

# U.S. DEPARTMENT of VETERANS AFFAIRS

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) delivers on three core responsibilities: providing eligible Veterans timely, world class health care; ensuring that Veterans and their families have access to the benefits they have earned; and honoring Veterans with a final resting place that is a lasting tribute to their service and sacrifice.

## BUILDING ON VA'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **EMBEDDING EQUITY THROUGH POLICY AND OPERATIONAL CHANGES:** The Honolulu Regional Office increased personnel in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa to provide assistance and reduce challenges that affect Veterans' access to benefits in those regions, such as internet connectivity issues in rural areas.
- **EXPANDING ACCESS TO GRANTMAKING, RESEARCH, AND TRAINING:** VA is working to understand the unmet needs of minority and Women Veterans in the Pacific Islands and freely associated states (FAS). Women Veterans and Veterans from historically marginalized and underserved communities in these locations face systemic barriers and lack equitable access to health care, benefits, and opportunities. VA has completed a study on Mental Health disparities and released the [AANHPI Mental Health Information Brief](#). VA has released the Asian and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander Veteran [Chartbook](#).
- **HONORING THE LEGACY, SERVICE, AND SACRIFICE OF AA AND NHPI VETERANS:** The National Cemetery Administration continued to provide services for AA and NHPI Veterans through VA grant-funded state Veterans cemeteries, including Metlakatla Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Alaska; Guam Veterans Cemetery; Hawaiian Office of Veteran Services; and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Veterans Cemetery.
- **ENGAGING WITH AA AND NHPI VETERANS:** VA Deputy Secretary Donald M. Remy led a visit with listening sessions to locations in the Indo-Pacific where VA facilities provided healthcare, benefits, and services to U.S. Veterans. Also, VA Secretary Denis McDonough visited Hawaii in October 2022. VA continues targeted outreach to the AA and NHPI communities, including at the Manila Regional Office which hosts monthly benefits information sessions for Veterans who reside in the Philippines, Micronesia, Palau, and the Marshall Islands. During these sessions, presenters provide information about veteran eligibility requirements and the VA benefits and services application process.

# PRIORITY PROGRAM GOALS FOR THE ASIAN AMERICAN, NATIVE HAWAIIAN, AND PACIFIC ISLANDER COMMUNITIES

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*Per Executive Order 14031, VA has identified five high-priority goals that will span the next two years. These goals will advance equity, justice, and opportunity for AA and NHPI communities.*

## GOAL 1

**Develop data to advance VA's strategy on equity:** VA seeks to provide authoritative demographic data on all Veterans, regardless of whether they use VA services. The Veteran-centered model will synchronize VA's data on health care, disability benefits, and other Veteran-facing services to address demographic data gaps. With better data, VA will have the capability to identify and eliminate disparities and measure quality and effectiveness of benefits, care, and services for underserved Veteran populations, inclusive of Women Veterans, Veterans of color, and LGBTQ+ Veterans.

## GOAL 2

**Improve access to VA benefits, care, and services:** Veterans in the Pacific Islands, FAS, and the Philippines have little or no access to suicide prevention, military sexual trauma resources, women's health, wellness, and other VA programs. To address these gaps, VA will, among other things, review regulations to increase opportunities for participation in telehealth; modernize the Foreign Medical Program to provide overseas Veterans with easier electronic communication and streamlined claims and billing processes; and develop a benefits awareness campaign to inform Veterans of the services available to them. VA will conduct its inaugural Veterans Experience Action Center with a first-time focus on the Pacific region (vs. state) and Women Veterans.

## GOAL 3

**Address health equity for underserved Veterans:** VA will build upon current clinical population health and quality improvement resources to identify disparities in health care and health outcomes among Veterans receiving care through VA and address the root causes of the identified disparities by assessing the quality of coding in VA electronic health records and identifying efficient ways to improve the identification of NHPI Veterans in that system and utilize the AA and NHPI chartbook that highlights disparities experienced by AA and NHPI Veterans to reduce disparities, improve cultural competency and diversity in alignment to VA strategic plan FY 22-28.

## GOAL 4

**Promote an inclusive work environment free from all discrimination, retribution, and harassment:** VA will identify agency materials that reach AA and NHPI audiences and ensure they are culturally and linguistically appropriate; continue virtual technical assistance reviews to assist facilities in striving to attain a model equal employment opportunity (EEO) program; and implement updated mandatory EEO, diversity and inclusion, and conflict management training for all executives, managers, and supervisors.

## GOAL 5

**Eliminate barriers to equal employment opportunities at all levels and in all occupations to advance equity for employees:** Among other things, VA will continue the "Identity Insights" project, which examines the experience of multiple identity groups (American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Black/African American, Hispanic, various generations, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+, and women) across six relationships (work, technology, place, people,

organization, and well-being); analyze the current level of diversity among the VA's SES employees; become intentional about diversifying the applicant pool in alignment with VA strategic plan FY 22-28; and revise and renew partnerships and memoranda of understanding with affinity groups.