



# Diversity & Inclusion Advocate Program

VA INNOVATION PROJECT PRESENTED BY  
MS. PAMELA BLACK (She/Her)

EEO Manager, VA Mediator, vALP Graduate, TCF EEO Intern  
Program Graduate, Veteran U.S. Air Force  
ORLANDO VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM (0675)



## DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ADVOCATE PROGRAM

### **Applicant:**

Ms. Pamela Black, EEO Manager  
Orlando VA Healthcare System (0675)  
Group: Diversity & Inclusion Committee

### **Stakeholder/Champion:**

Mr. Timothy Cooke, MCD/CEO  
Ms. Pamela Black, EEO Manager

**Innovation Cost:** \$6,000.00

### **New to VA or Spread:**

New VA Initiative  
Pilot Program to begin at OVAHCS FY21

# VA DIVERSITY & INCLUSION ADVOCATE PROGRAM

- **What problem does this Innovation solve?** The newly assigned service level **Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Advocates** will assist VA leadership, employees and Veterans by...
  - ❖ CREATING A CULTURE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN ALL CLINIC/OFFICE ENVIRONMENTS
  - ❖ SERVING AS BOOTS-ON-THE-GROUND, TRAINED AND ENGAGED DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION CHAMPIONS FOR THEIR SERVICE
  - ❖ PERSONAL A.C.T.I.O.N (ADVOCACY, CONNECTIONS, TRAINING, IN-REACH, OUT-REACH, NETWORKING) TO HELP BUILD A STRONG VA-WIDE SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAM
  - ❖ Employee Engagement; Increases Employee & Veteran Satisfaction/Morale; Improves Employee & Veteran Whole Health; Retention of Exceptional/Quality Staff; Saves Time & Money, Resolves Workplace Conflict at the Lowest Levels; Creates A Model EEO Program
- **Where would this Innovation be implemented?** Pilot Program at the **Orlando VA Healthcare System** (All OVAHCS (0675) sites/CBOCs).
  - ❖ Seeking VA National support to implement the D&I Advocate Program VA-wide.
- **Target population and impact area?** All OVAHCS Staff and Veterans/VA-Wide
  - # Staff Assigned to OVAHCS – **5,513**
  - # Veterans Assigned to OVAHCS – **36,635**
- **Timeline summary for project? Rollout program at OVAHCS 2<sup>nd</sup> Qtr. FY21**
  - **January 30, 2021** – Recruit and assign at least 1 **D&I Advocate** in each service within OVAHCS
  - **February 26, 2021** – Conduct mandatory initial D&I Advocate Orientation/Training Sessions
  - **March 31, 2021** - Purchase and distribute new polos and lanyards to each assigned D&I Advocate

# VA D&I Advocate Program Innovation Project (Pilot at OVAHCS FY21)

**Innovation Applicant:** Ms. Pamela Black, EEO Manager (0675)

**Contributors:** Ms. Mariel Santana, EEO Specialist, Ms. Nadege Jean-Paul, EEO Assistant and the OVAHCS Diversity & Inclusion Committee

**Stakeholders/Champions:** Mr. Timothy Cooke, MCD/CEO & Ms. Pamela Black, EEO Manager

**\*Problems Solved:** D&I Advocates assist VA Leadership, employees and Veterans by...

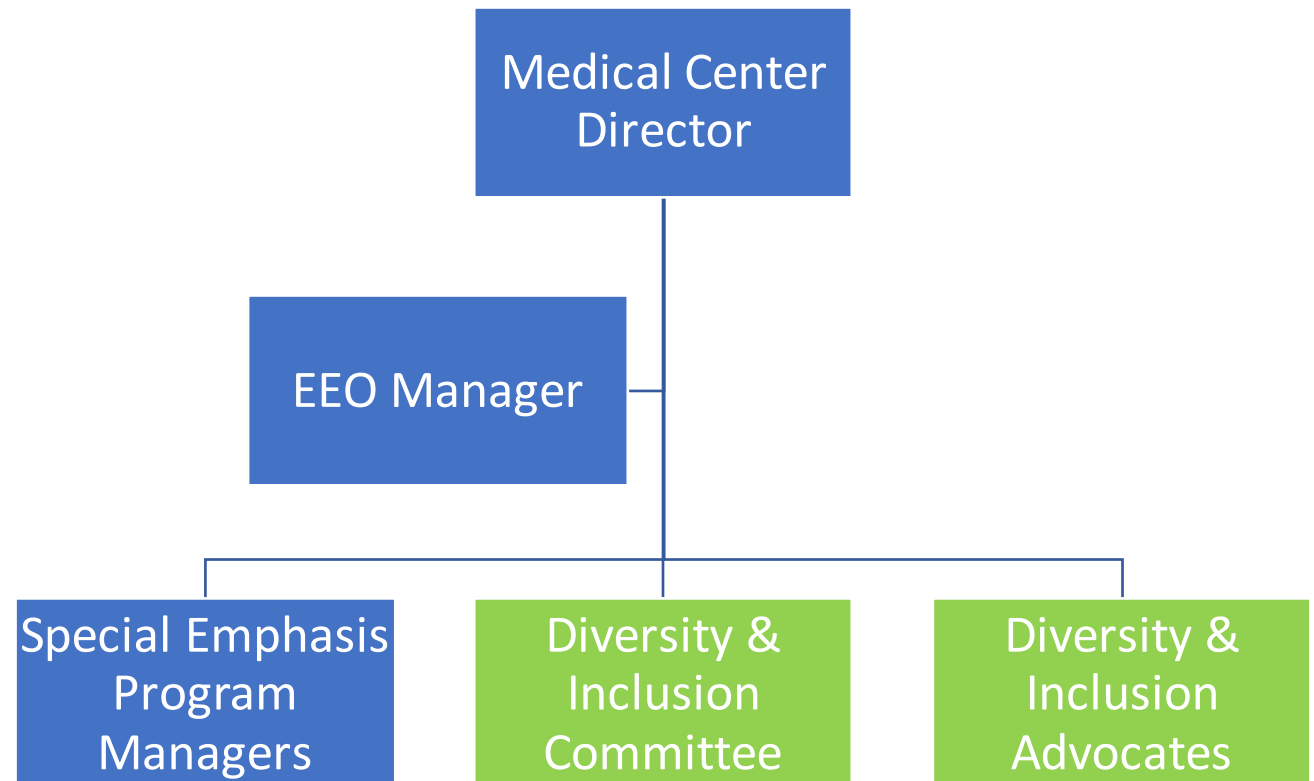
- **CREATING A VA CULTURE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**
- **SERVING AS DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION CHAMPIONS FOR THEIR SERVICE**
- **BUILDING A STRONG VA-WIDE SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAM**
- **PERSONAL A.C.T.I.O.N (ADVOCACY, CONNECTIONS, TRAINING, IN-REACH, OUT-REACH, NETWORKING)** Service-Level D&I

Advocates help to:

- Increase Employee Engagement
- Improve Employee & Veteran Satisfaction/Morale
- Improve Employee & Veteran Whole Health
- Increase Recruitment & Retention of Exceptional/Quality Staff
- Save Time & Money
- Resolve Workplace Conflict at the Lowest Levels
- Create A Model EEO Program

**GOAL:** Make the D&I Advocate Program a VA-Wide Program

## Proposed VA-Wide Diversity and Inclusion Advocate Program Reporting Structure





# STANDING OUT FOR DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

## D&I ADVOCATE POLOS

## EEO STAFF & SEPM POLOS



- ADVOCACY
- CONNECTIONS
- TRAINING
- INREACH
- OUTREACH
- NETWORKING

Diversity &  
Inclusion  
Committee

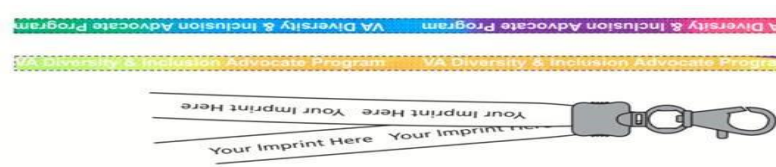
- ✓ CULTURAL DIVERSITY CHAMPIONS
- ✓ COMMUNITY BUILDERS
- ✓ CONNECTERS OF PEOPLE & SERVICES
- ✓ CONFLICT RESOLUTION COACHES
- ✓ CHANGE AGENTS



# D&I Advocate Program Funding Expenditures

## Grant Amount: \$6,000

- Marketing/Branding – Polos, Keychains, Lanyards, Tablecloth, Banner, Logo –
- Training- Unconscious Bias Training (no cost); Mediation/Conflict Resolution Skills Training (ORMDI)
- Cultural Competency Manuals



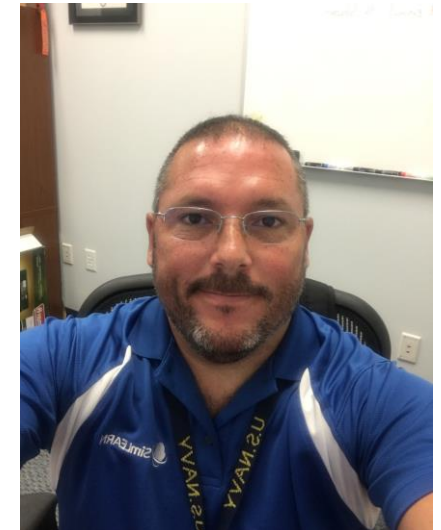
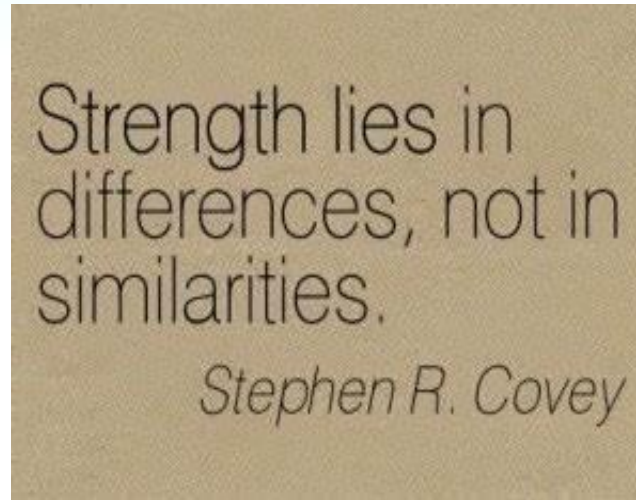
## Future Program Needs:

- ☐ VA-wide D&I Advocate Contact List
- ☐ Advocate Program Brochure
- ☐ Create VADIAP Toolkit
- ☐ TMS/Education Credit for Training
- ☐ Branding/Logo
- ☐ VADIAP Manager & Staff Positions





# CREATING A VA CULTURE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION BUILDING STRONG EEO SPECIAL EMPHASIS PROGRAMS



# OVAHCS (0675) Special Emphasis Program's Best Practices

- **Friday Reflections** - Held each Friday from noon-12:30 (EST) Open to All VA employees. Connect with us on MS Teams @ [Friday Reflections: I Stand For/I Reflect On...](#)
- **"Diversity Day Live From..."** - We took Diversity Day on the road in FY21 as a result on the COVID-19 Pandemic to engage with Team Orlando employees in small groups at each of our sites. We provided EEO Office hours, had meet & greet with EEO staff, SEPMS, MVPC and conducted site inspections during our visits.
- [Racial Disparities and the COVID-19 vaccine](#) **Open Forum and Video Collaboration with Blacks In Government (BIG)** - Video posted to VA YouTube Channel: [From Hesitation to Vaccination](#)
- **New EEO Button on facility SharePoint** - Quick ALL-employee button allows staff access to EEO, HPP, ADR and SEP information posted on our two new [Diversity & Inclusion SharePoint](#) and [EEO Office SharePoint](#)
- **Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) Advocate Program Innovation Project (Pilot at OVAHCS FY21)** – We placed collateral duty service-level D&I Advocates in each service throughout the OVAHCS to assist our EEO Team with creating a culture of D&I and the advocates will help build a strong SEP.
- **"...LIKE ME" Cultural Competency Series** – We engaged staff in fun and creative ways during virtual forums and lunch-and-learns to discuss Cultural Competency topics, explore our unconscious biases, practice Whole Health skills, DANCE, TALK, ACT, COOK...LIKE ME! Staff throughout Team OVAHCS are asking for a redo of our ["Special Emphasis Program - FY21 Dance Like Me Cultural Competency Series!"](#)
- **New interactive "EEO In the Know" Newsletter** – EEO Staff collaborated with PAO to create a first-class, interactive, informative, diverse and inclusive newsletter which we use to train, equip, and get all OVAHCS staff involved in the SEP/EEO Diversity and Inclusion Program. Published 6 Editions; read by over 700 employees monthly.
- **Race Relation Cafes, Open Forums and Director's Townhalls**– Throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic our Diversity & Inclusion Committee moderated and collaborated with community stakeholders, Executive Leadership and staff to facilitate numerous uplifting, educational, informative, diverse and inclusive ALL-staff open discussions on topics such as **Multicultural SEP- [Prevention of Microaggressions Training](#); Hispanic SEP-[Honoring the Past, Securing the Future](#); Native American & Alaska Native SEP - [Interventions for a Better Native Tomorrow](#); Black Employment Program - [Blacks in Government \(BIG\) Informational Session](#); Building Bridges, Not Walls with the Hon. James E.C. Perry; Women in Leadership Panel Talk; Federal Women's Program - [Sharing Her Story](#) by Ms. Suzette McNeil and "I Am Greater" by Ms. Freda Johnson; LGBTQ+ SEP -[Affirming Communication, Language and Documentaion](#); AAPI SEP-[Advancing Leaders Through Purpose-Driven Service](#); Individuals with Disabilities SEP – Virtual Disability Awareness Fair (Collaboration between EEO, HR, and LRACs to provide training to all staff on hiring IWD/IWTD and the RA Request process).**
- **ONE TEAM Concept** – During the COVID-19 Pandemic we shared our facility SEP observances, events, open forums and newsletter with VISN8 as well as all VA staff/Approved Guests; we collaborated with VISN 8 EEO Teams during Special Emphasis Program activities to ensure sites without strong SEPs were supported.
- **Leading VISN8 in Cost Avoidance through Non EEO ADR Use** – Utilizing communication tools like ADR/Facilitation to help resolve workplace conflict.





# Orlando VA Healthcare System Special Emphasis Program

## Connect with us...

Microsoft Teams Channels:

@[Diversity and Inclusion Advocate Program](#)

@[TEAM OVAHCS VOICES \(EEO/D&I All-Staff Open Forums\)](#)

@[Friday Reflections: I Stand For/I Reflect On...](#)

EEO Diversity & Inclusion Office Contact Info:

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EEO Program: [EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY OFFICE SharePoint](#)

Special Emphasis Program: [Special Emphasis Program SharePoint](#)

