



# **Veterans Research & Education Foundation of St. Louis**

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## EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

SERVING VETERANS SINCE 1993

## **ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK / DISCLAIMER**

We prepared this handbook to assist you in finding the answers to many questions that you may have regarding your employment with Veterans Research & Education Foundation (VREF). Please take the necessary time to read it.

We do not expect this handbook to answer all your questions. Your Supervisor and the VREF Office will also be major sources of information.

Neither this handbook nor any other verbal or written communication by a management representative, is, nor should it be considered to be, an agreement, contract of employment, express or implied, or a promise of treatment in any particular manner in any given situation. VREF adheres to the policy of employment at will, which permits VREF or the employee to terminate the employment relationship at any time, for any reason, with or without cause or notice.

Employment at-will may only be altered **IN AN INDIVIDUAL CASE OR GENERALLY** in writing signed by the Executive Director of the Foundation.

Many matters covered by this handbook, such as benefit plan descriptions, are also described in separate Company documents. These Company documents are always controlling over any statement made in this handbook or by any member of management.

This handbook states only general Company guidelines. VREF may, at any time, in its sole discretion, modify or vary from anything stated in this handbook, with or without notice, except for the rights of the parties to terminate employment at will.

This handbook supersedes all prior handbooks.

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## Section 1 – Governing Principles of Employment

### 1.1 Vision Statement

***“The mission of the Veterans Research and Education Foundation of St. Louis is to improve the health and well-being of veterans through research and education conducted within the St. Louis VA Healthcare System”***

Congratulations on your employment with the Veterans Research and Education Foundation!

VREF is a non-profit entity authorized by Public Law 100-322, Section 204. The congressional intent in enabling the creation of these corporations is to provide VA facilities with a flexible funding mechanism to administer non-VA funding from varied sponsors, private and public. VREF provides an administrative infrastructure that facilitates these collaborative efforts between the staff conducting the research and education activities within the St. Louis VA Healthcare System and the organizations sponsoring the activities.

VREF is a 501c (3) tax-exempt corporation incorporated in the State of Missouri in 1993. It is affiliated with, but legally distinct from, the Department of Veterans Affairs St. Louis VA Healthcare System. The focus of its mission is to facilitate research collaborations to improve veterans’ health. Your physical place of employment may be at the VA or an off-site location, but as an employee of VREF, your employment will always be related to a VA approved activity.

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## **1-2. Equal Employment Opportunity**

Veterans Research and Education Foundation is an Equal Opportunity Employer that does not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived race, creed, color, religion, alienage or national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, age, disability or handicap, sex, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, genetic information, arrest record, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state or local laws. Our management team is dedicated to this policy with respect to recruitment, hiring, placement, promotion, transfer, training, compensation, benefits, employee activities and general treatment during employment.

VREF will endeavor to make a reasonable accommodation to the known physical or mental limitations of qualified employees with disabilities unless the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the operation of our business. If you need assistance to perform your job duties because of a physical or mental condition, please let your supervisor know.

VREF will endeavor to accommodate the sincere religious beliefs of its employees to the extent such accommodation does not pose an undue hardship on VREF's operations. If you wish to request such an accommodation, please speak to your supervisor.

Any employees with questions or concerns about equal employment opportunities in the workplace are encouraged to bring these issues to the attention of their supervisor. Note: If your Supervisor is the person toward whom the concern is directed, you should contact any higher-level Manager in your reporting chain. VREF will not allow any form of retaliation against individuals who raise issues of equal employment opportunity. To ensure our workplace is free of artificial barriers, violation of this policy will lead to discipline, up to and including discharge. All employees must cooperate with all investigations.

## **1-3. Non-Harassment**

It is the policy of the Veterans Education and Research Foundation to prohibit intentional and unintentional harassment of any individual by another person on the basis of any protected classification including, but not limited to, race, color, national origin, disability, religion, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation or age. The purpose of this policy is not to regulate our employees' personal morality, but to ensure that in the workplace, no one harasses another individual.

If you feel that you have been subjected to conduct which violates this policy, you should immediately report the matter to your Supervisor. If you are unable for any reason to contact this person, or if you have not received a satisfactory response within three (3) business days after reporting any incident of what you perceive to be harassment, please contact the next level Manager. Note: If your Supervisor or next level Manager is the person toward whom the complaint is directed, you should contact any higher-level Manager in your reporting chain. Employees may also contact the ADP Total Source Employee Service Center at (800) 554-1802 if they are uncomfortable for any reason using the above procedure. Every report of perceived harassment will be fully investigated and corrective action will be taken where appropriate. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

All complaints will be kept confidential to the extent possible, but confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. In addition, VREF will not allow any form of retaliation against individuals who report unwelcome conduct to management or who cooperate in the investigations of such reports in accordance with this policy. Employees who make complaints in bad faith may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. All employees must cooperate with all investigations.

#### **1-4. Sexual Harassment**

It is the policy of the Veterans Research and Education Foundation to prohibit harassment of any employee by any Supervisor, employee, customer or vendor on the basis of sex or gender. The purpose of this policy is not to regulate personal morality within VREF. It is to ensure that at VREF, all employees are free from sexual harassment. While it is not easy to define precisely what types of conduct could constitute sexual harassment, examples of prohibited behavior include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, obscene gestures, displaying sexually graphic magazines, calendars or posters, sending sexually explicit e-mails, text messages and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, such as uninvited touching of a sexual nature or sexually related comments. Depending upon the circumstances, improper conduct also can include sexual joking, vulgar or offensive conversation or jokes, commenting about an employee's physical appearance, conversation about your own or someone else's sex life, or teasing or other conduct directed toward a person because of his or her gender which is sufficiently severe or pervasive to create an unprofessional and hostile working environment.

Note that there is a wide range of what could be considered inappropriate behavior under this policy even though such behavior may not be considered illegal. For this reason, a violation of this policy may lead to disciplinary action whether or not it violates the law.

If you feel that you have been subjected to conduct which violates this policy, you should immediately report the matter to your Supervisor. If you are unable for any reason to contact this person, or if you have not received a satisfactory response within three (3) business days after reporting any incident of what you perceive to be harassment, please contact the next level Manager. Note: If your Supervisor or next level Manager is the person toward whom the complaint is directed, you should contact any higher-level Manager in your reporting chain. Employees may also contact the ADP Total Source Employee Service Center at (800) 554-1802 if they are uncomfortable for any reason using the above procedure. Every report of perceived harassment will be fully investigated and corrective action will be taken where appropriate. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. All complaints will be kept confidential to the extent possible, but confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. In addition, VREF will not allow any form of retaliation against individuals who report unwelcome conduct to management or who cooperate in the investigations of such reports in accordance with this policy. Employees who make complaints in bad faith may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. All employees must cooperate with all investigations.



## 1-5. Workplace Violence

Veterans Research and Education Foundation is strongly committed to providing a safe workplace. The purpose of this policy is to minimize the risk of personal injury to employees and damage to Company and personal property.

We do not expect you to become an expert in psychology or to physically subdue a threatening or violent individual. Indeed, we specifically discourage you from engaging in any physical confrontation with a violent or potentially violent individual. However, we do expect and encourage you to exercise reasonable judgment in identifying potentially dangerous situations.

Experts in the mental health profession state that prior to engaging in acts of violence, troubled individuals often exhibit one or more of the following behaviors or signs: over-resentment, anger and hostility; extreme agitation; making ominous threats such as bad things will happen to a particular person, or a catastrophic event will occur; sudden and significant decline in work performance; irresponsible, irrational, intimidating, aggressive or otherwise inappropriate behavior; reacting to questions with an antagonistic or overtly negative attitude; discussing weapons and their use, and/or brandishing weapons in the workplace; overreacting or reacting harshly to changes in Company policies and procedures; personality conflicts with co-workers; obsession or preoccupation with a co-worker or Supervisor; attempts to sabotage the work or equipment of a co-worker; blaming others for mistakes and circumstances; demonstrating a propensity to behave and react irrationally.

### **Prohibited Conduct**

Threats, threatening language or any other acts of aggression or violence made toward or by any VREF employee **WILL NOT BE TOLERATED**. For purposes of this policy, a threat includes any verbal or physical harassment or abuse, any attempt at intimidating or instilling fear in others, menacing gestures, flashing of weapons, stalking or any other hostile, aggressive, injurious or destructive action undertaken for the purpose of domination or intimidation. To the extent permitted by law, employees and visitors are prohibited from carrying weapons onto Company premises.

### **Procedures for Reporting a Threat**

All potentially dangerous situations, including threats by co-workers, should be reported immediately to any member of management with whom you feel comfortable. Reports of threats may be maintained confidential to the extent maintaining confidentiality does not impede our ability to investigate and respond to the complaints. All threats will be promptly investigated. All employees must cooperate with all investigations. No employee will be subjected to retaliation, intimidation or disciplinary action as a result of reporting a threat in good faith under this policy.

If VREF determines, after an appropriate good faith investigation, that someone has violated this policy, VREF will take swift and appropriate corrective action.

If you are the recipient of a threat made by an outside party, please follow the steps detailed in this section. It is important for us to be aware of any potential danger in our offices. Indeed, we want to take effective measures to protect everyone from the threat of a violent act by an employee or by anyone else.

## Section 2 – Operational Policies

### 2-1. Employee Classifications

For purposes of this handbook, all employees fall within one of the classifications below.

**Full-Time Employees** - Employees who regularly work at least 30 hours per week who were not hired on a short-term basis.

**Part-Time Employees** - Employees who regularly work fewer than 30 hours per week who were not hired on a short-term basis.

**Short-Term Employees** - Employees who were hired for a specific short-term project, or on a short-term freelance, per diem or temporary basis. Short-Term Employees generally are not eligible for Company benefits, but are eligible to receive statutory benefits.

In addition to the above classifications, employees are categorized as either "**exempt**" or "**nonexempt**" for purposes of federal and state wage and hour laws. Employees classified as exempt do not receive overtime pay; they generally receive the same weekly salary regardless of hours worked. Such salary may be paid less frequently than weekly. You will be informed of your classifications upon hire and informed of any subsequent changes to your classifications.

### 2-2. Trial Period

The first three months of your employment is a probationary period. This is an opportunity for VREF to evaluate your performance. It also is an opportunity for you to decide whether you are happy being employed by VREF. VREF may extend the probationary period if it desires. Completion of the probationary period does not alter an employee's at-will status.

### 2-3. Training

The Research and Education Service Office will advise Foundation employees of all training that they are required to complete. This would include training required of all Research Service WOCs and specific training required due to the employee's role in the research protocol (e.g., human or animal research).

## 2-4. New Hire Paperwork/Orientation

Each new employee must complete the online training assigned by the Research and Education Service office prior to their first day of work. Employee's onboarding should be completed on their first day of work if possible or within 2 business days of their start date.

## 2-5. Your Employment Records

In order to obtain your position, you provided us with personal information, such as your address and telephone number. This information is contained in your personnel file.

Please keep your personnel file up to date by informing the Management Analyst or Executive Director of any changes. Also, please inform the Management Analyst or Executive Director of any specialized training or skills you may acquire in the future, as well as any changes to any required visas. Unreported changes of address, marital status, etc. can affect your withholding tax and benefit coverage. Further, an "out of date" emergency contact or an inability to reach you in a crisis could cause a severe health or safety risk or other significant problem.

## 2-6. Working Hours and Schedule

Work schedules for each position are established by the supervisor and approved by the Executive Director, who will be advised of any proposed changes.

- *Regular Employees* (Full time or Part Time) - Employee must be on duty during the hours and days scheduled (or on an approved leave to account for the absence). Employee may be full-time (30+ hours per week) or part-time (less than 30 hours per week).
- *Intermittent Employees* – work on an as-needed basis, with no schedule

**Work Week.** VREF work week begins on Sunday and ends on Saturday. The supervisor will determine the tour of duty needed to meet the needs of the position.

**Lunch Break.** Non-exempt employees working six hours or longer will take an unpaid 30minute lunch break. The scheduling of meal breaks is flexible and depends on the length of the workday. Ideally, the break will occur near the midpoint of the work period, but the supervisor will approve scheduling. Lunch may not be taken at the end of the work day.

**Paid Rest Periods.** A ten-minute rest break is provided during each four-hour work period. As possible, rest periods should be scheduled in the middle of the period. An employee unable to take a scheduled break or meal period should notify the supervisor promptly so that the break/meal can be rescheduled. Break periods may not be used to extend a lunch period, work overtime, or to arrive late or leave early.

## 2-7. Timekeeping Procedures

VREF uses timesheets to record and approve all employee time worked. It is the employee's responsibility to complete time records accurately and timely and to ensure the timesheet is approved by the employee prior to supervisor review/approval. Employees record the number of hours worked each day by project, and the project name on which they worked, and the total amount of leave time taken.

***Supervisor Certification:*** The supervisor must review and sign the timesheet before submitting it for payroll processing. **Timesheets received without supervisor signature will not be processed.**

***Submission:*** Timesheets should be approved on the last day of the payroll period (2<sup>nd</sup> Friday), but not later than end of business the following Monday for processing. Deadlines may change due to holidays and employees will be notified via email of any variance in submission deadlines. Timesheets not approved in time to meet this deadline will be processed the following pay period.

***Falsification:*** When the employee records their time, they certify the times being reported are accurate. Altering, falsifying or tampering with time records (for example, not reporting times absent thereby claiming pay for time not worked) will result in disciplinary action that may include termination of employment.

## 2-8. Overtime

From time to time when operating requirements or other needs cannot be met during regular working hours, the supervisor may require employees to work overtime hours.

***Eligibility.*** Nonexempt employees are eligible to receive overtime pay for hours worked in excess of 40 hours per workweek.

Employees may work overtime only with prior management authorization.

***Authorizing Overtime.*** All overtime work must be previously approved in writing by the supervisor. No overtime may be worked without prior authorization unless there is an emergency situation, in which case it should be brought immediately to the supervisor's attention. No employee may make the decision to work beyond their scheduled tour. Employees who work overtime without the direction and pre-approval of the supervisor are subject to disciplinary action with possible termination. Overtime hours worked should be shown on the timesheet.

***Hours/Rate.*** The overtime rate is one and one-half times the regular rate of pay. Overtime hours are determined based on the actual hours worked and calculated on a weekly basis. Paid absences,

such as leave, holidays, and authorized absence, are not counted as time worked for the purpose of computing overtime.

## 2-9. Safe Harbor Policy for Exempt Employees

It is our policy and practice to accurately compensate employees and to do so in compliance with all applicable state and federal laws. To ensure that you are paid properly and that no improper deductions are made, you must review your pay stubs promptly to identify and report all errors.

If you are classified as an exempt salaried employee, you will receive a salary which is intended to compensate you for all hours you may work for VREF. This salary will be established at the time of hire or when you become classified as an exempt employee. While it may be subject to review and modification from time to time, such as during salary review times, the salary will be a predetermined amount that will not be subject to deductions for variations in the quantity or quality of the work you perform.

Your salary may also be reduced for certain types of deductions such as; state, federal or local taxes or social security.

However, unless state law provides otherwise, deductions may be made to your accrued leave for full- or partial-day absences for personal reasons, sickness or disability.

If you believe you have been subject to any improper deductions, you should immediately report the matter to your supervisor. If the supervisor is unavailable or if you believe it would be inappropriate to contact that person (or if you have not received a prompt and fully acceptable reply), you should immediately contact the Management Analyst or Executive Director.

## 2-10. Your Paycheck

***Pay Periods, Paydays.*** Pay periods are two weeks long beginning on Sunday and ending on Saturday. Payday is the Friday following the end of each bi-weekly pay period

***Direct Deposit.*** VREF uses an outside payroll service to process its payroll. Paychecks are issued by electronic transfer to the financial institution designated by the employee. Employees are required to provide individual account information to VREF office at the time of employment. The first paycheck may be sent directly to the employee pending initiation of the electronic transfer.

***Earnings and Leave Statement.*** When the payroll is processed, an earnings and leave statement is provided electronically for all employees. This information can be requested from the VREF Management Analyst or Executive Director at any time. Employees should promptly inform the VREF Office of any errors.

***Payroll deductions:*** Paychecks reflect total earnings for the pay period, as well as any mandatory or voluntary deductions. Mandatory deductions are deductions that are legally required, such as Federal income tax, Social Security and Medicare. Voluntary deductions are authorized by the employee. The VREF office should be contacted for deduction questions.

***Wage Garnishment.*** On occasion VREF will receive an order from a court or a government agency directing the withholding of a certain amount of money from an employee's paycheck. Wages can be garnished to pay child support, spousal support, tax debts, outstanding student loans, or a court judgment. If instructed by a court or agency to garnish an employee's wages, the employee will be notified of the garnishment at once. Please note that VREF is legally required to comply with these orders. Employees disputing or having concerns about the amount of a garnishment must contact the court or agency that issued the order.

## **2-11. Direct Deposit**

Veterans Research and Education Foundation strongly encourages employees to use direct deposit.

## **2-12. Salary Advances**

Veterans Research and Education Foundation does not permit advances on paychecks or against accrued paid time off.

## **2-13. Performance Reviews**

Depending on your position and classification, Veterans Research and Education Foundation endeavors to review your performance annually. However, please understand that a positive performance evaluation does not guarantee an increase in salary, a promotion, or continued employment. Compensation increases and the terms and conditions of employment, including job assignments, transfers, promotions, and demotions, are determined by and at the discretion of management.

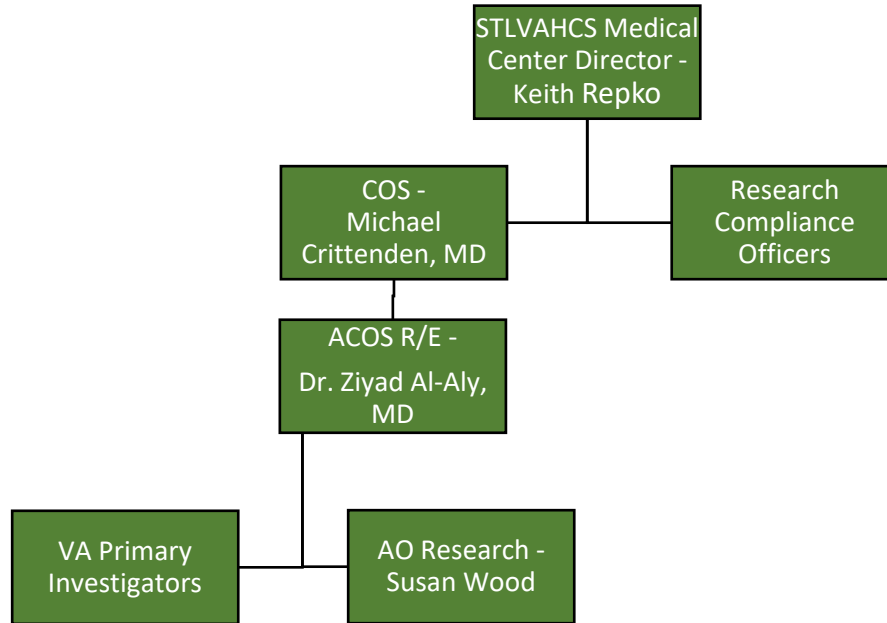
In addition to these formal performance evaluations, VREF encourages you and your Supervisor to discuss your job performance on a frequent and ongoing basis.

## **2-14. Record Retention**

VREF acknowledges its responsibility to preserve information relating to litigation, audits and investigations. Failure on the part of employees to follow this policy can result in possible civil and criminal sanctions against VREF and its employees and possible disciplinary action against responsible individuals (up to and including termination of employment). Each employee has an

obligation to contact the Executive Director to inform them of potential or actual litigation, external audit, investigation or similar proceeding involving VREF that may have an impact on record retention protocols. If you have questions regarding the retention of specific documents, please contact the Executive Director of VREF for more information.

# STLVAHCS Organizational Chart - Research

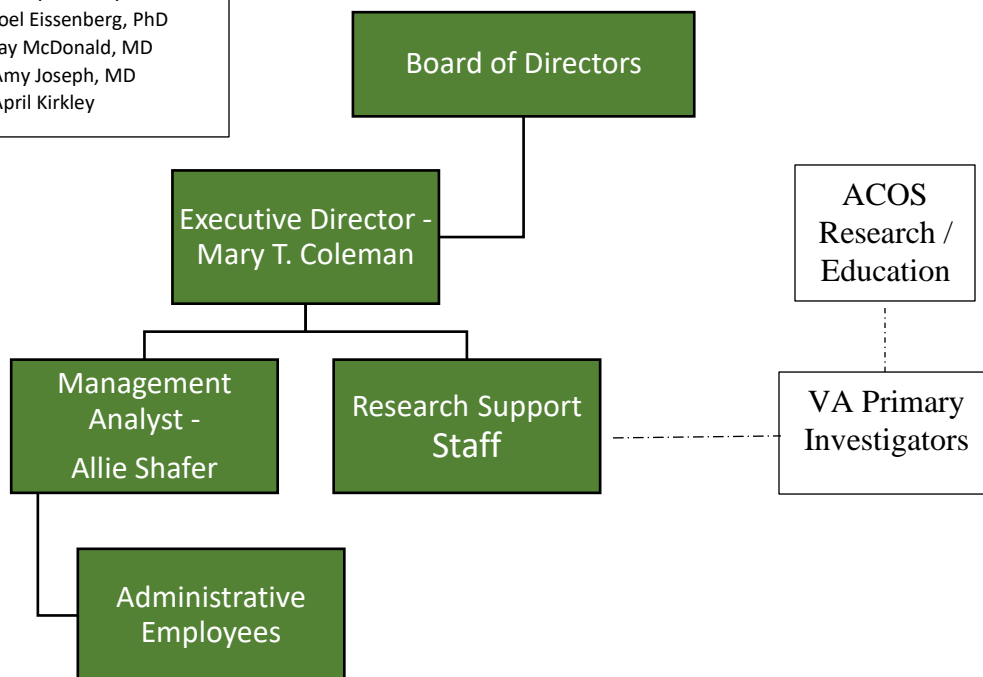


# VREF Organizational Chart

## VREF Board of Directors

- Keith Repko - Chairman
- Michael Crittenden, MD
- Dr. Ziyad Al-Aly, MD
- Joel Eissenberg, PhD
- Jay McDonald, MD
- Amy Joseph, MD
- April Kirkley

*Please note, although non-admin employees are supervised by the PI, they are employed by VREF. All employment issues such as time cards, paychecks, etc., are administered by VREF.*





## Section 3 - Benefits

### 3-1. Benefits Overview

Veterans Research and Education Foundation does not currently offer health or retirement benefits to its employees.

### 3-2. Holidays

The employee must be in an active pay status (worked or on paid leave for their scheduled hours) both the day before and the day after a holiday in order to be paid for the holiday. VREF recognizes the following holidays:

New Year's Day  
Martin Luther King, Jr., Day  
Presidents' Day  
Memorial Day  
Independence Day  
Labor Day  
Columbus Day  
Veterans Day  
Thanksgiving Day  
Christmas Day

***Full-time employees*** - receive 8 paid hours for a holiday

If the actual holiday falls on a work day, the employee will be excused for that day. If the holiday falls on a full-time employee's scheduled day off, the "in lieu of" day designated by the Federal government will be recognized for time off.

Full-time employees who are required by the supervisor to work on a holiday will be paid 8 hours for the holiday in addition to pay for the time worked. This holiday work must be prescheduled/approved by the supervisor and documented with an overtime approval request that is submitted with the timecard. Exempt employees will be provided time off, but will not be financially compensated for working holidays.

***Part-time employees*** – are entitled to holiday pay only if they would normally be scheduled to work on the actual holiday. They will be paid for their scheduled working hours for that date, not to exceed 10 hours.

Part-time employees do not receive the "in lieu of" holidays that full-time employees receive when the holiday falls on a non-work day. However, if their workplaces are closed due to an "in lieu of" holiday for full-time employees, part-time employees may be granted excused absence not to exceed 10 hours.

***Intermittent employees*** - do not have scheduled tours and are not paid for holidays

***Presidential Closing of Federal Agencies.*** Presidents occasionally issue Executive orders closing Federal departments for part or all of a workday, usually providing that it will be treated like a holiday. If a “half-day” holiday is granted to Federal employees, a full-time Foundation employee is excused from the last half of his tour not to exceed 4 hours. A part-time employee is excused from the last half of his tour, not to exceed 5 hours. Occasionally, Early Release is granted to STLVAHCS employees and all employees working that day are allowed to depart earlier than their scheduled tour. VREF will follow the same early release; however, employees on leave will not receive credit for any early release time provided to working employees.

### **3-3. Paid Time Off**

We know how hard you work and recognize the importance of providing you with time for rest and relaxation. We fully encourage you to get this rest by taking your paid time off. Time off under this policy includes extended time off, such as for a vacation, and incidental time due to sickness or to handle personal affairs.

VREF provides both Annual Leave and Sick Leave to all employees. Accruals of both are dependent upon Employee’s tenure and work status (part time vs. full time). Annual and sick leave are earned at 1 hour each for every 20 hours worked.

For example, an employee who works 40 hours per week (80 hours per pay period) will earn 1 hour each of annual and sick leave for every 20 hours worked. An employee who works 30 hours per week (60 hours per pay period) will earn 1 hour each of annual and sick leave for every 20 hours worked – 10 hours each week would roll into the next pay period.

***Advance Approval.*** All leave must be approved in advance by the supervisor except in cases of emergency. Staffing and workload will be considered by the supervisor when reviewing leave requests. If an emergency of any sort arises, supervisors must be contacted within two hours of the employee’s starting time. Any leave not approved may result in leave without pay, suspension, or if chronic, termination. Leave should be requested a week prior to enable supervisor to arrange workload.

***Call-in for Unexpected Absences.*** When unable to work a scheduled shift, the employee is expected to call the supervisor or the person designated as the contact person. They should give name, duration of the absence, and reason. They must continue to call in each day of absence. If unable to comply due to emergency or other extenuating circumstances, employee must call as soon as possible, indicating reason unable to call. Failure to follow policy or provide satisfactory reason will be treated as an attendance disciplinary issue.

***Calendar Year Carryover.*** A maximum of 240 hours of annual leave may be carried over into the next calendar year.

***Termination of Employment.*** Upon separation, the employee will be paid any accrued and unused annual leave, not to exceed 240 hours.

***Transfer to Another Investigator.*** If an Employee's supervisor changes, leave will continue to accrue at the same rate as with the previous supervisor. All accrued leave is charged to the investigator's account at the time it is accrued, and will continue to be available to the employee until its use or the employee's termination with VREF.

***Timecard Reporting.*** The employee must show all annual leave absences on the timecard. Submitting fraudulent timecards, i.e., claiming unearned pay by not entering absences, or not submitting any documentation of leave, is subject to disciplinary action including possible termination. All leave requests should be approved in advance of any leave taken.

## **Vacation Leave**

***Accrual.*** All Regular employees (Exempt and Non-Exempt) will receive annual/vacation leave with accrual from the start of employment. During the first four years of employment, full-time employees will receive 4 hours of leave each pay period. After completing four years, employees will receive 6 hours per pay period. After completing 10 years, employees will receive 8 hours per pay period. Part-time regular employees will accrue leave proportionate to their hours. Leave will accrue on worked, holiday, sick leave or annual leave hours paid. It does not accrue on overtime paid. Vacation leave balances roll over annually on January 1 and accrual is capped at 240 hours. Employees who leave VREF with a Vacation Leave balance will be paid for this time (up to 240 hours) at their current pay rate.

***Use.*** Leave may be used in ¼ hour increments. All leave requests should be submitted to the supervisor and included on the timecard. Employees may not take more leave than they have actually earned by the end of the previous pay period. If desired absence exceeds accrued leave, employee should request leave without pay for the additional time.

## **Sick Leave**

***Accrual.*** All Regular employees (Exempt and Non-Exempt) will receive sick leave with accrual from the start of employment. During the first four years of employment, full-time employees will receive 4 hours of leave each pay period. There are no increases in sick leave accrual. Part-time regular employees will accrue leave proportionate to their hours. Leave will accrue on worked, holiday, sick leave or annual leave hours paid. It does not accrue on overtime paid.

Sick leave balances roll over annually on January 1 without a cap; however, balances remaining upon employee's termination will **not** be paid to employee.

***Use.*** Leave may be used in ¼ hour increments. All leave requests should be submitted to the supervisor and included on the timecard. Employees may not take more leave than they have actually earned by the end of the previous pay period. If desired absence exceeds accrued leave, employee should request leave without pay for the additional time.

### **3-4. Lactation Breaks**

VREF will provide a reasonable amount of break time to accommodate an employee desiring to express breast milk for the employee's infant child, in accordance with and to the extent required by applicable law. The break time, if possible, must run concurrently with rest and meal periods already provided to the employee. If the break time cannot run concurrently with rest and meal periods already provided to the employee, the break time will be unpaid, subject to applicable law.

VREF will make reasonable efforts to provide employees with the use of a room or location to express milk in private. This location may be the employee's private office, if applicable. VREF may not be able to provide additional break time if doing so would seriously disrupt VREF's operations, subject to applicable law. Please consult the Executive Director if you have questions regarding this policy.

Please advise management if you need break time and an area for this purpose. Employees will not be discriminated against or retaliated against for exercising their rights under this policy.

### **3-5. Workers' Compensation**

On-the-job injuries are covered by our Workers' Compensation Insurance Policy, which is provided at no cost to you. If you are injured on the job, no matter how slightly, report the incident immediately to your Supervisor. Failure to follow Company procedures may affect your ability to receive Workers Compensation benefits.

This is solely a monetary benefit and not a leave of absence entitlement. Employees who need to miss work due to a workplace injury must also request a formal leave of absence. See the Leave of Absence sections of this handbook for more information.

### **3-6. Jury Duty Leave**

If a regular full- or part-time employee is required to perform jury duty, he or she will receive regular pay. A copy of the summons and the verification of days served must be provided in order to have the absence excused. The employee will be expected to work his or her regular schedule on any day he or she is not required to be present in court. The supervisor should be advised as soon as possible after receiving a jury summons so arrangements can be made to accommodate the absence. If employee is chosen to sit on a jury, the supervisor should be informed as to how long the trial is expected to last. Employee should also check in with the supervisor periodically during jury service, so the supervisor knows when to expect the employee to return to work. On days when jury service ends before the end of the usual workday, employee should check in with the supervisor to find out whether he needs to return to work for that day.

### **3-7. Court Cases**

An employee required to serve as a witness in a court case or arbitration should immediately notify the supervisor. Available annual leave may be used to cover the time.

### **3-8. Bereavement Leave**

The death of a family member is a time when you wish to be with your family. If you are a full-time employee and lose a relative, you should check with your immediate supervisor for details on the amount of time off allowed to assist in attending to your obligations and commitments. For the purposes of this policy, a close relative includes a spouse, domestic partner, child, parent, sibling or any other relation required by applicable law. You must inform your Supervisor prior to commencing bereavement leave. In administering this policy, VREF may require verification of death.

### **3-9. Voting Leave**

In the event an employee does not have sufficient time outside of working hours to vote in a statewide election, the employee may take off sufficient working time to vote. This time should be taken at the beginning or end of the regular work schedule, whichever allows the most free time for voting and the least time off from work. An employee will be allowed a maximum of two (2) hours of voting leave on Election Day without loss of pay. The employee's supervisor must be notified of and approve the need for leave at least three (3) working days prior to the Election Day.

## **Section 4 - Leaves of Absence**

### **4-1. Military Leave**

It is the policy of the organization to abide by rules, regulations, and laws with regard to protection of employee's positions as a result of military obligations. Employees taking military leave are entitled to return to their jobs as provided under federal and state laws. Employees should bring the orders to the attention of their supervisor and VREF Office on the first working day after receiving the notice.

### **4-2. Leave Without Pay (LWOP)**

When an employee has used all earned leave, the supervisor may approve an unpaid absence – leave without pay – depending on circumstances and workload. All absences/leave must be

approved by the supervisor whether paid leave or unpaid. Absences without supervisor approval are considered disciplinary issues. Absences that exceed earned leave will be evaluated for their effect on the workload. The timecard must show all LWOP absences and include the approved leave without pay request. Submitting fraudulent timecards is subject to disciplinary action including possible termination.

### **4-3. Leave of Absence**

VREF will consider unpaid leaves of absence on an individual basis for a specified period. Requests are granted at the discretion of the employee's supervisor and the Executive Director, who will consider inconvenience/benefit to organization, staffing needs, the employee's work record, and the reason for the requested leave. Annual and sick leave must be used before unpaid leave will be authorized. A personal leave of absence must be requested in writing and submitted to the supervisor and VREF office as soon as the need for such leave is known. Circumstances will determine the length of leave granted. Employees are not guaranteed a return to their former position. Where possible, the employee will return to his or her prior position or a similar position. Failure to return to work at the end of the approved leave will be considered abandonment and resignation of the employee's position.

### **4-4. Training/Seminars**

Authorized absence may be granted when an employee requests approval to be absent from work duties in order to attend training, a meeting, seminar, etc. A request for authorized absence must be submitted to the supervisor and VREF Office for approval and should include supporting documentation indicating what the training will include, usually the training/meeting brochure. The absence may be approved if the supervisor determines the work load permits and the training provided will benefit the employee's Foundation work duties. If approved, the employee would be excused from duties for the duration of the approved training/meeting.

## **Section 5 – General Standards of Conduct**

### **5-1. Workplace Conduct**

Veterans Research and Education Foundation endeavors to maintain a positive work environment. Each employee plays a role in fostering this environment. Accordingly, we all must abide by certain rules of conduct, based on honesty, common sense and fair play.

Because everyone may not have the same idea about proper workplace conduct, it is helpful to adopt and enforce rules all can follow. Unacceptable conduct may subject the offender to

disciplinary action, up to and including discharge, in VREF's sole discretion. The following are examples of some, but not all, conduct which can be considered unacceptable:

1. Obtaining employment on the basis of false or misleading information.
2. Stealing, removing or defacing Veterans Research and Education Foundation, VA property or a co-worker's property, and/or disclosure of confidential business information.
3. Fraudulent submission of timecards.
4. Violation of safety rules and policies.
5. The unlawful or unauthorized use, abuse, solicitation, distribution, theft, possession, transfer, purchase, or sale of drugs, drug paraphernalia or alcohol by an individual anywhere on Company premises, while on Company business (whether or not on Company premises), or while representing VREF, reporting to work, or remaining on duty after using drugs or alcohol in any amount that adversely affects the employee's ability to perform the functions of the job.
6. Failure to follow lawful instructions of a supervisor.
7. Failure to perform assigned job duties.
8. Violation of the Punctuality and Attendance Policy, including but not limited to irregular attendance, habitual lateness or unexcused absences.
9. Gambling on Company property.
10. Willful or careless destruction or damage to Company assets or to the equipment or possessions of another employee.
11. Wasting work materials.
12. Performing work of a personal nature during working time.
13. Violation of the Solicitation and Distribution Policy.
14. Violation of Veterans Research and Education Foundation's Harassment or Equal Employment Opportunity Policies.
15. Violation of the Communication and Computer Systems Policy.
16. Unsatisfactory job performance.
17. Any other violation of Company policy.

Obviously, not every type of misconduct can be listed. Note that all employees are employed at will, and Veterans Research and Education Foundation reserves the right to impose whatever

discipline it chooses, or none at all, in a particular instance. VREF will deal with each situation individually and nothing in this handbook should be construed as a promise of specific treatment in a given situation. However, Veterans Research and Education Foundation will endeavor to utilize progressive discipline but reserves the right in its sole discretion to terminate an employee at any time for any reason.

The observance of these rules will help to ensure that our workplace remains a safe and desirable place to work.

## **5-2. Separate Employers**

Foundation employees are not VA or Federal employees. The work policies of other institutions may differ from Foundation policies. Those paid by VREF are employees of VREF and are subject to its employment policies. However, an employee must also follow the institutional conduct standards of the area in which they work (For example: VA), such as personal conduct, dress, safety, and research activities.

## **5-3. Grievances/Complaints**

It is the policy to allow employees the opportunity to voice concerns in a confidential manner. Employees with grievances or complaints should first discuss the issues with the responsible investigator supervisor. If the individual is not satisfied with resolution of the issue, the employee may request a meeting with the Executive Director.

## **5-4. Whistleblower Protection Policy**

VREF requires directors, officers, investigators, and employees to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities. VREF does not condone any activity that is illegal or improper. The organization encourages complaints, reports or inquiries about illegal practices or serious violations of the organization's policies. Appropriate subjects under this policy would include financial improprieties, accounting or audit matters, ethical violations, or other similar illegal or improper practices or policies. Other subjects, such as alleged discrimination, should be addressed under separate mechanisms. This policy is not intended to provide a means of appeal from outcomes in other areas.

On February 22, 2013, the United States Department of Labor's Occupational Health and Safety Administration ("OSHA") published an interim final rule ("Rule"), effective February 27, 2013, setting forth procedures governing whistleblower complaints under the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act ("Affordable Care Act" or "Act").



**Protection from Retaliation** Section 1558 of the Act prohibits retaliation (*e.g.*, intimidation, blacklisting, discipline, etc.) against employees who (i) report violations of Title I of the Act. The Act authorizes the Secretary of Labor to conduct investigations into retaliation complaints and issue determinations, and the Rule delegates that duty to OSHA. Retaliating employers can be required to, among other things, reinstate terminated employees, provide back pay with interest, and pay compensatory damages, attorneys' fees, and expert witness fees.

The organization prohibits retaliation against staff for making good faith complaints, reports or inquiries under this policy or for participating in a review or investigation under this policy. This protection extends to those whose allegations are made in good faith but prove to be mistaken. An employee who feels that adverse action has been taken toward him/her due to a report of improper activity should notify the Executive Director. Any allegations that prove not to be substantiated and which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly to be false will be viewed as a disciplinary offense.

**Reporting.** Activities believed to be illegal or improper should be reported to the person who can address the issues properly. In most cases, an employee's supervisor is in the best position to address an area of concern. However, if the employee is not comfortable speaking with the supervisor or is not satisfied with the supervisor's response, they are encouraged to speak with the Executive Director. Violations may be submitted on a confidential basis or may be submitted anonymously. They should describe in detail the specific facts demonstrating the bases for the complaints, reports or inquiries. Reports of violations will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation. The organization will conduct a prompt, discreet, and objective review or investigation. Staff must recognize that the organization may be unable to fully evaluate a vague or general complaint that is made anonymously. Appropriate corrective action will be taken if warranted by the investigation.

## **5-5. Without Compensation VA Appointment**

Employees must have a current VA Without Compensation (WOC) appointment. WOC appointment processing includes, but is not limited to, a background check, fingerprinting, TB tests, and training.

For employees engaged in direct patient care activities (*e.g.*, nurse), the WOC appointment requires verification of professional credentials and attainment of clinical privileges at the VA facility. Patient contact is not allowed until clinical privileges have been granted. Clinical privileges must also be obtained from other institutions if applicant will be working at other locations.

## **5-6. Punctuality and Attendance**

Employees are expected to be at work during the full period of their scheduled hours unless absent on approved leave. Employees are required to report to work punctually and to work all scheduled hours. Tardiness and poor attendance disrupts workflow and customer service.

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring employees are not abusing salary benefits or regular workday starting and ending times. Absent employees or those who arrive late or leave early unfairly burden other employees. Regular attendance is a key element of satisfactory job performance. Unsatisfactory attendance, including reporting late or departing early, may be cause for disciplinary action, including discharge. Employees who fail to report to work for three consecutive days without contacting the supervisor will be deemed to have voluntarily resigned the position. Any wages and vacation pay due will be sent to the employee's home address during the next normal pay period.

## **5-7. Use of Communication and Computer Systems**

Veterans Research and Education Foundation's communication and computer systems are intended for business purposes and may be used only during working time; however limited personal usage is permitted if it does not hinder performance of job duties or violate any other Company policy. This includes the voice mail, e-mail and Internet systems. Users have no legitimate expectation of privacy in regard to their use of the systems. VREF utilizes the VA network. Employees are required to abide by all VA data security policies and requirements.

Veterans Research and Education Foundation may access the voice mail and e-mail systems and obtain the communications within the systems, including past voice mail and e-mail messages, without notice to users of the system, in the ordinary course of business when VREF deems it appropriate to do so. The reasons for which VREF may obtain such access include, but are not limited to: maintaining the system; preventing or investigating allegations of system abuse or misuse; assuring compliance with software copyright laws; complying with legal and regulatory requests for information; and ensuring that Company operations continue appropriately during an employee's absence.

Further, Veterans Research and Education Foundation may review Internet usage to ensure that such use with Company property, or communications sent via the Internet with Company property, are appropriate. The reasons for which VREF may review employees' use of the Internet with Company property include, but are not limited to: maintaining the system; preventing or investigating allegations of system abuse or misuse; assuring compliance with software copyright laws; complying with legal and regulatory requests for information; and ensuring that Company operations continue appropriately during an employee's absence.

VREF may store electronic communications for a period of time after the communication is created. From time to time, copies of communications may be deleted.

VREF's policies prohibiting harassment, in their entirety, apply to the use of Company's communication and computer systems. No one may use any communication or computer system in a manner that may be construed by others as harassing or offensive based on race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, religious beliefs or any other characteristic protected by federal, state or local law.

Since VREF's communication and computer systems are intended for business use, these systems may not be used to solicit for religious or political causes or outside organizations.

Further, since VREF's communication and computer systems are intended for business use, all employees, upon request, must inform management of any private access codes or passwords.

Unauthorized duplication of copyrighted computer software violates the law and is strictly prohibited.

No employee may access, or attempt to obtain access to, another employee's computer systems without appropriate authorization.

Violators of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

## **5-8. Use of Social Media**

Veterans Research and Education Foundation respects the right of any employee to maintain a blog or web page or to participate in a social networking, Twitter or similar site, including but not limited to Facebook and LinkedIn. However, to protect Company interests and ensure employees focus on their job duties, employees must adhere to the following rules:

Employees may not post on a blog or web page or participate on a social networking, Twitter or similar site during working time or at any time with Company equipment or property.

All rules regarding confidential and proprietary business information apply in full to blogs, web pages, social networking, Twitter and similar sites. Any information that cannot be disclosed through a conversation, a note or an e-mail also cannot be disclosed in a blog, web page, social networking, Twitter or similar site.

Whether an employee is posting something on his or her own blog, web page, social networking, Twitter or similar site or on someone else's, if the employee mentions VREF and also expresses either a political opinion or an opinion regarding VREF's actions, the poster must include a disclaimer. The poster should specifically state that the opinion expressed is his/her personal opinion and not VREF's position. This is necessary to preserve VREF's good will in the marketplace.

Any conduct that is impermissible under the law if expressed in any other form or forum is impermissible if expressed through a blog, web page, social networking, Twitter or similar site. For example, posted material that is discriminatory, obscene, defamatory, libelous or threatening is forbidden. Company policies apply equally to employee social media usage. Employees should review their Employee Handbook for further guidance.

Veterans Research and Education Foundation encourages all employees to keep in mind the speed and manner in which information posted on a blog, web page, and/or social networking site is received and often misunderstood by readers. Employees must use their best judgment. Employees with any questions should review the guidelines above and/or consult with their manager. Failure to follow these guidelines may result in discipline, up to and including termination.

## **5-9. Personal and Company-Provided Portable Communication Devices**

Company-provided portable communication devices (PCDs), including cell phones and personal digital assistants, should be used primarily for business purposes and are required to have installed all applicable security measures per the VA data security policies. Employees have no reasonable expectation of privacy in regard to the use of such devices, and all use is subject to monitoring, to the maximum extent permitted by applicable law. This includes as permitted the right to monitor personal communications as necessary.

Some employees may be authorized to use their own PCD for business purposes. These employees should work with the IT department to configure their PCD for business use. Communications sent via a personal PCD also may be subject to monitoring if sent through VREF's networks and the PCD must be provided for inspection and review upon request.

All conversations, text messages and e-mails must be professional. When sending a text message or using a PCD for business purposes, whether it is a Company-provided or personal device, employees must comply with applicable Company guidelines, including policies on sexual harassment, discrimination, conduct, confidentiality, equipment use and operation of vehicles. Using a Company-issued PCD to send or receive personal text messages is prohibited at all times and personal use during working hours should be limited to emergency situations.

If an employee who uses a personal PCD for business resigns or is terminated, the employee will be required to submit the device to the IT department for resetting on or before his or her last day of work. At that time, the IT department will reset and remove all information from the device, including but not limited to, Company information and personal data (such as contacts, e-mails and photographs). The IT department will make efforts to provide employees with the personal data in another form (e.g., on a disk) to the extent practicable; however, the employee may lose some or all personal data saved on the device.

Employees may not use their personal PCD for business unless they agree to submit the device to the IT department on or before their last day of work for resetting and removal of Company information. This is the only way currently possible to ensure that all Company information is removed from the device at the time of termination. The removal of Company information is crucial to ensure compliance with VREF's confidentiality and proprietary information policies and objectives.

Please note that whether employees use their personal PCD or a Company-issued device, VREF's electronic communications policies, including but not limited to, proper use of communications and computer systems, remain in effect.

## **5-10. Camera Phones/Recording Devices**

Due to the potential for issues such as invasion of privacy, sexual harassment, and loss of productivity, no employee may use a camera phone function on any phone on company property

or while performing work for VREF. Additionally, photos of any VA employees or veterans are strictly prohibited by VA policy without first obtaining the appropriate consent.

The use of tape recorders, dictaphones or other types of voice recording devices anywhere on Company property, including to record conversations or activities of other employees or management, or while performing work for VREF, is also strictly prohibited, unless the device was provided to you by VREF, is used solely for legitimate business purposes, and all required approvals and consents have been obtained per VA policy.

## **5-11. Inspections**

Veterans Research and Education Foundation reserves the right to require employees while on Company property, or on client property, to agree to the inspection of their persons, personal possessions and property, personal vehicles parked on Company or client property, and work areas. This includes lockers, vehicles, desks, cabinets, work stations, packages, handbags, briefcases and other personal possessions or places of concealment, as well as personal mail sent to VREF or to its clients. Employees are expected to cooperate in the conduct of any search or inspection.

## **5-12. Smoking**

Smoking, including the use of e-cigarettes, is prohibited on Company premises and in all Company vehicles except in designated areas.

## **5-13. Personal Visits and Telephone Calls**

Disruptions during working time can lead to errors and delays. Therefore, we ask that personal telephone calls be kept to a minimum, and only be made or received after working time, or during lunch or break time.

For safety and security reasons, employees are discouraged from having personal guests visit or accompany them anywhere in our facilities other than the reception areas.

## **5-14. Solicitation and Distribution**

Soliciting for any cause and distributing literature of any kind in the workplace shall be guided by the following in order to promote a professional workplace, prevent disruptions in business, and avoid personal inconvenience. Employees may not solicit on property or use facilities, such as e-mail, voicemail or bulletin boards during working time for solicitation. This policy applies to collecting funds, requesting contributions, selling merchandise, gathering employee signatures

and promoting membership in clubs or organizations. Nonemployees may not make solicitations or distribute literature at any time. Working time means time during which employees are expected to be actively engaged in their assigned work; it does not include scheduled meal or break periods. Solicitation of another employee may occur only if both employees are not on working time. Employees may distribute literature only in nonworking areas and while not on working time to other employees who are not on working time.

## **5-15. Bulletin Boards**

Important notices and items of general interest are continually posted on our bulletin board. Make it a practice to review it frequently. This will assist you in keeping up with what is current at Veterans Research and Education Foundation. To avoid confusion, please do not post or remove any material from the bulletin board.

## **5-16. Confidential Company Information**

During the course of work, an employee may become aware of confidential information about Veterans Research and Education Foundation business, including but not limited to information regarding Company finances, pricing, products and new product development, software and computer programs, marketing strategies, suppliers, customers and potential customers. An employee also may become aware of similar confidential information belonging to VREF's clients. It is extremely important that all such information remain confidential, and particularly not be disclosed to our competitors. Any employee who improperly copies, removes (whether physically or electronically), uses or discloses confidential information to anyone outside of VREF may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. Employees may be required to sign an agreement reiterating these obligations.

## **5-17. Conflict of Interest and Business Ethics**

It is Veterans Research and Education Foundation's policy that all employees avoid any conflict between their personal interests and those of VREF. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that VREF's honesty and integrity, and therefore its reputation, are not compromised. The fundamental principle guiding this policy is that no employee should have, or appear to have, personal interests or relationships that actually or potentially conflict with the best interests of VREF.

It is not possible to give an exhaustive list of situations that might involve violations of this policy. However, the situations that would constitute a conflict in most cases include but are not limited to:

1. Holding an interest in or accepting free or discounted goods from any organization that does, or is seeking to do, business with VREF, by any employee who is in a position to

directly or indirectly influence either VREF's decision to do business, or the terms upon which business would be done with such organization.

2. Holding any interest in an organization that competes with VREF.
3. Being employed by (including as a consultant) or serving on the board of any organization which does, or is seeking to do, business with VREF or which competes with VREF.
4. Profiting personally, e.g., through commissions, loans, expense reimbursements or other payments, from any organization seeking to do business with VREF.

A conflict of interest would also exist when a member of an employee's immediate family is involved in situations such as those above.

This policy is not intended to prohibit the acceptance of modest courtesies, openly given and accepted as part of the usual business amenities, for example, occasional business-related meals or promotional items of nominal or minor value.

It is your responsibility to report any actual or potential conflict that may exist between you (and your immediate family) and VREF.

## **5-18. Use of Facilities, Equipment and Property, Including Intellectual Property**

Equipment essential in accomplishing job duties is often expensive and may be difficult to replace. When using property, employees are expected to exercise care, perform required maintenance, and follow all operating instructions, safety standards and guidelines.

Please notify your Supervisor if any equipment, machines, or tools appear to be damaged, defective, or in need of repair. Prompt reporting of loss, damages, defects, and the need for repairs could prevent deterioration of equipment and possible injury to employees or others. The Supervisor can answer any questions about an employee's responsibility for maintenance and care of equipment used on the job.

Employees also are prohibited from any unauthorized use of VREF's intellectual property, such as audio and video tapes, print materials and software.

Improper, careless, negligent, destructive, or unsafe use or operation of equipment can result in discipline, up to and including discharge.

Further, VREF is not responsible for any damage to employees' personal belongings unless the employee's Supervisor provided advance approval for the employee to bring the personal property to work.



## 5-19. Health and Safety

Employees are expected to take an active part in maintaining a safe work environment. Each employee should be provided, or have a copy available, of the safety guidelines appropriate for their work area and be aware of the guidelines. Foundation employees must adhere to STLVAHCS safety training requirements for WOC employees. All employees are required to adhere to all health and safety regulations required of VA employees. New employees must receive a workplace safety orientation by the supervisor prior to starting work. Employees are expected to be safety conscious in the work place at all times and to report any potential hazards to the supervisor. Employees must use any applicable protective equipment prescribed for the job. Employees are expected to complete training assigned by the Research Service and the service in which they are working. An employee must notify the supervisor immediately if injured on the job. It is the supervisor's responsibility to help evaluate the situation and assist in obtaining appropriate medical assistance, should that be necessary. Employees encountering a life-threatening emergency within the medical center should contact Employee Health/Triage in accordance with hospital procedures.

## 5-20. Weather-Related Closures

VREF will follow the weather-related guidelines issued by the St. Louis VA Healthcare System for VA employees. If the facility closes with only essential personnel being required to report, only essential Foundation personnel will be required to report. (Essential personnel are those employees who have program-related responsibilities deemed necessary to serve our clients on a daily basis.) If VA indicates it is open but that "liberal leave" policy is recommended, supervisors will approve annual leave whenever possible. If the employee cannot report to work, the supervisor should be contacted immediately. If the facility is closed and VA employees are given authorized absence, Foundation employees will also be excused for the period.

## 5-21. Employee Relationships

### **Hiring Relatives**

A familial relationship among employees can create an actual or at least a potential conflict of interest in the employment setting. Especially where one relative supervises another relative. To avoid this problem, Veterans Research and Education Foundation may refuse to hire or place a relative in a position where the potential for favoritism or conflict exists.

In other cases, such as personal relationships where a conflict or the potential for conflict arises, even if there is no supervisory relationship involved, the parties may be separated by reassignment or terminated from employment, at the discretion of VREF. Accordingly, all parties to any type of intimate personal relationship must inform management.



If two employees marry, become related, or enter an intimate relationship, they may not remain in a reporting relationship or in positions where one individual may affect the compensation or other terms or conditions of employment of the other individual. VREF generally will attempt to identify other available positions, but if no alternate position is available, VREF retains the right to decide which employee will remain with VREF.

For the purposes of this policy, a relative is any person who is related by blood or marriage, or whose relationship with the employee is similar to that of persons who are related by blood or marriage.

### **Hiring Former Employees**

Veterans Research and Education Foundation may rehire any previous employee provided they were not terminated for misconduct. Rehired employees will be treated as any other new hire, including completion of all employment documents, orientation and benefits status. It is the policy of the organization that prior employees who have terminated their employment and return to work for the organization more than 90 days from their termination date will be considered as new employees with regard to employment-related benefits such as sick and annual leave accrual rates. Approval to rehire a previous employee must be obtained from the Executive Director.

### **Hiring VA Employees**

VA-affiliated foundations are discouraged from hiring VA employees to perform Foundation paid work. Doing so requires special precautions against dual compensation by ensuring Foundation-paid work is (1) distinct from the employee's VA responsibilities and (2) conducted outside VA duty hours. There are significant fines and penalties (up to five years imprisonment and/or \$50,000 for each violation) for violations of Federal statutes prohibiting supplementation of Federal pay. An agreement with the VA in which VREF purchases a portion of the employee's time is preferable.

***In the rare instance where the supervisor determines that hiring a VA employee is necessary, special procedures are required.***

- VA employees who perform work that is outside the scope of their VA duties may receive income from VREF provided the work is (1) *entirely different from and not related to the employee's official VA responsibilities* AND (2) *the work is done outside of their VA tour of duty*. If work is within the scope of his/her VA/Federal work, regardless of when the work is done, that activity is part of his/her STLVAHCS employment. Consequently, VREF is prohibited from providing any compensation for VA duties, even if work is done outside duty hours.

### **Hiring Washington University or Saint Louis University Employees**

Per Federal regulations (29 CFR 779.221 "Common Control"), if two organizations operate with "Common Control" over a single employee (interpreted to mean said employee has the same

supervisor and performs the same work), those two companies are considered to be an enterprise under federal employment law.

#### § 779.221 “Common control” defined.

*Under the definition the “enterprise” includes all related activities performed through “common control” for a common business purpose. The word “control” may be defined as the act of fact of controlling; power or authority to control; directing or restraining domination. “Control” thus includes the power or authority to control. In relation to the performance of the described activities, the “control,” referred to in the definition in section 3(r) includes the power to direct, restrict, regulate, govern, or administer the performance of the activities. “Common” control includes the sharing of control and it is not limited to sole control or complete control by one person or corporation. “Common” control therefore exists where the performance of the described activities are controlled by one person or by a number of persons, corporations, or other organizational units acting together. This is clearly supported by the definition which specifically includes in the “enterprise” all such activities whether performed by “one or more corporate or other organizational units.” The meaning of “common control” is discussed comprehensively in part 776 of this chapter.*

For the purposes of calculating overtime in instances where this applies, this means the combined work hours conducted for both institutions contributes toward the calculation of overtime eligibility. The employee is entitled to overtime pay for all time worked above 40 hours per week, regardless of the location or employer under which that time is accumulated.

## 5-22. Employee Dress and Personal Appearance

Employees who are not required to wear uniforms are expected to be dressed in a manner suitable for a medical center environment. All employees should present a clean and neat appearance in grooming and attire. Employees should be familiar with the STLVAHCS’s current policy on clothing guidelines, including prohibited clothing. Employee dress must also adhere to established safety guidelines.

## 5-23. Publicity/Statements to the Media

All media inquiries regarding the position of VREF as to any issues must be referred to the Executive Director. Only the Executive Director is authorized to make or approve public statements on behalf of VREF. No employees, unless specifically designated by the Executive Director, are authorized to make those statements on behalf of Company. Any employee wishing to write and/or publish an article, paper, or other publication on behalf of VREF must first obtain approval from the Executive Director.

## 5-25. Business Expense Reimbursement

Employees will be reimbursed for reasonable approved expenses incurred in the course of business. These expenses must be approved by your Supervisor, and may include air travel, hotels, motels, meals, cab fare, rental vehicles, or gas and car mileage for personal vehicles. All expenses incurred should be submitted to your Supervisor along with the receipts in a timely manner.

Employees are expected to exercise restraint and good judgment when incurring expenses. You should contact your Supervisor in advance if you have any questions about whether an expense will be reimbursed.

## **5-26. References**

Veterans Research and Education Foundation will respond to reference requests through the Executive Director. VREF will provide general information concerning the employee such as date of hire, date of termination, and positions held. Requests for reference information must be in writing, and responses will be in writing. Please refer all requests for references to the Executive Director.

## **5-27. If You Must Leave Us**

Should you decide to leave VREF, we ask that you provide your Supervisor with at least two (2) weeks advance notice of your last day worked. Your thoughtfulness will be appreciated.

All Company & VA property including - but not limited to - keys, building keys or building access pass cards, PIV or security cards, parking passes, laptop computers, fax machines, uniforms, etc. must be returned at separation. Employees also must return all of VREF's Confidential Information upon separation. To the extent permitted by law, employees will be required to repay VREF (through payroll deduction, if lawful) for any lost or damaged Company property.

As noted previously, all employees are employed at-will and nothing in this handbook changes that status.

Per policy, any accrued vacation leave will be paid out with the next scheduled payroll. Termination will be effective as of the employee's last day physically worked. Vacation or sick leave cannot be used to extend an employee's employment date.

## **5-28. Exit Interview**

The Executive Director may request an exit interview with the employee upon his or her resignation or termination. Employees who resign can also request an exit interview with the Executive Director of VREF and can do so by submitting a written request (email preferred) to the Management Analyst in the VREF Office for scheduling.

## **5-29. A Few Closing Words**

This handbook is intended to give you a broad summary of things you should know about Veterans Research and Education Foundation. The information in this handbook is general in

nature and, should questions arise, any member of management should be consulted for complete details. While we intend to continue the policies, rules and benefits described in this handbook, Veterans Research and Education Foundation in its sole discretion, may always amend, add to, delete from or modify the provisions of this handbook and/or change its interpretation of any provision set forth in this handbook. Please do not hesitate to speak to management if you have any questions about VREF or its personnel policies and practices.



## General Handbook Acknowledgment

This Employee Handbook is an important document intended to help you become acquainted with Veterans Education and Research Foundation. This document is intended to provide guidelines and general descriptions only; it is not the final word in all cases. Individual circumstances may call for individual attention.

Because VREF's operations may change, the contents of this Handbook may be changed at any time, with or without notice, in an individual case or generally, at the sole discretion of management.

Please read the following statements and sign below to indicate your receipt and acknowledgment of this Employee Handbook.

**I have received and read a copy of Veterans Research and Education Foundation Employee Handbook. I understand that the policies, rules and benefits described in it are subject to change at the sole discretion of VREF at any time.**

**I further understand that my employment is terminable at will, either by myself or VREF, with or without cause or notice, regardless of the length of my employment or the granting of benefits of any kind.**

**I understand that no contract of employment other than "at will" has been expressed or implied, and that no circumstances arising out of employment will alter "at will" status except IN AN INDIVIDUAL CASE OR GENERALLY in writing signed by the Executive Director of VREF.**

**I understand that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand the above statements and that I have received a copy of VREF's Employee Handbook.**

Employee's Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The signed original copy of this acknowledgment should be given to management - it will be filed in your personnel file.

## Receipt of Sexual Harassment Policy

It is Veterans Research and Education Foundation's policy to prohibit harassment of any employee by any Supervisor, employee, customer or vendor on the basis of sex or gender. The purpose of this policy is not to regulate personal morality within VREF. It is to ensure that at VREF all employees are free from sexual harassment. While it is not easy to define precisely what types of conduct could constitute sexual harassment, examples of prohibited behavior include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, obscene gestures, displaying sexually graphic magazines, calendars or posters, sending sexually explicit e-mails, text messages and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, such as uninvited touching of a sexual nature or sexually related comments. Depending upon the circumstances, improper conduct also can include sexual joking, vulgar or offensive conversation or jokes, commenting about an employee's physical appearance, conversation about your own or someone else's sex life, or teasing or other conduct directed toward a person because of his or her gender which is sufficiently severe or pervasive to create an unprofessional and hostile working environment. Note that there is a wide range of what could be considered inappropriate behavior under this policy even though such behavior may not be considered illegal. For this reason, a violation of this policy may lead to disciplinary action whether or not it violates the law. If you feel that you have been subjected to conduct which violates this policy, you should immediately report the matter to your Supervisor. If you are unable for any reason to contact this person, or if you have not received a satisfactory response within five (5) business days after reporting any incident of what you perceive to be harassment, please contact the next level Manager. Note: If your Supervisor or next level Manager is the person toward whom the complaint is directed, you should contact any higher-level Manager in your reporting chain. Every report of perceived harassment will be fully investigated and corrective action will be taken where appropriate. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. All complaints will be kept confidential to the extent possible, but confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. In addition, VREF will not allow any form of retaliation against individuals who report unwelcome conduct to management or who cooperate in the investigations of such reports in accordance with this policy. Employees who make complaints in bad faith may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. All employees must cooperate with all investigations.

I have read and I understand Veterans Research and Education Foundation's Sexual Harassment Policy.

Employee's Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The signed original copy of this receipt should be given to management - it will be filed in your personnel file.







