

# Veterans Affairs and Department Of Defense Careers

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# DISCLAIMER

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The views presented herein are those of the speaker or author and do not necessarily represent the views of DoD, its components or the VA.

# Mission

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## Military Health Care System (MHS):

- **MISSION:** To provide a medical benefit commensurate with the service and sacrifice of more than 9.6 million active duty personnel, military retirees and their families.
- **Historical Mission:** “To preserve the fighting force”.
- **Centered on Military Treatment Facilities (MTF’s)** comprised of large, full service teaching hospitals and medium sized community hospitals on military bases throughout the United States to include overseas locations. 49 Total (32 CONUS)
- **Staffed by Active Duty as well as Civilian GS Employee and Contract Physicians.**
- **Branches that have hospitals include the Army, Air Force and Navy.**
- **Used to be managed by individual services, recently migrated to a model operated by a joint healthcare management structure designed by the Pentagon and Congress called “DHS” or Defense Healthcare Services. Budget and Manning increasingly centralized to reduce duplication of services and save money.**

# Mission

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## Veteran Health Administration(VHA):

- **MISSION:** To care for those “who shall have borne the battle” and for their families, caregivers and survivors..
- **New Mission:** “To fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.” .
- Centered on VA Health Care Systems (HCS's) comprised of large, full service teaching hospitals and medium sized community hospitals in major cities throughout the United States to include overseas locations. 171 VA Medical Centers exist.
- Staffed by Civilian GS Employee and small numbers of Contract Physicians.
- Often function in conjunction with large teaching hospitals.

# DOD and VA Nuclear Medicine

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- Similar in Organization between VA/DOD
- Department or Section in DOD, often part of Radiology, sometimes under Internal Medicine. Can be a separate “Service” in the VA (Their term for a Department) or under Radiology (which is called the “Imaging Service”).
- Small Team of several Nuclear Medicine Physicians with 5-10 Technologists, sometimes smaller, sometimes larger.
- Equipment is almost always excellent, cutting edge due to frequent nationwide equipment replacement programs.
- Most locations with multiple SPECT-CTs and a PET-CT.
- Some locations have a Radiopharmacist.

# Why VA or DOD?

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- What are the Pay? Benefits? Work Conditions/Hours? Vacation?
- Compensation falls under Government Rules as outlined by the General Services Administration, Federal Law and United States Code of Regulations.
- In Broad Terms, pay cannot exceed the President's. You are paid based on your GS rank – which is generally as a GS-15 (very high rank) which provides a base pay of 112-146K and the remainder is a market adjustment which brings your pay into the appropriate physician range for your specialty and position. Technologists increasingly GS-11, must do PET, but can be trained. CT a bonus. Often 60-90K.
- Similar between VA and DOD. Can reach 400. Usually lower. Different in various parts of the country due to economic factors, difficulty recruiting, etc.
- Other benefits include full health, dental, vision, insurance – of course requires employee contributions, but better than civilian plans.

# Why VA or DOD?

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- Vacation and Sick leave are quite generous. 26 days off per year for physicians – which is 5 weeks plus 1 day (and all your weekends not on call). 13 days off for illness or medical appointments – including children. Sick leave accumulates and can be taken in 1 hour increments. Many people have 6-12 months of sick leave after a number of years.
- New benefit of maternity and paternity leave. Also generous.
- Two simultaneous retirement plans: A defined benefits pension and a 401K with matching. Do have to contribute 4.4% of your gross. Receive 1% of high pay x years of service. Can collect between 57-62 age depending on years of service. Vested after only 5 years. The 401K matches up to 15K per year. You can contribute up to 19K.
- Work week is generally 40 hours with defined start and end time including lunch – for example 8 am to 4:30 pm. Call is mandatory and is covered by your salary.
- Remote work authorized.

# Top 10 Reasons to Work at VA

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1. The Best Patients! – Veterans
2. WE serve the Nation! - Our culture is defined through our “I CARE” set of core values: integrity, commitment, advocacy, respect, and excellence. Every day, we’re dedicated to showing how much we care for our Veterans.
3. Nation’s Largest Healthcare System - Each year, we serve over 9 million Veterans in 1,200+ health care facilities throughout all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories
4. Innovation and Cutting Edge Technology – Early investments in tools, techniques and meds
5. Education Support – Loan Forgiveness, 7000 residencies & fellowships supported
6. Work-life Balance – remote work, hours, time off
7. Benefits – Pay, insurance, retirement, etc.



# Top 10 Reasons to Work at VA

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8. Team-based, patient-focused Care - We're a leader in patient satisfaction with more than half of VA hospitals receiving top marks on the 2022 Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems patient survey report.
9. Live and Work Anywhere – any state license is accepted
  - Wherever life may lead, you can seek employment at any facility with an open position and transfer with no loss of benefits.
  - With our integrated system, you're free to explore new areas of career development and pursue opportunities anywhere within VA.
10. Leadership training - We offer ongoing internal training opportunities to employees at all employment levels, from mandatory developmental programs to competitive opportunities.

# Time Off

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- 13 to 26 days of paid annual leave
- 13 sick days annually, with unlimited accumulation
- 11 paid federal holidays
- 12 weeks of paid parental leave
- Up to 15 days of leave for active reservists and National Guard members

# Flexibility

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- Work-from-home options
- Flexible scheduling
- Work anywhere in the U.S. with one active license
- Choose from any of our 1,300 facilities
- Change locations without losing benefits or salary

# Insurance Options

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- Comprehensive federal health insurance for life
- Up to 75% of health premiums paid
- Group life insurance for you and eligible family members
- Long-term care coverage for home care, adult day care, and facility care
- Flexible savings accounts to pay for health care expenses, tax-free
- Free medical malpractice insurance for health care providers

# Retirement

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- Access to the Federal Employees Retirement System
- Eligible for monthly retirement benefits after just 5 years of federal service
- Supplement your retirement with the tax-deferred Thrift Savings Plan, similar to a 401(k) - 15K Matching per annum
- Long-term disability benefits after 18 months of service
- Add VA benefits to your full military retirement pay or pension
- 3.6% Funding Fee for Pension

# Performance

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- Strong starting salaries, steady growth, and incentives
- Employment incentives, including recruitment and relocation bonuses and retention allowances
- Regular performance-based increases and accelerated increases for outstanding performance
- Premium pay rates for overtime, weekend, holiday, on-call, and night work
- Incentive awards like superior performance awards, special contribution awards, quality step increases, and VA honor awards

# How to get a Job

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- All positions generally posted on a single overarching web site for both VA and DOD called “USA JOBS”.
- Must register with the website and upload a resume/CV.
- Some jobs are announced elsewhere or recruited through word of mouth, but still must go through USA JOBS website.
- Selection criteria often opaque.
- Nuclear Medicine Radiologists generally preferred.
- Limited opportunities for Nuclear Medicine Only.
- Must check the USA JOBS website at least weekly as positions are often only posted for 2 weeks.
- Hiring process can take from a minimum of 2-3 months to almost a year due to HR issues. Feel free to apply within 12 months of “availability”.

# Questions?

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