

Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Washington, DC 20420

January 29, 2008

VHA DIRECTIVE 2008-005

CERTIFICATION OF CLINICIANS PERFORMING COMPENSATION AND PENSION EXAMINATIONS

1. PURPOSE: This Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Directive establishes policy for the implementation of an education and certification program for clinicians who perform compensation and pension (C&P) examinations.

2. BACKGROUND

a. VHA performs over 700,000 C&P examinations yearly. As part of the ongoing quality assurance program operated by the office of Compensation and Pension Examination Program (CPEP), and from reports issued by the office of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Inspector General, it has been concluded that there is observed variation in the performance and quality of C&P examination reports between Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs).

b. As health care providers traditionally approach examinations in the purely clinical domain, training is critical to ensure that they have an understanding of the legal ramifications of the examinations, and what elements are required by the Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) in order to make a valid determination. Given the importance of a thorough examination to the veteran in terms of eligibility for future benefits and compensation, it is critical that standards are consistently enforced and applied fairly across all VISNs. As a result, VHA and VBA have determined the need for a training and certification program established for all clinicians performing C&P examinations, no matter where they are performed. These courses are available on VA Learning Management System (LMS) <http://www.lms.va.gov> to meet the requirements identified below (search for keyword “CPEP”).

c. After completion of the certification process, employees who have demonstrated increased performance in the efficiency of claims processing, customer satisfaction, and improved quality of examinations being performed may be acknowledged. In recognition of this increased performance, VHA physicians and other clinicians who are “certified C&P examiners” on a prorated basis may receive a one-time incentive award up to \$1,000 from their local health facility.

NOTE: Any VHA clinician may take the certification training and receive continuing medical education (CME) for course completion, but only clinicians designated to perform C&P examinations are eligible to receive the cash award. Residents and interns assisting with C&P examinations, as part of their graduate training curriculum under the supervision of a VHA certified C&P examiner, are encouraged to complete the training modules that are appropriate to their courses of training, but are not eligible for the cash awards.

3. POLICY: It is VHA policy that

- all clinicians designated to conduct C&P examinations must complete the required training modules and post-tests and become certified by CPEP;

- new clinicians must be certified prior to being allowed to perform any C&P examination;

- clinicians already performing C&P examinations have until July 1, 2008, to be certified; however, they may still perform C&P examinations during the interim period.

4. ACTION

a. Under Secretary for Health. The Under Secretary for Health, or designee, is responsible for joint oversight of CPEP.

b. Compensation and Pension Examination Program (CPEP) Office. The CPEP Office is directly responsible for:

(1) The development, evolution, management and implementation of the ongoing clinician certification program.

(2) Working collaboratively with the Employee Education System (EES) to:

(a) Produce the certification training modules, and

(b) Document and track clinicians who have successfully completed the required training.

(3) Coordinating the certification process and providing a list of certified clinicians to the appropriate field facility.

(4) Monitoring field facilities for compliance with this Directive.

(5) Establishing and chairing the C&P Examiner Certification Review Board (ECRB).

Membership on the board shall include representation from Patient Care Services (PCS), Employee Education System (EES), C&P Service, Office of Nursing Services, Mental Health Services, and a field representative from a Medical Center C&P Program Office.

The ECRB shall be responsible for the identification and oversight of all future modules and updates to existing modules which will be used as content requirements for maintaining certification. The ECRB will serve in an advisory capacity to the CPEP office which has overall responsibility for the clinician certification program.

c. EES Office in Northport, NY. The EES Office in Northport, NY, is responsible for the:

(1) Production of C&P training modules in direct collaboration with CPEP and field-based subject matter experts who perform C&P examinations.

(2) Development and maintenance of the web-based training and testing sites.

(3) Access to course completion and testing data.

d. VISN Director. Each VISN Director is responsible for ensuring:

(1) Certification of all clinicians performing C&P examinations (including fee-for-service physicians) within their areas of responsibility.

(2) The VISN C&P Contact Person compiles and maintains a list of providers who perform C&P examinations at each facility, and submits the list to CPEP Office.

(3) Additional instructions provided by CPEP on the certification process are distributed to the VISN facilities.

e. Facility Director. Each facility Director is responsible for ensuring:

(1) Certification of all clinicians performing C&P examinations (including fee-for-service physicians) within their area of responsibility.

(2) Consideration of cash awards acknowledging successful completion of certification.

(3) Local record keeping strategies are developed and implemented to track employees' completion of C&P certification training.

(4) All clinicians who perform VA C&P examinations (for VHA this means all employee and Fee-For-Service Providers) complete the interactive video module on "CPEP General Certification Course."

(5) All clinicians who perform VA C&P examinations (for VHA this means all employee and Fee-For-Service Providers) successfully complete the post-test examination.

(6) Requirements are met for certain special examinations. In addition to completing the interactive video module on "CPEP General Certification Course," and successfully completing the post-test examination, those:

(a) Clinicians performing joint, feet, and spine examinations, must complete the module on the "Musculoskeletal Examination," and successfully complete the post-test.

(b) Psychiatrists and clinical psychologists performing initial mental disorders examinations, must complete the "Mental Disorders Initial Examination" module, and successfully complete the post-test.

(c) Psychiatrists and clinical psychologists performing initial Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) examinations must complete the “Initial PTSD Examination” module and successfully complete the post-test.

(d) Clinicians who perform mental disorder review examinations (including nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and licensed social workers) must complete the module for “Mental Disorders Review Examinations,” and successfully complete the post-test.

(e) Clinicians who perform Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) review and/or increase examinations, (including nurse practitioners, physician assistants and licensed social workers) must complete the module for “PTSD Review and/or Increase Examinations,” and successfully complete the post-test.

(7) Timely completion of updates to existing modules and any new module requirements that may be added in the future for enhancing the efficacy of the clinician certification program.

(8) The completion of the certification process is linked to increased performance in the efficiency of claims processing, customer satisfaction, and improved quality of examinations being performed. In recognition of this increased performance, VHA physicians and other clinicians who become “certified” C&P examiners, and are involved in the actual performance of C&P examinations, may receive a one-time incentive cash award up to \$1000. The decision to grant any cash award is the responsibility of the facility Director, as is the determination of the actual amount of the award that each clinician may be eligible to receive.

NOTE: Any VHA clinician may take the certification training and receive continuing medical education (CME) for course completion, but only clinicians designated to perform C&P examinations are eligible to receive the cash award.

Residents and interns assisting with C&P examinations as part of their graduate training curriculum under the supervision of a VHA certified C&P examiner, are encouraged to complete the training modules that are appropriate to their courses of training, but are not eligible for the cash awards.

5. REFERENCES: None.

6. FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES: The Office of Department of Defense (DOD) Coordination (10D) is responsible for the contents of this Directive. Questions may be addressed to the Office of DOD Coordination at (202) 461-6082.

7. RESCISSIONS: None.

This VHA Directive expires on January 31, 2013.

Michael J. Kussman, MD, MS, MACP

Under Secretary for Health

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