached as a PDF file to the Travel Authorizations and Expense Report.

- a. Availability of a GOV.
- b. Use of the POV for official business at the travel site.
- c. Intermediate stops for official purpose.
- d. Annual leave required for excess time for POV travel versus travel time by a common carrier.

Note: If an employee is authorized to use his/her own POV for official travel, is involved in an accident and it is determined the employee was acting within the scope of their official duties, the Government will cover the employee for liability pursuant to the Federal Tort Claims Act, 28 U.S.C. 2671. Employees involved in an accident should report the accident to the police and notify their supervisors immediately. If possible, a police report should be obtained. Upon return from travel, complete form SF-91, Motor Vehicle Accident Report, and forward the report along with a copy of the police report, to their supervisor and the Counselor to the Inspector General (50C), for review and action. Additionally, it is recommended that employees keep good records of anything that occurred in the accident.

15. FREQUENT TRAVELER BENEFITS: Employees may use frequent traveler benefits earned while on official travel in accordance with OIG GM Directive 313, "VA Travel Savings Award Program." Promotional benefits or materials earned while on official travel may be retained for personal use if these items are obtained under the same conditions as those offered to the general public and at no additional cost to the Government. However, employees are prohibited from selecting a travel service provider (such as an air carrier) based on whether it provides frequent flyer or other type benefits.

16. PER DIEM:

- a. Except as otherwise provided, the per diem authorized or approved for all official travel will:

(1) Be computed under the "lodging plus per diem" system, using 3/4 day computations of Meals and Incidental Expenses (M&IE) per diem rate for the first and last days of travel. Reimbursement is based on the maximum amount set by locality for lodging, plus a fixed allowance for M&IE. The per diem allowance is in addition to transportation expenses.

(2) Be prohibited when employee is in travel status for 12 hours or less.

(3) Will be computed at the 3/4 day rate from the time the official travel begins (such as when the employee leaves home, office, or other authorized point of departure) and ends at the time the employee returns to home, office, or other authorized point, in circumstances when travel exceeds 12 hours and lodging is not required.

(4) Not be paid for overnight stays when the employee could otherwise return. Employees must obtain advance approval from their supervisor prior to travel when circumstances require the employee to remain overnight on the last day of an assignment.

b. Travelers and supervisors must ensure the per diem allowances quoted in the Travel Authorization do not exceed necessary expenses of travel. OIG supervisors authorized to approve travel may authorize a reduced per diem rate under various circumstances, such as when lodging and/or meals can be obtained by the employee at reduced cost or furnished to the employee at no cost, or when the M&IE can be determined in advance. Supervisors are encouraged to work with employees to identify lower cost alternatives.

17. EXEMPTION TO LOCAL TRAVEL PER DIEM

Only the Inspector General/Deputy Inspector General (IG/DIG) can approve the exception for per diem expenses in the local area. The IG/DIG may approve a per diem allowance for travel in the local area if an employee is authorized to travel under the Government Employees Training Act (5 U.S.C. 41). This approval may not be delegated. The following conditions must be met for an employee to receive a per diem allowance in the local area:

a. The event must be classified as a bona-fide training event, which is concurred on by the Office of the Counselor (50C) and DIG.

b. The Office of the Counselor (50C) provides a legal review to ensure appropriated funds are used for the "necessary expenses" of training (5 U.S.C. §4109);

c. In the event that funding is sought for meals rather than lodging only, a determination must be made that partaking of meals is necessary to achieve the objectives of the training; and

d. All participants are required by VA or OIG to stay in the same local hotel in order to foster the participation in daytime and evening activities.

Note: Approval of the lodging portion of the per diem allowance does not automatically provide approval for the meal portion. Justification must be provided for each portion separately.

18. LOCAL TRAVEL:

a. Local travel is defined as travel to an alternate site that is less than 50 miles from the employee's official duty station. As a general rule, OIG employees are required to commute from their residence to their official duty station and return at their own expense. When an employee is required to perform official duty at an alternate location, reimbursement will be limited to expenses that exceed the normal daily commute.

b. Travel Authorizations are not required to be submitted for local travel requests. OIG employees must obtain written (electronic) approval by the supervisor authorized to approve travel prior to incurring local travel expenses.

c. Supervisors will authorize or approve reimbursement for local travel expenses that are in excess of the normal daily commute between:

(1) The employee's residence from which he/she regularly commutes to and from daily and a place of business other than the office or official duty station.

(2) Office or official duty station and another place of business, or

(3) One place of business and another place of business.

d. Employees will use mass transportation for local travel when it is practicable and permits accomplishment of official business. Taxi use for local travel should only be authorized when a GOV or mass transportation is not available or practicable.

e. Local mileage reimbursement for POVs will be authorized when a GOV is unavailable and it is determined that using a POV is the most advantageous method of local travel. At no time should an employee use their individual travel card to purchase fuel, oil, or any vehicle type maintenance when authorized to use their POV. Mileage payment and reimbursement will be limited to:

(1) The employee who owns the POV regardless of the number of passengers who accompany the employee or whether the passengers contribute funds to pay for the operating expenses of the vehicle.

(2) The mileage that exceeds the round trip mileage from the employee's residence to their official post of duty station.

f. Employees will use FedTraveler to process local travel claims (expense vouchers). Employees should submit local travel claims in FedTraveler at least every 30 days and in the fiscal year in which the expense incurred.

g. Receipts must be obtained and submitted (scanned into FedTraveler) for expenses of \$25 or more for each instance. This includes but is not limited to receipts for parking, bridge and road tolls, or other local transportation expenses. Approving officials have the authority to request documentation and/or receipts for expenses under \$25. Receipts must be maintained by the employee for 6 years and 3 months.

19. INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL. Travel to destinations outside the United States and the US territories of American Samoa, Guam, Midway Islands, Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, and Wake Islands is considered international travel.

a. **Travel Documents:** Employees who are U.S. citizens and who travel to international locations on official duty must obtain an official passport prior to commencement of travel. When required by the country being visited, employees must also obtain a visa endorsement in their official passports allowing them entry into the country. For all but emergency situations, a 60-day lead time is required to process the applications and receive a passport. To meet this requirement and ensure timely travel, employees must contact VAOIGTravelinquiries@va.gov as soon as they are notified they will be taking an international trip. Complete details of the passport process and other pertinent travel information is found at <http://www.va.gov/finance/policy/travel.asp>.

b. **Travel Approval:** All international travel must be pre-approved by the applicable AIG or Counselor to the IG who will then provide courtesy notification to the IG or DIG about the pending travel. Employees must enter the following statement in the comments section of their Travel Authorization to document that the approval has been received: "Travel to (name the location) has been approved by the AIG for (name the directorate). This travel is considered essential for the purpose of carrying out the mission of the OIG."

c. **Passport Issuance and Return:** The VA Passport Office is the custodian of official passports issued to VA employees and is accountable for safeguarding official passports when employees are not traveling on official business. Employees will submit official passports back to the VA Passport Office within five (5) days of their return from official travel and will notify their supervisor and VAOIGTravelinquiries@va.gov of the submission. Similarly, if the passport is needed for additional international travel, the employee will complete VA Form 900 Country Clearance Application (<http://vaww4.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA0900.pdf>) and submit it to the VA Passport Office. Employees will notify their supervisor and VAOIGTravelinquiries@va.gov once the passport is received.

d. **Secret/Top Secret Clearances:** Any traveler with a Secret or Top Secret clearance must notify the OIG Security and Suitability Officer (51X) of any international travel, personal or official.

20. USE OF GOVERNMENT TRAVEL CREDIT CARD: Employees must use the Government-issued travel credit card for official travel expenses to the maximum extent possible. All airline and train tickets will be charged to the Centrally Billed Account. Employees are prohibited from using the travel credit card for personal items. Travel advances (ATM cash withdrawals) must be included on the Travel Authorization in FedTraveler and limited to out-of-pocket expenses that cannot be charged to the travel card. Cash advances are limited to \$410 per week and restricted cards are limited to \$205.00 per week. Employees must comply with all requirements in OIG GM Directive 319, "Mandatory Use of Travel Cards."

21. SPECIAL PROVISIONS:

- a. Threatened Law Enforcement. Certain expenses are authorized to protect the law enforcement/investigative employee and his/her immediate family when their lives are placed in jeopardy as the result of the employee's assigned duties. See FTR 301-31 <http://gsa.gov/travelpolicy> and contact 53D for additional guidance.
- b. Accommodations for Special Needs. Reasonable accommodations may be authorized to an employee with a special need. Medical documentation will be required. See FTR 301-13 at <http://gsa.gov/travelpolicy> and contact 53D for further guidance.
- c. Emergencies During Travel Status. Some expenses may be authorized to an employee in certain emergency type situations while in a TDY status. See FTR 301-30 at <http://gsa.gov/travelpolicy> and contact 53D for further guidance.

22. RESPONSIBILITIES AND DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY:

- a. Inspector General. The Inspector General is responsible for establishing policy for the implementation of TDY travel, for approving the use of premium class travel and international/foreign travel requests for actual expense per diem in excess of 150 percent to 300 percent, and requests for per diem at an employee's official station under the *Government Employee Training Act*.
- b. Assistant Inspector General for Management and Administration. The AIG for Management and Administration is responsible for:
 - (1) Implementation and administration of this directive and applicable laws and regulations by providing administrative and staff support for TDY travel functions. This responsibility is delegated to the Director, 53D.
 - (2) Formulating and maintaining continuous evaluation of OIG-wide policies and procedures relating to employee travel management.
- c. Director, Administrative and Financial Operations Division. 53D is responsible for:

(1) Coordinating with the AIG for Management and Administration and formulating plans, policies, systems, and procedures for financial management of employee travel.

(2) Coordinating and monitoring the implementation and administration of this directive.

(3) Providing information and answering employee questions regarding TDY travel.

(4) Auditing selected authorizations and expense reports on a random basis as a means of internal control.

(5) Supervising the TDY travel staff that implements applicable policy and procedures within this directive, including authorizing, approving, and reimbursing all OIG approved travel.

(6) Establishing the necessary controls and records required for preparation and issuance of employee travel authorizations.

d. Supervisory Officials. OIG supervisory officials' responsibilities include:

(1) Approving only official travel which is necessary for the purpose of carrying out the mission of the OIG.

(2) AIGs and DAIGs are delegated authority to approve actual expense per diem up to 150 percent. Additional guidance for approving actual expense per diem is included in Appendix C. They are also delegated authority to approve foreign travel.

(3) Ensuring that travel is performed in the most economical and effective manner.

(4) Ensuring that travel is authorized and performed consistent with the FTR and OIG directives.

(5) Ensuring the traveling employee has been instructed on employee responsibilities in the performance of and reimbursement of official travel.

(6) Reviewing and approving travel, expense reports, and supporting documentation, and ensuring information is complete and accurate.

(7) Approving travel documents within 3 workdays of receipt or return them to the employee for revision. Supervisors will coordinate with alternate approvers to ensure submission is completed within the established deadline.

e. Employees. OIG traveling employees' responsibilities include:

(1) Being familiar with the requirements of the FTR and OIG directives related to TDY.

(2) Minimizing costs by exercising care in incurring expenses.

(3) Completing and submitting necessary travel documents promptly, timely, and within established deadlines, e.g., expense reports within 5 days of completed travel.

(4) Maintaining and submitting required documentation and justifications of expenses properly chargeable to OIG funds.

(5) Maintaining supporting documentation for 6 years and 3 months.

(6) Fulfilling requirements in this directive when a trip is cancelled.

(7) Claiming and obtaining, where applicable, exemptions of tax imposed on lodging, M&IE, and miscellaneous expenses by utilizing specific tax exemption forms. The forms and a list of states that provide tax exemption to Federal employees on official business are located at: <http://gsa.gov/travelpolicy>.

CONTRACT AIR CARRIERS

Use of Contract Air Carriers. GSA requires Federal travelers on official business to use City Pair Contract Carriers unless a specific exception applies. This required use is the incentive necessary to obtain airline participation in the City Pair program and allows the airlines the business volume necessary to offer discounted rates. Exceptions for the use of a non-contract carrier are:

1. Space on a scheduled contract flight is not available in time to accomplish the purpose of the travel.
2. Use of contract service would require incurring unnecessary overnight lodging costs which increase the total cost of the trip.
3. Rail service is available, cost effective, and consistent with mission requirements.
4. A non-contract carrier offers a lower fare to the general public that, if used, will result in a lower trip cost to the Government (the combined costs of transportation, lodging, meals, and related expenses considered). **Note:** This exception does not apply if the contract carrier offers a comparable fare and has seats available, or if the lower fare (Government matching fares) by a non-contract carrier is restricted to the Government employee on official business.

Any traveler who meets one or more of the above exceptions and intends to use a non-contract carrier is required to obtain advance approval by the supervisor authorized to approve travel prior to purchasing the ticket. Additionally, employees must note the exception code above on their Travel Authority. Additional costs or penalties incurred as a result of the unauthorized use of a non-contract carrier is the responsibility of the employee.

Employees canceling nonrefundable tickets for personal preference will be responsible for reimbursing the Government for all additional costs associated with the rebooking of a new ticket along with reimbursement of any portion of the unused ticket.

Foreign Air Carriers. Employees must obtain advance approval from their supervisor prior to making reservations on a foreign air carrier. The supervisor must consult with 53D before approving foreign air travel.

The Fly America Act (49 U.S.C. 40118) requires anyone whose air travel is financed with U.S. Government funds use a U.S. Flag air carrier service for all air travel, unless specific exemptions provided in the FTR are met. For the purposes of this directive, a U.S. Flag air carrier includes services provided under a code share agreement with a foreign air carrier when the ticket or electronic ticket documentation identifies the U.S. Flag air carrier's designator code and flight number.

Contractors. Contractors (including cost-reimbursable contractors) performing official travel for OIG are not eligible to receive the Government contract airfare under the terms of the GSA City Pair Program contract. OIG employees making travel arrangements for contractors are responsible for advising TMS that the traveler is a contractor and is only eligible for a commercial fare. Contractors may not contact TMS directly.

Although contractors are prohibited from utilizing contracted Government airfares, some hotels/motels and car rental companies offer discounted rates to contractors traveling on official Government business. These Government rates are at the discretion of the hotel/car rental company.

Compensation for Denial of Seat and Voluntary Surrender of Seat. The FTR states that when an airline denies a Federal employee a confirmed reserved seat on an airplane during official travel, any payment for liquidated damages belongs to the Federal government. Payment should be made to the VA Agent Cashier. Employees must submit documentation to 53D for processing.

If an employee voluntarily vacates a seat, the employee may keep any compensation provided by the airline if the conditions listed below are met:

1. Vacating the seat will not interfere with performing official duties, e.g., cannot miss an official event or scheduled meeting.
2. Additional travel expenses, if incurred as a result of vacating the seat, are borne by the employee and are not reimbursable.
3. If vacating a seat delays the employee's travel during duty hours, the employee will be charged annual leave for the additional time.
4. Employee is required to obtain supervisory approval unless the additional time occurs outside of normal duty hours.

Complimentary Upgrade to First or Business Class Seating. The use of first class or business class seating may be used without additional authorization when the upgrade is complimentary by the airline. Travelers and alternate preparers must provide comments on the travel plan in FedTraveler that premium class seating was not intentionally selected and no additional cost incurred. The deliberate use of premium class seating must be authorized by the Inspector General.

Multiple Reservations. Travelers should avoid booking multiple reservations for one travel episode. For example, a traveler will often make multiple return flight reservations on the same day if he or she is not certain when a meeting, conference, or seminar will end. Airlines may see these individual reservations as duplicate reservations and cancel both, or may fulfill the approved reservation, but issue a fee for the duplicate reservation.

Churning. “Churning” is the act of cancelling and rebooking the same reservation. Travelers should avoid this practice because if the airline notices a traveler continually churning a reservation, they may cancel the reservation, issue a fee, or both. Below are two examples of what airlines determine to be churning:

1. A traveler may book a reservation early to guarantee a seat and then hold it as long as possible until he or she is confident the travel will take place. Before submitting his or her travel authorization, however, the traveler modifies the reservation by releasing the original fare and reserving a lower fare, hoping to save money. To avoid churning in this scenario, a traveler should either purchase the originally reserved fare or cancel the travel authorization and create a new document and rebook a reservation with the lower fare.
2. When a traveler books a reservation that has a restricted fare rule, the travel authorization must be approved in time to meet the ticket deadline; otherwise, the reservation is either canceled by the TMC or automatically canceled by the airlines. Once the reservation is canceled, travelers may attempt to reuse the FedTraveler document to create a new reservation, which is considered churning. To avoid churning in this scenario, the traveler should cancel the travel document, create a new document, and rebook the reservation using the online booking engine.

VEHICLE RENTAL

Use of Rental Vehicle. FTR 301-10, Subpart E requires the use of rental vehicles be advantageous to the Government and approved in advance by the employee's supervisor. The FTR requires travelers to use TMS to secure rental vehicles. The TMS will be responsible for renting vehicles from car rental companies that fully participate in the Defense Travel Management Office (DTMO) Car/Truck Rental Program. Information about the DTMO program may be located at:
<http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/Sections/Rent.cfm>

Under the DTMO agreement, travelers will be covered by the collision/loss damage waiver and increased liability coverage, unlimited mileage, and fixed rates at no additional cost to the Government or employee. Any insurance acquired outside this agreement for Continental United States (CONUS) travel is unnecessary and therefore will be the responsibility of the employee, and is not reimbursable. Employees are required to use their Government issued travel credit card to pay for the cost of vehicle rental.

Employees must use the rental vehicle for official purposes only. The FTR states that employees are liable for any expenses due to unauthorized use of a rental vehicle or for other than official travel-related purposes. The Government will deny liability for any loss or damage to the rental vehicle that occurs outside the scope of official business. Any claims for reimbursement toward additional costs such as gasoline that cover travel mileage for personal reasons will be denied. In accordance with the requirement to be cost-effective, employees should return the rental vehicle with a full tank of gasoline to eliminate excessive charges by rental car companies for gasoline "fill-up" service.

OIG employees are prohibited from renting premium or luxury class vehicles except with upgrade coupons or due to lack of availability of lower classed vehicles. Premium or Luxury Class vehicles must be rented using the DTMO program to insure the Government receives the same coverage as when renting a lower class vehicle under the DTMO program. Rentals involving exceptions to the above guidance must be at the same price (e.g., free upgrade).

LODGING

Hotel Accommodations. The FTR requires travelers to stay in a facility which meets the fire safety requirements of the Hotel and Motel Fire Safety Act of 1990. GSA contracts with lodging facilities under the Federal Premier Lodging Program (FPLP). The TMS will provide a list of hotels participating in the FPLP. First consideration must be given to participating FPLP facilities when selecting hotel accommodations. If no FPLP facilities are available, request a list of approved hotels and make a selection from the list provided. Advance approval is required and justification must be provided in the Travel Authorization when this is necessary.

Lodging Location Rules. Employees must obtain lodging at their TDY station. In certain circumstances, lodging may not be available at the TDY station and the employee must obtain lodging in a locality where the maximum per diem rate is higher than the maximum per diem rate for the TDY station. In these instances, employees will be reimbursed the maximum per diem rate where the lodging is obtained. Advance approval is required and justification must be provided in the Travel Authorization when this is necessary. Receipts are required to support all lodging costs, even if under \$75.

If the employee obtains lodging away from or outside the TDY Per Diem area because of personal preference or convenience and the per diem rate is lower, reimbursement will be limited to the maximum per diem rate where the lodging is obtained. Employees will not be reimbursed at a higher rate.

Employees will not be reimbursed for any lodging expenses for staying at their personally owned residence or for any real estate expenses associated with the purchase or sale of a personal residence at the TDY location, except in conjunction with an authorized relocation pursuant to Chapter 302 of the FTR. Additionally, employees will not be reimbursed any expenses associated with the purchase, sale or payment of a recreational vehicle or trailer/camper at the TDY location.

Actual Expense Allowance. Actual expense allowance may be needed in certain circumstances when lodging costs exceed the prescribed per diem allowance such as special events being held at the TDY station and lodging and/or meals cannot be obtained nearby, or the lodging and/or meals is procured at a hotel where a meeting or conference session is held. In these instances, the employee must obtain advance approval from their AIG or DAIG for per diem up to 150 percent. Requests for per diem in excess of 150 percent to 300 percent must be approved by the IG or DIG. Employees must identify at least four hotels in the surrounding area that offer GSA rates, but were not available for the dates required, and include the total additional cost for the trip. This information must be noted in the comments section of the Travel Authorization and be uploaded and included as an attachment to the Expense Report.

TDY CHECKLIST

Note: Checklists provided for guidance only; employees are not required to complete and submit these checklists.

<u>EMPLOYEE</u>		
<u>Pre-Travel Approval</u>	_____	Have you been assigned to take a trip?
See Appendix A	_____	Have you made flight reservations through the TMS using the Centrally Billed Account?
	_____	Have you made ground transportation arrangements through the TMS using your Government issued travel credit card? If rental vehicle is authorized, see Appendix B.
See Appendix C	_____	Have you made lodging arrangements through the TMS using your Government issued travel credit card?
	_____	Have you considered other expenses (Travel Advance, tolls, parking, phone charges, gratuities, other miscellaneous expenses) and included these items on the Travel Authorization?
	_____	Have you obtained tax exemption forms, where applicable, for exemption from lodging, M&IE, and miscellaneous taxes?
<u>During Travel</u>	_____	Are you keeping your receipts?
	_____	Are you using the Government issued travel credit card?
Travel Complete	_____	Have you submitted your expense report within 5 days of completing travel?

<u>SUPERVISOR</u>		
<u>Pre-Travel Approval</u>	_____	Is the trip necessary?
	_____	Is the time appropriate?
	_____	Is the number of staff appropriate?
	_____	Has the employee been instructed of their rights, privileges, and responsibilities in the performance of and reimbursement for official travel?
	_____	Is coordination complete, among OIG elements, regarding lodging and rental vehicles?
	_____	Are sufficient travel funds available?
	_____	Are vehicle rentals appropriate? How many and what size?
<u>Post-Travel Approval</u>	_____	Have all requirements been met in a timely manner to include approving the expense report within 3 business days?
	_____	Are the necessary records being maintained to respond to an internal or external inquiry?

COST COMPARISON BASIS

The following is an example of a cost comparison when an employee elects to use his or her privately owned vehicle in lieu of flying:

Cost to Fly Roundtrip:	Amount	Time
Travel time and taxicab cost from residence to airport and return	\$60.00	1 Hour
Airline ticket cost, TMC transaction fee, baggage fee (not excess baggage), and flight time for round trip on contract carrier	\$200.00	5 Hours (includes wait time at airport)
Shuttle time and gratuity cost for courtesy shuttle to hotel and return	\$10.00	1 Hour
TOTAL	\$270.00	7 Hours

Cost to Drive POV Roundtrip:	Amount	Time
Mileage: 600 miles @ \$0.51	\$306.00	10 Hours
Tolls	\$20.00	
TOTAL	\$326.00	10 Hours

In this example, an employee who chose to drive would be reimbursed \$270.00, which is the total cost to fly. Additionally, the employee would be required to take 1 hour of annual leave for the excess time it would have taken to drive, if the excess driving time occurred during duty hours (8-hour tour of duty).

NOTE: The current GSA mileage rate should be used when calculating mileage located at <http://gsa.gov/travelpolicy>.

COST COMPARISON BASIS—COMBINING OFFICIAL WITH PERSONAL TRAVEL

The following is an example of a cost comparison when an employee interrupts his travel to combine official travel with personal travel. In this example, the employee is traveling from the post of duty, Washington, DC, to Los Angeles, CA, on official business and is stopping in Chicago, IL, for personal reasons on the return trip.

Official Portion: Return

Los Angeles, CA, to Washington, DC

\$200.00 (contract fare)

Total: \$200

Personal Portion: Return

Los Angeles, CA, to Chicago, IL

\$300 (commercial fare)

Chicago, IL, to Washington, DC

\$200 (commercial fare)

Total: \$500

In this example, the employee would be reimbursed no more than \$200.00 for his/her return portion. The employee would not be able to use a Government contract fare from Los Angeles, CA, to Chicago, IL, and return to Washington, DC, since this would be considered personal travel. Additionally, the employee would be prohibited from using FedTraveler to book the return portion of the trip and prohibited from using the government travel card to purchase the return portion of the ticket.

Note: In another example, if the employee chose to take annual leave and stay in Los Angeles, CA, instead of stopping in Chicago, IL, on the return, the employee would be allowed to use FedTraveler to book the return portion. The employee can also use the Government fare for the return portion, Los Angeles, CA, to Washington, DC, and can use the government travel card to purchase the return portion of the trip.

DEFINITIONS

Approved Accommodation. Any place of public lodging that is listed on the national master list of approved accommodations. The national master list of all approved accommodations is compiled, periodically updated, and published in the *Federal Register* by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Additionally, the approved accommodation list is available on the U.S. Fire Administration's Internet site at <http://www.usfa.fema.gov/hotel/index.htm>.

Capacity Controlled Fare. These are fares offered by some City Pair contract carriers that offer deeper discounts than the contract fares. These fares have a limited number of seats but no other restrictions apply.

City Pair Contract Fare. This is the fare negotiated by GSA for Federal travelers for a specific city pair. It is a highly discounted fare and is strictly limited to Federal and military travelers on official travel.

Civilian Board of Contract Appeals. The Civilian Board of Contract Appeals (CBCA) has the authority to resolve any questions involving payment of travel claims for reimbursement of expenses that employees incur while on official temporary duty travel. All denied appeals must first be filed with the OIG, Assistant Inspector General for Management and Administration, through the employee's supervisor prior to submitting to the CBCA. Information regarding the travel appeal process can be directed to 53D. Information pertaining to the CBCA and the rules on how to file a claim can be found at www.cbca.gsa.gov.

Common Carrier. Private sector supplier of air, rail, or bus transportation.

Conference. A meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium, or event that involves attendee travel. The term "conference" also applies to training activities that are considered to be conferences under 5 CFR 410.404.

Continental United States. The 48 contiguous states and the District of Columbia, also known as CONUS.

Contract Carriers. U.S. certified air carriers which are under contract with GSA to furnish Federal employees and other persons authorized to travel at Government expense with passenger transportation service. In this directive, contract carriers are also referred to as City Pair contract carriers who provide service between one of 5,000 different city pairs at reduced rates. A specific airline may be a City Pair contract carrier for one or more city pairs (such as Washington to Denver), but not for others (such as Washington to Dallas).

Emergency While In Travel Status. Travel that is interrupted or discontinued as a result of the employee becoming incapacitated by (1) illness or injury not due to the employee's own misconduct; (2) the death or serious illness of a member of the employee's family; or (3) a catastrophic occurrence or impending disaster such as fire, flood, or act of God, which

directly affects the employee's home. In all instances, employees must contact their supervisor for instructions as soon as possible.

Expense Report. A listing of expenses, prepared by a traveler after conclusion of authorized travel, which is presented to the agency for the purposes of obtaining reimbursement.

Incidental Expenses. (1) Fees and tips given to porters, baggage carriers, bellhops, hotel maids, airline attendants, and to hotel staff in foreign countries; (2) transportation between places of lodging or business and places where meals are taken, if suitable meals cannot be obtained at the TDY site; and (3) mailing costs associated with filing travel vouchers and payment of Government sponsored credit card billings.

Local Travel. Travel performed within an established local radius of the official duty station. The standard local radius will be less than 50 miles from the official station.

Lodgings Plus Per Diem System. The method of computing per diem allowances for official travel in which the per diem allowance for each travel day is established on the basis of the actual amount the traveler pays for lodging, plus an allowance for M&IE, the total of which does not exceed the applicable maximum per diem rate for the location concerned.

Mass Transportation. Any form of public transportation operated for use by the general public (i.e., buses, subways, ferries, commuter buses, trains and qualified van pools).

Meals and Incidental Expenses Allowance. The maximum per diem rates include a fixed allowance for meals and certain incidental expenses, known as M&IE. Not all incidental expenses are categorized as M&IE. When M&IE rate is approved, it is payable to the traveler without itemization of expenses or receipts when under \$75. However, supervisors may request documents to support claims. The M&IE rate will be computed using 3/4 day per diem rate for the first and last days of travel. The fixed allowances for M&IE are listed on the GSA Travel Homepage, which is on the Worldwide Web at <http://gsa.gov/travelpolicy> under the search query "per diem."

Miscellaneous Expenses. Actual incurred expenses allowable in addition to those covered under per diem (see Appendix H for a partial list).

Non-Contract Carrier. An airline that GSA has not entered into agreement to provide service for Federal travelers between a specific city pair.

Non-Contract Carrier Fares. In attempts to stay competitive, non-contract carriers offer matching fares that are restricted to Government travelers on official business but not available to the general public. OIG employees are prohibited from using these fares unless they meet the requirements for one of the exceptions listed in Appendix A.

Official Station. In area defined by the agency that includes the location where the employee regularly performs his or her duties or an invitational traveler's home or regular

place of business. The area may be a mileage radius around a particular point, a geographic boundary, or any other definite domain, provided no part of the area is more than 50 miles from where the employee regularly performs his or her duties or from an invitational's home or regular place of business. If the employee's work involves recurring travel or varies on a recurring basis, the location where the work activities of the employee's position of record are based is considered the regular place of work.

Per Diem. The per diem allowance (also referred to as subsistence allowance) is a daily payment instead of reimbursement for actual expenses for lodging, meals, and certain incidental expenses. The per diem allowance is separate from transportation, traveling expenses (see definition), and other miscellaneous expenses (see Appendix H). Per diem is separate from traveling expenses such as airfare, train, vehicle rental, etc. Per diem rates are subject to change. Current rate information is posted on the GSA Web site: <http://gsa.gov/travelpolicy>.

Reduced Per Diem. A reduced per diem rate may be authorized when there are known reductions in lodging and meal costs or when your subsistence costs can be determined in advance and are lower than the prescribed per diem rate. For example, if a lunch was provided as part of the conference fee, a deduction for the meal would be made according to the GSA M&IE locality rate.

Special Conveyance. Commercially rented or hired vehicles, other than a POV, and those owned or under contract to an agency, for example, a rental car or taxicab.

Split Disbursement. The process of dividing a travel reimbursement between the amount due to traveler and the amount due to the Government travel card issuing bank. Employees are required to use the split disbursement option when preparing his or her expense report.

Special Needs. Physical characteristics of a traveler not necessarily defined as a disability. Such physical characteristics could include, but are not limited to, the weight or height of the traveler.

Subsistence Allowance. See per diem above.

Temporary Duty Station. A place, away from an employee's official station where the employee is authorized to travel, also known as TDY station.

Travel Authorization or Orders. Written electronic permission to travel on official business. There are two basic types of travel authorization, also known as orders:

1. Unlimited open. An authorization allowing an employee to travel for any official purpose without further authorization.
2. Limited open. An authorization allowing an employee to travel on official business without further authorization under certain specific conditions, that is, travel to specific

geographic area(s) for specific purpose(s), subject to trip cost ceilings, or for specific periods of time.

Travel Authorization. A travel request. It includes estimates of all expenses that may be incurred while in travel status.

Travel Advance. Prepayment of estimated travel expenses paid to employee.

Travel Management Service. A service for booking common carrier reservations, confirmations and seat assignments, lodging accommodations, and car rental services; providing basic management information on those activities; and meeting other requirements as specified in FTR 301-73.106. A Travel Management Service may include a Travel Management Center, such as Omega Travel; an electronically available system, such as FedTraveler; a commercial ticket office; or an in-house system.

Travel Voucher. A written electronic request, supported by documentation and receipts where applicable, for reimbursement of expenses incurred in the performance of official travel.

MISCELLANEOUS EXPENSES

Examples of actual incurred expenses allowable on TDY, in addition to those covered by per diem, include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Daily round trip transportation by common carrier, POV, taxicab (only when local transportation is not available), between place of lodging and place of business when its use is advantageous to the Government.
2. Parking meter fees.
3. Laundry, cleaning, and pressing of clothing. However, employees must incur a minimum of 4 consecutive nights lodging on official travel to qualify for this reimbursement. Additionally, the number of articles cleaned should be commensurate with time remaining on TDY assignment.
4. Hired vehicle.
5. Ferry fares; bridge, road, and tunnel tolls.
6. Round trip mileage for use of a personal car from home to a transportation terminal and from terminal to home (not to exceed round trip taxicab fare).
7. Airport limousine.
8. Tips for taxicabs or airport limousines (limited to 15%).
9. Telegrams and telephone calls on official business. OIG employees are expected to use their OIG issued cell phone in lieu of hotel phones because hotel charges are much more expensive. Additionally, if traveling more than one night in the United States, a brief call can be made to your residence (but not more than an average of one call per day).
10. Use of computers, printers, faxing machines, and scanners necessary in connection with the preparation of official reports or correspondence.
11. Charges for conference center room or hotel room for official business.
12. Shipments by express or freight of Government property.
13. Fees or tips to porters at transportation terminals for handling Government property carried by traveler.
14. Copies of records furnished by state officials when necessary for performance of official business.
15. Services of typists, data processors, or stenographers.

Appendix H

16. Taxes for lodging, where applicable (limited to the taxes on reimbursable lodging costs).
17. Energy surcharge and lodging resort fee(s) (when such fee(s) is/are not optional).
18. Services of guides, interpreters, and drivers.
19. Fees for travelers checks, money orders, and certified checks.
20. Transaction fees for use of automated teller machines for official expense withdrawals only.

TELEWORK PROGRAM

1. **REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish policies and procedures relating to the Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Inspector General (OIG) Telework Program.
2. **SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:** This directive outlines the OIG policy regarding performance of official duties other than at the official work site or on official travel, which is commonly referred to as telework. It includes the rationale behind telework, as well as the basic requirements for participation in the program.
3. **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Operations Division (53B), Office of Management and Administration (53).
4. **REFERENCES:**
 - a. H.R. 1722, Telework Enhancement Act of 2010.
 - b. VA Handbook 5011/5, "Hours of Duty and Leave," Chapter 4, "Alternative Workplace Arrangements (Telework), dated September 22, 2005.
 - c. United States Office of Personnel Management, Guide to Telework in the Federal Government, dated April 2011.
5. **RECISSION:** OIG GM Directive 321, October 24, 2012.

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE
INSPECTOR GENERAL:**

(original signed)

(original signed)

Dana L. Moore, Ph.D.
Assistant Inspector General for
Management and Administration

George J. Opfer
Inspector General

Distribution: Electronic Distribution to All OIG Employees

TELEWORK PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE:

The Inspector General recognizes the benefits of reduced traffic congestion and environmental pollution, and increased employee recruiting, retention, and morale that can result from accountable alternative workplace programs. This directive outlines the policy and procedures related to the OIG Telework Program. The program design promotes employee workplace flexibility consistent with efficient operations and mission accomplishment of the OIG.

2. POLICY OVERVIEW:

The OIG encourages supervisors to promote, and employees to participate in, the Telework Program to help each employee attain their full work potential through the development of a productive workplace arrangement. As a result, the OIG will benefit from enhanced productivity and improved morale. The policy does not support telework as suitable for a full-time permanent work schedule. For the purpose of this policy, telework means working from an alternative site, rather than the traditional office, other than while on official travel.

The goal of the Telework Program is to offer workplace flexibility consistent with efficient operations and mission accomplishments. Managers and supervisors, in conjunction with employees who telework, will develop specific measurable performance and productivity expectations for the work assigned during each telework episode.

Participation in the Telework Program requires eligible employees to complete initial telework training in the Talent Management System (TMS) and submit to their immediate supervisor an annual revised telework agreement and safety checklist for review and approval (see the Appendix for the forms).

3. ELIGIBILITY:

The Telework Program provides a staffing option, not an employee entitlement or right. Participation in the OIG Telework Program is voluntary and permissive, in that management must approve it. All OIG employees, including supervisors and managers, who are performing at a satisfactory level and are in good standing conduct-wise are eligible to participate in the program. Interns, trainees, and non-supervisory employees serving a probationary or trial period are eligible—at the discretion of their supervisor—to participate in the program. For this program, the term trainee means employees hired at the entry-level grades of GS-5 through GS-9. Employees who wish to participate in the program must comply with the provisions of this policy.

Telework may not be appropriate for all employees. Approval to telework should take into consideration whether the employee can work independently with a clear set of predetermined performance expectations. A telework employee should also be an

organized, highly disciplined, and conscientious self-starter who requires minimal supervision. In addition to ensuring successful completion of telework assignments, supervisors should exercise flexibility and creativity in providing and supporting opportunities for employees to telework.

4. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS:

- a. The Telework Program will focus on providing telework opportunities that are portable and quantifiable. These can include project-oriented assignments such as writing a draft report or OIG policy, or recurring work assignments. While this policy does not support full-time telework arrangements, the OIG does not preclude such arrangements under rare and extenuating circumstances, such as when an employee may be recovering from an injury or illness and unable to meet daily commuting demands.
- b. Supervisory OIG employees are required to provide adequate oversight and direction to employees in the traditional office setting and to their teleworking employees. Supervisors will utilize available technology to maintain active contact with all employees. Such tools include, but are not limited to, email, Communicator, Live Meeting, and telephone contact. Supervisors will use these same tools when they are teleworking to ensure adequate supervision of all assigned employees.
- c. Supervisory OIG employees may be limited in the number of days they can telework each week based on the performance of the employees they supervise or the management of their assigned projects.
- d. Supervisors will maintain for one year records that document employee requests for telework, the work proposed for each instance of telework, and the actual work accomplished during the telework session. Additionally, supervisors will ensure that telework is properly annotated in WebTA and matches the number of hours that the employee worked.
- e. The OIG will not pay for any home modifications or equipment, such as phone or modem lines, home computer or workstation, etc., although transportable supplies, such as a laptop computer, cell phone, etc., may be supplied and used for telework. Under no circumstances should a telework employee incur or assume expenses under the presumption that such expenses are reimbursable by the OIG. By participating in telework, employees understand and agree that they may incur some additional expenses, such as increased utility expenses for using electronic equipment to perform official duties at home, which are an offset to saved commuting time and expenses.
- f. Telework is not a substitute for child or dependent care. Employees are required to work their full tour of duty at the telework site. The savings in expense and time of commuting may offer opportunities to increase time with family members or avoid dependent care expenses for the commuting time, but employees must be able to

devote work hours to their official duties free of interruptions and distractions. Employees must remain available for contact during their assigned official tour of duty on telework days in case their supervisor needs to contact them. In no event should telework interfere with OIG operational needs.

g. OIG employees who telework and connect to the VA network from home or an alternative work site must follow the computer security requirements found in OIG GM Directive 335, Information Security. Members of the Information Technology and Data Analysis Division (53C) will assist OIG staff in establishing secure connectivity.

5. TELEWORK AGREEMENTS:

a. Employees seeking to participate in the OIG Telework Program must submit a completed VAOIG Telework Agreement (located in the Appendix) to their immediate supervisor for discussion and completion. The completed agreement includes the proposed telework schedule, contact information during telework days, and a synopsis of the types of projects to be completed while teleworking. Employees, in consultation with their supervisors, are required to annually complete and retain on file a new telework agreement. Before an employee can begin to telework their telework agreement must be approved by the approving official. The approving official is the next level supervisor.

b. All employees with approved telework agreements are required to complete the TMS Telework Module prior to beginning their initial telework proposal. The TMS telework module is a one-time training requirement, but supervisors have the discretion to require employees to take refresher training if problems are noted during days spent teleworking.

c. Specific performance expectations are critical to the success of the Telework Program. Performance expectations should be results-oriented and describe the quantity and quality of expected work products. In developing these expectations, the supervisor should also take into consideration that the work to be completed is compatible with the amount of telework hours requested and approved. Supervisors must ensure adequate documentation of requests, approvals, and work assigned and accomplished is maintained for at least 1 year due to agency reporting requirements and periodic internal reviews.

d. The immediate supervisor will approve a telework agreement only if it will maintain or increase efficiency in performing the work of the organization. In applying this standard, employees and supervisors must consider not only the efficiency and productivity of the proposed teleworker, but also the efficiency and productivity of other employees who remain and work in the office.

e. Telework agreements must keep employees involved in office-wide activities, such as staff meetings and announcements, whether in person, or by telephone or video conference call. Employees agree that they are subject to recall to the

office in the case of unforeseen developments that alter management's work priorities to the extent that continuing the telework agreement without modification would diminish organizational efficiency or productivity.

f. Telework is voluntary and discretionary and a permanent telework arrangement may not be established as a condition of employment. Telework agreements may be cancelled at any time. Management will cancel the agreement if the employee's performance or conduct does not meet performance standards or the terms of the telework agreement, or if the needs of the organization require an employee's presence at the office. If management must cancel the telework agreement, the employee has no right to continued telework, although management is not precluded from agreeing to future telework proposals from that employee if additional safeguards are established to prevent a recurrence of the problem in the earlier agreement. If a telework agreement is canceled, the employee will return to his or her regular work schedule in the office. Furthermore, in the event of employee relation issues with subordinate employees, supervisors will be expected to restrict their own telework schedules to provide appropriate guidance and oversight in the traditional office setting.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

a. Telework does not change the employees' salaries or benefits (except for transit subsidy reduction necessitated by reduced commuting), official duty station, official duties, work schedules or tours of duty, or any other requirements of Federal, VA, or OIG law, regulations, or policy, such as standards of conduct, security, leave, time and attendance, or liability.

b. Time and attendance practices, including procedures for requesting and approving leave, remain unchanged. Employees are responsible for entering their telework usage each pay period in WebTA. Telework is not a reason to refrain from contacting an employee, unlike a situation where an employee is on leave.

c. Telework employees will be required to work when the agency is closed on a day the employee is scheduled to telework. In the event the Office of Personnel Management announces a modified operating status due to inclement weather or special events that severely impact commuting, employees have the option, in coordination with their supervisor, to take unscheduled leave or perform unscheduled telework. On a case-by-case basis, an agency may excuse a teleworker from duty during an emergency situation if the emergency adversely affects the telework site, if the teleworker faces a personal hardship that prevents him or her from working successfully at the telework site, or if the teleworker's duties are such that he or she cannot continue to work without contact with the regular worksite.

d. Employees will safeguard Government equipment, and will transport the same to and from the telework site at his or her own expense and return the same undamaged except for normal wear and tear. Loss, theft, or damage to Government

equipment or supplies will be handled in accordance with applicable OIG procedures.

e. Telework employees will report downtime (periods when the employee is unable to work, such as a power outage or equipment failure) as soon as practicable to the supervisor, and whether the downtime is expected to impact the employee's ability to complete the telework project within approved timeframes. The employee may be required to return to the office or take annual leave if the problem is not resolved promptly.

f. Telework employees will protect Government/VA records from unauthorized disclosure or damages and will comply with the Privacy Act and other confidentiality requirements.

g. The OIG has a responsibility to ensure that all its employees work in a safe environment, to include telework. Telework employees agree to workplace inspections of the telework site by management to ensure a safe and adequate workplace upon reasonable notice of a planned inspection. If the employee designates a single or specific workplace area in the home, such as a home office, the workplace inspection requirements apply only to that area rather than other areas of the home. An alternative to workplace inspection is employee self-certification (see VA Form 0740b in the Appendix) that the employee's home telework area meets applicable safety requirements. If the employee elects self-certification, both the employee and the supervisor, who will maintain it with his or her Telework Program records, must sign the safety checklist. The employee need not develop a new checklist for each telework project if the telework site and the supervisor remain unchanged. However, employees must complete and submit a new safety checklist every year, commencing at the same time as the employee's annual telework agreement. Management inspections of the telework site may be required if an employee files a claim of injury.

h. If an employee's immediate supervisor changes and the employee wishes to continue a previously approved telework agreement, the new supervisor must review and approve the telework agreement.

i. Supervisors who have staff teleworking must ensure adequate office coverage and provide ample mentoring opportunities. During business hours, all operations should be carried out in an efficient, economical manner. Employees and supervisors should make reasonable adjustments to telework and office arrangements due to official travel, unforeseen contingencies, and emergencies consistent with accomplishing the OIG mission. Supervisors will also ensure that employees participating and non-participating in the Telework Program are treated equitably.

j. Employees must forward their work phones to their home or cellular numbers to ensure continuity of operations during the workday. In the event the phone cannot be forwarded, employees must indicate in their outgoing work message that they are teleworking and provide an alternate method of contact. Additionally, if employees

are in receipt of a Government-issued mobile device, they must ensure that the device phone number is listed in the Outlook e-mail exchange.

k. The Operations Division (53B) will report telework participation results quarterly to the Deputy Inspector General, Assistant Inspector Generals, and the Counselor to evaluate Telework Program use by directorate and subcomponents. Furthermore, the telework program will be reviewed periodically as part of the OIG internal control program. Results of the internal control will be discussed with the Deputy Inspector General and respective Assistant Inspector General or Counselor.

7. FECA COVERAGE FOR INJURY:

The Federal Employee's Compensation Act (FECA) provides compensation benefits to employees for disability or death due to personal injury or disease sustained while in the performance of duty, including participation in an agency approved telework program (5 USC Section 8101). Under VA OIG policy, only authorized telework activities are considered covered for these purposes. If an employee is injured performing authorized telework activities in an authorized location while participating in the OIG Telework Program, the employee must promptly:

- a. Report any injuries to his or her supervisor;
- b. Complete page one of the Office of Workers' Compensation Programs' "Federal Employee's Notice of Traumatic Injury and Claim for Continuation of Pay/Compensation" Form (CA-1); and
- c. Provide the completed CA-1 form to his or her first-line supervisor, who will provide the information requested on page two and submit the entire CA-1 to the Bureau of the Public Debt for processing.

Coverage under FECA is determined by the Department of Labor on a case-by-case basis. The OIG has the responsibility to review the circumstances of each claim and to controvert the claim if evidence suggests that the injury is not related to authorized telework activities, did not occur at an approved telework site, or that the employee's participation in the telework activity was not in accordance with the telework agreement or was not in compliance with the terms and conditions set forth in this directive.

VA OIG TELEWORK AGREEMENT


A fillable VA OIG Telework Agreement is available in the OIG Portal "Forms" section (<https://vaww.portal.oig.va.gov/oig/Lists/Forms%20Directory/AllItems.aspx>)

VA OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL TELEWORK AGREEMENT										
NAME OF EMPLOYEE (Last, First, Middle initial)					POSITION TITLE, SERIES, AND GRADE					
NAME AND ADDRESS OF DUTY STATION				ORGANIZATION AND LOCATION				OFFICE PHONE NUMBER		
WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT WORK SCHEDULE? <input type="radio"/> ALTERNATE WORK SCHEDULE <i>(Eight 8-hour days, one 8-hour day, and one day off)</i> <input type="radio"/> REGULAR WORK SCHEDULE <i>(five 8-hour days that has a fixed start and end time)</i> <input type="radio"/> PART-TIME WORK SCHEDULE <input type="radio"/> OTHER WORK SCHEDULE (Explain)										
ALTERNATE WORK SCHEDULE REQUESTED <input type="radio"/> WORK-AT-HOME <input type="radio"/> VIRTUAL OFFICE					ALTERNATE WORKSITE ADDRESS				ALTERNATE WORKSITE PHONE NUMBER (include area code)	
PROPOSED TELEWORK SCHEDULE										
	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	PAY PERIOD WEEK 1					PAY PERIOD WEEK 2				
EXAMPLE	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	7:00-3:30	7:00-4:30	7:00-4:30	7:00-4:30	7:00-4:30	DDO/OFF	7:00-4:30	7:00-4:30	7:00-4:30	7:00-4:30
	VA OFFICE	OFF-SITE	VA OFFICE	OFF-SITE	VA OFFICE	HOME	VA OFFICE	OFF-SITE	VA OFFICE	OFF-SITE
EXPLAIN HOW YOUR PROPOSED TELEWORK ARRANGEMENT WILL HELP YOU AND THE ORGANIZATION GET YOUR JOB DONE.										
WHAT POTENTIAL CHALLENGES WILL YOUR PROPOSED TELEWORK ARRANGEMENT POSSIBLY CREATE FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS (internal/external to VA), CO-WORKERS, AND SUPERVISOR? HOW DO YOU PLAN TO RESOLVE THEM?										

VA OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL TELEWORK AGREEMENT			
DOES YOUR JOB INVOLVE CONFIDENTIAL OR SECURE FILES OR INFORMATION?			
<input type="radio"/> YES (If "YES," see your supervisor to discuss additional guidance)		<input type="radio"/> NO	
WHAT SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND/OR ASSIGNMENTS DO YOU PROPOSE TO ACCOMPLISH WHILE WORKING OFF-SITE? HOW WOULD YOU AND YOUR SUPERVISOR ASSESS ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF IDENTIFIED ASSIGNMENTS/PROJECTS? (Be specific and provide time periods for completion of projects)			
COMPLETED BY SUPERVISOR			
ACTION OF SUPERVISOR: <input type="radio"/> APPROVED <input type="radio"/> DISAPPROVED (Explain why) <input type="radio"/> APPROVED WITH MODIFICATION		COMMENTS OF SUPERVISOR	
APPROVED TIMEFRAME FOR TELEWORK (CANNOT EXCEED 1 YEAR)			
BEGIN:		END:	
SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR	DATE	SIGNATURE OF EMPLOYEE	DATE
SIGNATURE OF APPROVING OFFICIAL	DATE	EMPLOYEES PLEASE NOTE: Your signature implies acknowledgment of the potential for unauthorized release during telework sessions or unforeseen workplace circumstances. Teleworking employees are expected to follow their normal work schedule regardless of approval for delayed arrivals or early departures.	

VA FORM 0740B: TELEWORK SELF-CERTIFICATION SAFETY CHECKLIST

A fillable VA Form 0740b is available in the OIG Portal "Forms" section
<https://vaww.portal.oig.va.gov/oig/Lists/Forms%20Directory/AllItems.aspx>

 Department of Veterans Affairs			
TELEWORK SELF-CERTIFICATION SAFETY CHECKLIST WORK-AT-HOME			
1. NAME OF EMPLOYEE (Last, First, Middle Initial)		2. NAME OF YOUR TELEWORK COORDINATOR	
3. HOME ADDRESS (Street, City, State, and ZIP Code)		4. OFFICIAL DUTY STATION ADDRESS (Street, City, State, and ZIP Code)	
		5. HOME OFFICE PHONE NUMBER	
		6. OFFICE PHONE NUMBER	
The following checklist is designed to assess the overall safety of your home office. Please answer each question, sign and date. You should also have your supervisor sign and date after you have completed this form.			
7A. OFFICE ENVIRONMENT			
1. Are temperature, noise, ventilation and lighting levels adequate for maintaining your normal level of job performance?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
2. Are all stairs with four or more steps equipped with handrails?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
3. Are all circuit breakers and/or fuses in the electrical panel labeled as to intended service?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
4. Do circuit breakers clearly indicate if they are in the open or closed position?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
5. Is all electrical equipment free of recognized hazards that would cause physical harm (frayed wires, bare conductors, loose wires, flexible wires running through walls, exposed wires to the ceiling)?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
6. Will the building's electrical system permit the grounding of electrical equipment?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
7. Are aisles, doorways, and corners free of obstructions to permit visibility and movement?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
8. Are file cabinets and storage closets arranged so drawers and doors do not open into walkways?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
9. Do chairs have any loose casters (wheels) and are the rungs and legs of the chairs sturdy?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
10. Are the phone lines, electrical cords, and extension wires secured under a desk or alongside a baseboard?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
11. Is the office space neat, clean, and free of excessive amounts of combustibles?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
12. Are floor surfaces clean, dry, level and free of worn or fray seams?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
13. Are carpets well secured to the floor and free of frayed or worn seams?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
14. Is there enough light for reading?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
7B. COMPUTER WORKSTATION			
1. Is your chair adjustable?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
2. Do you know how to adjust your chair?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
3. Is your back adequately supported by a backrest?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
4. Are your feet on the floor or fully supported by a footrest?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
5. Are you satisfied with the placement of your VDT and keyboard?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
6. Is it easy to read the text on your screen?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
7. Do you need a document holder?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
8. Do you have enough leg room at your desk?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
9. Is the VDT screen free from noticeable glare?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
10. Is the top of the VDT screen eye level?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
11. Is there space to rest the arms while not typing?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
12. When typing, are your forearms close to parallel with the floor?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
13. Are your wrists fairly straight when typing?		<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
8A. SIGNATURE OF EMPLOYEE	8B. DATE	8A. SIGNATURE OF IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR	8B. DATE

 VA FORM
 JAN 2003 **0740b**

ActiveFormDesigner

**REPORTING AND HANDLING ALLEGATIONS
OF MISCONDUCT AGAINST OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL EMPLOYEES**

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish Office of Inspector General (OIG) policy on reporting and handling allegations of misconduct by OIG employees.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:** This directive establishes a requirement for employees and managers to report allegations of misconduct and assigns responsibility to the Office of Investigations, Analysis and Oversight Division (51X) to conduct investigations, when warranted.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Director, Human Resources Management Division (53F), Office of Management and Administration (53).
- 4. RESCISSION:** OIG Policy and Procedure Guide, Chapter 13, Paragraph 9.a., "Reporting Allegations of Misconduct."

CERTIFIED BY:

/s/

Richard Ehrlichman
Assistant Inspector General for
Management and Administration

**BY DIRECTION OF THE
INSPECTOR GENERAL:**

/s/

Richard J. Griffin
Inspector General

Distribution:

Deputy Inspector General (50A)
Executive Assistant (50B)
Counselor to the Inspector General (50C)
Assistant Inspector General for Investigations (51)
Assistant Inspector General for Auditing (52)
Assistant Inspector General for Healthcare Inspections (54)
Director, Human Resources Management Division (53F)

**REPORTING AND HANDLING ALLEGATIONS
OF MISCONDUCT AGAINST OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL EMPLOYEES**

1. PURPOSE: This directive establishes uniform procedures on reporting and investigating allegations of misconduct against Office of Inspector General (OIG) employees. To ensure a thorough inquiry, investigations of serious misconduct will be conducted by the Office of Investigations, Analysis and Oversight Division (51X).

2. POLICY: All OIG employees will follow these procedures when allegations of misconduct against an OIG employee become known, regardless of origin. Employees and managers must report allegations of misconduct directly to the responsible Assistant Inspector General (AIG). In situations where the allegation is against an AIG, report them directly to the Inspector General (IG). If criminal allegations from external organizations such as the Office of Personnel Management, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or the VA Office of Security and Law Enforcement come to the OIG Hotline or 53F, report them directly to the IG.

Credible allegations of serious misconduct, i.e., misconduct that could lead to removal, downgrade, or suspension, or in situations where the skill of trained investigative personnel is required to collect and resolve complicated or conflicting information, will be investigated by 51X. To ensure confidentiality and protection of employee privacy rights, allegations of misconduct will be confined only to those officials with a need to know.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. The IG will determine if a 51X investigation is needed, based on the presentation of the allegation and preliminary facts by the AIG. If the IG determines 51X needs to conduct the investigation, the IG will notify the AIG and 51X. The IG will also provide 53F with notice that a case is under investigation, which they will place on the control log.

b. As noted above, the AIG where the subject works will conduct a preliminary review to determine the merits of the allegation. AIGs will not notify the subject or conduct the investigation. The AIG will provide the IG with a recommendation on handling the allegation. Upon completion of a 51X investigation, or if the IG determines the allegation does not warrant a 51X investigation, the AIG will refer the matter to the appropriate manager, who will work with 53F and the Office of the Counselor to determine appropriate action.

c. The Special Agent in Charge of 51X is responsible for overseeing the conduct of internal investigations, preparing reports of investigations, providing completed reports to the appropriate AIG, and maintaining all related records and evidence.

d. Employees are responsible for adhering to the standards of conduct and for reporting allegations of misconduct, including possible criminal misconduct, as outlined in this policy in accordance with Title 5, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §2635.101 and 38 CFR §1.204. Failure to report an allegation of misconduct may become the basis for a disciplinary action. In accordance with 38 CFR §0.735-12(b), all OIG employees have a duty to cooperate in an official investigation and furnish information to the best of their ability, unless the employee's rights against self-incrimination are implicated.

Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Inspector General
Washington, DC 20420

OIG GM Directive 330
Transmittal Sheet
April 7, 2005

REPORTING INCIDENTS OF ARRESTS

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish Office of Inspector General (OIG) policy on the reporting of arrests of OIG employees.
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS:** This directive establishes a requirement for all employees who are arrested to report these incidents to their immediate supervisor on the first work day after the incident.
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Director, Human Resources Management Division (53F), Office of Management and Administration (53).
- 4. RESCISSION:** OIG Policy and Procedure Guide, Chapter 13, Section IV, "Reporting Incidents of Arrests."

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE
INSPECTOR GENERAL:**

/s/

/s/

Richard Ehrlichman
Assistant Inspector General for
Management and Administration

Richard J. Griffin
Inspector General

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Assistant Inspector General for Healthcare Inspections (54)
Director, Human Resources Management Division (53F)

1. PURPOSE: OIG employees are expected to adhere to high standards of conduct both on and off duty. To protect the integrity and reputation of the OIG, all employees who are arrested will report these incidents to their immediate supervisor so that a determination on current duty status and continued suitability for employment can be made.

2. POLICY: OIG employees who are arrested will report arrests for violations of Federal, state, or local criminal laws, both felony and misdemeanors, to their immediate supervisor on the first work day after the incident. Failure to report an arrest may become the basis for a disciplinary action. To ensure confidentiality and protection of employee privacy rights, reports of arrests will be confined only to those officials with a need to know.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES:

a. Employees will comply with the requirement to report arrests and to provide updated information on the status of arrests, e.g., indictments, trial dates, final disposition of the charges, etc., to the immediate supervisor.

b. Supervisors will prepare a written report and submit it to the Director, Human Resources Management Division (53F) on the same day the arrest is reported by the employee. The report should include the following information:

- Employee's name, position title, and duty station
- Date and place of arrest
- Name of arresting agency
- Charges
- Disposition, if known
- Copy of arrest record

c. The Director (53F) will immediately report incidents of arrests directly to the Inspector General (IG).

d. The IG will determine the need for additional fact finding in accordance with OIG GM Directive 329, "Reporting and Handling Allegations of Misconduct against Office of Inspector General Employees." The IG will determine the appropriate duty status of the employee pending resolution of the charges.



OIG Announcements

Whistleblower Protection Ombuds Program
Training presentation from Hotline for review by all OIG employees

New & Updated Directives
Internal Controls, Records Management, Staffing & Recruitment, Liability Insurance, Purchase Cards, Travel Cards and Travel Policy

FedEx / UPS Delivery Procedures

Announcements in the Employee Toolbox

Non-Sanctioned TSP App in Apple Store

Microsoft Home Use Program

OIG Travel Resource Center



OIG's travel site has been transformed with easier-to-find content, updated information, and new content all reorganized to better meet the needs of the OIG traveler.

New content includes an Approving Officials' Corner, complete with

Live Meeting presentation of step-by-step procedures; a New Employee's page; FedTraveler FAQ's and much more. Take a minute to familiarize yourself with this valuable new resource.

[OIG Travel Resource Center](#)

TechWorld Renovation Announcements

Office Moves Updates

VACO-Only Announcements


Use of TechWorld 8th Floor Fitness Center

What's New?

- Investigations Highlights, 4/22
- OIG Travel Resource Center
- Cisco/IronPort "Registered Envelope Service" sites now acceptable for exchanging sensitive data with external contacts!

Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

Let your voice be heard!



The Survey is Important!

- It helps assess climate, work environment, and human capital practices.
- It lets us compare the VA OIG with other agencies.
- Results are used to determine the Government-wide Best Places to Work Index.
- It drives VA OIG improvement initiatives. Your opinion counts!

What Else Do You Need To Know?

- Survey is **confidential** and **voluntary**.
- All employees will not participate in the survey; OPM will utilize a stratified random to identify participants.

Questions? Please contact Scott Miller (Scott.Miller@va.gov) or Kinale Ford (Kinale.Ford@va.gov).

Take the 2013 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey!

The survey will be administered by OPM via e-mail from April 30 – June 7.

[Click to Enlarge](#)

January 2013 "OIG Happenings" Newsletter



OIG Happenings is a quarterly, internal newsletter published by the Office of Management and Administration on behalf of the Inspector General. Issues will be available on the Portal and will include news, updates, and other information regarding the entire organization.

Links

- [OIG Internet \(Public Website\)](#)
- [OIG Hotline](#)
- [House Committee on Veterans' Affairs](#)
- [Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs](#)
- [VA Internet \(Public Website\)](#)
- [VA Intranet](#)
- [VACO Portal](#)
- [VA Forms](#)
- [OIG Home and Office Safety, Security and Emergency Brochure](#)
- [DisasterAssistance.Gov](#)
- [Ready.gov](#) - disaster preparedness tips and guides

- Federal Holidays
- IDP - Individual Development Plan
- State Tax Exempt Forms Library at the GSA SmartPay Site
- TMS - Talent Management System
- VA Wellness Program
- VAOIG on Twitter
- VPN Self Service Portal
- WebTA

https://www.va.gov/... (b)(6) ... OIG Portal Home Page ... VA Office of Inspector General

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WAOIG Intranet > OIG Portal

OIG Portal Home Page

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This Site: OIG Portal

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- VA Intranet
- VACO Portal
- VA Forms
- OIG Home and Office Safety, Security and Emergency Procedure
- Disaster Assistance - Gov

NTAS
NO ALTERNATES
NEWPHS.gov/ntas

100%