

Subsec. (b)(2), (3). Pub. L. 102-405, §302(c)(1), substituted "Under Secretary for Health" for "Chief Medical Director" wherever appearing.

Subsec. (c). Pub. L. 102-585, §511(b)(2), substituted "(4), and (7)" for "and (4)".

Pub. L. 102-405, §302(c)(1), substituted "Under Secretary for Health" for "Chief Medical Director".

DEADLINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF 2010 AMENDMENT

Pub. L. 111-163, title V, §514(b), May 5, 2010, 124 Stat. 1165, provided that: "The Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall ensure that an individual is serving as the Director of Physician Assistant Services under paragraph (9) of section 7306(a) of title 38, United States Code, as amended by subsection (a), by not later than 120 days after the date of the enactment of this Act [May 5, 2010]."

§ 7307. Office of Research Oversight

(a) REQUIREMENT FOR OFFICE.—(1) There is in the Veterans Health Administration an Office of Research Oversight (hereinafter in this section referred to as the "Office"). The Office shall advise the Under Secretary for Health on matters of compliance and assurance in human subjects protections, research safety, and research impropriety and misconduct. The Office shall function independently of entities within the Veterans Health Administration with responsibility for the conduct of medical research programs.

(2) The Office shall—

(A) monitor, review, and investigate matters of medical research compliance and assurance in the Department with respect to human subjects protections; and

(B) monitor, review, and investigate matters relating to the protection and safety of human subjects and Department employees participating in medical research in Department programs.

(b) DIRECTOR.—(1) The head of the Office shall be a Director, who shall report directly to the Under Secretary for Health (without delegation).

(2) Any person appointed as Director shall be—

(A) an established expert in the field of medical research, administration of medical research programs, or similar fields; and

(B) qualified to carry out the duties of the Office based on demonstrated experience and expertise.

(c) FUNCTIONS.—(1) The Director shall report to the Under Secretary for Health on matters relating to protections of human subjects in medical research projects of the Department under any applicable Federal law and regulation, the safety of employees involved in Department medical research programs, and suspected misconduct and impropriety in such programs. In carrying out the preceding sentence, the Director shall consult with employees of the Veterans Health Administration who are responsible for the management and conduct of Department medical research programs.

(2) The matters to be reported by the Director to the Under Secretary under paragraph (1) shall include allegations of research impropriety and misconduct by employees engaged in medical research programs of the Department.

(3)(A) When the Director determines that such a recommendation is warranted, the Director

may recommend to the Under Secretary that a Department research activity be terminated, suspended, or restricted, in whole or in part.

(B) In a case in which the Director reasonably believes that activities of a medical research project of the Department place human subjects' lives or health at imminent risk, the Director shall direct that activities under that project be immediately suspended or, as appropriate and specified by the Director, be limited.

(d) GENERAL FUNCTIONS.—(1) The Director shall conduct periodic inspections and reviews, as the Director determines appropriate, of medical research programs of the Department. Such inspections and reviews shall include review of required documented assurances.

(2) The Director shall observe external accreditation activities conducted for accreditation of medical research programs conducted in facilities of the Department.

(3) The Director shall investigate allegations of research impropriety and misconduct in medical research projects of the Department.

(4) The Director shall submit to the Under Secretary for Health, the Secretary, and the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report on any suspected lapse, from whatever cause or causes, in protecting safety of human subjects and others, including employees, in medical research programs of the Department.

(5) The Director shall carry out such other duties as the Under Secretary for Health may require.

(e) SOURCE OF FUNDS.—Amounts for the activities of the Office, including its regional offices, shall be derived from amounts appropriated for the Veterans Health Administration for Medical Care.

(f) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than March 15 each year, the Director shall submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a report on the activities of the Office during the preceding calendar year. Each such report shall include, with respect to that year, the following:

(1) A summary of reviews of individual medical research programs of the Department completed by the Office.

(2) Directives and other communications issued by the Office to field activities of the Department.

(3) Results of any investigations undertaken by the Office during the reporting period consonant with the purposes of this section.

(4) Other information that would be of interest to those committees in oversight of the Department medical research program.

(g) MEDICAL RESEARCH.—For purposes of this section, the term "medical research" means medical research described in section 7303(a)(2) of this title.

(Added Pub. L. 108-170, title IV, §401(a)(1), Dec. 6, 2003, 117 Stat. 2059.)

§ 7308. Office of Rural Health

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in the Department within the Office of the Under Secretary for Health an office to be known as the "Office of Rural Health" (in this section referred to as the "Office").

(b) **HEAD.**—The Director of the Office of Rural Health shall be the head of the Office. The Director of the Office of Rural Health shall be appointed by the Under Secretary of Health from among individuals qualified to perform the duties of the position.

(c) **FUNCTIONS.**—The functions of the Office are as follows:

(1) In cooperation with the medical, rehabilitation, health services, and cooperative studies research programs in the Office of Policy and the Office of Research and Development of the Veterans Health Administration, to assist the Under Secretary for Health in conducting, coordinating, promoting, and disseminating research into issues affecting veterans living in rural areas.

(2) To work with all personnel and offices of the Department of Veterans Affairs to develop, refine, and promulgate policies, best practices, lessons learned, and innovative and successful programs to improve care and services for veterans who reside in rural areas of the United States.

(3) To designate in each Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) an individual who shall consult on and coordinate the discharge in such Network of programs and activities of the Office for veterans who reside in rural areas of the United States.

(4) To perform such other functions and duties as the Secretary or the Under Secretary for Health considers appropriate.

(d) **RURAL HEALTH RESOURCE CENTERS.**—(1) There are, in the Office, veterans rural health resource centers that serve as satellite offices for the Office.

(2) The veterans rural health resource centers have purposes as follows:

(A) To improve the understanding of the Office of the challenges faced by veterans living in rural areas.

(B) To identify disparities in the availability of health care to veterans living in rural areas.

(C) To formulate practices or programs to enhance the delivery of health care to veterans living in rural areas.

(D) To develop special practices and products for the benefit of veterans living in rural areas and for implementation of such practices and products in the Department system-wide.

(Added Pub. L. 109-461, title II, §212(a)(1), Dec. 22, 2006, 120 Stat. 3421; amended Pub. L. 112-154, title I, §110, Aug. 6, 2012, 126 Stat. 1175.)

AMENDMENTS

Subsec. (d). Pub. L. 112-154 added subsec. (d).

§ 7309. Readjustment Counseling Service

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—There is in the Veterans Health Administration a Readjustment Counseling Service. The Readjustment Counseling Service shall provide readjustment counseling and associated services to individuals in accordance with section 1712A of this title.

(b) **CHIEF OFFICER.**—(1) The head of the Readjustment Counseling Service shall be the Chief Officer of the Readjustment Counseling Service

(in this section referred to as the “Chief Officer”), who shall report directly to the Under Secretary for Health.

(2) The Chief Officer shall be appointed by the Under Secretary for Health from among individuals who—

(A)(i) are psychologists who hold a diploma as a doctorate in clinical or counseling psychology from an authority approved by the American Psychological Association and who have successfully undergone an internship approved by that association;

(ii) are holders of a master in social work degree; or

(iii) hold such other advanced degrees related to mental health as the Secretary considers appropriate;

(B) have at least three years of experience providing direct counseling services or outreach services in the Readjustment Counseling Service;

(C) have at least three years of experience administering direct counseling services or outreach services in the Readjustment Counseling Service;

(D) meet the quality standards and requirements of the Department; and

(E) are veterans who served in combat as members of the Armed Forces.

(c) **STRUCTURE.**—(1) The Readjustment Counseling Service is a distinct organizational element within the Veterans Health Administration.

(2) The Readjustment Counseling Service shall provide counseling and services as described in subsection (a).

(3) The Chief Officer shall have direct authority over all Readjustment Counseling Service staff and assets, including Vet Centers.

(d) **SOURCE OF FUNDS.**—(1) Amounts for the activities of the Readjustment Counseling Service, including the operations of its Vet Centers, shall be derived from amounts appropriated for the Veterans Health Administration for medical care.

(2) Amounts for activities of the Readjustment Counseling Service, including the operations of its Vet Centers, shall not be allocated through the Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation system.

(3) In each budget request submitted for the Department of Veterans Affairs by the President to Congress under section 1105 of title 31, the budget request for the Readjustment Counseling Service shall be listed separately.

(e) **ANNUAL REPORT.**—(1) Not later than March 15 of each year, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the activities of the Readjustment Counseling Service during the preceding fiscal year.

(2) Each report submitted under paragraph (1) shall include, with respect to the period covered by the report, the following:

(A) A summary of the activities of the Readjustment Counseling Service, including Vet Centers.

(B) A description of the workload and additional treatment capacity of the Vet Centers, including, for each Vet Center, the ratio of the