

STAFFING

- 1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** To establish a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) qualification standard for Registered Radiologist Assistant, GS-0601, appointed under 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3) and 38 U.S.C. § 7405(a)(1)(B).
- 2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS/MAJOR CHANGES:** This handbook contains mandatory procedures on staffing. This new policy establishes qualification standards for the Registered Radiologist Assistant (RRA) occupation, under VA's Title 38 Hybrid excepted service employment system, in accordance with the authority established under the "Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010" (Public Law 111-163). Authority is given to the Secretary of the VA under 38 U.S.C. § 7402, to prescribe qualifications for occupations identified in or established under 38 U.S.C. § 7401(3) and 38 U.S.C. § 7405(a)(1)(B). The new standard is effective on the date of this publication; however, no action may be taken by the Human Resources (HR) Officer to convert or promote employees until training and guidance is received by the Veterans Health Administration on the implementation of the qualification standard. This new qualification standard will be incorporated into the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005 that is maintained on the [Office of Human Resources Management Web site](#).
- 3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** Recruitment and Placement Policy Service (059), Human Resources Management.
- 4. RELATED DIRECTIVE:** VA Directive 5005, Staffing.
- 5. RESCISSIONS:** None.

CERTIFIED BY:

**BY DIRECTION OF THE SECRETARY OF
VETERANS AFFAIRS:**

/s/
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DISTRIBUTION: Electronic only

**[APPENDIX G54. REGISTERED RADIOLOGIST ASSISTANT
QUALIFICATION STANDARD
GS-0601
Veterans Health Administration**

1. **COVERAGE.** The following are the requirements for appointment as a Registered Radiologist Assistant (RRA) in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). These requirements apply to all VHA RRAs in the GS-0601 series.
2. **DEFINITIONS.**
 - a. **Appointing Official.** The Human Resources Management Officer is delegated the appointing authority to process and authenticate notifications of personnel actions, and authority to effect management-approved employment actions on behalf of officials, employees and facilities for which service is provided.
 - b. **Approving Official.** The Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Director, Facility Director, or designee is the approving official and will determine whether to approve or disapprove the appointment of employees in hybrid occupations.
 - c. **Journey Level.** The full performance level for this qualification standard is at the GS-9 grade level.
 - d. **Creditable Experience.** To be creditable, experience must have demonstrated possession of the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics (also referred to as clinical competencies) associated with current radiologist assistant practices. The experience may have been evidenced by the equivalent of one year of active practice, which is paid or non-paid employment as an RRA, as defined by the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT).
 - e. **Quality of Experience.** Experience is only creditable if it was earned after completing an ARRT approved radiologist assistant program with a minimum of a Bachelor's degree. The experience may be acquired under a temporary appointment while seeking ARRT RRA certification.
 - f. **Part-Time Experience.** Part-time experience is creditable according to its relationship to the full-time work week. For example, one week of full-time credit is equivalent to two weeks of part-time work.
3. **BASIC REQUIREMENTS.**
 - a. **Citizenship.** Be a citizen of the United States. (Non-citizens may be appointed when it is not possible to recruit qualified citizens in accordance with chapter 3, section A, paragraph 3g this part.)

PART II

APPENDIX G54

- b. **Education.** Completion of a Radiologist Assistant program, and a bachelor's degree approved by the ARRT.
- c. **Credentialing Standards.** Public Law 97-35, the Consumer-Patient Radiation Health and Safety Act of 1981, requires that persons who administer radiologic procedures meet the credentialing standards in 42 C.F.R. Part 75 - Standards for the Accreditation of Educational Programs and the Credentialing of Radiographic Personnel. Applicants must have successfully completed an educational program that meets or exceeds the standards described in that regulation, and is accredited by an organization recognized by the Department of Education, **and** be certified as radiographer (RT). Except as noted below, applicants must also have passed the ARRT exam and obtained Registered Radiologist Assistant (RRA) certification.
 - (1) **Exception for Non-Certified, Entry Level Candidates.** Non-certified RRAs, who otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for the ARRT radiologist assistant certification, may be given a temporary appointment under 38 U.S.C. § 7405 (c)(2)(B), as a graduate RRA. The appointing official may waive the requirement of certification for a period not to exceed two years for a graduate RRA, under the supervision of a physician. This exception only applies at the GS-7 grade level. For grade levels above the GS-7 grade level, the candidate must be a certified RRA. Temporary appointments of non-certified RRAs as described in this section may not be subsequently converted or reappointed to a new temporary appointment as a graduate RRA.
 - (2) **Failure to Obtain Certification.** In all cases, the registered radiologist assistant must actively pursue meeting certification requirements starting from the date of appointment. At the time of appointment, the supervisor will provide the non-certified RRA with the written requirement to obtain certification, the date by which the certification must be acquired, and the consequences for not becoming certified by the deadline. Failure to become certified within two years from the date of appointment will result in removal from the registered radiologist assistant, GS-0601 series and may result in termination of employment.
 - (3) **Loss of Credential.** An employee in this occupation, who fails to maintain the required certifications (ARRT and RRA). must be removed from the occupation, which may also result in the termination of employment.
- d. **Foreign Education.** Foreign education is vetted and approved by ARRT as a pre-requisite for certification. No additional documentation or verification of foreign education is required for applicants fully certified by ARRT.
- e. **Grandfathering Provision.** None
- f. **Physical Requirements.** See VA Directive and Handbook 5019, Employee Occupational Health Service.
- g. **English Language Proficiency.** Candidates will not be appointed under the authority of 38 U.S.C. chapters 73 or 74, to serve in a direct patient-care capacity in VHA who are not proficient in written and spoken English. See Chapter 2, section D, paragraph 5a, this part.

4. GRADE REQUIREMENTS.

- a. **Specialized Assignments.** Specialized areas of a registered radiologist assistant include: patient assessment and management following electronic health record (EHR) review and documentation, selected procedures (invasive and non-invasive) using fluoroscopy, computed tomography (CT), diagnostic ultrasound (sonography) and cardiovascular (CV) interventional procedures, and quality management (QM). These specialized assignments are done under the general supervision of a radiologist or similarly-privileged physician who is qualified to supervise the RRA.
- (1) **Patient Assessment and Management.** The RRA performs procedures and examinations in hospitals and/or clinics under the general supervision of a radiologist and/or other physician. The RRA reviews the patients EHR and may directly question the patient to achieve the knowledge for determining the procedure and/or exam which best obtains a medical diagnosis for the clinician. This is achieved following the American College of Radiology (ACR) and other established standards for ordering exams. RRAs may perform and document a radiology-focused physical examination, including the analysis of available data (signs and symptoms, laboratory values, vital signs) to report to the radiologist, to ensure the patient meets the criteria to safely have the procedure. The RRA provides pre- and post-care instructions to the patient and documents the procedure and post-procedure evaluations in the EHR. Patient admission and/or discharge summaries are reviewed and cosigned by the radiologist or other supervising physician.
 - (2) **Fluoroscopy.** Following VA, State, and Federal requirements, the RRA uses fluoroscopy to visualize and image the anatomy while acting as the fluoroscopist for routine exams under the general supervision of the radiologist or other supervising physician. This modality is also used by the RRA during interventional procedures under the direct supervision of the radiologist and or other supervising physician.
 - (3) **Diagnostic Ultrasound (Sonography).** Diagnostic ultrasound uses high frequency sound waves to produce images. The RRA must be competent in the use, recognition, and analysis of ultrasound images for patient diagnosis and treatment, as they pertain to the performance of invasive procedures.
 - (4) **Computed Tomography (CT).** This specialty modality requires specific knowledge of cross sectional human anatomy and its application in computed tomography, inclusive of 3-D reconstruction scans. The RRA requires specific knowledge and training to understand the functioning and inter-relationship of the various organs; to use the methods and techniques which will identify organs appearing on the digital display monitor (or on film); and the various stages of the examination to judge the acceptability of the image and/or scan for diagnostic use. CT may be utilized for drainages, biopsies, peripheral vasculature, and other image-guided procedures, complex and non-complex, under the direct supervision of the radiologist or other supervising physician. Performance of and assistance with CT-guided procedures may be accomplished by RRAs without advanced modality certification; however, independent operation of the CT scanner requires Advanced ARRT certification in CT.

(5) **Cardiovascular-Interventional Technology.** RRAs performing and/or assisting with complex vascular interventional and therapeutic procedures use highly specialized equipment. This specialty requires additional knowledge of the vascular system and major vessel anatomy.

(6) **Quality Management.** The RRA must have the skills and knowledge to evaluate images for completeness and diagnostic quality, and recommend additional images as appropriate, for the procedure and/or diagnosis. The RRA must participate and contribute to quality improvement activities/projects in the Imaging Service.

b. **Grade Determinations.** In addition to the basic requirements for appointment, the following criteria must be used when determining the appropriate grade assignment of candidates:

(1) Registered Radiologist Assistant, GS-7

(a) **Experience.** None beyond the Basic Requirements.

(b) **Assignment.** RRAs at this level operate and monitor equipment, such as fluoroscopy and CT, to perform procedures under close supervision as limited by modality specific advanced certification (see subparagraph 4a above). The RRA functions under the direct supervision of a radiologist or similarly-privileged physician qualified to supervise the RRA in carrying out these standardized procedures of various complexities. Deviations from regular procedures, unanticipated problems, and unfamiliar situations are referred to the radiologist or supervising physician for review. Some assignments at this level also include developmental duties involving more complex procedures, such as biopsies, aspirations, and/or peripherally inserted central catheter line placements, which are designed to prepare the RRA for promotion to higher grades in a functional area. Such duties are performed under closer supervision.

(2) Registered Radiologist Assistant, GS-9

(a) **Experience.** One year of experience equivalent to the GS-7 grade level.

OR

(b) **Education.** Master's degree related to the duties of a specific position or to the occupation must be appropriate for the position being filled.

(c) **Assignment.** In addition to assignments at the entry level, RRAs at this level operate and monitor equipment, such as Fluoroscopy and CT, to perform procedures under general supervision as limited by modality specific advanced certification, see 4a above. The RRA functions independently in carrying out these standardized procedures of various complexities. In addition to the entry level duties, RRAs at this level perform complex invasive and non-invasive procedures utilizing the various modalities in Imaging. These are performed under the general and direct supervision of the radiologist or other supervising physician.

The full performance level RRA is skilled in assessing patient vital signs, responding to emergent situations, and entering documentation into the EHR.

- (d) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities. In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities (KSA):**
- i. Knowledge of Imaging techniques following as low as reasonably achievable principles in various modalities.
 - ii. Ability to perform various diagnostic procedures, including fluoroscopy, and evaluate images for completeness and diagnostic quality.
 - iii. Knowledge of anatomy and physiology, as well as, contrast and general medications prescribed by the radiologist/physician.
 - iv. Ability to perform all routine invasive procedures under the direct and/or general supervision of the radiologist or supervising physician, including vascular procedures with image guidance, contrast administration, needle and/or catheter placement.
 - v. Ability to assess a patient's clinical record, diagnosis, laboratory results, perform a radiology focused physical exam on the patient and documenting the EHR.
 - vi. Ability to perform invasive vascular procedures with image guidance, including contrast administration, needle or catheter placement.

(3) Registered Radiologist Assistant, GS-11

- (a) **Experience.** At least one year of experience equivalent to the GS-9 grade level that demonstrates the clinical competencies described at that level.
- (b) **Assignment.** RRAs at this level perform and/or assist with complex invasive procedures, such as embolization and interventional oncology procedures in the Interventional Section, receiving guidance and direction from the radiologist or other supervising physician, regarding unfamiliar or unusual situations for the more complex patient issues. Candidates at this grade level may be assigned to provide specialty service in the Interventional Section.
- (c) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the KSAs listed above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
- i. Ability to perform complex invasive procedures in the Interventional Section under the direct supervision of the radiologist or other supervising physician.
 - ii. Skills to maintain image quality in multiple sections of radiology.
 - iii. Ability to function with initiative and progressively independent judgment within his/her sphere of responsibility.

iv. Advanced knowledge to prioritize exams and procedures.

(4) Lead Registered Radiologist Assistant, GS-11

- (a) **Experience.** At least one year of experience equivalent to the GS-9 grade level.
- (b) **Assignment.** This assignment is generally found in facilities where there are no diagnostic radiology technicians (DRT) lead or supervisory positions. At this level, RRAs demonstrate advanced competency in their field performing duties of a full performance level or advanced RRA. They are proficient in assessing, evaluating, and planning the patient care in their area. This is achieved by determining the necessary staff and materials needed to coordinate the Imaging Service and the other involved service for the best patient outcomes in a procedure. Duties include: the daily assignments of staff; managing inventory and resources, recommendations to the supervisor for awards; and conducting performance evaluations.
- (c) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
- i. Ability to make decisions leading RRAs and Technologists for the best patient outcomes.
 - ii. Ability to manage the working staff, and ensuring adherence to the policies and procedures developed by the service and the medical center.
 - iii. Ability to resolve complex problems.
 - iv. Ability to communicate orally and in writing with a variety of people from different backgrounds.
 - v. Advanced knowledge to prioritize exams and procedures.
 - vi. Comprehensive knowledge of local and national policies related to Radiology.

(5) Supervisory Registered Radiologist Assistant, GS-11

- (a) **Experience.** At least one year of experience equivalent to the GS-09 level demonstrating the clinical competencies at that level. Team leadership skills have been acquired through education and/or experience.
- (b) **Assignment.** This assignment is generally found in less complex facilities where there are no DRT supervisory position, or lead RRA, GS-11 positions. For all assignments above the full performance level, the higher-level duties must consist of significant scope, complexity (difficulty), and range of variety, and be performed by the incumbent at least 25% of the time. Performs the full range of supervisory duties over staff below the GS-11 grade level, including assignment of staff, development of performance standards in their section, recommendations for advancement, and when appropriate,

disciplinary action. RRA's at this level maintain regulatory compliance, and contribute to budget planning. Equipment planning and research is performed to maintain overall quality and effective patient health care delivery in Radiology.

- (c) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to meeting the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
- i. Knowledge of Federal and State laws, regulations and accrediting/regulatory requirements, in order to develop plans and procedures for a lower to medium complexity radiology service.
 - ii. Knowledge of radiology quality management procedures and principles, to provide education and/or training to fully functioning non-supervisory and/or junior supervisory staff.
 - iii. Skills to interview and evaluate candidates for positions in the section and recommend appointments, advancements, or, when appropriate, disciplinary actions.
 - iv. Ability to perform the full range of supervisory duties that include responsibility for assignment of work, performance evaluations, selection of staff, recommendation of awards, advancements and disciplinary actions.
 - v. Ability to analyze organizational, technical, and administrative problems, including equipment needs, and to develop and implement solutions that result in efficient section operation.
 - vi. Knowledge of general concepts, principles and methods of radiologic technology and operations.
 - vii. Knowledge of maintaining records for review by external regulatory agencies, and of local and national policies related to Radiology.

(6) Supervisory Registered Radiologist Assistant, GS-12

- (a) **Experience.** At least one year of experience or the equivalent at the GS-11 grade level.
- (b) **Assignment.** This assignment is generally found in facilities where supervisory duties might include oversight of DRT's, regardless of facility complexity. RRAs at this level demonstrate advanced competency in their field performing duties above the RRA, GS-11 level. Performs the full range of supervisory duties over staff at the GS-11 level and below, including assignment of staff, development of performance standards in their section, recommendations for advancement, and when appropriate, disciplinary action. RRAs at this level maintain regulatory compliance, and contribute to budget planning. Equipment planning and research is performed to maintain overall quality and effective patient health care delivery in radiology.

- (c) **Demonstrated Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities.** In addition to meeting the experience above, the candidate must demonstrate all of the following KSAs:
- i. Knowledge of Federal and State laws, regulations and accrediting/regulatory requirements in order to develop plans and procedures for Radiology.
 - ii. Knowledge of radiology quality management procedures and principles sufficient to lead a radiology quality management program, and/or education and training of supervised staff.
 - iii. Demonstrated leadership and managerial skills, including skills in interpersonal relations and conflict resolution, in order to effectively interact with employees internal and external to the service.
 - iv. Ability to perform the full range of supervisory duties, that include responsibility for assignment of work, performance evaluations, selection of staff, recommendations for awards, advancements and disciplinary actions.
 - v. Ability to plan, organize, set short and/or long term goals, and conduct studies on technical and administrative problems, including personnel shortages, organizational structure, upgrades and new equipment purchasing.
 - vi. Knowledge of concepts, principles, and methods of radiologic technology and operations.
 - vii. Ability to maintain records for review by an outside regulatory agency, and of local and national policies related to Radiology.

5. DEVIATIONS.

- a. The appointing official may, under unusual circumstances, approve reasonable deviations to the grade determination requirements for registered radiologist assistants in VHA, whose composite record of accomplishments, performance, and qualifications, as well as current assignments, warrant such action, based on demonstrated competence to meet the requirements of the proposed grade. This deviation *only* applies to grades and/or assignments published in this qualification standard.
- b. Under no circumstances will the education and/or ARRT Certification requirements be waived.
- c. The placement of individuals in grade levels or assignments not described in this standard must be approved by the Under Secretary for Health, or designee, in VHA Central Office prior to placement in the position.

Authority: 38 U.S.C. §§ 7402, 7403]