

the use by women veterans of health services through the Department of Veterans Affairs, including counseling for sexual trauma and mental health services, and to submit reports to the Under Secretary for Health of the Department of Veterans Affairs not later than Apr. 1, 1997, and Apr. 1 of each of the two following years, and also required the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to submit reports to Congress, not later than July 1, 1997, and July 1 of each of the two following years.

**§ 319. Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication**

(a)(1) There is in the Department an Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication. There is at the head of the Office a Director.

(2) The Director shall be a career appointee in the Senior Executive Service.

(3) The Director reports directly to the Secretary or the Deputy Secretary concerning matters within the responsibility of the Office.

(b)(1) The Director is responsible for making the final agency decision within the Department on the merits of any employment discrimination complaint filed by an employee, or an applicant for employment, with the Department. The Director shall make such decisions in an impartial and objective manner.

(2) No person may make any ex parte communication to the Director or to any employee of the Office with respect to a matter on which the Director has responsibility for making a final agency decision.

(c) Whenever the Director has reason to believe that there has been retaliation against an employee by reason of the employee asserting rights under an equal employment opportunity law, the Director shall report the suspected retaliatory action directly to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary, who shall take appropriate action thereon.

(d)(1) The Office shall employ a sufficient number of attorneys and other personnel as are necessary to carry out the functions of the Office. Attorneys shall be compensated at a level commensurate with attorneys employed by the Office of the General Counsel.

(2) The Secretary shall ensure that the Director is furnished sufficient resources in addition to personnel under paragraph (1) to enable the Director to carry out the functions of the Office in a timely manner.

(3) The Secretary shall ensure that any performance appraisal of the Director of the Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication or of any employee of the Office does not take into consideration the record of the Director or employee in deciding cases for or against the Department.

(Added Pub. L. 105-114, title I, §102(a)(1), Nov. 21, 1997, 111 Stat. 2280.)

**Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries**

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

Pub. L. 105-114, title I, §102(c), Nov. 21, 1997, 111 Stat. 2281, provided that: "Section 319 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a), shall take effect 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act [Nov. 21, 1997]."

**REPORTS ON IMPLEMENTATION**

Pub. L. 105-114, title I, §102(b), Nov. 21, 1997, 111 Stat. 2281, required the Director of the Office of Employment

Discrimination Complaint Adjudication of the Department of Veterans Affairs to submit to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and to Congress reports on the implementation and the operation of the office, with the first report due not later than Apr. 1, 1998, and subsequent reports due not later than Jan. 1, 1999, and Jan. 1, 2000.

**§ 320. Department of Veterans Affairs-Department of Defense Joint Executive Committee**

(a) JOINT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.—(1) There is established an interagency committee to be known as the Department of Veterans Affairs-Department of Defense Joint Executive Committee (hereinafter in this section referred to as the "Committee").

(2) The Committee is composed of—

(A) the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs and such other officers and employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may designate;

(B) the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness and such other officers and employees of the Department of Defense as the Secretary of Defense may designate;

(C) the Assistant Secretary of Labor for Veterans' Employment and Training and such other officers and employees of the Department of Labor as the Secretary of Labor may designate; and

(D) such officers and employees of other Executive agencies as the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Secretary of Defense jointly determine, with the consent of the heads of the Executive agencies of such officers and employees, necessary to carry out the goals and objectives of the Committee.

(3) The co-chairs of the Committee are the Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

(b) ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS.—(1) The Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the Under Secretary of Defense shall determine the size and structure of the Committee, as well as the administrative and procedural guidelines for the operation of the Committee.

(2) The two Departments shall supply appropriate staff and resources to provide administrative support and services. Support for such purposes shall be provided at a level sufficient for the efficient operation of the Committee, including a subordinate Health Executive Committee, a subordinate Benefits Executive Committee, a subordinate Transition Executive Committee, and such other committees or working groups as considered necessary by the Deputy Secretary and Under Secretary.

(c) RECOMMENDATIONS.—(1) The Committee shall recommend to the Secretaries strategic direction for the joint coordination and sharing efforts between and within the two Departments under section 8111 of this title and shall oversee implementation of those efforts.

(2) The Committee shall submit to the two Secretaries and to Congress an annual report containing such recommendations as the Committee considers appropriate.

(d) FUNCTIONS.—In order to enable the Committee to make recommendations in its annual report under subsection (c)(2), the Committee shall do the following:

(1) Review existing policies, procedures, and practices relating to the coordination and sharing of resources between the two Departments.

(2) Identify changes in policies, procedures, and practices that, in the judgment of the Committee, would promote mutually beneficial coordination, use, or exchange of use of services and resources of the two Departments, with the goal of improving the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of benefits and services to veterans, service members, military retirees, and their families through an enhanced Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense partnership, including with respect to job training and post-service placement.

(3) Identify and assess further opportunities for the coordination and collaboration between the Departments that, in the judgment of the Committee, would not adversely affect the range of services, the quality of care, or the established priorities for benefits provided by either Department.

(4) Review the plans of both Departments for the acquisition of additional resources, especially new facilities and major equipment and technology, in order to assess the potential effect of such plans on further opportunities for the coordination and sharing of resources.

(5) Review the implementation of activities designed to promote the coordination and sharing of resources between the Departments.

(6) Develop, implement, and oversee such other joint actions, initiatives, programs, and policies as the two Secretaries determine appropriate and consistent with the purpose of the Committee.

(e) **TRANSITION EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.**—The Transition Executive Committee described in subsection (b)(2) shall, in addition to such other activities as may assigned<sup>1</sup> to the committee under subsection (d)(6)—

(1) review existing policies, procedures, and practices of the Departments (including the military departments) with respect to job training and post-service placement programs; and

(2) identify changes to such policies, procedures, and practices to improve job training, transition from life in the Armed Forces to civilian life, and post-service placement.

(Added Pub. L. 108-136, div. A, title V, §583(a)(1), Nov. 24, 2003, 117 Stat. 1490; amended Pub. L. 114-92, div. A, title V, §561, Nov. 25, 2015, 129 Stat. 828; Pub. L. 118-31, div. A, title XVIII, §1805, Dec. 22, 2023, 137 Stat. 687.)

#### Editorial Notes

##### AMENDMENTS

2023—Subsec. (a)(2)(C), (D). Pub. L. 118-31, §1805(1)(A), added subpars. (C) and (D).

Subsec. (a)(3). Pub. L. 118-31, §1805(1)(B), added par. (3).

Subsec. (b)(2). Pub. L. 118-31, §1805(2), substituted “Transition Executive Committee” for “Job Training and Post-Service Placement Executive Committee”.

Subsec. (d)(6). Pub. L. 118-31, §1805(3), added par. (6).

Subsec. (e). Pub. L. 118-31, §1805(4)(B), in introductory provisions, substituted “Transition” for “Job Training and Post-Service Placement” and inserted “, in addition to such other activities as may assigned to the committee under subsection (d)(6)” after “shall”.

Pub. L. 118-31, §1805(4)(A), substituted “Transition” for “Job Training and Post-Service Placement” in heading.

Subsec. (e)(2). Pub. L. 118-31, §1805(4)(C), inserted “, transition from life in the Armed Forces to civilian life,” after “job training”.

2015—Subsec. (b)(2). Pub. L. 114-92, §561(1), inserted “a subordinate Job Training and Post-Service Placement Executive Committee,” before “such other committees”.

Subsec. (d)(2). Pub. L. 114-92, §561(3), inserted “, including with respect to job training and post-service placement” before period at end.

Subsec. (e). Pub. L. 114-92, §561(2), added subsec. (e).

#### Statutory Notes and Related Subsidiaries

##### EFFECTIVE DATE

Pub. L. 108-136, div. A, title V, §583(d)(2), Nov. 24, 2003, 117 Stat. 1492, provided that: “If this Act is enacted on or after October 1, 2003, the amendments made by this section [enacting this section and amending section 8111 of this title] shall take effect on the date of the enactment of this Act [Nov. 24, 2003].”

##### JOINT PROGRAM FOR DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF INTEGRATED HEALING CARE PRACTICES FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES AND VETERANS

Pub. L. 108-136, div. A, title VII, §727, Nov. 24, 2003, 117 Stat. 1537, provided that:

“(a) **PROGRAM.**—The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Veterans Affairs may conduct a program to develop and evaluate integrated healing care practices for members of the Armed Forces and veterans. Any such program shall be carried out through the Department of Veterans Affairs-Department of Defense Joint Executive Committee established under section 320 of title 38, United States Code.

“(b) **SOURCE OF DOD FUNDS.**—Amounts authorized to be appropriated by this Act [see Tables for classification] for the Defense Health Program may be used for the program under subsection (a).”

#### § 321. Office of Survivors Assistance

(a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—The Secretary shall establish in the Department an Office of Survivors Assistance (in this section referred to as the “Office”) to serve as a resource regarding all benefits and services furnished by the Department—

(1) to survivors and dependents of deceased veterans; and

(2) to survivors and dependents of deceased members of the Armed Forces.

(b) **ADVISORY DUTIES.**—The Office shall serve as a primary advisor to the Secretary on all matters related to the policies, programs, legislative issues, and other initiatives affecting the survivors and dependents described in subsection (a).

(c) **GUIDANCE FROM STAKEHOLDERS.**—In establishing the Office, the Secretary shall seek guidance from interested stakeholders.

(d) **RESOURCES.**—The Secretary shall ensure that appropriate personnel, funding, and other resources are provided to the Office to carry out its responsibilities.

(e) **INCLUSION OF INFORMATION ON OFFICE IN ANNUAL REPORT ON DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES.**—The Secretary shall include in each annual Perform-

<sup>1</sup> So in original. Probably should be preceded by “be”.