

**Librarian Manager Mentoring Program**

The Librarian Manager Mentoring Program is designed to assist librarians as they are assuming their first position as library managers at a VA health care facility.

# **PURPOSE**

The goal of this program is to help new librarian managers acquire the skills and knowledge needed to be effective VA managers. To be successful, new librarian managers must learn to operate within an administrative structure and assume managerial responsibilities which are unique to the VA system. A series of performance objectives has been identified with accompanying modules to support each objective. The program is designed to be flexible because the new managers come from a variety of backgrounds.

# **MENTORS**

Assigning a mentor to each new librarian manager is core to the program. Mentors are experienced VA librarian managers who have been selected and trained. Among other criteria, they are chosen for their communication skills, technical proficiency, management capabilities, and ability to work with others. The mentor’s role is to assist new managers in meeting the performance objectives.

The mentor is an information source for the new manager during the first transitional months, and guides him/her through the management orientation modules. This one-on-one, colleague-to-colleague approach provides great flexibility. Within its established guidelines, the program adapts to meet the varying backgrounds and unique needs of each new librarian manager. Mentors neither evaluate nor judge the site, the service, or the new manager.

# **MENTORING PROGRAM**

The Director, Library Network Office, initiates the mentoring program with a letter to the Medical Center Director, copying the library supervisor, and the new librarian. The letter welcomes the new manager, and provides an overview of the librarian mentoring program. The letter is followed by a telephone contact initiated by the Program Field Coordinator who introduces the new manager to the program, explains the mentoring program in greater detail, and tells the manager which mentor has been assigned. Within one week, the mentor contacts the new manager and thereafter remains available for consultation. During this period, the mentor assists the new manager with any identified problems and provides advice on any activities, e.g., reports, requiring immediate attention.

Formal mentoring is provided virtually over the course of several months by the assigned mentor. An optionable on-site visit is available later in the mentoring period at the discretion of the medical center. An on-site visit can provide an opportunity for the mentor to review the specific needs of the facility, library, and new manager. During the mentoring, all the modules of the Librarian Manager Manual are reviewed. The mentor and new manager are encouraged to remain in contact through telephone and email.

During the mentoring process, the mentor and new manager concentrate on meeting the performance objectives listed below. Once all of the objectives have been met, formal training is complete, and further telephone or email contact is at the discretion of the mentor and new manager.

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# **PERFORMANCE OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of the Mentoring Program, the new manager will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the following areas:

1. The Department of Veterans Affairs organizational structure.
2. VA structure for fiscal and logistics policies and the need for contracts as required by VA Acquisition Regulation.
3. VA human resources personnel policies and procedures.
4. The medical center management structure.
5. Administrative and management reports and reviews.
6. Educational resources available for library and medical center staff.
7. An understanding of services and resources available for Veterans.
8. The operation of a VA Library.

## **EVALUATION**

New managers complete evaluations of the programs through surveys or other measurement tools, while mentors continuously monitor the program’s effectiveness on monthly conference calls. A recent assessment of participants concluded that new librarian managers considered the mentoring experience to be extremely helpful. Flexibility and timeliness are the cornerstones of the program’s success.

In addition to the benefits gained by the new managers, the Library Network Office and the individual health care facility profit from this program. The program produces a cadre of managers who use and contribute to the combined resources of a national network. At the same time, VALNET is strengthened as each member becomes more effective.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

For further information about the Librarian Manager Mentoring Program contact:

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