



The Director

UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

Washington, DC 20415

DEC 31 2009

Ms. Sharon Stewart
Acting Director
Civilian Personnel Management Service
1400 Key Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22209-5144

Dear Ms. Stewart:

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has approved your request for an extension of your Direct-Hire Authority (DHA) for positions at the Department of the Army's Walter Reed Army Medical Center (WRAMC).

The situation at WRAMC continues to meet the criteria of 5 CFR 337.205(b) for a critical hiring need as follows:

- (1) Identification of the position(s) that must be filled. WRAMC must continue to fill a total of 82 positions for the anticipated staffing surge at both Fort Belvoir and the new Walter Reed at Bethesda in the following healthcare occupations:

Table with 3 columns: Title, Series/Grade Level(s), Total Vacancies. Rows include Health Aid and Technician, Medical Technologist, Medical Technician, Medical Instrument Technician, Health System Administration, Health System Specialist, Medical Records Technician, Medical Support Assistant, Pharmacy Technician, and a Total row.

- (2) Description of the event or circumstance that has created the need to fill the position(s). WRAMC continues to compete with both private sector and other Federal agencies for medical skill shortage occupations. WRAMC must continue to staff the Warrior Transition Units at WRAMC which places a strain on the current patient care services.

The Department of Defense (DoD) is currently experiencing the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) initiative which may be linked to its large turnover rates. WRAMC is scheduled to shut down causing medical personnel to be moved to other locations which caused these employees to look to other sources for employment and possible increased retirement(s). WRAMC is also experiencing an increase in the number of injured soldiers requiring medical attention, and having difficulty maintaining adequate staff-to-patient ratios which jeopardizes WRAMC's ability to provide quality medical care to injured soldiers.

- (3) *Specify the duration for which the critical hiring need is expected to exist.* DoD anticipates this critical hiring need will exist through December 31, 2012, in conjunction with the BRAC initiative.
- (4) *Evidence that demonstrates why the use of other hiring authorities is impracticable or ineffective.* Seventy positions were filled under the current authority. WRAMC continues to use a variety of appointment authorities such as the Veteran's Recruitment Authority, the Student Career Experience Program, the Federal Career Intern Program, existing Government-wide DHA authorities, and under the Veterans Employment Opportunity Act. DoD also made use of authorities granted under the DoD Appropriations Act to fill certain healthcare occupations as listed under 38 U.S.C. 7403(a)(2) for specific occupations that are included in this approval.

Use of these authorities has proven to be impractical due to the amount of time it takes to acquire one hire. Timeliness is of the essence and DoD has not been able to sustain adequate staff-to-patient ratios. Care must be provided to returning soldiers and those placed on medical-hold status. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have caused a tremendous increase in the number of health care providers required due to the growing patient population. As a result, WRAMC is also experiencing a gap in obtaining health care providers and requests for service. Despite use of these authorities, DoD continues to experience a critical hiring need with these health care positions.

Your authority reads:

DoD-009 extended on the date of this letter to fill 82 positions as described above at various grade levels located at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Washington, D.C. metropolitan area to provide timely and effective medical care for wounded soldiers. This authority is based on a critical hiring need to fill vacancies quickly during the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. This authority expires effective **December 31, 2012**.

Using this DHA

DoD may give individuals in the occupational series shown above competitive service career, career-conditional, term, or temporary appointments, as appropriate, without regard to provisions of 5 U.S.C. 3309-3318 or 5 CFR part 211 and part 337, subpart A.

These appointments are subject to public notice requirements in 5 U.S.C. 3327, 3330 and 5 CFR 330, subpart G, and requirements in 5 CFR 332.402.

In addition, DoD must comply with all relevant laws unless DoD is exempted from such laws pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 3304a.(3). Qualified candidates with veterans' preference should be selected as they are found, just as any qualified non-preference eligible candidate would be. Recommend you take particular care in conducting pre-employment background and security clearance investigations to ensure clearance and security requirements.

OPM Oversight

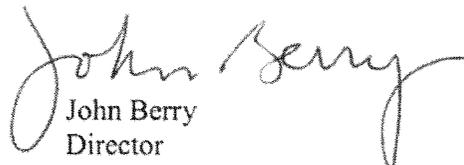
DoD must use two authority codes when documenting personnel actions using the direct hire authority. The first code "AYM" automatically fills in "Reg. 337.201" on the Notification of Personnel Action, Standard Form 50. The second authority code "BYO" identifies DoD's use of this agency-specific authority. Using these two authority codes will help OPM evaluate the use of these authorities without requiring agency reports.

On a periodic basis OPM will determine if continued use is supportable. OPM will monitor DoD's use of this authority as well as the continued need for it, and may modify or terminate this authority as appropriate.

When filling positions at the GS-5/7 level, you have the option of using Administrative Careers with America (ACWA) maintained by OPM or you may develop and utilize your own examination tools.

I am confident this authority will help you to continue to fill these critical positions. My staff stands ready to assist and advise DoD. Please contact Ms. Darlene Phelps at (202) 606-1730 for any additional questions or assistance.

Sincerely,


John Berry
Director