



**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**Veterans Benefits Administration**  
**Washington, D.C. 20420**

November 8, 2012

Director (00/21)  
All VA Regional Offices and Centers

Fast Letter 12-28

ATTN: All Veterans Service Center Personnel

SUBJ: Compensation Service Fiscal Year 2013 National Training Curriculum for VBA Regional Office Personnel.

**Purpose**

It is critical that the Compensation Service National Training Curriculum is consistent and aligned with VA's organizational goals. VBA regional offices (ROs) provide specific employee training to enhance the delivery of quality service to Veterans. Each RO is responsible for establishing training plans at the beginning of every fiscal year to ensure that employees complete the designated number of national curricula hours.

In general, all Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs), Rating Veterans Service Representatives (RVSRs) and Decision Review Officers (DROs) must complete 85 hours (or more) of training in Fiscal Year (FY) 2013. The five hours of annual VA training such as Privacy, HIPAA, Ethics, VBA Continuity of Operations, and Prevention of Harassment/No Fear Training items will be monitored by Employee Development and Training (ED&T). The Compensation Service Training Staff, in coordination with the Quality Assurance Staff, has developed an 80 hour curriculum that includes technical training, specific to the level of experience for:

- Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs)
- Rating Veterans Service Representatives (RVSRs)
- Decision Review Officers (DROs), and
- Quality Review Team (QRT) members

The National Training Curriculum also provides developmental training appropriate to address skill enhancement for all employees and mandatory agency-wide curricula for all employees. Topics identified as mandatory consist of issues of high interest and/or quality concerns.

Director (00/21)

This Fast Letter is intended to facilitate the understanding, implementation, and recording of the Compensation Service FY 2013 National Training Curriculum. All VBA ROs must ensure that the information outlined in the attached Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is implemented upon receipt of this directive.

### **Definitions**

Technical training is content that is directly related to an employee's function in the organization, and it is driven by RO quality standards.

Developmental training is content that will add to an employee's skill sets and enhance agency performance, but not necessarily related to specific technical applications.

Mandatory agency-wide curriculum consists of:

1. The required Compensation Service training programs, and
2. The VBA-wide required training programs for all agency personnel

### **Training Procedures**

The attached SOP for the Compensation Service FY 2013 National Training Curriculum provides more specific information regarding the training requirements, procedures, and certification of completed courses. The Compensation Service Training Staff has identified the training requirements for VSRs, RVSRs, DROs, and QRT members during FY 2013. All training being delivered as part of the National Training Plan must have a Compensation Service nationally-assigned Talent Management System (TMS) number. Training provided by ROs that does not have a Compensation Service TMS number assigned will not be counted as part of the required 80 hours.

In addition, the SOP defines training per Title 5, United States Code, Chapter 41, and outlines the elements of training that must be met for training to be credited. All mandatory training must be delivered in accordance with the intent of the lesson. VBA RO's must ensure that:

1. Each individual selected to provide instruction meets the qualifications as outlined in the attached SOP, and
2. Selected instructors teach courses according to the approved lesson plans. (For example, if the lesson plan states that the course is "instructor-led", then the instructor must provide instructor-led training and utilize all practical exercises associated with the particular course.)

Page 3.

Director (00/21)

The required training identified in the National Training Curriculum supports the agency goal to meet quality standards, and it allows employees to feel more empowered and confident in their jobs.

**Questions**

E-mail questions concerning this letter to [VAVBAWAS/CO/C&PTraining](#).

/S/  
Thomas J. Murphy  
Director  
Compensation Service

Enclosure: Standard Operating Procedure

## **Standard Operating Procedure Compensation Service Fiscal Year 2013 National Training Curriculum**

### **Index**

<a href="#">Introduction</a> .....	2
<a href="#">Target Audience</a> .....	2
<a href="#">Definitions</a> .....	2
<a href="#">Compensation Service FY 2013 NTC Training Requirements for VSRs, RVSRs, and DROs</a> .	3
<a href="#">Compensation Service FY 2013 NTC Training Standards</a> .....	3
<a href="#">Prorating FY 2013 NTC Training Requirements</a> .....	4
<a href="#">Compensation Service FY 2013 NTC Major National Training Curricula</a> .....	4
<a href="#">Compensation Service FY 2013 NTC Training Curriculum (VSR and RVSR/DRO) Requirements</a> .....	4
<a href="#">Credit for Training (Locally created training)</a> .....	6
<a href="#">Assigning the Compensation Service National Training Curricula in TMS</a> .....	6
<a href="#">NTC Make-up Training</a> .....	7
<a href="#">NTC Refresher Training for TMS Comprehension Assessment</a> .....	8
<a href="#">Instructor Special Circumstances</a> .....	8
<a href="#">Reporting Requirement</a> .....	9
<a href="#">Questions</a> .....	9
<a href="#">Appendix A: Prorating FY 2013 Training Requirements</a> .....	10

## Introduction

This standard operating procedure (SOP) provides guidance and direction to support understanding, implementation, and recording of the Compensation Service Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 National Training Curriculum (NTC) at Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Regional Offices (ROs). This SOP is effective upon receipt.

## Target Audience

The Compensation Service NTC is required annual training for all Veterans Service Representatives (VSRs), Rating Veterans Service Representatives (RVSRs), and Decision Review Officers (DROs) in the Service Center who are involved with Compensation claims processing and who have been in their positions for 12 months or longer. This also includes Quality Review Team (QRT) members. This SOP will guide training managers in ensuring employees receive quality training according to Compensation Service guidelines.

For the first 12 months in the VSR or RVSR position, entry-level employees will be required to complete the appropriate Challenge training and the 40 hours of mandated items.

*Assigned casework should continually reinforce skills as they are taught during this training period.*

VSRs should complete the Advanced Development Curriculum within their first 24 months in the position. These courses are offered within the VSR Elective Training Curriculum.

This SOP does not apply to Pension Management Center VSRs, RVSRs, DROs, or QRT members.

## Definitions

- Training: In accordance with Title 5, United States Code, Chapter 41: "Training" means the process of providing for and making available to an employee, and placing or enrolling the employee in, a planned, prepared, and coordinated program, course, curriculum, subject, system, or routine of instruction or education, in scientific, professional, technical, mechanical, trade, clerical, fiscal, administrative, or other fields, which will improve individual and organizational performance and assist in achieving the agency's mission and performance goals.
- Trainee status: The status of a VSR or RVSR in their first year of the position. The time starts on the date of assignment and ends on the one-year anniversary date.
- Curriculum: A course of study designed for a particular purpose.
- Compensation Service Mandated Training Curriculum: Courses on specific topics identified by VBA Central Office based on national quality trends and emerging issues.

- Compensation Service Elective Training Curriculum: Courses designed to build skills and abilities of the employees. Elective training may consist of both Technical and Developmental Training:
  - Technical Training: Training to gain or improve specific skills related to a job, function, or task.
  - Developmental Training: Training to prepare employees to perform future jobs and/or to move with an organization as it develops, changes, and grows.
- Talent Management System (TMS): The VA system of record for all VA training records.
- VBA Learning Catalog: A new training catalog that is organized specifically to support the way VBA structures and manages its training programs. The training catalog is searchable by job position, TMS item number, curriculum, etc. The catalog is available at: <http://hvnc.gdit.com/lc/>

## **Compensation Service FY 2013 NTC Training Requirements for VSRs, RVSRs, and DROs**

All VSRs, RVSRs, DROs and QRT members in the target audience must complete a minimum of 80 hours of NTC training in FY 2013.

Employees in Trainee Status must complete 40 hours of mandated items. It is **strongly recommended** that trainees be included in any other local training when the training is relevant to their development. See the prorating examples in Appendix A.

The VA/VBA curriculum required of all VBA employees (which includes items such as VA Privacy Training and HIPAA) is a separate requirement and is not addressed in this SOP. The target audience will be required to complete this training and it is assigned to VBA employees in all business lines on a national level.

## **Compensation Service FY 2013 NTC Training Standards**

- ROs will only use training materials and lesson plans provided by VBA Compensation Service through their website, VBA Learning Catalog or online through TMS to ensure consistency of training across VBA. NTC courses must be taught according to the approved lesson plans provided by Compensation Service Training Staff. For example, if the lesson plan states the lesson is instructor-led, it must be taught as an instructor-led course. If there is a practical exercise, the practical exercise must be used in the class.
- Employees must complete the evaluations and/or comprehension assessments, if applicable, in TMS to receive credit for completing the course.

- Training session attendance sheets for instructor-led items are required to be completed at the time of training to include all attendees' signatures. The regional office will utilize the signed attendance sheets to ensure compliance with credit received in TMS for the attendees.

Note: The RO is required to keep the attendance sheets for the previous and current fiscal year. Scanned electronic records are highly recommended for record keeping purposes.

## **Prorating FY 2013 NTC Training Requirements**

Prorating FY 2013 NTC training requirements will be allowed in the following circumstances (refer to Appendix A for full proration details):

- Employees first becoming eligible for NTC training more than one month after the beginning of the fiscal year.
- Employees on extended periods of excused absence from their RO.
- Challenge instructors, beginning with their fourth month away from their RO.

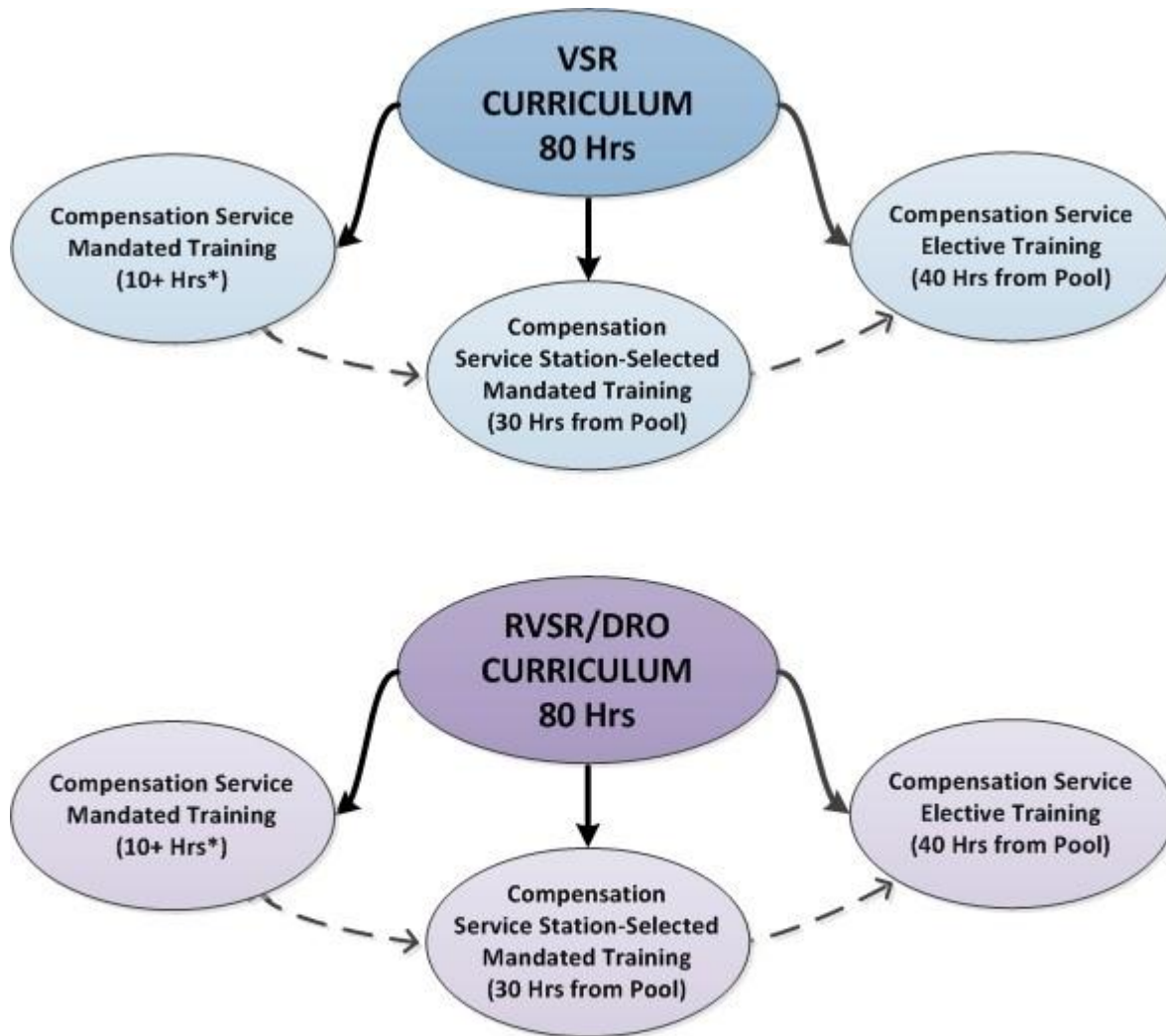
## **Compensation Service FY 2013 NTC Major National Training Curricula**

- Compensation Service NTC FY 2013 VSR Training Curriculum (VBA-310)
- Compensation Service NTC FY 2013 RVSR/DRO Training Curriculum (VBA-314)

## **Compensation Service FY 2013 NTC Training Curriculum (VSR and RVSR/DRO) Requirements**

The Compensation Service FY 2013 NTC Training Curricula have 3 sub-curricula:

- Compensation Service Mandated Training
- Compensation Service Station-Selected Mandated Training
- Compensation Service Elective Training



\*Actual required Mandated Training hours will be determined by emerging National trends

— — — The dashed line indicates how user learning hours cascade from one sub-curricula to the next

All VSRs, RVSs, and DROs in the target audience must complete a minimum of 40 hours of mandatory training. Of those mandatory 40 hours:

- Compensation Service Mandated Training: 10 hours will be courses mandated by Compensation Service (and listed as such within the VBA Learning Catalog). These items address changes in regulations and procedures at a national level. Fast letters, training letters, court decisions, and other Compensation Service mandated items will have TMS item numbers assigned and be added to this curriculum as they are published. All employees who have been assigned the Mandatory Training Curriculum will have these items appear on their learning plans automatically.

**Note:** If there are insufficient fast letters, training letters, court decisions, and other Compensation Service mandated items to produce 10 hours of training by the end of the third quarter of FY 2013, **Compensation Service will assign other relevant training to complete the 10 hours.** If emerging issues cause mandated training items



to exceed 10 hours, those extra hours may be used to satisfy the mandated requirements portion of the training requirement.

- Compensation Service Station-Selected Mandated Training: 30 hours will be courses selected from a specific pool of items by each RO based on local Systematic Technical Accuracy Review (STAR) errors, national quality trends, and requirements for a particular position. For example, this item pool contains training required for Transformation as well as for cross training from one team to another. It also includes any items which are only required once in a VSR's or RVSR's career, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Training and Performance Support System (TPSS) Modules or job-specific Transformation training. **These one-time items will be automatically assigned to learning plans based on job position assignment profiles and will count towards this 30-hour requirement.**

Any hours that accumulate over the 40-hour mandatory training requirement may be applied to the elective training requirement.

All VSRs, RVSRs, DROs and QRT members in the target audience must complete a minimum of 40 hours of Compensation Service elective training.

- Each RO will select 40 hours of appropriate elective training courses for the relevant employees based on employee performance levels, local needs and organizational structure.
- The Elective Training Curriculum includes a wide variety of technical and developmental courses.
- All authorized **technical** elective courses will be listed within the VBA Learning Catalog under the elective training curriculum. All developmental training must be chosen from VBA-level leadership courses or from the VA Learning University (VALU) catalog.

## **Credit for Training (Locally created training)**

ROs that create local training will submit the lesson plan, student handout and PowerPoint presentation, practical exercises and answer keys (complete lessons) to the Compensation Service Training mailbox at [CPTTraining.VBACO@va.gov](mailto:CPTTraining.VBACO@va.gov) for approval before teaching the topic.

Compensation Service will review the material and process the lesson through concurrence before it is approved for use in the field. Upon lesson approval, Compensation Service will create a VBA national TMS item number and assign it to the appropriate curricula ID numbers within the National Training Requirements.

Compensation Service holds the sole authority to include training items in the NTC curriculum.

## **Assigning the Compensation Service National Training Curricula in TMS**

It is essential that Training Managers follow the guidelines for assigning the National Training Curricula and the items in TMS. The curricula make it possible to track and report progress toward meeting the NTC requirement. By assigning the curricula to employees based upon

job position, ROs will have the ability to easily track employees' progress toward NTC requirements and create required reports.

- The Training Manager will assign the **Compensation Service FY 2013 NTC VSR Training Curriculum (VBA-310)** to VSRs in the target audience.  
**Important note:** Set the assign date as **October 1, 2012**, to enable TMS to track progress toward the annual training requirement.
- The Training Manager will assign the **Compensation Service FY 2013 NTC RVSR/DRO Training Curriculum (VBA-314)** to RVSRs and DROs in the target audience.  
**Important note:** Set the assign date as **October 1, 2012**, to enable TMS to track progress toward the annual training requirement.
- The initial set of Compensation Service mandated training items will automatically appear on the employees' learning plans upon curriculum assignment. New items (i.e., fast letters, court decisions) will appear on employees' learning plans as they are released throughout the fiscal year.

ROs must assign all station-selected items. This includes station-selected mandatory items and station-selected elective items. Training Managers or their TMS administrators will place each item on the employee's learning plan. Upon successful completion of any online content (evaluation, comprehension assessment, etc.), the employee will receive credit for that item.

- The Technical Training and Evaluation (TT&E) Staff, in the Office of Employee Development and Training (ED&T), will monitor, analyze, and complete reporting requirements for evaluations and comprehension assessments in TMS to ensure compliance within the NTC standards. Note that training credit may be withdrawn if the TMS evaluation and/or comprehension assessment is not completed. Training Managers will be alerted before training credit is withdrawn.

## **NTC Make-up Training**

All VSRs, RVSRs, DROs and QRT members in the target audience are required to complete the hourly requirement for the Mandatory Training Curriculum; therefore, each RO must develop a strategy for conducting make-up training sessions as necessary. Procedures for the make-up training sessions should include the following:

- The Compensation Service-approved lesson plan for each training item will be followed for all training offerings.
- The approved materials and handouts, including online exercises and/or evaluations, provided by Compensation Service for each training offering, will be distributed to training participants.
- Typically the same instructor will facilitate every offering of a required training item.
- If a videotaped session is provided as a make-up session, a Subject Matter Expert (SME) in the training topic must be made available as point of contact during the training should questions arise.
- Make-up sessions must take place as soon as possible within the same fiscal year for the Compensation Service mandated items.

- A sign-in sheet must be used to record instructor-led training attendance, including the name of the SME who facilitated the make-up session.

## **NTC Refresher Training for TMS Comprehension Assessment**

Comprehension assessments attached to TMS item content will allow three attempts of successful completion. After three attempts, the following actions must be taken when an employee does not pass the comprehension assessment in TMS associated with a training item:

1. The immediate supervisor or instructor will discuss the issue with the employee to determine the root cause for not passing and provide appropriate refresher training.
2. After remedial training has been provided and verified, the Training Manager will request that the assessment be “unlocked” for another attempt by contacting the TMS Help Desk ([TMS\\_Support@camber.com](mailto:TMS_Support@camber.com) – note that this is **NOT** the VA-level TMS help desk). Note: The Training Manager will request one unlock per employee in each request.
3. The TMS Help Desk will assign the Refresher Training TMS Item number.
4. The employee will immediately complete the evaluation attached to the Refresher Training TMS Item number. The evaluation questions will target areas for multiple attempts to pass the assessment attached to the training item.
5. The employee will attempt to successfully complete the comprehension assessment in TMS on the original training.

Note: This process continues until the employee successfully completes the comprehension assessment. The Refresher Training TMS item number will not include a time allowance for credit, but will be included in the Elective Curriculum for tracking purposes.

## **Instructor Special Circumstances**

Authorized instructors (those who have completed an Instructor Development Course (IDC), Basic Instructor Clinic (BIC), a local trainer preparation course based on Train the Trainer, or equivalent preparation as noted in the VBA Learning Catalog) may receive NTC credit for time spent preparing for and instructing courses in accordance with the approved lesson plans. ROs may grant the following credit to instructors:

1. An RO may grant an instructor up to 20 hours of credit for course preparation time each fiscal year. The Training Manager can assign TMS item VA 3786223 as completed, which is a 2-hour item that can be re-assigned as needed to match the actual preparation time.
2. Training Managers may also place the item the instructor taught on the instructor’s learning plan. Upon successful completion of any online content (assessment, instructor evaluations, etc.), the instructor may receive credit for that item.
3. Challenge Instructor credit: Instructors are eligible to receive up to 20 hours of training credit each fiscal year for course preparation. Compensation Service is developing a

form for Challenge instructors to complete. This form will list the courses taught by the instructors during Challenge. Compensation Service will send the completed form to the local RO Training Manager to update the instructor's TMS record. Course preparation time for each class taught will be given as shown in paragraph one above.

## Reporting Requirement

All ROs are required to submit quarterly training reports to Compensation Service at [CPTraining.VBACO@va.gov](mailto:CPTraining.VBACO@va.gov) in order to demonstrate reasonable progress towards the yearly training requirement. These reports are due the third workday after the end of each quarter. The format for these reports will be based on readily available TMS reports. TMS-related guidance, report formats and help documents pertaining to the execution of these requirements will be available in the Compensation Service FY13 NTC folder on the Training Manager SharePoint site.

Report Due Dates for FY 2013:

- January 4, 2013
- April 4, 2013
- July 3, 2013
- October 3, 2013

## Questions

Please send all questions about the execution of this SOP to the Compensation Service Training mailbox at [CPTraining.VBACO@va.gov](mailto:CPTraining.VBACO@va.gov)

## **Appendix A: Prorating FY 2013 Training Requirements**

### **Prorating FY 2013 Training Requirements**

Prorating Compensation Service FY 2013 NTC Training Requirements will be allowed in the following circumstances:

- Employees becoming eligible for NTC training after the first month of the fiscal year.
- Employees on extended periods of excused absence from their RO. Examples of extended periods of excused absence may include the following:
  - Consecutive active duty or active duty for training absence for 30 consecutive days or more
  - Accumulative active duty or active duty for training absence for 30 days or more
  - Consecutive leave for 30 days or more including leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
  - Accumulative sick leave or FMLA for the same illness or disease of 30 days or more; single days of sick leave that is not excused by a physician's approval will not count as time applied for prorated hours
  - Instructors are allowed up to 20 hours applied to the National Training Requirements as described in a separate part of this document; however, instructors teaching Challenge training may be allowed to prorate beginning with the fourth month away at Challenge training

Proper documentation will be maintained with the Training Manager for the current fiscal year for compliance purposes. A memorandum from the employee's immediate supervisor will suffice as proper documentation to include the name of the employee, period of time and amount of days that have been approved as extended periods of leave. The documentation will be kept confidential and will only be presented to the director's office of the RO for compliance purposes to the National Training Requirements. The RO Director will certify the proper documentation is of record and all prorated training requirements are in compliance.

## Example of documentation for extended excused absence

### Memorandum

From: (Employee's Immediate Supervisor's Name)  
 To: (Regional Office Name) Training Manager  
 Subject: (Employee Name) approved extended leave

The above-mentioned employee has been authorized extended absence as follows:

March 1 to April 1, 2013: Extended approved sick leave 31 Days  
 June 1 to July 1, 2013: Extended approved military leave 30 Days

Signed by (Immediate Supervisor)

## Calculating prorated items

Calculation of prorated items:

- Prorated items will be applied as 50% to mandated items and 50% to elective items.

Calculated example:

- Employee's first year as a VSR ends on January 1, 2013. Nine of twelve months will need to be in compliance with the National Training Requirements.
  - $9/12 = .75$
  - $80 \times .75 = 60$  hours
  - 50% of 60 must be mandated items, which is 30 hours
  - 50% of 60 must be elective items, which is 30 hours
- Employee is promoted from VSR to RVSR on July 1, 2012. The first year as an RVSR ends on June 30, 2013. Three months from July 1, 2013 to September 30, 2013 must be in compliance with RVSR National Training Requirements
  - $3/12 = .25$
  - $80 \times .25 = 20$  hours
  - 50% of 20 must be mandated items, which is 10 hours
  - 50% of 20 may be elective items, which is 10 hours

From October 1, 2012 through June 30, 2013, the employee is in "Trainee status," and, during that time, must start to complete the mandated hours of training for the complete fiscal year. Any NTC elective training completed during these nine months will count towards the 10 hours that are required for this employee by the end of the fiscal year, even if the training was completed before July 1, 2013.

Excessive mandated hours over the required hours will apply to the elective items.