VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION
Health Care Executive Fellow (HCEF) Program

Frequently Asked Questions
Fellow Candidates

1. What are the qualifications?

Many of the qualifications differ depending on the fellowship position however there are some universal qualifications among the positions. The program has three tracks: Associate Director, Nurse Executive and Chief of Staff. Detailed position and qualification information can be found in the respective job application announcements once released on USA Jobs.

2. How do I apply?

The job announcement with detailed instructions will be posted on USAJobs. The application period is July 2 to August 6, 2012.

http://www.vacareers.va.gov/VACAREERS/students-trainees/healthcare-execs.asp

3. How many fellows will be hired?

The approved number of fellows in the Class of 2013 is unknown at this time. The number will not exceed more than 25.

4. How long is the fellowship?

The fellowship program is for one full year. This is to provide the fellow with maximum exposure to the roles and responsibilities of an executive in VHA.

5. What is a senior leadership development program?

- Internal applicants – the most prominent executive leader development programs for VHA are the VHA Executive Career Field Candidate Development Program (ECFCDP) or the VHA Health Care Leadership Development Program (HCLDP).

- External applicants – prior senior leader training must be equivalent to the ECFCDP or HCLDP programs by meeting the following criteria:
    - One year or more in length.
    - Assignments provide knowledge of basic health system administration philosophies, practices, and procedures.
    - Practical assignments providing an opportunity to apply health system administration skills and principles.
    - Oversight by an experienced health system administrator with periodic evaluation of the individual's progress and appropriate adjustment of the training program.

I would like to know more about employment with Veterans Affairs (VA), where can I find information?

The below VA websites offers a wealth of information about employment opportunities and joining the team with the most honorable mission in the federal government, serving our American Heroes.

http://www.vacareers.va.gov/index.asp
http://www.va.gov/

6. I am applying in July 2012 but if selected I won't start my fellowship until July 2013. Why does the process take so long?

Selection for an HCEF fellowship follows a very rigorous process to ensure the highest caliber candidates are accepted into the program and trained to assume VHA's most challenging executive assignments. Between the application period in July and fellowship offers in early spring, candidates will have their applications scored by a selection panel, respond to telephone interviews, and participate in a hands-on assessment center. The candidate pool will be reduced at each stage, resulting in a final set of candidates. The time between the offers in the spring and the beginning of the training in July is set aside for fellows to arrange for and to relocate to their training assignments.

7. Why aren't the training locations known at the time of application?

The process for selecting the best possible training sites is as important as selecting the fellows themselves. Senior executives for each major VHA medical facility may apply to host one of the HCEF fellows. The selection of the final sites rests with a senior executive panel and will be based on the experience level of the facility senior staff, breadth and uniqueness of the facility healthcare environment, and demonstrated ability of the facility team to mentor and develop trainees. Selection of one site over another will also consider the pool of fellow candidates and which category of fellow is most appropriate for a particular facility -- Associate Director, Nurse Executive and Chief of Staff.

8. What is involved with selection of the candidates?

VHA is seeking only the best qualified candidates to be HCEF fellows, so selection involves multiple steps. The application period is open for a full month (July to August) to provide the greatest opportunity for internal and external candidates to apply. During August, all of the applications will be screened to ensure they meet the minimum qualifications and requirements. Those who meet the minimum standards will be reviewed and scored by a panel of experienced executives in September. The best qualified candidates will be telephonically interviewed by a group of executives during late November and early December. A maximum of 48 top candidates can be scheduled for the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) hands-on Assessment Center in late winter. Finally, the top candidates based on application review, interview scoring and the OPM Assessment Center results will be offered the fellowships.

9. I am not able to move. Do I have to sign a mobility agreement if I am selected?

The HCEF Program was created to meet the pressing need for VHA executives in critical leadership positions in facilities throughout the country. Having a trained and ready cadre to move into and assume these roles is fundamental to the program and its ability to meet VHA's

succession needs. Every HCEF Fellow will be required to sign a mobility agreement indicating they understand this fact and that they will be willing to move to an executive position following completion of the HCEF program. Each candidate's unique circumstances, qualifications and personal desires will be considered as much as possible in making final assignments to meet VHA needs.

10. Will I be required to travel?

Yes, some travel will be required as an HCEF fellow. Anticipate at least 5 travel episodes to complete your training requirements. Occasional unscheduled travel may be deemed appropriate by your Preceptor in order to enhance your training or to expose you to different VA environments.

11. Will I receive employment benefits?

Yes, benefits will be available to selected fellows.

http://www4.va.gov/JOBS/Job_Benefits/benefits.asp

12. What type of training is covered through the HCEF program to prepare me as a new healthcare executive?

The HCEF program is focused on the technical skill competencies of new executives. Multiple methods and modalities are incorporated into the curriculum, including hands-on experiences, job assignments and on-line training modules to enhance the following skill areas:

- Budget/Finance/Decision Support Systems
- Human Resources/Employee Relations/Labor/Equal Employment Opportunity & Diversity
- Patient Safety/Quality Management/Performance Management
- Research/Affiliations/Contracting
- VA/Communications/Community Relations/Congressional Relations

13. Will I be supervising people as a fellow?

HCEF fellows will be placed in a supervisory role during their training period. In addition, fellows may have an opportunity to serve in an Acting capacity within the organization and engage in all of the daily responsibilities that entails.

14. Will I get to choose where I am placed at the end of the fellowship?

Every effort will be made to consider each candidate's unique situation, qualifications and personal desires when they are matched to a follow-on assignment. However, the HCEF program is designed to create a trained set of future executives who can be placed in VHA's highest priority positions, which may not always align with a fellow's immediate desires.

15. If the candidate completes the fellowship and no positions are available, what is the candidate's employment status?

Succession data in VHA indicates that more than 80% of executives and 56% of supervisors are eligible to retire by 2015. That is a lot of potential openings. The absence of available positions for HCEF graduates is not expected, but if difficulties arise the HTM office will work to place the graduate in a position at a medical center that best meets their talents and the needs of the VHA. In other instances, fellows may be temporarily allowed to remain at their training sites until a relocation assignment is open.

For additional questions please contact the VHAHCEFProgram@va.gov