



Office of Resolution Management Fiscal Year 2003 Annual Report



It's About Improving the Environment

Office of Resolution Management



Mission

To provide timely and high quality Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint processing, while fostering discrimination--free work environments through education, training, prevention, and early resolution. We will exemplify fairness, integrity, and trustworthiness.

Motto

Honoring and serving our Nation's Veterans by promoting discrimination-free environments.

Vision

To be the best in the timely and confidential processing of EEO complaints, while remaining sensitive and compassionate to all we serve. To maintain the trust of VA employees and all others touched by our work.



Message from the Deputy Assistant Secretary

In this annual report, I want to share with you what has been taking place in the Office of Resolution Management (ORM) and discuss the initiatives and programs we now have in place to carry us into the future.

We have made great strides during the last two years in realigning organizational elements that are critical to ORM's mission. One of the initial steps of the realignment was to consolidate our geographic jurisdictions, resulting in a reduction in the number of field offices from 11 to 7 and the number of full time employees by 30. By developing new programs, we were better able to meet the needs of our customers, improve our core services, and focus on the core competencies required to deliver world-class complaint processing. We have gained a reputation as a "can do" organization when it comes to equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaint processing and have taken a leading role in VA's efforts to expand the use of mediation to resolve workplace disputes.

One measure of our success is that the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) recognized VA as one of the best in government in the timely processing of EEO complaint investigations, both for procedural determinations and final agency decisions.

A primary objective in the coming fiscal year is to reach the EEOC standard of completing investigations within 180 days. If you or I were involved in a complaint, we would want the issue resolved as quickly as possible; we owe no less to those who come to us for assistance. Timely resolution – whether achieved through investigation, mediation, or other methods used to reach a settlement – allows all involved parties to focus on providing services, directly or indirectly, to veterans.

Our goal is to help create an Employer-of-Choice environment in VA through our discrimination complaint processing and value-added services. Employer-of-Choice environments have a positive effect on the bottom-line: improved quality, productivity, cost-effectiveness, and customer satisfaction.

Vibrant and effective organizations continually change to meet the demands of the marketplace. In our effort to provide the best we have to offer to our customers and stakeholders, we should always strive to improve ourselves, collectively and individually. By continuing to develop and improve ORM's programs and services, we will be able to meet the challenges of the future.

I welcome any comments or suggestions you may offer on ways we can further improve our efforts to deliver world-class service to veterans and their families.

James S. Jones

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I. Program Summary

In 1998, the estimated cost to process a single EEO complaint through the investigative stage was between \$40,000 and \$70,000. Even beyond these dollar figures are the costs to employee morale and lost opportunities to improve the lines of communication between management and employees, not to mention the cost to an agency's image resulting from high-profile complaints. Prevention and early intervention are critical elements in reducing the high cost of dispute resolution and creating discrimination-free work environments.

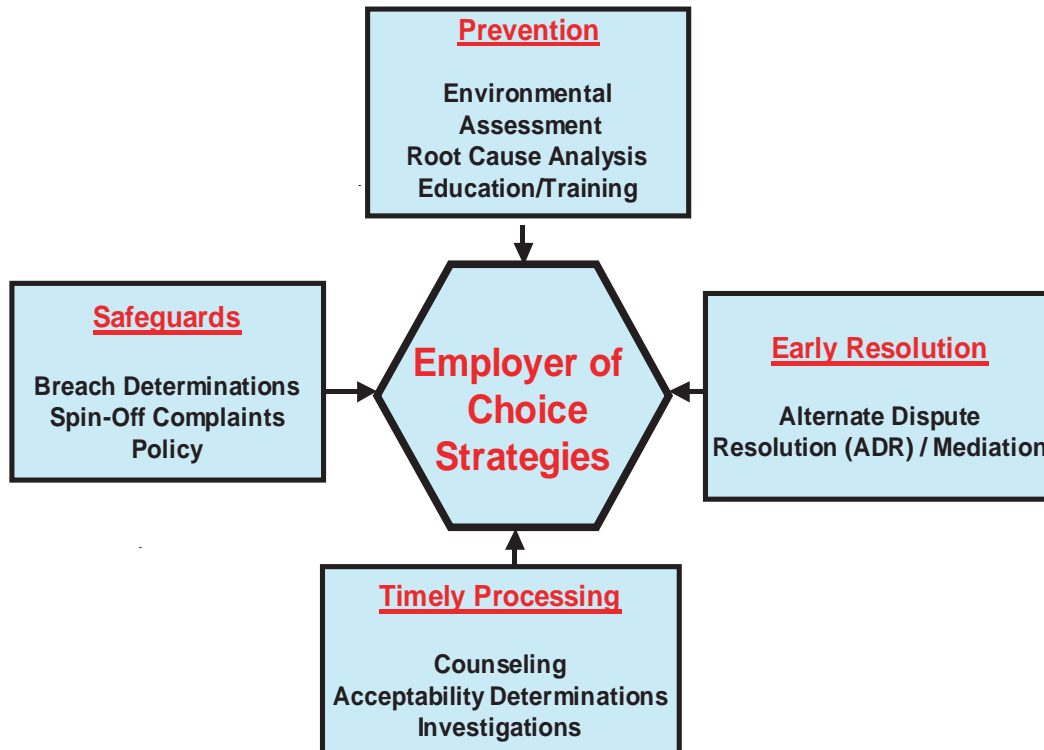
ORM provides EEO discrimination complaint processing services to VA employees, applicants for employment, and former employees. Complaint processing services include counseling, mediation, investigation, and final agency determinations. ORM also provides compliance oversight functions to the Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication (OEDCA) for final agency decisions, EEOC appellate decisions, and matters relating to settlements, including breaches. ORM carries out these responsibilities through a nationwide network of 7 field offices and 17 satellite offices.

ORM's philosophy for addressing EEO complaints and other workplace disputes:

- Create Employer-of-Choice environments.
- Employ prevention strategies.
- Emphasize early intervention and resolution.
- Encourage Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).
- Process complaints efficiently with an emphasis on the front end – **Resolution.**

ORM supports the development of Employer-of-Choice environments in VA through our EEO discrimination complaint processing services and an array of programs designed to support the Enabling Goal of VA's Strategic Plan: **Deliver World-Class Service to Veterans and Their Families by Applying Sound Business Principles that Result in Effective Management of People, Communications, Technology, and Governance.**

Prevention, Early Intervention/Resolution, Timely Processing, and Safeguards are the four cornerstones of our operational model for achieving an Employer-of-Choice environment in VA.



Workload and Performance Measures

ORM's established workload and performance measures support the objectives of the President's Management Agenda and VA's Strategic Plan.

The chart below illustrates fiscal year 2003 progress toward accomplishing our targeted workload and performance measures.

WORKLOAD MEASURES	FY 2002	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2003	Status
	Plan	Actual	Plan	Actual	
1. Number of Counseling Episodes Completed	5000	4772	5000	4057	G
2. Number of Investigations Completed	1600	1518	1600	1564	G
3. Percentage of Investigations Pending > 180 days	15%	12%	5%	11%	Y
4. Number of EEOC Appellate Decisions	18	19	30	40	G
RESOURCES					
5. Obligations (\$000)	\$28,555	\$28,550	\$27,503	\$27,623	
6. FTEE	279	266.5	279	245.1	
PERFORMANCE MEASURES					
7. Average Days to Complete EEO Counseling without ADR (12 month rolling average)	30	26.5	30	28	G
8. Average Days to Complete EEO Counseling with ADR (12 month rolling average)	90	61	90	69	G
9. Average Days to Complete Investigations (12 month rolling average)	200	202	180	232	Y
10. Percentage of Procedural Reviews Affirmed by EEOC	70%	76%	80%	75%	Y

Definitions of Progress Evaluation:

Green Implementation is proceeding according to plan.

Yellow Slippage in implementation schedule, quality of deliverables, or other issues requiring adjustments by ORM in order to achieve initiative objectives.

Red Initiative is in jeopardy. The objective is unlikely to be realized without significant management intervention.

One of our primary goals for fiscal year 2003 was to complete 91 percent of the formal EEO cases, through the investigative stage, in less than 180 days. To achieve this goal, we employed several strategies.

First, we implemented a system of monitors (safeguards) that allow us, on a monthly basis, to make sure we are meeting critical milestones within the 180-day timeframe.

Second, we made effective use of full-time counselors, intake specialists, and investigators.

We will continue our efforts to meet this goal in fiscal year 2004.

Another of our goals was to reduce or eliminate, by the end of fiscal year 2003, complaint cases 180 days old or older through the use of several strategies:

- Identifying and assessing workload.
- Assigning temporary staff to this effort.
- Writing a resolution letter encouraging parties to consider resolution at the investigative and post-investigative stages.

We continued to achieve our goal of exceeding the EEOC standard for average counseling time (without ADR) of 30 days. We averaged **28** days during fiscal year 2003.

VA was cited as one of two cabinet level agencies (the State Department was the other) whose EEO program showed significant improvement. VA was recognized for a 31 percent reduction in time to issue a decision without a hearing.

One of our continuing goals for fiscal year 2004 is to complete the investigative stage - in 180 days or less. We will continue working with VA's office of Alternative Dispute Resolution and Mediation to expand the use of mediation as VA's preferred method of ADR to address EEO complaints and other workplace disputes.

II. Prevention: The Foundation of Employer-of-Choice Environments

“An Ounce of Prevention is Worth a Pound of Cure”

ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (OCAP)

OCAP focuses on the workplace environment to address complaint prevention and early resolution. To identify potential issues, OCAP provides facility management feedback from employees and supervisors on how they perceive their workplace environments. Through meetings with facility management, Labor, HR, and EEO professionals – as well as employee focus groups, and on-line climate surveys – OCAP provides managers with reports analyzing systemic issues that they may have been unaware of and recommending ways to address them.

OCAP site visits were conducted at the following VA facilities in FY 2003 during our pilot phase:

- Asheville VAMC, NC
- Dayton VAMC, OH
- Philadelphia Regional Office and Insurance Center
- Martinsburg VAMC, WV
- VA Health Administration Center, Denver, CO
- VA Illiana Health Care System, Danville, IL
- Riverside National Cemetery, Riverside, CA
- Golden Gate National Cemetery, San Francisco, CA

The OCAP assessment has four separate components:

1. Web-Based Climate Survey

- Collects data on employees' workplace perceptions and perspectives.
- Provides an opportunity for a large number of employees to participate in the assessment of their facility.
- Analysis and interpretation provided by the National Center for Organization Development, an organization with demonstrated human behavior expertise in compiling and analyzing survey results.

2. Focus-Group Sessions

- Ten-to-twelve supervisory and non-supervisory employees per group.
- A trained mediator conducts each group session separately.
- Pre-established open-ended questions, plus face-to-face dialogue among employees.
- Confidential – no names attached to employee comments.

3. On-Site Interviews:

- Key Management Officials
- Union Representatives
- EEO Program Managers
- ADR Program Coordinators
- HR Manager (Records Review)

4. Report

- Provides an analysis of data gathered from focus groups, individual interviews, and the Web-Based Survey.
- Identifies facility EEO activity, grievances, and root causes of complaints.
- Includes a review of facility human resources programs.
- Is submitted to facility director within 60 days of visit.

OCAP promotes ways to improve workplace environments and prevent EEO complaints and other grievances by encouraging early intervention and resolution. In addition, OCAP assists facilities' efforts to buoy workplace morale, increase productivity, improve communication, and conserve financial resources, all of which enable VA employees and managers to focus on delivering high-quality service to veterans.

ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS

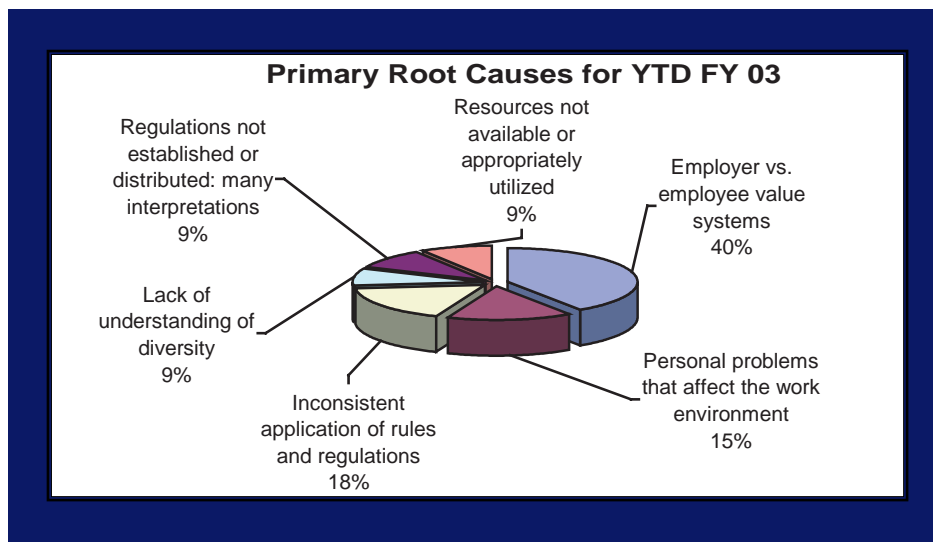
Fact – More than 96% of discrimination complaints filed do not result in a finding of discrimination. The question becomes – if not discrimination, then what?

Root Cause Analysis is an assessment of the underlying causes of workplace disputes that result in EEO complaints. ORM issues a quarterly report, "Root Causes: Preliminary Assessment of Underlying Causes for Initiating Discrimination Complaints," which captures the possible root causes or the underlying reasons why employees file discrimination complaints that clearly fall outside the scope of the EEO process. This report is designed to assist VA facility managers in identifying and addressing these issues before they lead to lower morale, employee complaints, and lower customer satisfaction.

The primary root causes found during fiscal year 2003 are:

- Employer vs. employee value systems differ (conflicting work ethics or conflicting personal values).
- Inconsistent or unequal application of rules and regulations as they relate to management, supervisors, and employees.
- Lack of understanding, appreciation, or awareness of diversity, language, or disability.
- Personal problems that spill over into the working environment. (Impact may be limited to the immediate employee or affect other members of the staff).
- Rules and regulations not established, published, or adequately disseminated; many differing interpretations.
- Resources not available or appropriately utilized.

The chart below illustrates the root causes identified during fiscal year 2003 for VA.



COMPARISON DATA

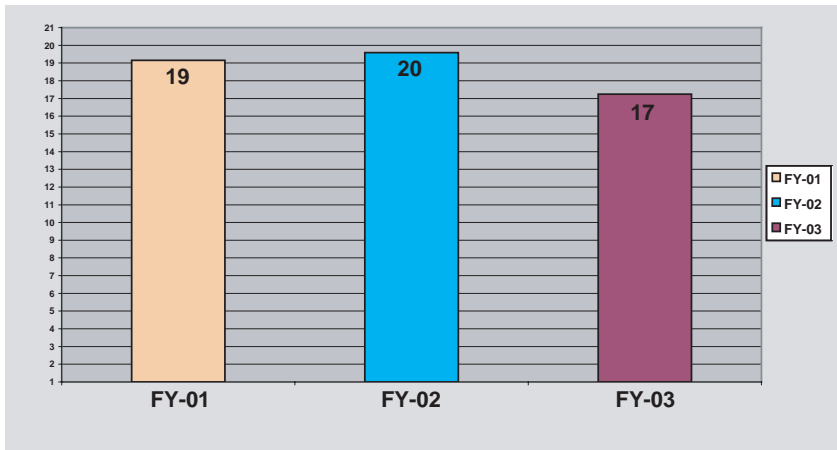
ORM prepares and issues a comparison of EEO informal and formal complaint activity data in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), and National Cemetery Administration (NCA). The data (in the form of charts) is not an in-depth analysis of the reasons why complainants initiated EEO complaints, but simply a comparison of complaint activity during the periods covered.

This data includes:

- A comparison of EEO complaint activity by Administration (VHA, VBA, NCA).
- A breakdown of each Administration into major operating components.
- A conversion of the number of informal and formal filings into rates per 1,000 employees, to provide a comparison of facilities based upon a consistent reference point.

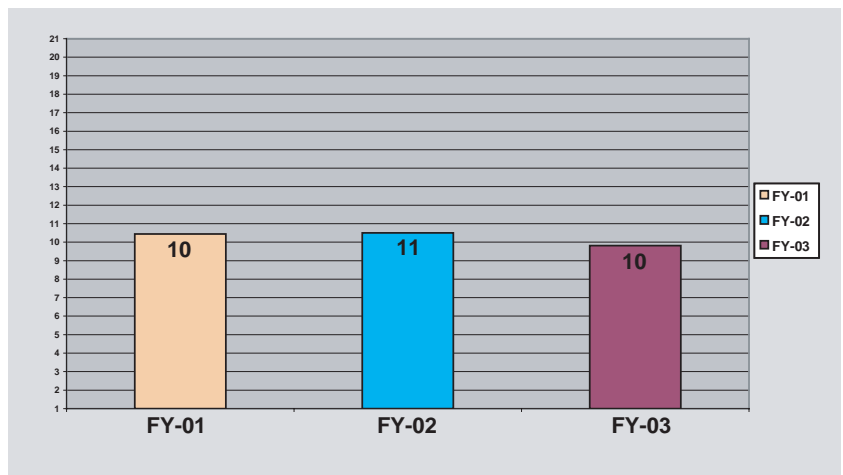
This information contained in the Office of Resolution Management Comparison Charts, Informal and Formal Complaint Activity is available to assist VA managers in monitoring EEO complaint activity at facilities under their direction. The data will enable facilities to ask questions and look to similar facilities to gain further insight into complaint activity. The reasons why individuals initiate EEO counseling or file formal complaints are also available in our Root Cause Report found at <http://vaww.va.gov/orm>.

VA Formal and Informal Filing Rates per 1000 employees for FY 01, 02, and 03 are shown in the charts below.



Informal

Formal



III. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR): The First Step in Resolving Disputes

"Never Too Early, Never Too Late"

ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Under the leadership of co-managers MaryEllen Garcia and R. LaMont Johnson, we are exploring ways to expand ADR and other mediation programs throughout VA.

In conjunction with the Office of Alternative Dispute Resolution and Mediation, ORM has devoted enormous effort and resources to promote the use of ADR as a means of resolving disputes at the lowest possible level. Employees who do not fully understand what ADR is, tend not to select it as a complaint resolution option. With improved understanding, more employees will recognize the advantages of ADR. Although information regarding ADR is provided to individuals involved in an EEO complaint, there is a critical need to promote the value of ADR to VA managers and other employees who are not immediately involved in the EEO complaint process.

ORM takes every opportunity to communicate the positive effects of early resolution of workplace disputes, so that employees and managers can concentrate on providing high-quality service to veterans.

*"Mediation is the Key to Less Costly and
Time Consuming Complaint Processing"*

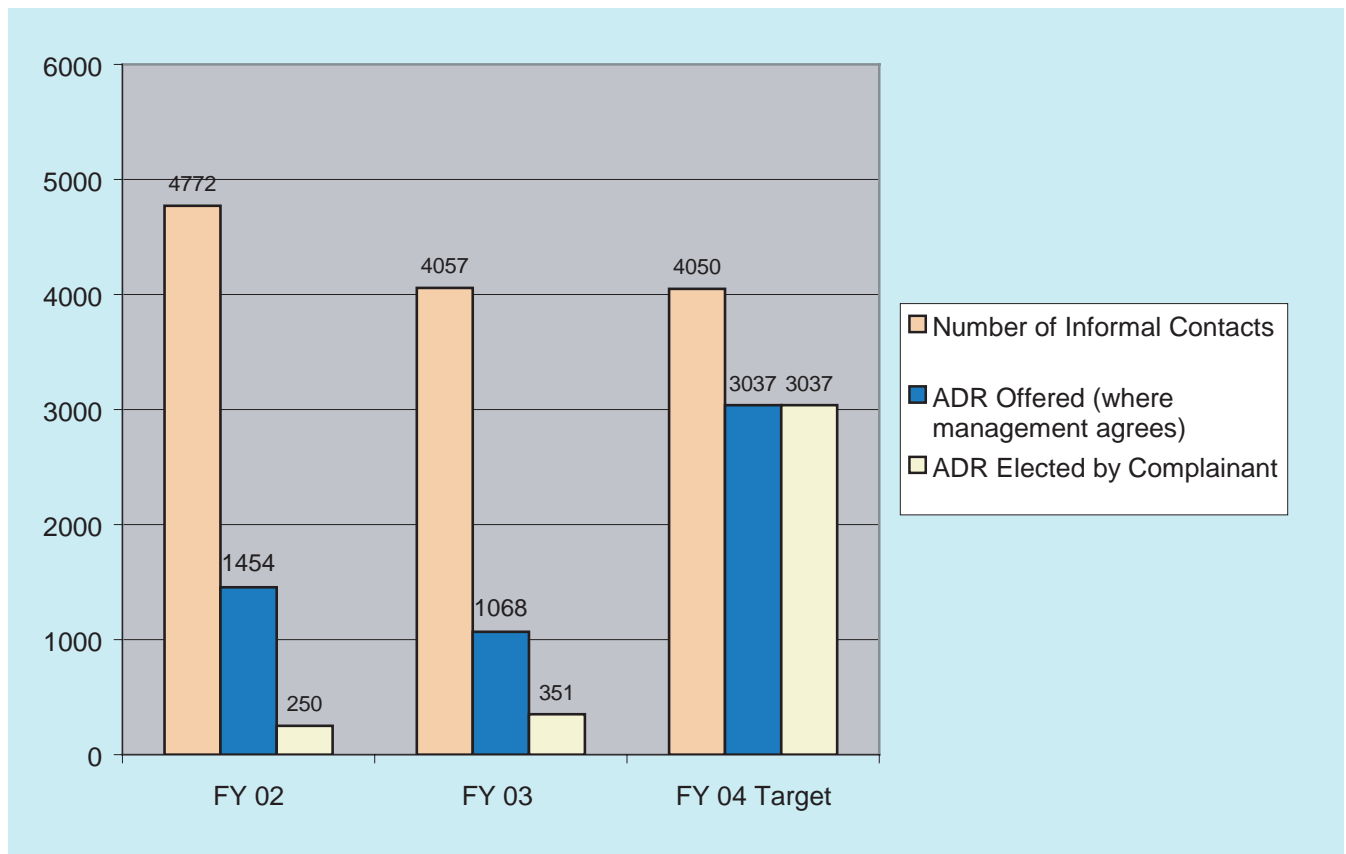
Mediation is VA's preferred method of ADR because it is cost-effective, timely, and improves communication. Mediation also leads to improved employee morale and team building. One result of the effort to increase awareness of the availability of mediation during the complaint process is the 29% increase in the number of individuals electing ADR during fiscal year 2003.

Our aim is to help create an environment where managers and employees see the benefit of using mediation in settling workplace disputes. Mediation is a "win-win" solution for everyone involved.

"Mediation is a Win, Win Solution - Everybody Wins"

FY 2003 ADR Election Rates VA-Wide

- The number of employees choosing ADR increased by **29%** in FY 2003 as compared to FY 2002.
- The number of managers choosing ADR decreased by **27%**.



Fiscal Year 2004 Targets

- **75%** of employees & managers agreeing to participate in ADR.

ADR INITIATIVES

ORM has developed the following initiatives to enhance and encourage the use of ADR throughout VA:

- VA National Level ADR Awareness Program.
- ORM ADR/Mediation Training.
- Use of mediation at the counseling stage of the compliant process, including training ORM counselors so that they can successfully mediate cases on their own.
- Encouraging the ADR option at the intake stage of the complaint process.
- Focus on resolution during the investigative stage through the use of a resolution letter sent to the involved parties.

MEDIATION TRAINING

ORM, through its Learning Resources Center, offers the following mediation training courses and videos.

- **Senior Executive Mediation Training**
 - Training ensures participants are well versed in mediation principles.
 - Approximately 263 Senior Executives trained in 2003.
 - Approximately 412 Senior Executive Service and other managers (GS14-15) trained since fiscal year 2000.
 - Approximately 113 ADR coordinators, attorneys, and others have attended this course since fiscal year 2003.
- **Basic Mediation Skills**
 - Provides knowledge and skills needed to be a successful mediator.
 - Approximately 515 new mediators trained for VA Networks and facilities since April 2002.
- **Advanced Mediation Skills**
 - Focus is on complex EEO cases and multiple-party disputes.
 - Approximately 60 mediators have completed this course.
- **Mediation for Management and Union Officials**
 - Provides union and VA management with an understanding of mediation, how it works, and when it would be helpful.
 - Provides frontline supervisors and union officials the basic skills to assist in resolving workplace disputes that do not require formal mediation or would not result in a formal complaint.

Continue ... MEDIATION TRAINING

- **Managing Group Conflict**
 - Stages of group formation and development.
 - Techniques for assessing group conflict and how to identify whether it exists.
 - Instruction on how to design group conflict interventions.
 - Skills and methods for group conflict intervention.
 - Instruction on managing a group conflict intervention.

- **Mediation Zone Video**
 - Demonstrates and explains the mediation process.
 - Covers EEOC and VA National Policies on ADR.
 - Distributed to VA ADR Coordinators in January 2003.

- **The Three Little Pigs Mediation Video**
 - Designed to raise awareness of the mediation process.
 - Available online at <http://vaww.va.gov/orm>.

IV. Ensuring Effective and Efficient Complaint Processing

We have continued to make improvements in counseling processing times, resolving complaints during the informal stage, completing cases within the EEOC standard of 180 days for investigations, and reducing the pending workload of active complaints.

ORM has also developed several innovative systems to help manage complaints:

INFORMATION SYSTEM – Web Based Tracking System (WBTS)

WBTS is ORM's permanent, nationwide database. With the WBTS data, local facility management has immediate access to complaint information, which can help to quickly identify the key issues surrounding conflicts.

ELECTRONIC CASE MANAGEMENT PROJECT – Moving from paper to an electronic case file

Efforts are underway to create a paperless EEO *Electronic Case Management System (ECMS)*, a collaborative effort among the Information Technology Service, EEOC, and OEDCA. ECMS will improve access to records, while reducing the costs to produce, compile, and maintain them. The system is scheduled for completion in latter part of fiscal year 2004 or early 2005.



Fiscal Year 2003 Facts and Figures

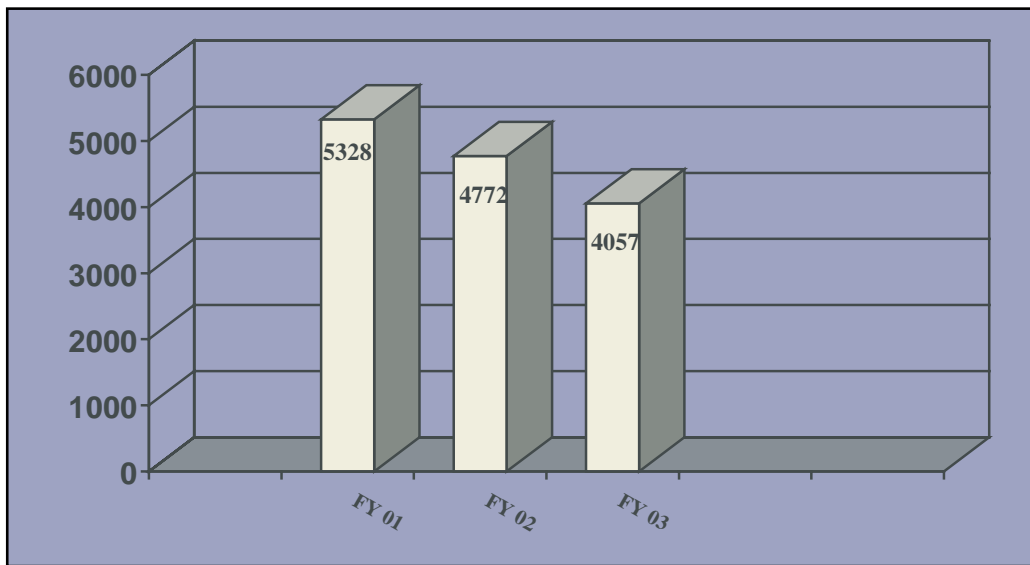
- We processed **4,057** counseling events; **82%** took place within 30 days.
- Average counseling time was **28** days for cases that did not go through ADR. (The EEOC standard is **30** days.)
- We were able to resolve **45%** of initial contacts during the informal stage; **1,825** of the aggrieved individuals who contacted EEO counselors decided not to file formal complaints.
- Formal complaints declined from **2,258** filed during FY 2002 to **2,232**, in FY 2003.
- We completed **401** of the **1,564** investigations conducted during the year within the EEOC standard of **180** days; **1,059** investigations were completed between **181** to **360** days; **104** were completed in more than **361** days.
- Our average processing time for completing investigations was **232** days. Our goal for FY 2004 is to average **180** days or less.
- We completed **2,267** procedural reviews in FY 2003.
- There were **2,922** complaints pending at the close of FY 2003, inclusive of complaints Pending with ORM (1,114), Pending a Formal Agency Decision (FAD) (236), and Pending a Hearing at EEOC (1,572). There were **4,009** complaints pending at the close of FY 2002 and **3,688** pending at the end of FY 2001.



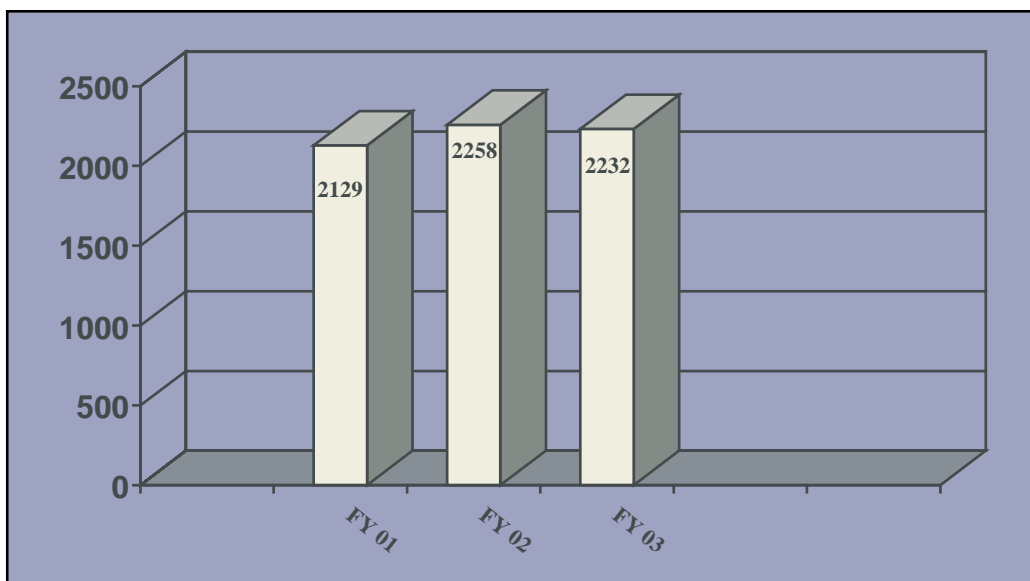
VA EEO Complaint Activity

The charts below show VA complaint activity for fiscal year 2001, 2002, and 2003.

Informal Counseling's

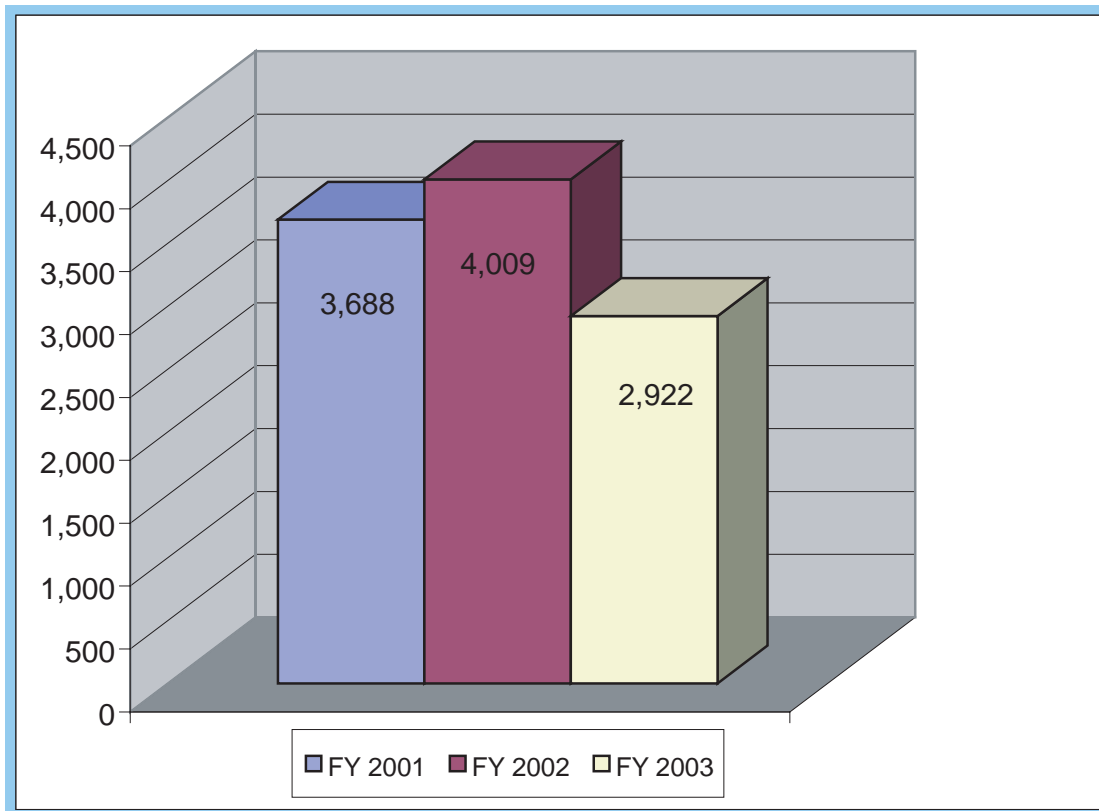


Formal Complaints



End-of-Year Complaint Inventory

The chart below provides a comparison of end-of-year complaint inventories for fiscal years 2001, 2002, and 2003.

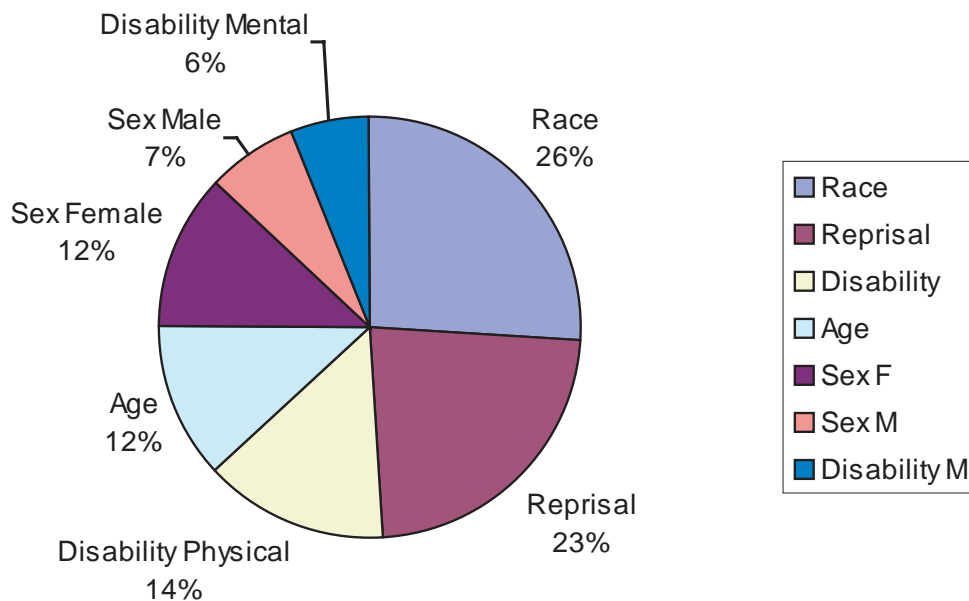


Most Frequently Cited Claims and Bases for Filing Complaints

A claim is the action alleged to be discriminatory. The basis is the reason the individual believes the action to be discriminatory. The most frequently cited claims and bases for filing complaints in fiscal year 2003 were:

- 26% Race
- 23% Reprisal
- 14% Disability – Physical
- 12 % Sex – Female
- 12% Age
- 7% Sex - Male
- 6% Disability – Mental

The chart below illustrates the most frequently cited claims and bases for complaints filed in fiscal year 2003:



V. ORM at a Glance

During the fiscal year, we completed the implementation of our Services and Resources Alignment (SARA). Some of the benefits of SARA include:

- Uniform quality of service
- Improved cost effectiveness
- Maximum use of technology

SARA resulted in a realignment of our field offices and the expansion of our programs to better serve our customers.

HUMAN RESOURCES

ORM had an authorized ceiling of 249 FTE at the end of fiscal year 2003.

ORM core staffing includes employees in the following positions who are directly involved in complaint processing as well as management, support and headquarters' personnel:

<u>Position</u>	<u>Employees</u>
EEO Counselors	48
EEO Investigators	60
EEO Intake Specialists	36

BUDGET

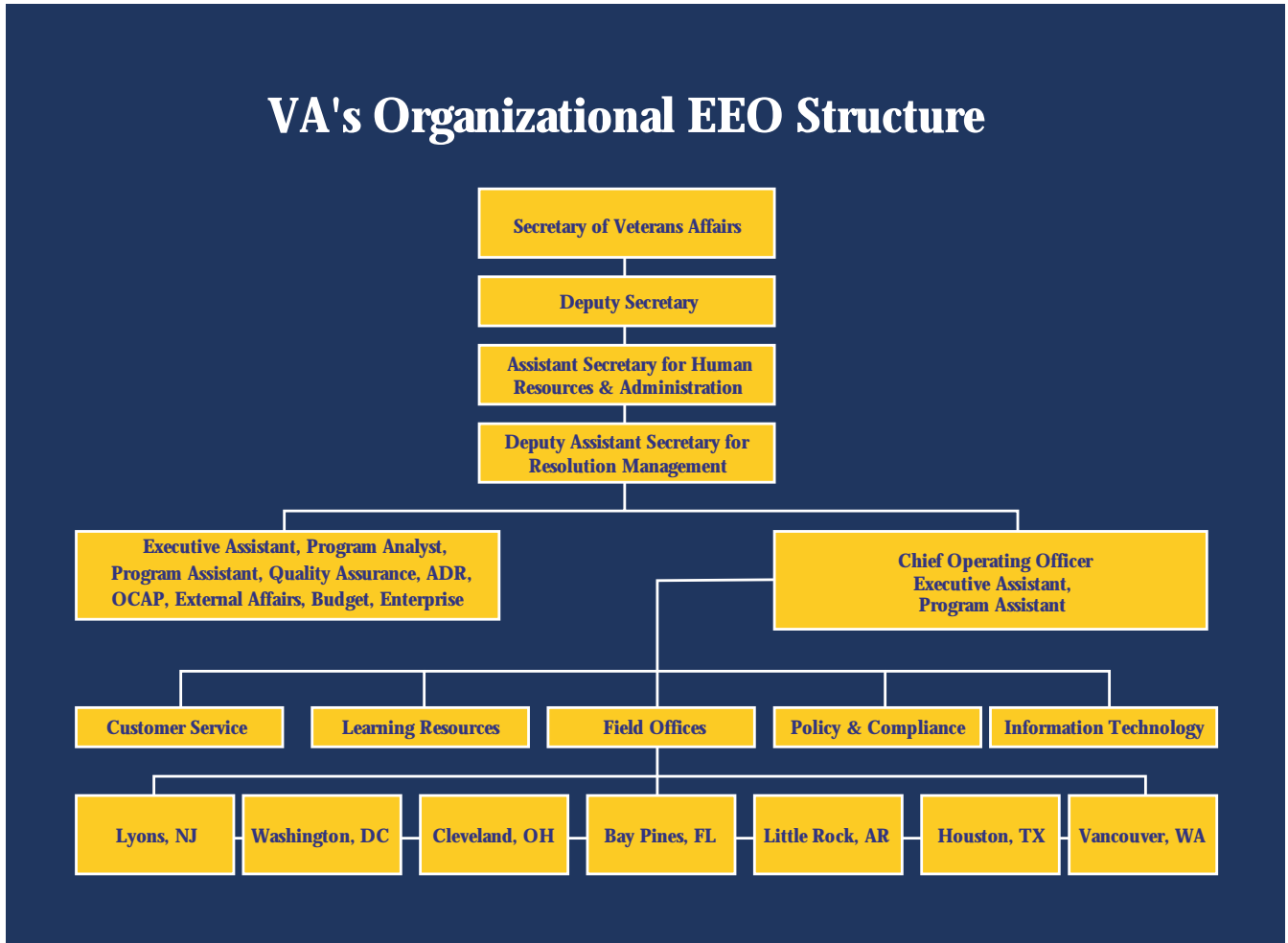
ORM's budget for fiscal year 2003 was \$27.6 million. As a reimbursable organization, ORM's funds are collected by an appropriation transfer from the three VA Administrations – Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA) – as well as from other staff offices, based on complaint activity. Each Administration receives quarterly and annual reports providing a breakdown of the complaints processed by ORM.

ORM ORGANIZATIONAL FUNCTIONS

- EEO Counseling
- Procedural Determinations
- EEO Investigations
- Compensatory Damages Investigations
- Dispute Prevention and Early Intervention Strategies
- ADR Education and Training
- Settlement Agreement Compliance
- Spin-off Complaints
- Environmental Assessments
- Agency oversight of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

VA ORGANIZATIONAL EEO STRUCTURE

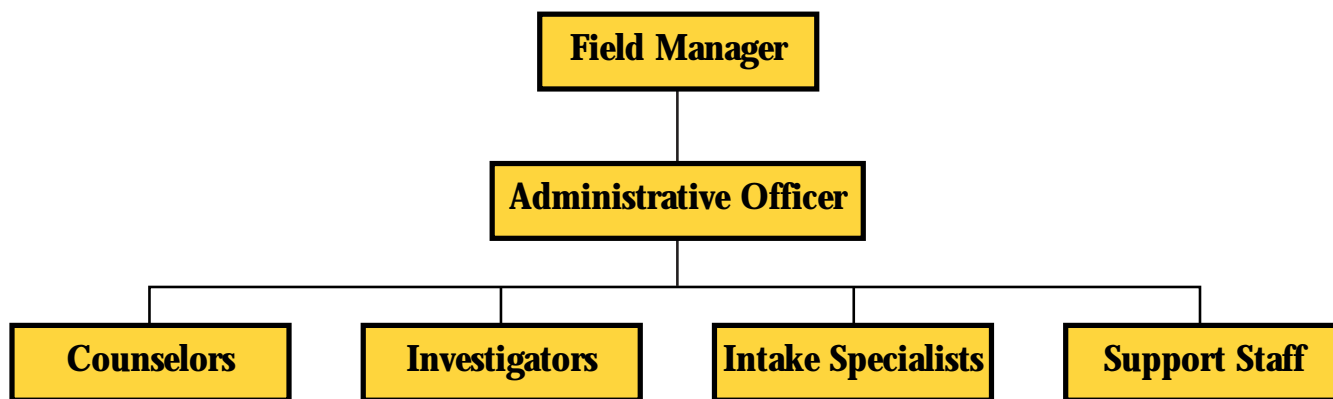
The chart below provides an overview of VA's EEO organizational structure.



FIELD OFFICES

Seven field offices and 17 satellite offices process EEO complaints.

ORM Field Office Staffing Chart



Field Office Areas of Jurisdiction

The following area designations were assigned to ORM Field Offices in FY 2003.

Northeastern Operations - Rosa Franco, EEO Regional Officer, **Lyons Field Office** and the Bedford, New York, Pittsburgh, and Lebanon satellite offices.

Mid-Atlantic Operations - David Betts, EEO Regional Officer, **Washington Field Office** and Fayetteville satellite office.

Southeastern Operations - William Low, EEO Regional Officer, **Bay Pines Field Office** and the Lake City satellite office. Southeastern Operations includes Puerto Rico.

Mid-South Operations - Austin Lewis, EEO Officer, **Little Rock Field Office** and the Murfreesboro satellite office.

Central Plains Operations - Paul Crain, EEO Regional Officer, **Houston Field Office** and the Amarillo, Leavenworth, Denver, and St. Louis satellite offices.

Great Lakes Operations - Tywana Halstead, EEO Regional Officer, **Cleveland Field Office** and the Detroit and Hines satellite offices.

Western Operations - Earl Hatcher, Acting EEO Regional Officer, **Vancouver Field Office** and the Los Angeles, Long Beach, Palo Alto, and Sepulveda satellite offices. Western Operations includes Alaska and Hawaii.

ORM FIELD OFFICE AND GEOGRAPHIC JURISDICTIONS



CIVIL RIGHTS

ORM coordinates with the U.S. Department of Justice and the three VA Administrations to ensure compliance with civil rights statutes that ensure equal access to Federally assisted and conducted programs and activities. These civil rights provisions prohibit discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in Federally assisted programs and activities.

The External Civil Rights Program includes oversight for preparing, implementing, and coordinating VA's adherence to:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Executive Order 13160, Non-Discrimination in Federally Conducted Education and Training
- Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

POLICY AND COMPLIANCE

ORM's Office of Policy and Compliance (OPC):

- Reviews and prepares final agency decisions on all VA breach of settlement agreement claims.
- Issues policy and guidance to ORM field offices and external customers on discrimination complaint processing.
- Monitors compliance with final agency decisions issued by OEDCA and the EEOC.
- Provides replies to allegations of dissatisfaction with the processing of EEO complaints (Spin-Offs).
- Conducts age discrimination and compensatory damage investigations; oversees investigations of complex and high-visibility cases.
- Prepares responses to Congressional inquiries.
- Prepares two quarterly reports:
 - **Senior Manager's Report** - Summarizes the employment discrimination complaints filed against senior VA managers and identifies the most prevalent issues and bases for these complaints. Mandated by Public Law 105-114, this report is submitted to the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs.
 - **Root Cause Report** - An assessment of the underlying causes of workplace disputes that result in EEO complaints, distributed to senior VA managers.

Office of Policy and Compliance's Web Site

OPC Web site contains information about the role of OPC in the complaint process, and guidance for processing complaints of discrimination in accordance with EEOC laws and regulations. Copies of the **Root Cause Report**, **Senior Manager's Quarterly** and **Annual Reports**, and the **Root Cause Newsletter** are available at <http://vawww.va.gov/orm>.

Complaint Processing Guidance

OPC issued Office of Policy and Compliance Letters (OPCL) that provided guidance in the following areas:

- Contractors who file complaints of discrimination.
- Harassment and Hostile Work Environment Claims.
- Guidance regarding Independent EEO Contractors.
- Disability Discrimination vs. VA Service Connected Disability.

QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM

The Quality Assurance Program was created in 2003 to ensure consistent, accurate, uniform, and high-quality discrimination complaint processing throughout ORM. Our Quality Assurance program, headed by Peggy Joyner, is designed to evaluate the quality and timeliness of services and share best practices to help improve services.

During FY 2003, the Quality Assurance team conducted site visits at ORM offices in Lyons, NJ, and Bay Pines, FL.

ENTERPRISE ACTIVITIES

Other federal agencies have requested our assistance by establishing interagency agreements with ORM for EEO services in complaint processing and mediation training. Our Enterprise Office, headed by Charlotte Jones, was established in 2003 to coordinate these activities:

The Enterprise Office:

- Arranged and coordinated an inter-agency investigation with Federal Labor Relations Authority.
- Established a memorandum of understanding with the Office of Government Ethics to provide EEO complaint processing services.
- Worked closely with our ADR activities to develop an interagency ADR/Mediation program.

CUSTOMER SERVICE PROGRAM

"The voices of our customers are heard and make a difference"

Our Customer Service and Satisfaction Division, headed by Brenda J. Lewis, obtains feedback from both our internal and external customers on the effectiveness of our programs and the quality of our services.

During fiscal year 2003, our Customer Service Division:

- Established a Customer Service Committee.
- Created a Customer Service Web site.
- Created automated surveys for distribution to our internal and external customers.
- Correlated, analyzed, and distributed over 1,000 surveys to ORM customers involved in the informal EEO complaint process.
- Created an all-ORM employee survey to be distributed during the first quarter of fiscal year 2004.
- Established a partnership agreement with VISN 16 – Information and Technology Group, Little Rock, AR – for customer-focused initiatives.

LEARNING RESOURCES

Our Learning Resources Center designs and offers a variety of training programs and educational services. ORM recognizes the importance of addressing two different but equally important fronts:

The ***internal front*** consists of training initiatives that enhance the knowledge, skills, and abilities of ORM staff to manage cases at all stages of the EEO discrimination complaint process.

ORM employees receive the following types of training:

- **Managers and Supervisors** – Management and leadership development courses offered by the Office of Personnel Management, the Federal Executive Institute, and other approved sources.
- **Program Assistants** – Administrative skills courses to enable employees to support ORM field office staff.
- **Counselors** – Thirty-two hours of basic EEO Counselor training provided prior to assuming duties, with an additional eight hours of training required each year.
- **Intake Specialists** – Training on acceptability determination issues, which involves legal analysis, legal writing, and team leader skills.
- **Investigators** – Training covers skills needed to conduct comprehensive EEO investigations, using a variety of investigative methods. Thirty-two hours of training required before conducting investigations, with eight hours of continuing investigator training each year.

The ***external front*** focuses on creating and marketing awareness initiatives to VA's global culture – to promote a greater understanding of EEO discrimination prevention, complaint processing, and early resolution.

ORM external initiatives include:

- Informing VA employees about the discrimination complaint process.
- Informing VA employees about the different avenues available to resolve complaints, including ADR.



New Training Courses for ORM Employees

- **EEO Career Intern Program**

We have expanded our EEO and HR training initiatives to include a two-year training plan for entry-level Federal EEO Specialists. Created under Executive Order 13162, this program is intended for positions at grade levels GS-5, 7, and 9. Individuals are appointed to a two-year internship. After completing the program, interns may be eligible for permanent placement within the agency.

- **Intermediate and Advanced EEO Investigator Training**

This training – which covers HR issues, EEO case law, and fact-finding – is designed to enhance the skills of experienced investigators. Development is scheduled for completion by the end of the second quarter of fiscal year 2004.

Training Broadcasts

ORM conducted EEO Investigator Training broadcasts on Channel 34 of VA's television network in August of 2003. Individuals were able to call in and receive answers to their questions on a variety of issues involving the EEO investigative process. The presenters – including representatives of VA's Office of General Counsel, OEDCA, and EEOC – provided useful information to our employees on a variety of EEO investigative process issues.

Training Provided to Other Organizations

Our Learning Resources Center, in addition to training ORM and other VA employees on EEO issues and ADR, also provided training to employees of the following Federal agencies:

- Department of Transportation
- Social Security Administration
- Federal Aviation Administration
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- Department of Defense
- Federal Executive Board (Miami)



OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Stakeholders Council

The Stakeholders Council is a forum for ORM to share information with our primary VA customers, identify new program areas, and work on shared projects. The Council is made up of representatives from:

- ORM
- Each VA Administration
- Office of General Council
- OEDCA
- Office of Dispute Resolution
- Human Resources
- Office of Policy and Planning

ORM Web Site

The ORM Web site, www.va.gov/or (internet) or <http://vaww.va.gov/orm> (Intranet) provides comprehensive information on ORM programs and services.

- How to file a complaint.
- EEO policies and procedures.
- Quarterly Employment Discrimination Complaint Processing Update Newsletter.
- OEDCA's "Quarterly Digest."
- ADR Mediation Procedures.
- ORM Fiscal Year Annual Reports.
- Publications and Forms



Presentations

During fiscal year 2003, we were invited to make presentations on ORM's programs and services to other organizations, including:

- U.S. State Department
- Blacks in Government (BIG) 2003 Annual Conference
- VA Women's Executive Leadership Forum Conference
- Council of Federal EEO and Civil Rights Executives
- Office of Personnel Management
- American Federation of Government Employees
- Leadership VA
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission EEOC EXCEL Conference
- 2003 VHA Leadership Conference
- Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN) 16 and 22
- Smithsonian Institute

REGIONAL CONFERENCES

The Little Rock Field Office (Mid-South Operations) and Lyons Field Office (Northeastern Operations) held regional conferences for VA facilities in their areas of jurisdiction to discuss ORM programs and services. These conferences were designed to provide training, improve communications, share information, and foster an environment of cooperation.

Little Rock Field Office (Mid-Southern Operations) Regional Conference

The Little Rock Field Office held an EEO Program Conference in Destin, FL, the week of December 3-5, 2002. In attendance were VA Medical Center and Regional Office Directors, EEO Professionals, ADR Coordinators, and Union Officials. Some of the noted guest speakers included Nora Egan, Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs; Laura Miller, Deputy Under Secretary for Veterans Health Administration; Dr. Jacob Lozada, Assistant Secretary for Human Resources & Administration; and Directors of VISN's 8,9,16, and 17.

Lyons Field Office (Northeastern Operations) Regional Conference

The Lyons Field Office held a Regional EEO Conference in Boston, MA, September 9-11, 2003. The conference theme was "Alternative Bridges to Resolution." Topics covered at the conference included VA's ADR Program, Peer Mediation, ADR Best Practices, and Preparing Successful Settlement Agreements. Key conference presenters included Judge Gary Krump, Chairman and Chief Administrative Judge of the Board of Contract Appeals; Nevin Weaver, Chief of Staff, Office of the Under Secretary for Health; and Dennis "Max" Lewis, Assistant Deputy

Under Secretary for Health/Operations and Management, Veterans Health Administration.

Presenters also included representatives from EEOC, VA Regional Counsel and OEDCA. A total of 127 individuals – representing a cross-section of employees, managers, union representatives, EEO, and ADR program managers from facilities in the Lyons area of jurisdiction – attended this conference.



Contacting ORM

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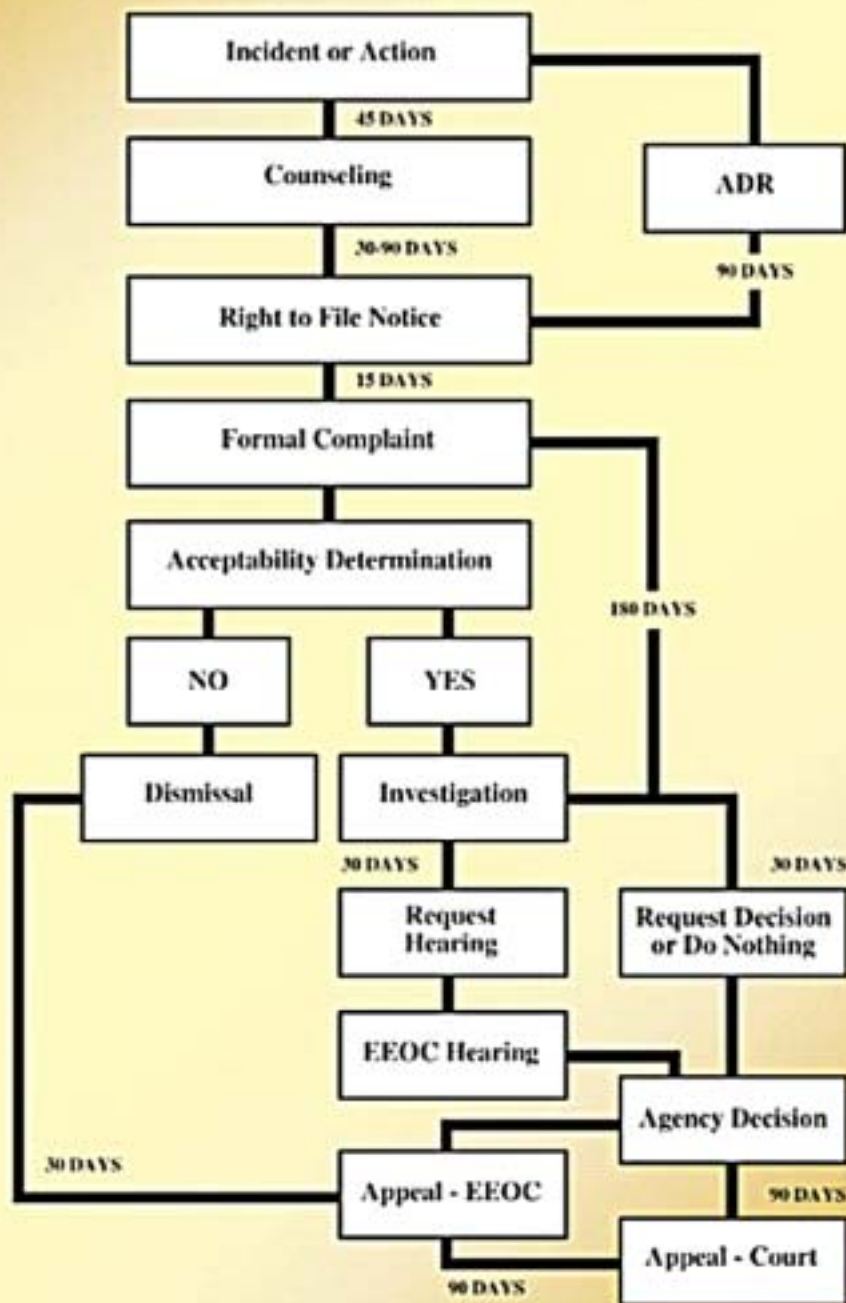
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**Visit our Web site:
<http://www.va.gov/orm> (Internet)
<http://vaww.va.gov/orm> (Intranet)**

EEO DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT PROCESS





Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Resolution Management