

August 1, 2024

VA-STEP PROGRAM SOP

Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Washington, DC 20420

VA-STEP PROGRAM SOP  
Transmittal Sheet  
August 1, 2024

**VA STUDENT TRAINEE EXPERIENCE PROGRAM (VA-STEP)  
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)**

**1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) implements the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Student Trainee Experience Program (VA-STEP).

**2. SUMMARY OF CONTENT:** This SOP sets forth the policy for VHA to implement a recruitment program that allows outstanding college students an opportunity to develop skills necessary for employment retention at approved VA medical facilities.

**3. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES:**

- Name change from VA Learning Opportunities Residency to VA Student Trainee Experience Program.
- Added instructions using the new Online Application Management System for reporting, application, and facility renewal procedures.
- Changed all references to Medical Technician to Medical Laboratory Scientist.
- Adjusted the requirement that the student not be allowed to be under a service obligation after graduation to another entity. Changed the requirement limiting the impact of the requirement to those agencies other than the VA. Chapter 6, para b.(9).
- Added wording to allow for a waiver of the Master's Degree requirement for Nurse and Medical Laboratory Scientist facility coordinators in Chapter 6, para a.(1).
- Expanded guidance on Appointment and Pay and updated hourly rate computation data to reflect guidance listed in Chapter 7, para a.(4).
- Added new chapter to capture the transition of students to employment in the VA. See Chapter 8.
- Changed primary support email address from [VHAVALORSupport@va.gov](mailto:VHAVALORSupport@va.gov) to [VHAVA-STEPSupport@va.gov](mailto:VHAVA-STEPSupport@va.gov).
- Additional of Pharmacy to the VA-STEP offerings. This includes multiple entries with Pharmacy specific requirements throughout the document.

**4. RELATED ISSUES:** None.

**5. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** The Workforce Management and Consulting Office (WMC/106A4) program office is responsible for the contents of this SOP. Questions may be addressed to [VHAVASTEPSupport@va.gov](mailto:VHAVASTEPSupport@va.gov).

**6. RESCISSIONS:** None.

August 1, 2024

VA-STEP PROGRAM

**7.RECERTIFICATION:** This VHA SOP is scheduled for recertification on or before the last working day of October 2026. This VHA SOP will continue to serve as a national VHA policy until it is recertified.



David Perry  
Chief Officer  
Workforce Management and Consulting

**NOTE:** *All references herein to VA and VHA documents incorporate by reference subsequent VA and VHA documents on the same or similar subject matter.*

**DISTRIBUTION:** Emailed to the VA-STEP Coordinators Distribution List on August 1, 2024.

CONTENTS

VA STUDENT TRAINEE EXPERIENCE PROGRAM (VA-STEP)

1. PURPOSE..... 1

2. BACKGROUND. .... 1

3. POLICY ..... 1

4. RESPONSIBILITIES ..... 1

5. VA-STEP PROGRAM PROPOSALS ..... 3

6. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS ..... 3

7. APPOINTMENTS AND PAY ..... 4

8. VA-STEP REPORTS..... 5

9. VA-STEP VIRTUAL PROGRAM REVIEW ..... 6

10. TRAINING ..... 6

11. RECORDS MANAGEMENT..... 7

12. COORDINATOR AND PARTICIPANT SURVEYS ..... 7

13. REFERENCES..... 7

APPENDIX A - VA-STEP PROPOSAL GUIDELINES.....A-1

APPENDIX B - VA-STEP INITIAL RECIPIENT & REPORT DATA ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS.....B-1

APPENDIX C - VA-STEP QUARTERLY RECIPIENT REPORT DATA ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS.....C-1

APPENDIX D VA-STEP FACILITY PROPOSAL REQUEST INSTRUCTIONS.....D-1

APPENDIX E PROGRAM DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES.....E-1

APPENDIX F VA-STEP ONLINE APPLICATION DETAILS.....F-1

## VA STUDENT TRAINEE EXPERIENCE PROGRAM (VA-STEP)

### 1. PURPOSE

This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) SOP implements the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Student Trainee Experience Program (VA-STEP) and provides specific direction and standards related to the operation of VA-STEP within VHA. The purpose of VA-STEP is to provide an opportunity for outstanding college students to develop clinical competencies at an approved VA medical facility and serves as a recruitment tool to encounter students before they enter the VA workforce.

**AUTHORITY:** 38 U.S.C. 7405 (a)(1)(D) & VA Handbook 5005/112.

### 2. BACKGROUND

As the Nation's largest integrated health care delivery system, VHA workforce challenges mirror those of the health care industry. VHA remains fully engaged in a fiercely competitive clinical recruitment market and, therefore, faces similar challenges as our private sector counterparts. VA student programs are a critical part of VA's succession plan and a key source of candidates for critical hybrid Title 38 and Title 38 occupations. VA-STEP serves as a recruitment and retention program to engage students before they enter the VA workforce. VA-STEP provides salary dollars and opportunities for outstanding students to develop knowledge, confidence and competencies while working at an approved VA health care facility.

### 3. POLICY

It is VHA policy that the Office of Workforce Management and Consulting (WMC) establish and implement VA medical facility VA-STEP programs. All VA medical facilities participating in VA-STEP are subject to the program criteria set forth in this SOP, unless otherwise specified.

### 4. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. **Chief Officer, Workforce Management and Consulting.** The Chief Officer, Workforce Management and Consulting is responsible for ensuring overall VHA compliance with this SOP.

b. **Director, Scholarships and Clinical Education.** The Director of Scholarships and Clinical Education (S&CE) determines the strategic direction and effectiveness of the VA-STEP program annually. The S&CE Director is responsible for:

(1) Allocating adequate resources to implement, manage, and administer the VA-STEP program;

(2) Evaluating the impact of VA-STEP including systematic measurement and program oversight from a national level;

(3) Reviewing and approving suspension recommendations submitted by the VA-STEP Program Manager for a VA medical facility's failure to comply with program requirements.

c. **VA Medical Facility Director.** Each VA medical facility Director is responsible for:

(1) **Com**mitting to hire qualified Registered Nurses, Medical Laboratory Scientists, and/or Pharmacists VA-STEP students in the approved VA-STEP occupation for which they were accepted in accordance with VA policy and procedures. This commitment is formalized in the facility proposal and re-affirmed every five years. These procedures should consider any internal recruitment and bargaining unit agreements that must be satisfied prior to consideration of VA student program candidates;

(2) Implementing and managing the VA facility-level VA-STEP program consistent with this SOP;

(3) Endorsing students' participation in the VA-STEP program.

d. **VA-STEP Program Manager.** The VA-STEP Program Manager determines VA medical facility compliance with VA-STEP program requirements. The VA-STEP Program Manager is responsible for:

(1) Reviewing VA medical facility proposals and supporting documentation and approving or disapproving VA-STEP sites; 

(2) Maintaining a list of approved VA medical facilities selected for participation in the VA-STEP program annually;

(3) Conducting coordinator and participant surveys annually to assess the effectiveness of administration of VA medical facility VA-STEP programs;

(4) Recommending to the S&CE Director the suspension of a VA medical facility participation in VA-STEP for failure to comply with virtual and on-site program review requirements; and

(5) Conducting VA-STEP Coordinator training throughout the year to ensure new coordinator knowledge and competencies.

e. **VA Medical Facility VA-STEP Program Coordinator.** The VA medical facility VA-STEP Program Coordinator is responsible for:

(1) Submitting an initial proposal to the VA-STEP Program Manager and resubmitting a proposal every five years in accordance with VA-STEP Program Procedures (see Appendix A & D);

(2) Coordinating recruitment, selection, and coding of VA-STEP students with Human Resources personnel;

(3) Submitting all required program documents to the VA medical facility Director for endorsement;

- (4) Coordinating training of VA-STEP students with VA-STEP Preceptors;
- (5) Submitting initial and quarterly reports as required;
- (6) Submitting documentation for virtual and on-site program reviews;
- (7) Maintaining continuity of operations with locally established guidance and procedures in a single document;
- (8) Coordinating hiring and placement of VA-STEP students with appropriate recruitment staff by reviewing direct hiring authorities and utilizing Title 38 flexibilities;
- (9) Recruiting candidates through contacts with schools or other appropriate organizations or groups;
- (10) Collaborating as appropriate with accredited schools or colleges to grant credit for participation in the VA-STEP program. Note: If academic credit is awarded, a letter of endorsement from the Dean or Director of the affiliated school is required. A current Memorandum of Affiliation (i.e., Educational Program Agreement) with the participating school must be approved by the Medical Center Director and on file at the VA medical center.
- (11) Reviewing student online applications, interviewing, and selecting the program participants in the online Application Management System (See Appendix F). Note: There are no travel funds available to reimburse VA-STEP students who wish to relocate for this experience.
- (12) Notifying the VA-STEP Program Manager via email when facilities become aware of unsuccessful recruitment/placement or if a tentative offer is not made to the student two-months prior to graduation, and adjusting the last report entered in the Application Management System to reflect the updated status. Note: If assistance is needed to place a student at another VA facility, please contact the VA-STEP Program Manager to help connect the student with the appropriate facility coordinator.

## **5. VA-STEP PROGRAM PROPOSALS**

The VA-STEP program proposal is used by the VA-STEP Program Manager to evaluate the current recruitment and retention need at the VA medical facility. Please see Appendix A & D for VA-STEP proposal guidelines.

- a. New proposals to become an approved VA-STEP site are submitted by VA facility VA-STEP Program Coordinators by the last workday of July using the Application Management System. The online system will notify the facility six-months prior to the facility's current approval expiring. The VA-STEP Program Office will notify VA medical facilities of their selection or non-selection as a program site by January 15 of the next year. Selected VA medical facilities are approved as program sites for 5 years. VA medical facilities not selected during an application or review cycle may reapply annually.
- b. Proposals to renew as an approved VA-STEP site must be submitted

**August 1, 2024**

## **VA-STEP PROGRAM**

by facility VA-STEP Program Coordinators by July 31st and every five (5) years thereafter. All required documents must be submitted through the VA-STEP Application Management System using guidance in Appendix D (Facility Proposal Instructions).

c. VA medical facilities may begin recruiting and appointing students after receiving approval as a program site from the S&CE Director.

d. Proposals must contain (information is usually collected through a Memo):

- (1) Evidence of a recruitment or retention need;
- (2) Student, Preceptor, and Program evaluation tools;
- (3) Number of students requested;
- (4) Clinical Instructor Profile form for the VA medical facility Program Coordinator;
- (5) The VA medical facility Director's endorsement;
- (6) Clinical or Didactic Education Plan; and

e. Recruitment or retention plan for VA-STEP graduates, including a clear bridge program from VA-STEP student to full-time employee.

f. The VA medical facility VA-STEP Program Coordinator is notified by the VA-STEP Program Manager of approval or disapproval, and an expiration date will be provided, if approved.

### **6. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

a. Facility Eligibility. To participate in VA-STEP, a VA medical facility must have:

(1) A nurse, medical laboratory scientist, or pharmacist (as appropriate) with a minimum of a master's degree to serve as the VA medical facility VA-STEP Program Coordinator, documented by the completion of the Clinical Instructor Profile form. Coordinator education requirements can be substituted with advanced certifications and/or three-years of Nurse/MLS/Pharmacist position experience, but these exceptions are approved on a case-by-case basis by the Program Manager.

(2) Education and clinical resources to provide seminars, conferences, and other activities to support the objectives of the program.

(3) A nurse, medical laboratory scientist, or pharmacist (as appropriate) with a bachelor's or a doctorate (Pharmacist specific) degree and a minimum of three (3) years of experience after residency to function as a preceptor. The same preceptor is expected to precept the student throughout the experience.;

(4) Evidence of recruitment/retention needs based on the VA medical facility's Workforce Succession Plan and vacancy or turnover rates.

(5) VA medical facility student retention rate will be evaluated annually to

**August 1, 2024**

**VA-STEP PROGRAM**

establish the approved number of students for future years. Those facilities that have less than a 60% retention rate can anticipate having their approved number of students reduced. Those facilities that maintain a retention rate above 75% can request additional positions.

(6) Funding of VA-STEP students per VA medical facility will be dependent on the VA medical facility's hiring of VA-STEP students and available VA-STEP funding for the current year. Thus, VA medical facilities requesting more than ten (10) participants will need to submit via e-mail a specific request for the number of VA-STEP participants. The quarterly reports will be used to determine the VA medical facility's hiring of VA-STEP students,

b. Student Eligibility. To participate in VA-STEP, a student must:

(1) Submit an online application for Federal employment to the VA medical facility where the student wants to be a VA-STEP student.

(2) Submit a letter of recommendation from the Dean or Director of the school to the VA medical facility via the online application system. The letter should include a nomination of the student to the program, verification of enrollment as a full-time student (as defined by the school), successful completion of the junior year by May/June of the current year (or its equivalent for rotating schedules), and anticipated graduation within 1 year after entry into the VA-STEP program for nursing and medical laboratory scientist students. For Pharmacist, the letter should include a nomination of the student to the program, verification of enrollment as a full-time student (as defined by the school), successful completion of the Sophomore year by May/June of the current year (or its equivalent for rotating schedules), and anticipated graduation within 2 years after entry into the VA-STEP program.

(3) Students must submit an Academic Dean and Personal reference in the online application.

(4) Have a minimum cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. The CGPA must be computed on post-secondary academic work taken within the past 3 years or based on academic work accepted for credit towards the nursing and medical laboratory scientist and 2 years for pharmacist degree. While a student may have a grade of "C" in a specialty course, the cumulative GPA for their specialty courses may not be less than a 3.0. Only data on official transcripts will be used for determining grade qualifications.

(5) Be able to complete 400 hours as a VA-STEP student at a VA medical facility before they graduate from their education program.

(6) Be a United States citizen by birth or naturalization and meet applicable qualification requirements at the time of entry in the VA-STEP program.

(7) Upon notification by the local VA medical facility of selection as a VA-STEP program student, confirm acceptance with the local VA medical facility so that the employment process may be initiated.



**August 1, 2024**

**VA-STEP PROGRAM**

(8) Selected students are expected to attend the required orientation and complete all mandatory training for trainees.

(9) Not be under a service obligation to any other federal, state, or private institution or be a recipient of any federal scholarship that incurs a service obligation to another organization. Must not be obligated to work for another institution following graduation and must intend to work for VHA following graduation.

(10) Have completed the final semester or quarter of the junior year in a National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences (NAACLS) baccalaureate, or generic equivalent Medical Laboratory Scientist program for medical laboratory scientist students, an Accreditation Commission for Education (ACEN), Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) of the American Association of College of Nursing (AACN) accredited baccalaureate or generic equivalent nursing program for nursing students. For Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) programs have completed the final semester or quarter of their sophomore year in an Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) accredited College or School of Pharmacy.

(11) Students do not have to attend a school that has an existing academic affiliation agreement with VA

**7. APPOINTMENTS AND PAY**

a. VA-STEP program students will be appointed under 38 USC 7405 (a)(1)(D). A student enrolled in an approved Nursing, Medical Laboratory Scientist, or Pharmacist school may be appointed on a temporary full-time or part-time basis under the provisions of 38 U.S.C. 7405(a)(1)(D) for a period not to exceed the duration of the individual's program. The appointment is at a per annum training rate equal to 80 percent of the actual salary rate established for January of the current calendar year for:

(1) Nurse I, Level 1, Step 1 for Nursing VA-STEP students as computed from the Title 38 Pay Schedules by facility. The VA-STEP office will use the Registered Nurse (RN) pay scale when determining pay

(2) GS 7, Step 1 for Medical Laboratory Scientist VA-STEP students at the facility as computed from the Title 38 Pay Schedules

(3) GS 11, Step 1 for Pharmacy VA-STEP students at the facility as computed from the Title 38 Pay Schedules

(4) Students appointed in one calendar year who continue in the VA-STEP program in the next calendar year will be paid at the rate established for the current calendar year.

(5) If the facility is receiving National funding, a 7.65% FICA rate is added to the 80% salary payment to offset the FICA payment the facility has to make on behalf of the student and should not be calculated into the Student Hourly Rate. The overall payment is computed using the following formula:

**August 1, 2024**

**VA-STEP PROGRAM**

(6) Student Hourly Rate:  $(\text{Salary} \times 0.8) / 2080 + \text{FICA Supplement}$   
 $((\text{Salary} \times 0.8) \times 0.0765) / 2080$ .

- Ref: VHA 5007, Part II, Chapter 2, Paragraph 2. m. (2) [Payment Computation. Payment is made bi-weekly for hours actually worked. Actual salary of trainees, therefore, is a proportionate amount of the full per annum rate. This is determined by prorating the amount of time worked in relation to the standard VA 40-hour workweek. In computing the bi-weekly amount payable, the full per annum rate for a 40-hour workweek first is divided by 2,080 to establish the hourly rate, as computed to the nearest cent, counting one-half cent and over as a whole cent; the hourly rate then is multiplied by the number of hours actually worked during the pay period].

(7) For HR Smart purposes, the following standardized Job Codes must be utilized for VA-STEP students:

- 309881 – Externally Funded Student Nurse Technician
- 204659 – Facility/Locally Funded Student Nurse Technician
- 219343 – Externally Funded Student Medical Laboratory Scientist
- 219342 – Facility Funded Student Medical Laboratory Scientist
- TBD – Externally Funded VA-STEP Pharmacy Student
- TBD – Facility Funded VA-STEP Pharmacy Student

(8) The standard Fund Control Point (FCP) for nationally-funded VA-STEP students is 2417. Do not use 2417 for locally funded VA-STEP students.

b. Appointment as a VA-STEP student will range from 3 to 12 months, with a minimum requirement of 400 hours worked in order to successfully complete the program. The VA medical facility may elect to request less than 400 hours if the school's curriculum does not allow a summer appointment of 10 weeks at 40 hours per week. While most students have the largest span of time off from school in the summer months, there are schools with nontraditional schedules for students. VA medical facilities may apply for start dates other than May for students with rotating time off schedules. Based on the information in the quarterly report form, funds will be transferred to approved sites at the end of each quarter. All funding is subject to readjustment based on information provided in the quarterly reports. Funding of the VA-STEP program beyond September 30<sup>th</sup> each year is contingent on the availability of centralized funds.

c. Each approved program site is authorized to recruit and appoint the designated number of students per funding cycle. The total number of students funded by S&CE includes continuing students from the previous year and new students. Additional VA-STEP students may be funded if requested with a justification addressing recruitment and retention difficulties for new graduate hires. Email requests for additional students to [VHAVA-STEPsupport@va.gov](mailto:VHAVA-STEPsupport@va.gov). If the number of additional positions requested and approved for a site exceeds the funding capabilities of S&CE, local VA medical facility funds may be used to support VA-STEP students.

d. VA-STEP facilities that support nursing, medical laboratory scientist, or pharmacist selected as part of the Health Professional Scholarship Program (HPSP) will receive additional annual selection authorizations based on the total selections that are HPSP recipients. If facilities select an HPSP participant, it is expected that the graduate will be placed at that facility once they graduate and complete a residency program.

e. VA-STEP students will be paid their regular straight time base rate. VA-STEP students do not receive any additional premium pay for working on legal holidays, off tours, and on weekends. These students will receive their straight time pay for time off if relieved or prevented solely because of a legal holiday.

f. As trainees, VA-STEP students may not be assigned to compressed work schedules except when rotating with an assigned preceptor who works a pre-assigned compressed work schedule.

g. VA-STEP students on intermittent appointments are not entitled to leave accruals. VA-STEP students are entitled to accrue annual and sick leave in accordance with the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 6301-6307. A student whose current employment is limited to less than 90 days is entitled to annual leave only after being employed for a continuous period of 90 days without a break in service. After completing the 90-day period, the student is entitled to be credited with the leave that would have accrued.

## 8. TRANSITIONING STUDENTS TO EMPLOYMENT

a. Every facility is required to have a transition plan to move students from trainee status to employee status. The standard flow should closely resemble these steps:

- (1) Nursing: VA-STEP Trainee to Student Nurse Technician (SNT) or Graduate Nurse Technician (GNT) after the student graduates. These are all pre-licensure placements. From these positions, the students should then transition to a residency program at the facility. This can either be a Registered Nurse Transition to Practice (RNTTP) program or a Post-Baccalaureate Registered Nurses Residency (PBRNR) program prior to final placement in a full-time employee position.
- (2) Medical Laboratory Scientist: Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS) coordinators should use available onboarding exceptions in VA Handbook 5005/72, 2.d.(3) to bring on the MLS student immediately after graduation even if they don't have their certification. Non-certified applicants who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for certification may be given a temporary appointment up to the full performance level not to exceed one year as a graduate Medical Laboratory Scientist under the authority of 38 U.S.C. § 7405(c)(2)(B). This appointment may not be extended.

**August 1, 2024**

**VA-STEP PROGRAM**

(3) Pharmacy: Fulltime position at the VA and/or a residency.

(4) VA Health Professional Scholarship Program (HPSP) students may work in a non-VA-STEP SNT position prior to starting a VA-STEP SNT position. This transition should occur after the completion of the student's junior year of education.

b. Transition planning is a key component to successfully planning employment of VA-STEP students. This planning needs to begin 8 months prior to the student completing graduation to avoid delays and ensure timely placement of VA-STEP students into SNT, GNT, Residencies, or Fulltime Employment.

c. The 311 Hire Job Aid was created to assist the coordinator with MSS position requests and position management. The current version of this Job Aid can be accessed here:

<https://dva.gov.sharepoint.com/sites/WMCPortal/MMO/MDS/Pages/Job-Aids-by-Role.aspx>

d. Former VA-STEP students may be hired at a salary rate above the minimum, based on superior qualifications such as documented outstanding performance in the VA-STEP program and/or number of hours completed as a VA-STEP participant.

## **9. VA-STEP REPORTS**

a. Initial and Quarterly Reports. The initial report is used to enter the student information into the S&CE database, validate information, and disburse funds for initial payments. The quarterly reports are used for tracking hours and payment purposes. All student information and hourly reporting is completed through the VA-STEP online application management system. See instructions in APPENDIX B & C.

b. Upon receipt of the initial reports, S&CE staff will validate:

(1) Accreditation of the college or university;

(2) The approved quantity of VA-STEP students;

(3) Social Security Numbers (SSN); and work and personal email

(4) The student's information is captured in the application management system.

c. The VA medical facility VA-STEP Program Coordinator will be notified by the VA-STEP Program Manager of any non-compliance.

d. Hiring information for all graduating students is validated in HR Smart at the end of the fiscal year.

## **10. VA-STEP VIRTUAL PROGRAM REVIEW**

a. VA-STEP Virtual Program Reviews are used to validate VA medical facility compliance with VA-STEP as delineated in the VA-STEP Program SOP. Each selected

**August 1, 2024**

## **VA-STEP PROGRAM**

VA medical facility VA-STEP Program Coordinator must submit a response to the Virtual Program Review annually.

b. Selection of VA medical facilities for virtual program reviews will be at the discretion of the VA-STEP Program Manager.

c. VA medical facilities will be notified by memorandum of the virtual program review a minimum of 30 days in advance.

d. The memorandum will include:

(1) Purpose of the review;

(2) Required response and documents if applicable; and

(3) Response due date.

e. S&CE will review submissions and notify facilities of compliance, recommendations, if applicable, or non-compliance and the required corrective actions to meet compliance.

f. VA medical facilities will be allotted 60 days to submit to S&CE for approval, all responses and corrective actions for discrepancies identified because of the virtual program review.

g. VA medical facilities failing to meet submission requirements will be recommended for suspension by the VA-STEP Program Manager from participating in the VA-STEP program until discrepancies are corrected and approved by the S&CE Director.

h. S&CE will share review findings with VA medical facility VA-STEP Program Coordinators annually through use of the VA-STEP Quarterly Conference Call.

## **11. TRAINING**

VA-STEP Coordinator Orientation is conducted by the S&CE Program Manager and provides local VA-STEP Coordinators with the training necessary to administer VA-STEP at the local level. To obtain scheduled training dates and register for participation, contact the S&CE Office at [VHAVASTEPSupport@va.gov](mailto:VHAVASTEPSupport@va.gov).

## **12. RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

All records regardless of format (paper, electronic, electronic systems) created in the requirements of this SOP must be managed per the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) approved records schedules found in VA Records Control Schedule 10-1. Questions regarding any aspect of records management should be directed to the facility Records Manager or Records Liaison.

## **13. COORDINATOR AND PARTICIPANT SURVEYS**

a. VA medical facility VA-STEP Program Coordinator and VA-STEP participant surveys are used to assess the administration of VA-STEP at the VA medical facility level.

**August 1, 2024**

**VA-STEP PROGRAM**

b. Selection of survey frequency, focus, and methodology is at the discretion of the S&CE Director.

c. VA medical facilities will be notified by memorandum from the S&CE Director of the survey opening and closing dates a minimum of 15 days in advance.

d. S&CE will analyze survey results and share applicable findings or results with VA medical facility VA-STEP Program Coordinators as appropriate. Information shared with the field will be at the discretion of the S&CE Director.

#### **14. REFERENCES**

a. 38 USC 7405.

b. 5 U.S.C. 6301-6312.

**VA-STEP PROPOSAL GUIDELINES**

1. To request program participation, submit proposals to Scholarships and Clinical Education (S&CE) by **July** 31st of the current year. S&CE will notify VA medical facilities of their selection or non-selection as a program site by January 15th of the next year. Selected VA medical facilities are approved as program sites for 5 years. VA medical facilities not selected during an application or review cycle may reapply annually.
2. VA medical facilities may begin recruiting and appointing students after receiving approval as a program site from the Director, SC&E.
3. VA-STEP proposal documents are gathered through the Application Management System. To access the proposal site, go to <https://va-ams.intelliworx.com/webapp/register/va-step/facility-representative.view>. Use instructions in APPENDIX D to complete the request.
4. The proposal is to be no longer than five single-spaced typewritten pages.
5. The proposal is to include the following information:
  - a. Description of the VA medical facility's recruitment and retention difficulties. Examples of clinical areas include, but are not limited to:
    - (1) Ambulatory care/outpatient clinics,
    - (2) Medical and/or surgical,
    - (3) Critical care,
    - (4) Psychiatry,
    - (5) Operating room,
    - (6) Dialysis,
    - (7) Hospice,
    - (8) Spinal cord injury or rehabilitation,
    - (9) Hospital Based Home Care (HBHC),
    - (10) Geriatric Evaluation and Management (GEM),
    - (11) Nursing Home Care Units,
    - (12) Laboratory, and/or
    - (13) Other.

b. Identify facility vacancy rates and top specialty (Nursing, Medical Laboratory Scientist, and/or Pharmacy) shortage areas based on facility workforce plans.

c. Description of the VA medical facility clinical strengths in the unit(s) where VA-STEP program students will be placed. Examples include characteristics of patients using the services, staffing patterns, availability of qualified preceptors, and specific projects or studies being conducted in the clinical areas.

d. Outline of the didactic and clinical educational plan with statement of anticipated length of the program. This should include classroom and clinical objectives of each requested clinical placement area and an overview of rounds, continuing education courses, clinical conferences or other related activities that would be available to VA-STEP students.

e. Evaluation plan for the VA-STEP program. This should include a sample of the tool that will be used to evaluate student satisfaction with the program, student perception of their clinical experiences while in the VA-STEP program (e.g., whether their educational experiences in the VA-STEP program are equal to or superior to their other academic training), and preceptor perception of their role and of student contributions to patient care.

f. Preceptor Training. Identify relevant training for the Preceptors to fulfill their roles.

g. Recruitment/Retention Plan for VA-STEP graduates.

h. Number of VA-STEP program students desired for each clinical unit.

i. Curriculum vitae for the program coordinator. Use VA Form 10-0105b, Clinical Instructor Profile form. The form is available on the VA-STEP SharePoint site at: <http://vaww.hrm.wmc.va.gov/SCE/VA-STEP/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx>.

j. Letter of endorsement from the VA medical facility Director. If academic credit is awarded to the student, a letter of support must be included from the Dean or Director of the student's current school.

**6. Additional Information/Mailing Address:**

For additional information email [VHAVA-STEPSupport@va.gov](mailto:VHAVA-STEPSupport@va.gov)



**VA-STEP INITIAL RECIPIENT & REPORT DATA ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS**

1. After filling the approved positions, VA medical facilities must immediately submit to S&CE an initial report using the application management system. Facilities that are unable to fill any position(s) must notify the S&CE Program Manager by no later than March 30 of the program year. For subsequent reporting, the quarterly report form for this program is due on the 10th day following the end of each quarter. Reports should only be submitted via the Application Management System (AMS).

2. Go To: [VA AMS \(intelliworx.com\)](https://va-ams.intelliworx.com) (<https://va-ams.intelliworx.com/webapp/auth/login.view>)

- a. SSO Login on the bottom left
- b. VA (Internal) from dropdown menu
- c. Continue
- d. Sign In with VA PIV Card
- e. Enter PIV Pin

3. Enter Recipient:

- a. Select “Recipients” from left hand side menu
- b. Select the +New button on the top right
- c. From the Program Group dropdown, select “VA-STEP”, then Save
- d. On the New Recipient data entry screen, make sure all blocks are completed
  - (1) Owner: use the dropdown to select your facility
  - (2) First Name: Student First Name
  - (3) Last Name: Student Last Name
  - (4) Email: Student’s email address
  - (5) Program: VA-STEP
  - (6) Specialty Type: Nursing, Medical Laboratory Scientist, or Pharmacy
  - (7) Facility: Select your facility from the dropdown
  - (8) SSN: Enter student’s SSN
  - (9) College/Department/School Name: List the school the student is attending while in the VA-STEP program (e.g., Emory University)
  - (10) Clinical Program: Enter either Nursing, Medical Laboratory Scientist, or Pharmacy
  - (11) Scholarship Start Date: This is the date the student will start the VALOR program at your facility
  - (12) Date Requirements Complete: This is the date the student will graduate from their education program
  - (13) Save

Note: If you are entering the data correctly as described above, and you are getting an error saying your positions are not setup correctly, email [VHAVASTEPSupport@va.gov](mailto:VHAVASTEPSupport@va.gov) with your station number. S&CE staff will troubleshoot the issue for you and email you a resolution.

4. Completing the Initial Report:

- a. From the Dashboard, select “Recipients” from left hand side menu
- b. Choose “Details” button next to the student’s name

**August 1, 2024**

**VA-STEP PROGRAM**

- c. Select "Reports" from the top right tool bar
- d. Select "+New" from the top right tool bar
- e. Reporting Year = 2022 (This is the Current Fiscal Year)
- f. Reporting Quarter = Initial
- g. Funding Type = VACO
- h. Clinical Placement = The section in the hospital where the student(s) are primarily working
- i. Hours Worked = 400
- j. Hired = Leave as "No"
- k. Not Hired Reason = Leave Blank
- l. Paid = Don't update this information
- m. This is the Final Report for this Student = Leave as "No".

Note: Send Email to [VHAVASTEPSupport@va.gov](mailto:VHAVASTEPSupport@va.gov) letting us know your report is complete.

**VA-STEP QUARTERLY RECIPIENT REPORT DATA ENTRY INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Go To: VA AMS (intelliworxit.com) (<https://va-ams.intelliworxit.com/webapp/auth/login.view>).
  - a. SSO Login” on the bottom left
  - b. VA (Internal)” from dropdown menu
  - c. Continue
  - d. Sign In with VA PIV Card
  - e. Enter PIV Pin
  
2. Completing the Quarterly Report:
  - a. From the Dashboard, select “Recipients” from left hand side menu
  - b. Choose “Details” button next to the student’s name
  - c. Select “Reports” from the top right tool bar
  - d. Select “+New” from the top right tool bar
  - e. Reporting Year = 2022 (This is the Current Fiscal Year)
  - f. Reporting Quarter = Qtr 1, 2, or 3
    - Qtr 1 Report encompasses Oct-Dec and is due Jan 12<sup>th</sup>
    - Qtr 2 Report encompasses Jan-Mar and is due Apr 12<sup>th</sup>
    - Qtr 3 Report encompasses Apr-Jun and is due Jul 12<sup>th</sup>
  - g. Funding Type = VACO
  - h. Clinical Placement = The section in the hospital where the students are primarily working
    - i. Hours Worked – Enter the actual hours worked during the report period.
    - j. Hired = Leave as “No” unless you have converted the student into an SNT, GNT, Residency, or fulltime position, hired the student into a permanent position, or selected them for the facility residency program (PBRNR/RNTTP).
    - k. Not Hired Reason = Leave Blank unless you have definitively decided not to hire the student. Please provide a detailed explanation.
    - l. Paid = Don’t update this information.
    - m. This is the Final Report for this Student = Leave as “No” unless the final hiring or not hired decision is made. Once you select “Yes” to this question, you should not make any further updates to the reports that have been entered.

Note: Send Email to [VHAVASTESupport@va.gov](mailto:VHAVASTESupport@va.gov) letting us know your report is complete.

### VA-STEP FACILITY PROPOSAL REQUEST INSTRUCTIONS

1. Access Point (Microsoft Edge): <https://va-ams.intelliworx.com/webapp/register/va-step/facility-representative.view>.

Facility Coordinator’s First Name, Last Name, Email Address, and Facility from the dropdown. Start typing facility name for a quicker find. Once you submit, it will take you to the PIV Login point. Follow next steps to login.

**Facility Representative Registration**

Use this form to register (or re-register) a Veterans Administration facility in the VA-STEP program. Once you submit this form, you will receive an email with the instructions for proceeding with the registration process.

First Name \*

Last Name \*

Email \*

Facility \* (Select)

Cancel Submit

2. Login with the PIV
  - a. “PIV/SSO Login” on the bottom left
  - b. “VA (Internal)” from dropdown menu
  - c. Continue
  - d. Sign In with VA PIV Card
  - e. Select Certificate
  - f. Enter PIV Pin



va-ams-prod-1a

Application Management System

**PIV/SSO Login**

If your agency uses PIV/CAC and your agency is registered to use SSO with this system select the 'PIV/SSO Login' button below.

PIV/SSO Login

**Username/Password Login**

Please enter your username (government email address (e.g. john.doe@agency.gov)) and password below.

Email \*

Password \*

Login Forgot Password?

**Warning**

You are accessing a U.S. Government information system, which includes: (1) this computer, (2) this computer network, (3) all computers connected to this network, and (4) all devices and storage media attached to this network or to a computer on this network. This information system is provided for U.S. Government-authorized use only.

Unauthorized or improper use of this system may result in disciplinary action, and civil and criminal penalties.

By using this information system, you understand and consent to the following:

- You have no reasonable expectation of privacy regarding any communications transmitted through or data stored on this information system. At any time, the government may monitor, intercept, search and/or seize data transiting or stored on this information system.
- Any communications transmitted through or data stored on this information system may be disclosed or used for any U.S. Government-authorized purpose. For further information see the Department order on Use and Monitoring of Department Computers and Computer Systems.
- Signing into this application indicates you have read and accepted the [Full Terms and Conditions of Use](#), and you consent to secure testing and monitoring.

Full Terms and Conditions of Use? Privacy Policy?

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Version 1.24.2 (20220606-180415)  
Based on Intelliworx version 4.69.2 (20220606-173945)

## 3. Dashboard has new task. Select “Start” under the Action column.

Department of Veterans Affairs

VA-AMS-UAT-1A

Change Password Logout

### Dashboard

Thank you for accepting the terms and conditions.

Search Filters

Active Tasks Available Tasks Completed Tasks

Name	Type	Task	Owner	Date Created	Due Date	Date For Expiration	Status	Action
Lulu Rubio	VA-STEP Representative Package - Facility Document...	Upload VA-Step Representative Documents	VA - Facilities - 549 - Dallas VA Medical Center	05/20/2022			Not Started	Start

Displaying 1 - 1 of 1 records.

First Previous 1 Next Last

## 4. Read Instructions.

### Upload VA-Step Representative Documents

Return to Dashboard

Please upload the VA-STEP program proposal. The VA-STEP program proposal is used by the VA-STEP Program Manager to evaluate the current recruitment and retention need at the VA medical facility level. Be sure that the VA-STEP program proposal includes all of these items:

- Program Proposal Document
  - Evidence of a recruitment or retention need.
  - Student, Preceptor, and Program evaluation tools.
  - The number of students requested.
  - The VA medical facility Director's endorsement.
  - Clinical or Didactic Education Plan.
  - Recruitment or retention plan for VA-STEP graduates.
- Clinical Instructor Profile Document
  - Clinical Instructor Profile form for the VA medical facility Program Coordinator.

## 5. Add Documents (.pdfs).

a. **Memo (Required):** Refer to the VA-STEP Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for detailed requirements for the Memo.

- Proposals to renew as an approved VA-STEP site must be submitted by VA facility VA-STEP Program Coordinators by July 31st and every five (5) years thereafter.
- Proposals must contain:
  - Evidence of a recruitment or retention need;
  - Student, Preceptor, and Program evaluation tools;
  - Number of students requested by occupation;
  - Clinical or Didactic Education Plan;
  - Recruitment or retention plan for VA-STEP graduates; and
  - The VA medical facility Director's endorsement.
- The VA medical facility VA-STEP Program Coordinator is notified by the VA-STEP Program Manager of approval or disapproval, and an expiration date will be provided, if approved.

b. **Clinical Instructor Profile (Required)** (<https://va-ams-info.intelliworx.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Clinical-Instructor-Form.pdf>) for all facility coordinators.

Supplemental Documents

There are no supplemental documents to display.

[Add Document](#)

6. Once you have attached all required documents, submit the request.

Upload VA-Step Representative Documents

[← Return to Dashboard](#)

Please upload the VA-STEP program proposal. The VA-STEP program proposal is used by the VA-STEP Program Manager to evaluate the current recruitment and retention need at the VA medical facility level. Be sure that the VA-STEP program proposal includes all of these items:

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  - Student, Preceptor, and Program evaluation tools.
  - The number of students requested.
  - The VA medical facility Director's endorsement.
  - Clinical or Didactic Education Plan.
  - Recruitment or retention plan for VA-STEP graduates.
- Clinical Instructor Profile Document
  - Clinical Instructor Profile form for the VA medical facility Program Coordinator.

Supplemental Documents

There are no supplemental documents to display.

[Add Document](#)

Dallas VA Medical Center

Facility Station ID	549
Fund Site Number	X000X
Street	4500 S. Lancaster Rd.
Street 2	
City	Dallas
State	TX
Zip Code	75216

[Submit](#)

7. In the event the proposal is returned for corrections; you will receive an email with the details of what needs to be corrected. You will log back in, and the task will show up in your Active tasks again.

8. Acknowledge the Approval Notification Email in the AMS System.

**PROGRAM DOCUMENTS AND RESOURCES**

**1. VA-STEP PROGRAM COORDINATORS**

<https://va-ams-info.intelliworxit.com/valor-coordinator/>

*NOTE: This is an internal VA Web site that is not available to the public.*

**2. VA-STEP NURSING & MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENTIST DOCUMENTS & FORMS**

<https://va-ams-info.intelliworxit.com/valor-coordinator/best-practices-2/>

*NOTE: This is an internal VA Web site that is not available to the public.*

**3. SNT, GNT, and RNTTP Position Builds**

[05-Manpower-012 SNT, GNT, and RNTTP Position Builds Job Aid.pdf \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

**4. Recruitment and Placement (R&P) Strategic Business Unit (SBU) VA-Student Trainee Experience Program (VA-STEP)**

[05-RP-028 VA-STEP SNT Job Aid.pdf \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

## VA-STEP ONLINE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

### 1. VA-STEP APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- a. For applicants, the process starts at: <https://va-ams.intelliworx.com/webapp/register/va-step/facility-applicant.view>
- b. The online system requires the following:
  - (1) 2850a (Nursing) and 2850d (MLS/Pharmacy) Forms
  - (2) General Eligibility Determination
  - (3) Personal & Professional Data and Activities
  - (4) Military Service/Veteran Status
  - (5) Declaration for Federal Employment Form
  - (6) Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) and Transcript
  - (7) Authorization for Release of Information
  - (8) References/Recommendations
  - (9) Essay Question Responses
  - (10) Resume

### 2. EVALUATING SUBMITTED PACKAGES

- a. The facility coordinator will evaluate the submitted application to determine eligibility and package completion requirements.
- b. The coordinator will be able to return the package for correction or immediately remove the application from consideration.
- c. In preparation for consideration, the coordinator will need to establish a 3-member team that can include themselves to evaluate applications for final selection decision. Items that are considered:
  - (1) Essay Question Responses
  - (2) Reference/Recommendation
  - (3) Interview
  - (4) Transcript/CGPA
  - (5) Resume
- d. Once scores are complete, the coordinator will select or reject the student for entry into VA-STEP through the online Application Management System. This action converts the student from Applicant to Enrolled. This enrollment will automatically create a Recipient record for the student.

- 3. ONLINE INSTRUCTIONS:** Instructions for completing the online application and evaluation can be obtained from the VA-STEP program office.