



PrideVA is a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employee resource group for gender and sexual minorities, including, but not limited to, those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+), as well as allies. Everyone supporting PrideVA's mission and vision is invited and encouraged to join.

### **Mission**

Pride VA advances diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility within VA; promotes awareness of issues affecting LGBTQ+ employees and Veterans; and provides mentorship, community, advocacy, and service opportunities for our members.

### **Vision**

Our vision is for VA's policies and programs to meet the diverse needs of all VA employees and Veterans. As members of communities affected by "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and related discriminatory policies, we have a special responsibility to ensure our nation's heroes and those who serve them as VA employees encounter a VA that is welcoming, inclusive, and fair for all. To that end, we partner with VA, its Office of Resolution Management, Diversity & Inclusion (ORMDI), and other stakeholders to encourage, support, and lead robust dialogues and initiatives within VA concerning diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility with a special emphasis on issues affecting gender and sexual minorities. We aim to have VA-wide reach by facilitating the formation of local chapters.

Pride VA aspires to achieve its mission and vision by focusing its activities on four areas:

- **Strategic Partnership with VA:** We are a strategic partner for VA in enabling a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible climate across the Department, to include advocating for policies aimed at creating a workplace that is free from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Together with other stakeholders within VA, we seek to identify, promote awareness of, and address issues affecting LGBTQ+ employees and Veterans. We will ensure policymakers, managers, and other employees are educated regarding issues of concern to PrideVA members. We will also work with other stakeholders to coordinate special events such as Pride month celebrations and



other events showcasing the contributions of LGBTQ+ VA employees, Veterans, and Service members.

- **Point of Contact & Resource:** PrideVA is point of contact and resource for employees, and potential employees regarding LGBTQ+ issues and activities at VA to include providing information about and referral to relevant VA programs, staff, and resources. Pride VA will also encourage VA recruitment efforts aimed at ensuring VA's workforce reflects our nation's diversity, to include outreach to gender and sexual minorities.
- **Mentorship & Professional Development:** Pride VA will support career success for our members by providing opportunities for mentorship, to include a formal pairing program between senior and junior employees in the same field. We will also facilitate professional development through presentations by subject matter experts during our membership meetings.
- **Community & Service:** We will strive to be a national organization with chapters across the country. We will foster a sense of community and camaraderie by connecting members through social media, newsletters, and other outlets. We will place a special emphasis on promoting opportunities for community building through volunteerism.

#### **Organizational & Governance Principles**

- **Membership:** Open to all VA employees, VA contractors, and retired VA employees who support the mission and vision of Pride VA
- **Structure:** Pride VA will be an officially recognized employee resource group within VA. We aspire to be a national organization with local chapters throughout the nation.
- **Governance:** We will have an elected Board of Directors (Board), written by-laws, and permanent and temporary committees. We endeavor for Board representation from VA Central Office, National Cemetery Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, and Veterans Health Administration.
- **Contact:** We will hold regular meetings to consult and update our members.

pride VA



### ***What is PrideVA?***

PrideVA is a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) employee resource group (ERG) for gender and sexual minorities, including, but not limited to, those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+), as well as allies. Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration/Operations, Security and Preparedness Gina M. Grosso signed the memorandum recognizing PrideVA as an official VA ERG on June 29, 2021.

### ***What is an ERG?***

An ERG is a voluntary employee-led group that fosters a diverse and inclusive workplace, aligned with organizational mission, goals, and objectives. Employees at agencies across the Federal workforce have formed ERGs to cultivate workplace inclusion and collaboration while giving a voice to employees.

### ***Who may join PrideVA?***

All VA employees, contractors, volunteers, and retirees who support PrideVA's mission and vision are invited and encouraged to join.

### ***What are PrideVA's mission and vision?***

Our mission is to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility within VA; promote awareness of issues affecting LGBTQ+ employees and Veterans; and provide mentorship, community, advocacy, and service opportunities for our members.

Our vision is for VA's policies and programs to meet the diverse needs of all VA employees and Veterans. As members of communities affected by "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and related discriminatory policies, we have a special responsibility to ensure our nation's heroes and those who serve them as VA employees encounter a VA that is welcoming, inclusive, and fair for all.



### ***How is PrideVA different than VA National Virtual Pride?***

PrideVA is an ERG open to all VA personnel and is not focused around preparing for a particular event. PrideVA is recognized by VA but is also independent, ie, does not represent official VA policy or fall under the supervision of a VA administration or office. Several of PrideVA's members are actively involved in National Virtual Pride, and we benefit from their expertise and networks.

### ***How is PrideVA different than VCCs and SEPMS?***

PrideVA is a voluntary group whose members do not have an official role in promoting VA's LGBTQ+ programming as part of their position description. Our membership includes current VCCs and SEPMS, and we greatly benefit from their expertise and contacts.

### ***How do I join PrideVA?***

To join PrideVA and be added to our listserv, please sign up on our website at [prideva.org](http://prideva.org). Alternatively, you may email [prideva@va.gov](mailto:prideva@va.gov) requesting to join.

### ***Does PrideVA have membership dues?***

PrideVA does not currently have a dues structure, as we are still determining our funding streams. If dues are requested in the future, they would be a nominal amount annually and scaled with the member's GS level.

### ***Besides becoming a member, how else can I be involved?***

Opportunities include attending meetings/events, joining a committee, and running for an elected leadership position. If you have another idea, please let us know! We highly encourage you to attend our general membership meetings held the first Thursday of every month at 5:30 PM EST on Teams (email [prideva@va.gov](mailto:prideva@va.gov) for the link).

### ***What are the different committees and how do I join one?***

You can sign up for a one or more at this [google form here](#) (You will need to forward to a personal computer/device to complete this form—won't open on VA device). Also, if you have particular skills/experience you want to contribute that don't fit in one committee category, let us know! **Current committees are as follows.**

- **Communication** - manages PrideVA's internal and external communications, to include our social media presence
- **Advocacy** - represents the interests of LGBTQ+ employees and Veterans to VA leadership and other VA stakeholders, advises VA leadership on issues affecting LGBTQ+ employees and Veterans, promotes awareness of these issues across VA
- **Mentorship** - helps stand-up and coordinate formal mentorship program as well as suggesting and leading opportunities for informal mentorship



- **Service** - leads and organizes community service events (both in person and virtually), develops relationships with like-minded community organizations, and seeks opportunities for service in the communities where we live and work
- **Membership/Chapter Formation**- devises strategy for VA-wide membership recruitment, goal is to have liaisons from major VA components, manages established members by developing strategy to ensure efficient communication between members and PrideVA leadership- assists with making PrideVA a truly nationwide organization by advising geographical and/or occupation-based groups on how to form chapters
- **Outreach** - formulates and executes PrideVA's outreach strategy, i.e., our visibility outside of VA, for example by organizing participation in Pride parades or at employee recruitment events, forms partnerships with our community and other like-minded organizations, develops and promotes a brand for publicity purpose (ie designs t-shirts, pencils etc.)
- **Events** - organizes speakers and events for our members and other VA employees, recruits speakers and handles the event logistics, develops ideas for events (Don't ask, don't Tell repeal anniversary event), oversees temporary working groups formed to oversee specific, labor intensive events such as a VA-wide Pride event

**I have an idea for something PrideVA should do or a question about PrideVA, whom should I contact?**

Please email [prideva@va.gov](mailto:prideva@va.gov) and/or come to our monthly membership meeting, the first Thursday of every month at 5:30pm EST via TEAMS (email us for more detailed information).

***My office already has an informal LGBTQ+ group. Should we become a PrideVA chapter? How would we do that?***

PrideVA aims to be a national organization with chapters centered around geographic areas and occupational specialties. For more information on how to form a chapter, please email [prideva@va.gov](mailto:prideva@va.gov).

***What is PrideVA's leadership structure? Do you have bylaws?***

We have an elected interim Board consisting of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Communications Director, Mentorship Director, and Advocacy Director. The Interim Board will hold office until January 2022 when elections will be held for the same offices for two year terms. PrideVA has draft bylaws which the interim Board is finalizing and will approve and publish before the January elections.

***What kinds of issues is PrideVA focusing on?***

PrideVA aspires to achieve its mission and vision by focusing its activities on four areas:

- **Strategic Partnership with VA:** We are a strategic partner for VA in enabling a more diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible climate across the Department, to include advocating for policies aimed at creating a workplace that is free from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. We are also supporting VA in by advising on initiatives to improve VA's service to LGBTQ+ Veterans.



- **Point of Contact & Resource:** PrideVA is point of contact and resource for employees, and potential employees regarding LGBTQ+ issues and activities at VA to include providing information about and referral to relevant VA programs, staff, and resources. Pride VA will also encourage VA recruitment efforts aimed at ensuring VA's workforce reflects our nation's diversity, to include outreach to gender and sexual minorities.
- **Mentorship & Professional Development:** PrideVA intends to support our members' careers by providing opportunities for mentorship, to include a formal pairing program between senior and junior employees in the same field. We also plan to facilitate professional development through presentations by subject matter experts during our membership meetings.
- **Community & Service:** We will strive to be a national organization with chapters across the country. We will foster a sense of community and camaraderie by connecting members through social media, newsletters, and other outlets. We will place a special emphasis on promoting opportunities for community building through volunteerism.

***Where can I find out more about PrideVA?***

Please feel free to email the current PrideVA leadership with specific questions at [prideva@va.gov](mailto:prideva@va.gov). We would love to hear from you! Please also check out our sharepoint and external website.

