

# The Sinclair Advisor



*E-News for our clients, prospective clients, and Associates*

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Welcome to *The Sinclair Advisor*, a monthly electronic newsletter for clients and Associates of The Sinclair Advisory Group LLC. The Sinclair Advisory Group is a leading provider of strategic planning, leadership development, and expert advisory services to government agencies and private industry.

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## SAG TO SUPPORT NEW VHA ORGANIZATION

Last month, Sinclair Advisory Group (SAG) was awarded a contract to provide High Level Strategic Facilitation Services to the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) new Office of Policy and Services (OPS). OPS was created in November 2010 as part of the reorganization of the Central Office functions of the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) to reduce variation, create alignment and enhance program accountability within the Administration in order to improve the delivery of health care to veterans.

OPS, which is headed by Dr. Madhu Agarwal, oversees VHA's Offices of Policy and Planning, Nursing, Public Health, Performance Management, Health Information Management, Readjustment Counseling, Intergovernmental Affairs, Ethics, Research and Development, Patient Care Services, and Health Information.

Our effort will be led by Christine Williams, PhD, a former VA employee and external consultant on a number of VHA transition and organizational change efforts, including work for VA's Office of Information Technology; meetings to discuss VA's Transformational Initiatives; and Office of Health Information Leadership Meetings.

"In the midst of VHA's extensive organizational changes," says Dr. Williams, "we want to work with OPS to facilitate building new relationships and support their efforts to interact and collaborate with internal and external customers in different and creative ways—all for the benefit of providing Veterans the best care anywhere."

SAG is proud to support Dr. Agarwal and OPS in their transformational efforts. It's another in a series of assignments that reflect our Associates' abilities to help organizations work effectively, efficiently, and cohesively within the context of major organizational change, in an environment of diminished budgets and timelines and increased system delivery complexity and oversight. For more information, contact Seth Sinclair at 703-665-4790.

## **VA SES COACHING PROGRAM HOLDS NETWORK MEETING**

On September 15 and 16<sup>th</sup>, SAG and the Veterans Health Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs held the latest in a series of Senior Executive Service Coaching Network Meetings in Atlanta, Georgia. The session featured program updates and presentations on current and emerging VA and VHA issues, including the role of VHA's Office of Quality and Safety; the merger of VA's North Chicago VA Medical Center with the Great Lakes US Naval Medical Center; the current direction of VA's Canteen Service and the Office of Pharmacy Benefits Management.

In addition to these updates, participants received a labor relations update, including a discussion of how senior managers interact with labor unions, and how to build and maintain an effective relationship between unions and management at VA facilities. Mr. Paul Bockelman, Director of VA's Marion, Illinois medical center talked about how employee attitudes and the culture of the facility had changed at that once-troubled facility.

Finally, a panel of VHA Senior Executives, including two Network Directors (Michael Moreland of VISN 4 and George "Buzz" Gray of VISN 16) and a facility director (Alex Spector of the Alaska VA Healthcare System) discussed key challenges facing VHA Senior Executives, especially the growing challenge of managing VHA Networks, field facilities, and VACO program offices during times of fiscal constraint. The panel, and the SAG executive coaches who were present, shared their insights and real life examples of how to effectively manage in these situations for efficiency and productivity, while still striving to meet quality goals.

SAG Associates participating in the event included Stan Sinclair, Jim Farsetta, Sandy Garfunkel and Ken Clark. Besides the formal presentations, each of the coaches spent time with those in attendance in informal coaching sessions to discuss topics presented during the meeting.

Their work, and the conference, is part of SAG's SES Coaching Services Blanket Purchase Agreement, in which SAG supports VA's SES Healthcare Coaching network by participating in quarterly network meetings, "virtual café" discussions, and by providing executive coaching for participants VA assigns to them. SAG is also available, under the terms of the BPA, to provide other activities in support of VA's Senior Executive Coaching program.

## **2011-12 VBA LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM TO BEGIN**

The latest session in VA's Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Leadership Development Program will kick off in New Orleans, Louisiana during the week of October 3. The program, which has been taught by SAG Chief Executive Officer Stan Sinclair since 2005, is targeted at GS-13s through GS-15s with the potential to be future VBA leaders.

This year's program has 23 participants. Key topics for the session, the first of three two-day, eight-hour sessions to be held over the next few months, include transitioning from managing to leading, developing interpersonal skills, and increasing self-awareness. Participants will also receive twelve one-on-one coaching sessions, which Stan personally conducts.

Overall, the course seeks to ensure VBA continues to have an outstanding workforce with excellent leaders by cultivating and developing those leaders from within their own ranks. It's designed to improve attendees' interpersonal skills, make them more aware of their personal leadership styles, and provide them with a better understanding of VBA and VA.

According to Chief Operating Officer Seth Sinclair, this program demonstrates one of SAG's key strengths. "Because Stan and many of our Associates spent many years working at VA, they really know what's going on in the organization," he said. "As a result, we can align the content of our leadership programs to the current environment and challenges VA faces."

## SEPTEMBER BLOG POSTS

Here are the articles that appeared in our *Sinclair Speaks* blog in September. Check them out, and all our posts, at <http://sinclairadvisorygroup.blogspot.com/>.

- *Leveraging Today's Technology and Data (Parts I and II)*, by Chris Domergue. The fourth and fifth articles in Chris Domergue's series on customer service offers ideas on how government agencies and businesses can choose the right customer service technology for them. Part I offers a cautionary tale about an agency Chris worked with who initially made the wrong choice. Part II offers advice to IT managers and others on how to take advantage of IT's ability to improve customer service, and explains why many IT managers have difficulties doing this.
- *Leaders are Made, Not Born*, by Seth Sinclair. Seth responds to the American Management Association's new Critical Skills survey that lists the four skills young leaders need to develop in order to be successful.
- *Timeless Books on Business Management*, by Seth Sinclair. Seth notes that Time Magazine's recent list of "25 Most Influential Business Management Books" doesn't include any books that have been written in the last decade. He asks readers for their suggestions on recent books on management that have influenced them—and **offers a prize** for the best submission.
- *Teamwork on the Field and In the Office*, by Ev Chasen. The start of this year's pro and college football season inspired Ev to offer some tips on how to improve teamwork and collaboration in an office environment, to help bring your group a winning edge.

Got an idea for a future blog post? Want to write one yourself? Email Ev Chasen at [Everett.Chasen@sinclairadvisorygroup.com](mailto:Everett.Chasen@sinclairadvisorygroup.com).

## ASSOCIATES' AREA

- Erica Eng, who began work for SAG in June as a summer intern, has completed her internship. We thank Erica for her many contributions to our company, and wish her every success in the future.
- Are you following us on Twitter at #SinclairAG, and friending us on Facebook, at our Sinclair Advisory Group page, yet? If not, what are you waiting for? Thanks!

## THE LAST WORD

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*Sinclair Advisory group is located at 13665 Dulles Technology Drive, Suite 200, Herndon, VA 20170. Our telephone number is 703-665-4800. We are a Veteran Owned Small Business, an Equal Opportunity Employer, and a GSA Contract Holder (Contract Number: GS-10F-0272V.)*

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