2013

GUIDE TO HIRING VETERANS

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

HIRING OUR HEROES.
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FOUNDATION

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NOVEMBER 2013

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Introduction

This guide is intended to provide employers with valuable information to establish a recruitment program by quickly connecting to America's Veterans.

The U.S. Military spends billions of dollars each year training our Servicemembers and developing competent and highly-motivated leaders. Historically, Veterans have a strong pattern of positive employment outcomes. Veterans have a proven record of performance and are often celebrated for their Leadership, Teambuilding, Organizational Commitment, Decision-Making, Working in Diverse - Cross-Cultural Work-Settings, and Advanced Technical Training.

Even with these facts, some Veterans may experience a period of unemployment. This means that on the whole, a civilian job is critical to his or her economic prosperity and success after serving our Nation. Most Servicemembers will spend more time in civilian employment than in our armed forces. To honor our sacred promise to all who serve our Nation, the Department of Veterans Affairs and its partners have mobilized key resources for Veterans and employers to expedite the "job match" that leads to workforce opportunity and success.

As this guide highlights, there are a number of programs in existence to help employers connect with top Veteran talent. Federal agencies are working together every day to make it easy to leverage the various tools and incentives available.

The development of this guide would not have been possible without the coordination and collaboration of the following organizations: The Department of Veterans Affairs, The Department of Labor, The Department of Defense, The Department of Education, The White House (Domestic Policy Council, Office of Management and Budget - Performance Improvement Council, and Joining Forces), and the U.S Chamber of Commerce.

Our collective goal is to ensure that employers are aware of the various programs and services available to find, hire, train, and employ America's most valued and skilled work-ready Veterans.

Executive Summary

In 2012 there were **21.2 million** Veterans in the United States. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the 3rd Quarter of 2013, there were approximately **10.8 million** Veterans in the workforce (about 7% of the total U.S. workforce). During that period, Veterans maintained a lower unemployment rate than non-Veterans (6.4% versus 7.1%). Women Veterans faced greater challenges than their male counterparts (7.3% unemployment rate versus 6.2%). During that time, Post-9/11 Veterans had a higher unemployment rate at 9.3%, versus all Veterans (6.4%) and non-Veterans (7.1%).

Veterans face employment challenges that unemployment indicators do not reveal, including: culture challenges (military-to-civilian life), issues of increasing demand (number of Veterans seeking employment) and employer skills translations (military experience to civilian career choices, etc.).

In response, citizens, business owners, non-profits, government agencies and others are stepping up to welcome "home" Veterans as they transition from military to civilian life – by offering meaningful employment option and a chance to brush up on skills needed for high-demand civilian jobs. This guide serves as a tool for employers and other partners looking to connect career opportunities to job-seeking Veterans.

Available resources outlined in the guide include:

- **Department of Veterans Affairs resources**
  - VetSuccess.va.gov
  - Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Program
  - Employment Initiatives
- **U.S Chamber of Commerce Foundation**
  - Hiring Our Heroes - Job Fairs
- **Department of Labor resources**
  - CareerOneStop
  - American Job Centers
  - Veterans Gold Card
- **Department of Defense resources**
  - Official Wounded Warrior Programs
  - Veteran Service Organization representatives
- **Department of Education resources**
- **Resources for Military Spouses**
- **Online Resources**
  - Military Skills Translators
  - Resume Builders
  - Interview Tips
- **Tax Credits for hiring Veterans and Wounded Warriors**

Veteran Fast Facts

Who are Veterans?

According to Title 38, a Veteran is "a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable"[1]. America's Veterans are strong, many, and diverse, as the statistics below reflect:

- **21.2 million** Veterans in the United States in 2012[2]
- **1.6 million** Women Veterans in the United States in 2012[3]
- **1.9 million** Active Duty (AD), Guard, and Reserve separations from 2004-2011[4]
- **274.8K** Average number of annual Servicemember separations (FY2009-FY2012)[5]
- **90%** Servicemembers separating from military service are 35 years old and younger (FY2012)[6]
- **10.8 million** Veterans in the workforce[7]
- **Diverse Demographics** – Veterans represent all eras, including the Post-9/11, Enlisted, women Veterans, various ages (young & older), all races, varying educational backgrounds, worldwide geographical diversity etc.

Where do Veterans live?

Top 9 States	Veteran Population
California	1,942,775
Texas	1,689,759
Florida	1,588,029
Pennsylvania	1,035,566
New York	983,844
Virginia	827,810
Illinois	803,964
Georgia	778,282
Washington	617,225

Vet Pop model 2011

[1] http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/38/101
[2] http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/data_main/
[3] http://www.census.gov/acs/www/data_documentation/data_main/
[4] 2004-2011 Demographics, Profile of the Military Community (Defense Manpower & Data Center) - http://www.militaryonesource.mil/footer?content_id=267470
[5] Defense Manpower and Data Center – Military Separations Data (FY2009-FY2012)
[6] Defense Manpower and Data Center – Military Separations Data (FY2012)
[7] www.bls.gov – 3rd Quarter 2013 Veteran Employment Statistics

Preparing for Civilian Life:

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in the 3rd Quarter of 2013[8], there were approximately 10.8 million Veterans in the workforce (about 7% of the total U.S. workforce). During that period, Veterans maintained a lower unemployment rate than non-Veterans at 6.4% versus 7.1%. Women Veterans are having greater challenges than their male counterparts with a 7.3% unemployment rate versus 6.2% for male Veterans. Nationwide women who were not Veterans had an unemployment rate of 7.0% versus 7.3% for women Veterans.

Also, during the 3rd Quarter 2013, Gulf War era II (or Post-9/11) Veterans had a higher unemployment rate at 9.3%, versus all Veterans (6.4%) and non-Veterans (7.1%).

There are other employment challenges for Veterans that BLS Veteran unemployment indicators do not reveal. There are culture challenges (military-to-civilian life), issues of increasing demand (number of Veterans seeking employment), and employer skills translations (military experience to civilian career choices, etc.

Women Veterans

Historically, regardless of the era of military service, women Veterans do not identify themselves as Veterans. With the number of women Veterans projected to rise in the out-years[9], ensuring that women Veterans have access to the programs and services needed to assist them in finding jobs and maintaining economic stability while unemployed remains a vital goal. VA, working with federal, state, and non-profit partners, is making a major effort to connect employers with the large population of women Veterans who are actively seeking employment and further advancement in the workforce.

[8] www.bls.gov – 3rd Quarter 2013 Veteran Employment Statistics
[9] http://www.va.gov/vetdata/Veteran_Population.asp

How to Find & Hire Veterans

There are multiple resources available to help employers connect their career opportunities to job-seeking Veterans. In fact, that is one of the challenges – there are so many resources that employers can become confused and overwhelmed when determining where to go, whom to talk to, and whether resources are reputable. Rather than conduct an Internet search for possible connections and then wonder if the organization is trustworthy, employers can access the following government resources. These resources are not listed in any particular order, nor is it recommended that only one source be utilized.

Federal Government & Non-Profit Resources

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

eBenefits Employment Center. The eBenefits Employment Center is a joint venture with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Labor (DOL), Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and Small Business Administration (SBA). The eBenefits Employment Center provides Veterans with a career/occupation assessment tool, military skill translator, and resume builder. To establish an account on the eBenefits Employment Center, go to: www.ebenefits.va.gov.

In addition to career exploration, eBenefits users are able to explore traditional benefits available from VA, including the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment benefits, which can assist in bridging the gap from military to civilian employment.

VetSuccess.va.gov. VetSuccess.va.gov is a part of the eBenefits Employment Center, providing a virtual transition and employment resource center to connect eBenefits users seeking employment directly to registered employers. Registered eBenefits users can browse job listings, create and post resumes, and apply for jobs directly on the website.

Registered employers on VetSuccess.va.gov have a robust toolbox that includes the ability to post jobs, accept applications, search a database of almost 40,000 posted resumes, and connect with career seekers at no cost.

The website also features a wide variety of information for Veterans, Servicemembers, dependents, and employers that is available without registration. Information available includes the following:

- Interactive maps to locate community resources available to Veterans and employers
- Career seeker links and tips for resumes, interviews, and cover letters
- External MOC translators
- Current VA Partnerships
- Upcoming Job Fair information
- Newsfeed that directly links to the most updated information pertaining to Veteran employment

VA's Homeless Veteran Supported Employment Program (HVSEP). The HVSEP provides Veterans who are homeless, formerly homeless, or at-risk for homelessness with vocational assistance, job

development and placement, and ongoing employment support to improve employment outcomes. To inquire about hiring HVSEP participants, contact VA and ask for either the HVSEP program manager or Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) manager. Find out more at www.va.gov/homeless/for_homeless_Veterans.asp.

VA's Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Program. VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program assists Veterans with service-connected disabilities to prepare for, find, and keep suitable jobs. For Veterans with service-connected disabilities so severe that they cannot immediately consider work, this program offers services to improve their ability to live as independently as possible. Find out more at www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre.

Services that may be provided by the VR&E Program include:

- Comprehensive rehabilitation evaluation to determine abilities, skills, and interests for employment
- Vocational counseling and rehabilitation planning for employment services
- Employment services such as job-training, job-seeking skills, resume development, and other work-readiness assistance
- Assistance finding and keeping a job, including the use of special employer incentives and job accommodations
- On-the-job training (OJT), apprenticeships, and non-paid work experiences
- Post-secondary training at a college, vocational, technical, or business school
- Supportive rehabilitation services including case management, counseling, and medical referrals
- Independent living services for Veterans unable to work due to the severity of their disabilities

Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). In collaboration with the Department of Defense, the Veterans Benefits Administration is expanding the provision of VR&E services to wounded, ill and injured active-duty Servicemembers.

This initiative expands services VA provides to support Servicemembers and Veterans with service-connected disabilities as they transition to civilian life by placing VR&E Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs) at IDES locations on military installations. For more information, call toll-free 1-800-827-1000 or visit the web site at www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/index.htm.

Veterans Job Bank (VJB). The Veterans Job Bank (VJB) on the eBenefits Employment Center is powered by the Department of Labor's National Labor Exchange (NLX). The VJB is a searchable jobs database with millions of job openings at any given time. Users can easily search job openings and apply for vacancies. Employers can post their vacancies on NLX at no charge by visiting www.us.jobs.

National Resource Directory (NRD). The Departments of Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs partnered to create the NRD, a website that connects Wounded Warriors, Servicemembers, Veterans, and their families with those who support them. The NRD will be available on eBenefits in March 2014. The objective of the website is to provide access to services at the National, state, and local levels to support recovery, rehabilitation, and community reintegration. In addition to providing information on topics like education and training, health, and homeless assistance. Find out more at www.nrd.gov.

U.S Chamber of Commerce Foundation

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation – Hiring Our Heroes. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation has partnered with VA to offer a variety of programs for Veterans under the Hiring Our Heroes initiative. Hiring Our Heroes is a Nationwide initiative of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation launched in March 2011 to help Veterans, transitioning Servicemembers, and military spouses find meaningful employment. Employers can best use Hiring Our Heroes resources through the Employer Roadmap, at www.EmployerRoadmap.com.

- **Hiring Our Heroes - Job Fairs.** As of November 2013, Hiring Our Heroes has hosted more than 640 hiring fairs in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. Through March 31, 2013, 20,200 Veterans and military spouses had obtained jobs. Find more information on Hiring Our Heroes, to include upcoming job fairs by visiting www.hiringourheroes.org.
- **U.S. Chamber of Commerce Hiring Our Heroes - Fast Track.** Hiring Our Heroes and the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University created Fast Track to guide Veterans and transitioning Servicemembers in making informed decisions about education and employment opportunities. Through Fast Track, Hiring Our Heroes is looking to partner with employers who are committed to hiring Veterans. Employers are welcome to post opportunities for Veterans through Fast Track by visiting www.hiringourheroes.org/fasttrack.
- The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes program also offers a mobile app, a one-stop shop developed to help Veterans, transitioning Servicemembers, and military spouses searching for employment. The Hiring Our Heroes app gathers all of the program's resources in one free, easy-to-use tool – enabling employers, military members, and their families to access the free resources Hiring Our Heroes offers on virtually all mobile devices.

Department of Labor (DOL)

CareerOneStop. CareerOneStop is a DOL-sponsored employment information tool designed to help job seekers, students, businesses, and career professionals. CareerOneStop includes a Veterans Re-Employment Portal (www.careeronestop.org/vets) that provides information on employment, training, and financial assistance after military service. The website includes a military-to-civilian job search tool where Veterans and Servicemembers can search for jobs based on the skills and experiences they gained in the military. The website also includes tips for job searching and links to National, state, and local resources specifically for Veteran job-seekers.

- **American Job Centers (AJCs).** The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) sponsors nearly 2,600 AJCs throughout the Nation. Local AJC has staff and services available to help hire, train, and retain Veterans, as well as deal with any workplace issues. Through each AJC, DOL's Gold Card initiative provides unemployed Post-9/11 era Veterans with the intensive and follow-up services they need to succeed in today's job market. Find the nearest AJC by visiting www.servicelocator.org.

Department of Defense (DoD)

Warrior Transition Command. Learn how warriors in transition can intern at federal agencies or how private-sector employers can help severely wounded Veterans who have separated from the Army and

are ready to transition to the civilian workforce. Find out more at www.wtc.army.mil/about_us/eei_for_employers.html.

Official Wounded Warrior Programs

Official Wounded Warrior Programs are sponsored by military service branches. In general, each provides individualized support, assistance, and advocacy for severely wounded, ill and injured Servicemembers, Veterans, and their families regardless of their military status or location, typically for as long as it takes. Each program can connect employers with wounded Servicemembers, Veterans, or spouses looking for employment. Employers, working through one of the official Wounded Warrior Programs, can designate themselves as truly committed to showing a special interest and concern for our Nation's most-cherished Veterans.

To learn more about hiring a wounded warrior from a specific service branch, please use any or all of the contacts presented below. There are many different programs across the country.

Official Wounded Warrior Programs (email | phone)

Branch	Email	Phone
Army	AW2careerprogram@conus.army.mil	(877) 393-9058
Air Force	afwounded.warrior@randolph.af.mil	(800) 581-9437
Navy | Coast Guard	safeharbor@navy.mil	(877) 746-8563
Marines	wwrtransition@usmc.mil	(877) 4USMCWW (487-6299)

Veteran Service Organizations

Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), together with state, county and local Veteran service representatives, help Veterans and their families understand and navigate Veteran-focused programs free of charge. Veteran Service Organizations serve as strong advocates and avenues for Veterans seeking employment and employers seeking Veterans. To locate Veteran service partners, please visit: www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation/index.asp or log in to your eBenefits online account to find and select an accredited VSO representative.

Military Skills Translation to Civilian Sector

Our Nation's Veterans bring an extraordinary array of knowledge, skills, and training from their military service. It's important for both Veterans and employers to understand how knowledge, skills, and training gained through military service translate into the specific career vacancy needs of employers. This section highlights the diverse set of tools available to both Veterans and employers for the translation of military skills.

Speak the Language

Veterans from each branch of the services will be trained in one or more employment specialties throughout their military career, known as Military Occupation Codes (MOCs). These MOCs tell a part of the story of a Veteran's experience and will help employers understand how they may be valuable in candidate searches. Below are service-specific versions of the MOCs.

Service Specific Terms for Military Occupational Classification

Air Force	Army	Marine Corps	Navy
Air Force Specialty Code **(AFSC)**	Military Occupational Specialty **(MOS)**	Military Occupational Specialty **(MOS)**	Ratings
O*NET OnLine offers a Military to Civilian Crosswalk that may help improve Veterans outreach by targeting specific Military Occupational Classification codes that relate to civilian positions. Simply enter the job title (e.g., accountant, human resources, warehouse, etc.) into the military search section. Most civilian occupations will display a list of the occupational specialty codes used by the different branches of the military. Consider including a list of these codes in job announcements as a way to help Veterans better understand the correlation between their military training and the civilian careers available.			
(***www.onetonline.org/crosswalk/MOC?s=&g=Go***)			

Easy Ways to Translate Veteran MOCs

Both the federal government and private sector have developed web-based educational and occupational skills translators to assist Veterans and employers in better understanding the skills Veterans attained during military service. Below is a list of federal educational and occupational skills translators that Veterans and employers can use for this purpose.

DOL's My Next Move for Veterans. My Next Move for Veterans (www.mynextmove.org/vets) is an electronic tool that converts MOCs into a related list of civilian careers, with other relevant integrated data for the user such as:

- The necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the job
- The required education (if applicable) needed to perform the job

- Whether the job has registered apprenticeship programs;
- The predicted future opportunities for the job under review
- Average salaries for jobs under review;
- A job search tool that interfaces with the largest online bank of jobs
- Related additional careers to the job under review

VA for Vets Military Occupational Code Translator. The VA for Vets Military Occupational Code Translator (mst.vaforvets.va.gov/mst/va) will convert MOCs into a related list of Federal occupations that are useful for launching a career as a Federal civil-servant. This tool also interfaces with the Federal government's job bank[10] to provide a list of all Federal jobs that match the results of the MOC translator. In addition to the MOC translator for Federal jobs, VA for Vets also offers a robust soft-skills translator that assists in resume development and identifying transferrable military skills to civilian occupations.

Department of Education - Credit for Prior Learning Experience. Many colleges and universities award credit for prior learning experience outside of postsecondary education, including experience gained through military service and training. Prior learning assessments provide a range of options from recognition of military and workforce training to National examinations and portfolio development. With more options comes the increased likelihood for greater numbers of students to complete credentials faster and at less cost.

The American Council on Education (ACE), for more than 60 years, has been a nationally recognized leader in the evaluation of workforce and military training and provides standards, practices, and tools that higher education institutions can rely on. The ACE Credit College and University Network is a group of more than 2,000 institutions of higher education that consider ACE credit recommendations for transfer to degree programs. ACE's Military Guide (www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Military-Guide-Online.aspx) presents credit recommendations for formal courses and occupations offered by all branches of the military.

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) links learning and work. CAEL is a nonprofit organization that works at all levels within education, public, and private sectors to make it easier for people to get the education and training they need. A particular area of focus is CAEL's effort to help active military and Veterans return to school by providing more access to military-friendly colleges, recognition for life and military experience, and paths to civilian jobs. Further information is available at www.cael.org/How-We-Help/Military-and-Veterans

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Hiring Our Heroes Personal Branding Resume Engine. The Personal Branding Resume Engine (www.ResumeEngine.org) is a next-generation online tool designed specifically for Veterans and transitioning Servicemembers. Much more than a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) translator, the Resume Engine captures the totality of a Veteran's military experience including military schooling, class ranks, awards and ribbons, and civilian-friendly

[10] www.usajobs.gov.

descriptions of his/her specialties. Each Servicemember using the Resume Engine has translated his or her military experience into a civilian resume, guided by tips and advice from HR professionals around the country. Completed resumes can be shared with employers nationwide, and recruiters can search for candidates at no cost

Interviewing Veterans

Many employers have admitted, on occasion, that there are differences between civilian and Veteran applicants during the job interview process. Research indicates that this is often due to the fact that Veterans have different experiences that are not always translated well into the civilian sector. Additionally, while Veterans will be quick to praise their team or unit, they are typically not self-boastful in interviews, so employers can often feel like Veteran candidates are not "selling themselves."

It is important to keep in mind that the concept of "professional presentation" is often different for former military personnel than for civilians. Military personnel (particularly those recently separated/discharged from military service) will often present themselves with a high level of discipline learned through military training (eyes forward, back straight, and using "Sir" and "Ma'am" vocabulary). Employers should recognize that former military personnel may need to be reminded of the interviewer's recommended atmosphere and that it is appropriate to relax and respond in a casual but respectful manner. This will create a comfort level where they can appear in the most positive light. Hiring managers should be encouraged to be patient with Veteran candidates and to "dig deep" with follow-up questions to find qualities that are not apparent at first glance. It is worth remembering that Veteran candidates have high levels of teamwork and leadership experience from working in high stress and challenging environments. Although they are not accustomed to civilian interviewing techniques, an employer that sets the stage early and reduces the social challenges can ensure the benefits of hiring a Veteran are worth the extra effort.

Know What to Ask During an Interview

First and foremost, interviewing a Veteran or wounded warrior is no different than interviewing any other candidate. It is important to ask all questions of all candidates, without exception. A good interviewing practice is to ask all candidates the following question: "Have you read the job description? Yes or no - can you, with or without a reasonable accommodation, perform the essential functions of the job?" This is not asking the candidate to disclose whether or not they have a disability, but are ensuring they can perform the essential functions of the job. In addition, make it clear that as an employer, the process is understood and discrimination will not occur due to disability.

Questions relevant to experience or training received while in the military, or to determine eligibility for any Veteran's preference required by law, are acceptable.

Most of the standard behavioral interview questions should be no different than those typically asked of any other candidate (e.g., management style, problem solving, strengths/weaknesses related to teamwork, etc.). Consider phrasing questions to ensure the interviewee clearly understands references to both civilian and military work experience. For example:

- "Tell me about the type of training and education you received while in the military."

- "Were you involved in day-to-day management of personnel and/or supplies? How many people did you supervise? If you managed resources such as supplies, inventory and/or equipment, what was the net worth of these resources?"

Additionally, it is perfectly fine to thank the individual for their service to our country - plain and simple.

Introduction to Military Spouses

More than 50% of U.S. Servicemembers are married[11]. With a majority of American households now requiring two incomes to support a stable standard of living, any solution to help Veterans transition out of the military must take into account the talent inherent in their spouses.

Our returning Veterans display tremendous levels of knowledge, skill, and experience for their age, and they are more than eager to continue contributing to society. Throughout their multiple deployments over the last 10 years, their spouses have been living with the same commitment of dedication and sacrifice. In spite of their transient existence – moving with their Servicemember from duty station to duty station – spouses have become some of the most active participants and generous contributors in both military and civilian society. They too are eager to turn their wealth of experience into a stable and satisfying life for themselves and their families.

Understanding Spouses' Skills

Spouses comprise an attractive talent pool for employers, often displaying dedication, resilience, and flexibility in and out of the workplace. More than 85% have attended college or completed college-level coursework– a higher percentage than the general population[12]. Spouses volunteer at more than three times the National average, and they have proven to be more civically engaged than their civilian counterparts.

In spite of these strong qualities, military spouse unemployment has stagnated[13]. Much of this can be attributed to the potential gaps in a military spouse's resume and the lack of a professional network – challenges resulting from frequent moves and separations from their Servicemembers.

Additionally, spouses have many 'hidden' skill sets, most of them developed while working without compensation. Through their volunteer work, spouses consistently take on leadership roles in their communities. Like several paid leadership positions, these spouses manage large staffs, organize complex events, raise substantial sums of money, and complete certification classes in order to run their projects more efficiently – some courses resulting in college credits. Understanding the challenges that spouses face while recognizing their amazing assets is critical to hiring and retaining them in the workforce.

Some helpful ideas:

- View the spouse's unique situation as an opportunity, not a potential barrier to hiring. Mobility among military families is an increasingly minor disadvantage in the workforce, especially compared to civilian employees who are voluntarily changing positions and companies at a more frequent rate than the past.
- Ask questions about a spouse's volunteer experience. Ask questions that are similar to questions asked about a paid job. How many people did you supervise? What was your budget? How much money did you raise? Spouses tend not to think of volunteer positions as legitimate

[11] U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation
[12] U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation
[13] U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

work experience, but they have often completed large-scale projects that could make them invaluable team members.

- Look past the resume. Most spouses will focus on their duties and accomplishments if engaged in conversation. Most spouses diminish their volunteer skills and "unofficial" certifications on their resume. Speaking with a spouse in an interview setting will give a better picture of the spouse's skill sets and abilities.
- Find mentors for military spouse employees. Giving newly hired spouses an organizational contact who shares a similar background or has a genuine interest in their professional development will help them better assimilate into the company.
- Finally – thank spouses for their service. Spouses often feel as invested in their connection to the military and service to their country as our Servicemembers. They will always appreciate the acknowledgement.

Resources for Hiring Military Spouses

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Hiring Our Heroes Job Fairs and Networking Receptions for Spouses – Each year, the Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse Employment Program hosts 20 fairs exclusively for military spouses on military installations. The fairs feature spouse-focused employers and workshops that are geared toward spouses' unique challenges. In addition, Hiring Our Heroes is hosting networking receptions in selected locations to connect spouses with local business leaders, chamber of commerce representatives, and military installation staff in a social, relaxed setting. To find more information about Hiring Our Heroes, to include spouse fairs and networking receptions, visit www.hiringourheroes.org.

Department of Defense (DoD)

The Department of Defense's Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP)

MSEP (www.msepjobs.militaryonesource.mil/) is part of the U.S. Department of Defense's broader Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) initiative, which seeks to strengthen the education and career opportunities of military spouses by providing career exploration opportunities to help them understand their skills, interests, and goals; education and training to help them identify academic, licensing, or credentialing requirements that can help them reach their career goals; employment readiness assistance to optimize their self-marketing skills; and employment connections that help them find and maintain a rewarding career. MSEP, a targeted recruitment and employment solution, creates employment connections that provide companies with direct access to military spouses seeking career opportunities and spouses with direct access to employers who are actively recruiting. MSEP currently has more than 200 partners, who have hired over 50,000 military spouses.

Veterans Employment Programs and Initiatives

Veterans Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (VOW Act)

On November 21st, 2011, President Obama signed the VOW Act into law. The VOW Act is a bipartisan, bicameral, comprehensive legislation that is designed to lower the rate of unemployment among our nation's Veterans. The law combines Veterans' tax credits into a comprehensive jobs package that will aggressively attack the unacceptably high rate of Veterans' unemployment by:

- *Expanding Education & Training.* The VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 provides nearly 100,000 unemployed Veterans of past eras and wars with up to 1-year of additional Montgomery GI Bill benefits to qualify for jobs in high-demand sectors, from trucking to technology. It also provides disabled Veterans who have exhausted their unemployment benefits up to 1-year of additional VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment benefits.
- *Improving the Transition Assistance Program (TAP).* The VOW to Hire Heroes Act makes TAP mandatory for most service members transitioning to civilian status, upgrades career counseling options, and job hunting skills, as well as ensures the program is tailored to individuals and the 21st Century job market.
- *Facilitating Seamless Transition.* This bill allows service members to begin the federal employment process by acquiring Veterans preference status prior to separation. This facilitates a more seamless transition to civil service jobs at VA, or the many other federal agencies that would benefit from hiring our Veterans.
- *Translating Military Skills and Training.* This bill also requires the federal government to take a hard look at how to translate military skills and training to civilian sector jobs, and will work to make it easier to get the licenses and certification Veterans need.
- *Veterans Tax Credits.* The VOW to Hire Heroes Act provides tax credits for hiring Veterans and disabled Veterans who are out of work

There are two tax credits associated with this law (*Currently extended through December 31, 2013*):

1. The Returning Heroes Tax Credit is a hiring tax credit that provides an incentive for businesses to hire unemployed Veterans.
   - *Short-term unemployed:* A new credit of up to $2,400 for employers who hire Veterans who have been unemployed at least 4 weeks.
   - *Long-term unemployed:* A new credit of up to $5,600 for employers who hire Veterans who have been unemployed 6 months or longer.
2. The Wounded Warrior Tax Credit doubles the existing tax credit for long-term unemployed Veterans with service-connected disabilities.
   - Maintains the existing Work Opportunity Tax Credit, of up to $4,800 for Veterans with service-

connected disabilities hired within one-year of leaving military service.

- Increases the tax credit, now up to $9,600, for firms that hire Veterans with service-connected disabilities who have been unemployed for at least 6 months.[14]

More information on these tax credits can be found at www.doleta.gov/wotc.

The VOW Act provides additional support to assist unemployed Veterans secure employment.

Veterans Affairs Employment Initiatives

There are several programs available through the Department of Veterans Affairs that employers can utilize to find and hire Veterans. The programs, as highlighted below, include the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program, On-the-Job Training and Apprenticeship Programs, Non-Paid Work Experience Program, and the Special Employer Incentives Program.

Veterans Retraining Assistance Program

The Veterans Retraining Assistance program (VRAP) (www.benefits.va.gov/vow/education.htm) provides up to 99,000 unemployed Veterans age 35 to 60 with 12 months of training.

- Veteran must not be eligible for any other GI Bill benefits.
- Leads to an Associate's Degree or Certification in a high-demand occupation.
- Training must be offered by Community College or Technical School.
- During and upon completion of the program, Veterans are offered employment assistance and job-referral services from AJC locations Nationwide.

VRAP is no longer accepting new applicants into the program.

Apprenticeships and On the Job Training (OJT) Program

Apprenticeships and On the Job Training programs (www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/emp_resources.htm) provide a way for an employer to hire a Veteran at an apprentice wage and VR&E supplements the salary of the journeyman wage (up to the maximum allowable under the OJT program). As the Veteran progresses through training, the employer begins to pay more of the salary until the Veteran reaches journeyman level and the employer is paying the entire salary. VR&E will pay for any necessary tools.

The employer is also eligible for a federal tax credit for hiring an individual who participated in a vocational rehabilitation program.

- Benefits for Employers:
  - Half the Veteran's salary is paid by VA – not the employer
  - Possible eligibility for federal tax credit
  - Employee is on site being trained with tools funded by VA
- Benefits for Veterans:
  - Earn a salary while in an apprentice status

[14] www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/21/fact-sheet-returning-heroes-and-wounded-warrior-tax-credits

- Learning a skill with potential long-term benefit/employment

State Approving Agencies (SAA) are responsible for approving OJT and Apprenticeship programs for VA use. Employers interested in setting one up should use this link to find their local SAA, www.nasaa-vetseducation.com/contacts/default.aspx.

Additional information on registered apprenticeships is available through the Department of Labor's Office of Apprenticeship (www.doleta.gov/OA).

Non-Paid Work Experience Program

The Non-Paid Work Experience program (www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/emp_resources.htm) allows a Veteran to be placed in a local, state, or Federal government office. The placement does not count against the agency's FTE and the agency does not pay the Veteran. VR&E pays the Veteran a monthly subsistence allowance while the Veteran is participating in the program. During the placement, the Veteran works toward gaining and / or strengthening particular skill sets. Though the office is under no obligation to hire the Veteran, the goal of this program is for the Veteran to obtain full-time, permanent employment in the office where he / she is placed or a similar office.

- Benefit for Employers:
  - No salary obligation while receiving the benefit of an employee
- Benefit for Veterans:
  - Earn a skill while receiving a monthly allowance

Special Employer Incentives (SEI)

The Special Employer Incentives program (www.benefits.va.gov/vow/foremployers.htm) is available to eligible Veterans currently enrolled in VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program. Veterans approved to participate in the SEI program are hired by participating employers, and employment is expected to continue following successful completion of the program

- Benefits for Employers:
  - Reimbursement of up to 50 percent of the Veteran's salary during the SEI program (6 months or longer) to cover expenses incurred for the cost of instruction, necessary loss of production due to training status, and supplies and equipment necessary to complete training
  - Tax credit for hiring an individual who participated in a vocation rehabilitation program
  - VA-provided tools, equipment, uniforms, and other supplies
  - Appropriate accommodations based on the individual needs of the Veteran
  - Minimal paperwork to participate
  - VA support during training and placement follow-up phase to assist with work or training-related needs

- Benefits for Veterans:

- Immediate income and benefits as an employee
- Incentive to help Veterans overcome barriers to employment
- Valuable skills learned in a practical setting that meets the employer's specifications
- Permanent employment following successful completion of the SEI program
- One-on-one support from a VA counselor to assist with training or work-related needs

Chapter 36 Vocational and Educational Counseling

VA provides free educational and career counseling services to:

1. Transitioning Servicemembers who are:
    - Within six months prior to discharge from active duty
    - Within one year following discharge from active duty
    - Current beneficiaries of educational assistance under Chapters 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 1606, 1607
2. Veterans and qualified dependents who are eligible for and have entitlement to education assistance under Chapters 30, 31, 32, 33, 35, 1606, 1607

Chapter 36 services include:

- Counseling to facilitate career decision-making for civilian or military occupations
- Educational and career counseling to choose an appropriate civilian occupation and develop a training program
- Academic and adjustment counseling to resolve barriers that impede success in training or employment

To apply, eligible individuals should complete the application available at:
www.vba.va.gov/pubs/forms/VBA-28-8832-ARE.pdf

Department of Labor Employment Initiatives

Veterans Gold Card

www.dol.gov/vets/goldcard.html

The Gold Card initiative is a joint effort of the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) and Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS).

An eligible Veteran can receive enhanced intensive services including up to six months of follow-up. The enhanced in-person services may include:

- Job-readiness assessment, including interviews and testing
- Development of an Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- Career guidance through group or individual counseling that helps Veterans make training and career decisions
- Provision of labor market, occupational, and skills transferability information that informs educational, training, and occupational decisions
- Referral to job banks, job portals, and job openings

- Referral to employers and registered apprenticeship sponsors
- Referral to training by government-funded or third-party service providers
- Monthly follow-up by an assigned case manager for up to six months

As an employer contact your local AJC to provide information on job openings currently available. Locate the nearest AJC at www.servicelocator.org.

Department of Education Employment Initiatives

The Department of Education, with programs like "8 Keys to Success for Veterans" and various educational financial assistance programs, is working with both Veterans and employers to encourage education as a key enabler for long-term employment and career advancement.

8 Keys to Success for Veterans

With more than a million Servicemembers returning home in the next five years, it has never been more important for America's colleges and universities to ensure that our Veterans are getting the best possible educational experience. The *8 Keys to Success* are concrete actions that institutions of higher education are taking to help Veterans, Servicemembers and military families transition to and complete a postsecondary education. Over 400 colleges and universities have signed on to the *8 Keys to Success* so far, expressing their commitment to helping Veterans achieve postsecondary success. The following best practices comprise the 8 Keys:

- Create a culture of trust and connectedness across the campus community to promote well-being and success for Veterans
- Ensure consistent and sustained support from campus leadership
- Implement an early alert system to ensure all Veterans receive academic, career, and financial advice before challenges become overwhelming
- Coordinate and centralize campus efforts for all Veterans, together with the creation of a designated space (even if limited in size)
- Collaborate with local communities and organizations, including government agencies, to align and coordinate various services for Veterans
- Utilize a uniform set of data tools to collect and track information on Veterans, including demographics, retention and degree completion
- Provide comprehensive professional development for faculty and staff on issues and challenges unique to Veterans
- Develop systems that ensure sustainability of effective practices for Veterans

A list of colleges and universities that have signed on is available at www.ed.gov/veterans-and-military-families/8-keys-success-sites.

Financial Assistance for Veteran Education

The U.S. Department of Education offers a variety of federal grants and loans to students—including Veterans—attending four-year colleges or universities, community colleges, and career schools.

Pell Grants. A Federal Pell grant, unlike a loan, does not need to be repaid. These grants are usually awarded only to undergraduate students who have not earned a bachelor's or a professional degree (in some cases, however, a student enrolled in a post-baccalaureate teacher certification program might eligible to receive a Federal Pell Grant). Amounts can change yearly. The maximum Federal Pell Grant award is $5,645 for the 2013–14 award year (July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014). The actual amount for which an individual qualifies will depend on financial need, cost of attendance, status as a full-time or part-time student, and plans to attend school for a full academic year or less. Individuals whose parent or guardian was a member of the U.S. armed forces and died as a result of military service performed in Iraq or Afghanistan after the events of 9/11 may be eligible for additional Federal Pell Grant funds or a special Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant.

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG). FSEOG grants are provided for undergraduate students with exceptional financial need. Students who receive Federal Pell Grants and have the most financial need will receive FSEOGs first. Students can receive between $100 and $4,000 per year, depending on financial need. FSEOG does not need to be repaid. Since not all schools participate in this program, students should check with their school's financial aid office.

Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH). The TEACH program provides grants of up to $4,000 per year to students who demonstrate financial need and who are completing or plan to complete course work needed to begin a career in teaching. As a condition for receiving a TEACH grant, students must sign a TEACH Grant Agreement, agreeing to teach 1) in a high-need field; 2) in an elementary school, secondary school, or educational service agency that serves students from low-income families; and 3) for at least four complete academic years within eight years after completing (or ceasing enrollment in) the course of study for which the grant was received. If the service obligation is not completed according to the Agreement, the funds will be converted to a Direct Unsubsidized Loan, which must be repaid.

Student Loans. There are several types of student loans available from the federal government, including Direct Subsidized Loans, Direct Unsubsidized Loans, Direct PLUS Loans, and Direct Consolidation Loans, and Federal Perkins Loans (a school-based loan program for students with exceptional financial need; under this program, the school is the lender). Undergraduate students can borrow up $5,500 annually in Perkins Loans, and between $5,500 to $12,500 annually in Direct Subsidized or Unsubsidized Loans. Graduate students can borrow up to $8,000 annually in Perkins Loans, and up to $20,500 annually in Direct Unsubsidized Loans; the remainder of college costs not covered by other financial aid may be covered by a Direct PLUS loan. Federal student loans are an investment in one's future; while students should not be afraid to take out federal student loans, they should be smart about it. Federal student loans offer many benefits compared to other options, including that the interest rate is almost always lower than that on private loans, and much lower than that on a credit card.

Servicemembers should be aware of additional benefits. For all Direct Loans first disbursed on or after Oct. 1, 2008, no interest will be charged for a period of no more than 60 months while individuals are serving on active duty or performing qualifying National Guard duty during a war, other military operation, or national emergency and are serving in an area of hostilities

qualifying for special pay. Servicemembers qualify for deferment of repayment on any of their federal loans while serving on active duty in the military, or performing qualifying national Guard duty, during a war, military operation, or National emergency. If the period of active duty service includes Oct. 1, 2007, or begins on or after that date, the deferment will be extended for an additional 180 days after the demobilization date for each period of qualifying service. Under the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act, for military personnel who took out student loans prior to entering the military or being called to active duty, the interest rate on those loans will be limited to 6% during active duty military service. This applies to both federal and private student loans (and other loans as well). For members of the National Guard or other reserve component of the U.S. armed forces (current or retired) who are called or ordered to active duty while enrolled at least half-time at an eligible school or within six months of having been enrolled at least half-time, they qualify for deferment of repayment on their federal student loans during the 13 months following the end of active duty service, or until they return to school on at least a half-time basis, whichever is earlier.

College Work-Study. Federal Work-Study provides part-time jobs for undergraduate and graduate students with financial need, allowing them to earn money to help pay education expenses. The program encourages community service work and work related to the student's course of study. Students should check with their school's financial aid office to find out if the school participates.

For more information on these and other student aid opportunities, see studentaid.ed.gov/types and studentaid.ed.gov/types/grants-scholarships/military.

Additional Benefits & Resources

VA Benefits

Not only are Veterans transitioning out of the military with an extraordinary set of skills and training under their belt, they also have an array of benefits available from the Department of Veterans Affairs to help them gain the knowledge, experience, and qualifications to enter successful careers.

Many Veterans can use their benefits for:

- Two and four-year college degrees
- Graduate degrees
- On-the-Job Training
- Apprenticeships
- Technical and Vocational programs
- Licensing and Certification Exams

VA also offers a wide array of vocational and employment services to Veterans with service-connected disabilities to help them obtain suitable employment.

VA can provide:

- Half the Veteran's salary for up to six months, in some instances
- The cost of accommodations, required tools, and equipment
- A VA counselor to work with some Veterans to provide supportive services

Social Networking

Organizations that conduct business using social-networking platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, consider joining groups pertaining to Veterans and Veterans' employment. For example, there are currently more than 250 Veteran-related groups on LinkedIn. All will not be appropriate to join, of course, but some will be for posting job descriptions, and also receiving and sharing information.

A few recommended social networking groups to join or follow include the following:

- America's Heroes at Work LinkedIn group (www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=1842767)
- The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and TBI Twitter feed (www.twitter.com/dcoepage)
- U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Facebook (www.facebook.com/hiringourheroes), LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com/groups/Hiring-Our-Heroes-4248410?trk=my_groups-b-grp-v), and Twitter (twitter.com/hireourheroes)National Resource Directory Facebook page (www.facebook.com/NationalResourceDirectory).

E-News

Staying connected to issues supporting the employment of Veterans and transitioning Servicemembers is easy. The following are some suggestions for employers of all sizes and types:

- **America's Heroes at Work**
  www.AmericasHeroesatWork.gov
  Receive updated news, information, tools, and resources about the America's Heroes at Work project.

- **U.S. Department of Labor Employment Laws Assistance for Workers and Small Business (ELAWS) Advisor updates**
  www.dol.gov/elaws/subscribe.html
  DOL's ELAWS Advisor provides interactive e-tools that guide to specific information on DOL employment laws and regulations. Stay up to date on these important compliance assistance tools by subscribing to receive ELAWS e-mail updates.

- **U.S. Department of Labor e-mail alerts**
  www.dol.gov/dol/email.htm
  DOL offers a free electronic subscription service that allows citizens to receive notifications by e-mail alerting them to newly available information. Subscribers get updates on their items of interest automatically without having to return to the website to check for changes.

Preparing and Educating the Workplace

- **A lesson in military cultural competence**
  www.essentiallearning.net/student/content/sections/Lectora/MilitaryCultureCompetence/index.html

- **Top ten reasons to hire Veterans and wounded warriors**
  www.americasheroesatwork.gov/AHAW/newsroom/TopTen

- **Work Opportunity Tax Credit - Veterans Brochure**
  www.doleta.gov/business/Incentives/opptax/PDF/WOTC_Vets_Brochure.pdf

- **Understanding the military resume**
  www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/133601p.pdf

Recruiting Veterans and Wounded Warriors

- **Army Reserve Employer Partner Initiative**
  www.army.mil/standto/archive/2009/03/12/

- **Operation Warfighter**
  www.dhs.gov/xabout/careers/gc_1246894993888.shtm

- **U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's eMentor for Veterans and Military Spouses**

  www.mentorheroes.org

- **Understanding the military resume**

  - Proof of military service (DD214)
    www.dd214.us/dd214andjobs.html

- **VetSuccess**

  - Post Job openings
    www.vetsuccess.va.gov

  - Find a local representative
    www.vetsuccess..va.gov/assets/VR&E_Employment_Coordinators_list.xls

Retaining Veterans

- **Accommodations and workplace productivity enhancements**
  www.askjan.org

- **Apprenticeship - creating a flexible apprenticeship program**
  www.doleta.gov/oa/employer.cfm

- **Flexible Work Arrangements**
  www.dol.gov/odep/categories/workforce/fwas.htm

- **Employer Success Stories (hiring wounded warriors)**
  www.americasheroesatwork.gov/successStories#Employers

Employment Laws Pertaining to Veterans and Veterans Hiring

- **Compliance Assistance on Hiring Veterans**
  www.dol.gov/compliance/topics/hiring-vets.htm

- **Employment Law Guide: Laws, Regulations, and Technical Assistance Services**
  www.dol.gov/compliance/guide/index.htm

- **US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: A Guide for Employers**
  www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/publications/ada_Veterans_employers.cfm

- **Jobs for Veterans Act**
  www.dol.gov/compliance/laws/comp-vevraa.htm

- **Uniformed Service Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) Advisor**
  www.dol.gov/elaws/vets/userra/mainmenu.asp

Other Important Resources

- **America's Heroes at Work**
  www.americasheroesatwork.gov/
- **Childcare Assistance and Support**
  www.naccrra.org/MilitaryPrograms/army/
- **eBenefits Portal (for Veterans, Servicemembers, and their families to research, find, access, and manage their benefits and personal information)**
  www.ebenefits.va.gov
- **National Resource Directory (for wounded, ill and injured Servicemembers, Veterans, their families and those who support them)**
  www.nrd.gov/
- **Department of Veterans Affairs – Veterans Employment Toolkit**
  www.va.gov/vetsinworkplace/
- **VA for Vets (provides career development services to Veterans and coaching/reintegration support for military Servicemembers)**
  www.vaforvets.va.gov
- **Veterans Issues - elaws**
  www.dol.gov/elaws/Veterans.html
- **Veterans Service Organizations (Directory)**
  www1.va.gov/vso/

Specifically for the Federal Workforce

- **Computer/Electronic Technology Accommodations Program (CAP) for Federal Employers - Wounded Service Member Initiative**
  www.cap.mil/Wsm/Default.aspx
- **The Good Faith Initiative (G-FIVE)**
  www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/faqs/dir282faqs.htm
- **HR University - Veterans Appointing Authorities - Free, Online Workshop**
  www.hru.gov/course_catalog.aspx
- **OFCCP - Federal Contractor Program**
  www.dol.gov/vets/programs/fact/vet97-5.htm

- **OFCCP - Federal Contractor Program - Frequently Asked Questions**
  www.dol.gov/vets/contractor/main.htm
- **U.S. Office of Personnel Management's Government-wide Veterans Employment Website**
  www.fedshirevets.gov/
- **Veterans Preference in Appointments**
  www.opm.gov/staffingPortal/Vetguide.asp#intro

APPENDIX A: Applying for VOW Tax Credits for Hiring Veterans

The VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 made changes to the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). The Act added two new categories to the existing qualified Veteran targeted group and made the WOTC available to certain tax-exempt employers as a credit against the employer's share of social security tax. The Act allows employers to claim the WOTC for Veterans certified as qualified Veterans and who begin work before January 1, 2013.

The credit can be as high as **$9,600** per qualified Veteran for for-profit employers or up to **$6,240** for qualified tax-exempt organizations, but the amount of the credit will also depend on a number of factors, including the length of the Veteran's unemployment before hire, the number of hours the Veteran works, and the Veteran's first-year wages. The amount of the credit for qualified tax-exempt organizations may not exceed the organization's employer social security tax for the period for which the credit is claimed.

Pre-screening and Certification

All employers must obtain certification that an individual is a member of the targeted group, before the employer may claim the credit. The process for certifying the Veterans for this credit is the same for all employers.

Normally, an eligible employer must file Form 8850, Pre-Screening Notice and Certification Request for the Work Opportunity Credit, with their respective state workforce agency within 28 days after the eligible worker begins work. However the IRS has provided special transition rules for the recent legislative changes.

Special Transition Rules:

Under the special transition rules, an employer who hires a member of a targeted group, other than a qualified Veteran, after Dec.31, 2011, and on or before March 31, 2013, will be considered to have timely filed Form 8850 if it submits the completed form to the respective state workforce agency by April 29, 2013. An employer who hires a Veteran after Dec. 31, 2012, and on or before March 31, 2013, will be considered to have timely filed Form 8850 if it submits the completed form to the respective state workforce agency by April 29, 2013. The 28-day rule will be applicable after that date. See Notice 2013-14 for further processing and transition timeframe rules for Form 8850.

For more information on the pre-screening and certification process, see Form 8850, Pre-Screening Notice and Certification Request and the instructions.

Employers should contact their individual state workforce agency with any specific processing questions for Forms 8850.

Specific guidance on the VOW Act process may be found at: www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&-Self-Employed/Expanded-Work-Opportunity-Tax-Credit-Available-for-Hiring-Qualified-Veterans

Claiming the Credit

For-profit Employers	Tax-exempt Employers
For for-profit employers, the law now allows a tax credit for hiring qualified Veterans who begin work before January 1, 2013. After the required certification is secured, for-profit employers claim the tax credit as a general business credit against their income tax. The process for for-profit employers claiming the Work Opportunity Tax Credit under the VOW to Hire Heroes Act for qualified Veterans remains the same.	Qualified tax-exempt organizations, organizations described in IRC Section 501(c) and exempt from taxation under IRC Section 501(a), may claim the credit for qualified Veterans who begin work on or after Nov. 22, 2011, and before January 1, 2013. After the required certification is secured, tax-exempt employers claim the credit against the employer social security tax by separately filing Form 5884-C , Work Opportunity Credit for Qualified Tax-Exempt Organizations Hiring Qualified Veterans. File Form 5884-C after filing the related employment tax return for the employment tax period for which the credit is claimed. It is recommended that qualified tax-exempt employers do not reduce their required deposits in anticipation of any credit as the forms are processed separately. In addition to Form 5884-C and its instructions, tax-exempt employers should see IRS Notice 2012-13 for more details for claiming the credit.
You'll Need: Form 5884 (with instructions) www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f5884.pdf Form 3800 (with instructions) www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f3800.pdf Your business's related income tax return and instructions (i.e., Forms 1040, 1041, 1120, etc.)	You'll Need: Form 5884-C, Work Opportunity Credit for Qualified Tax-Exempt Organizations Hiring Qualified Veterans. www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/f5884c.pdf

For more information on the tax credit process, please visit www.irs.gov.

APPENDIX B: Employing Veterans with Disabilities

Answers to Common Questions about Employing Veterans with Disabilities

The America's Heroes at Work initiative has developed responses and supplied resources related to some common (and often unspoken) questions employers and HR professionals have with regard to employing Veterans with disabilities, including those with physical and psychological wounds and injuries sustained in the recent conflicts. This section offers some quick answers and vetted resources related to common questions about: workplace accommodations; cost, liability and return on investment; and candidate qualifications and capabilities.

Workplace Accommodations

- *"How do I determine what types of workplace accommodations a wounded warrior might need?"*
- *"Where should I go for assistance regarding workplace accommodations?"*

Just as everyone's personal history is unique, so too should be their specific accommodation.

The most appropriate accommodation is best determined through a flexible, interactive process that involves both the employer and the Veteran with a disability. This generally begins with a conversation. - Using a problem-solving approach, an employer should:

1. Analyze the particular job involved and determine its purpose and essential functions;
2. Consult with the Veteran to ascertain the precise job-related limitations imposed by his or her disability and how those limitations could be overcome with an accommodation;
3. Jointly identify potential accommodations and assess the effectiveness each would have in enabling the individual to perform the essential functions of the position; and
4. Consider the preference of the individual to be accommodated - and select and implement the accommodation that is most appropriate for both the employee and the employer.

The best thing an employer can do is to have a clear accommodations process in place (including procedures for Veterans to request a job-related accommodation) and an expressed willingness to provide both the flexibility and the tools to *all* employees that maximize their productivity. The policy should be posted and made easily accessible (via the Web, corporate intranet, etc.) for all potential candidates and current employees. The number of employees with acquired disabilities is growing rapidly in this country (according to the U.S. Census Bureau, there is a 73.6% chance of acquiring a disability if you live to age 80[15]), and employing such strategies (which are truly just good management techniques) will undoubtedly lead to greater retention of all employees, including Veterans.

Suggested Resources:

[15] *U.S. Census Bureau, 1997*

- **America's Heroes at Work**
  www.AmericasHeroesAtWork.gov
- **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**
  www.askjan.org
- **Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services (VR&E)**
  www.VetSuccess..va.gov
- **National Resource Directory (NRD)**
  www.nrd.gov

Cost, Liabilities and Return on Investment

- *"Will it cost me extra to hire a wounded warrior? What is the return on investment?"*
- *"Are job accommodations expensive? Are they simple to implement?"*
- *"What are the liabilities and consequences associated with terminating an employee with a disability?"*
- *"Will wounded warriors need more supervision? Will they take more time off work or increase my risk of workers compensation costs?"*

According to a recent accommodations study (9/1/12 from the Job Accommodation Network), 57% of accommodations cost absolutely nothing! Approximately 37% of employers reported a one-time cost, 4% reported an ongoing, annual cost to the company, and 2% required a one-time cost and annual costs. Of those accommodations that did have a cost, the typical one-time expenditure by employers was about $500. When asked how much they paid for an accommodation beyond what they would have paid for an employee without a disability who was in the same position, employers typically answered around $400.

Regarding liability, the decision to terminate any employee carries with it the risk of possible legal challenges. It is best to have clear procedures and policies in place to ensure all employees are getting the feedback they need in order to perform their jobs to the best of their abilities. The protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act are based on non-discrimination (including ensuring equal access in the employment process). It does not mandate that companies hire individuals with disabilities, but to hiring the most qualified applicant regardless of disability. Additionally, it does not protect an employee with a disability from being fired due to poor job performance, but from being fired simply because of a disability.

Research studies have consistently shown that employees with disabilities have average or better attendance, lower turnover, average or better job performance, and average or better safety records than their nondisabled counterparts. Additionally, the cost of accommodations for most employers is quite small relative to the benefits gained. Most large- and medium-sized businesses report no significant increase in costs.

Regarding the need for more supervision, studies have also shown that Veterans tend to need less supervision than the average employee. Much of this is based on their military background (resiliency, understanding chain-of-command, not sitting idle, etc.).

Time loss will only be a factor if the employee (or any other) doesn't disclose a need for a flexible schedule (which is the most frequently requested accommodation for employees both with and without disabilities). A flexible schedule rarely results in fewer hours worked.

Suggested Resources:

- **America's Heroes at Work**
  www.AmericasHeroesAtWork.gov
- **EARNWorks (Employer Assistance and Resource Network)**
  www.askearn.org/businesscase/roi_index.asp
- **U.S. Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP)**
  www.dol.gov/odep/
- **Worksupport.com**
  www.worksupport.com

Candidate Qualifications and Capabilities

- *"Are wounded warrior employees the right fit for my business?"*
- *"Are wounded warriors capable of meeting the demands of the job?"*
- *"What are the advantages of hiring Veterans"*
- *"How can I create a flexible and inclusive workplace for all employees, including those with disabilities?"*

First and foremost, it is important to expect the same level of performance from *all* employees, regardless of age, disability, gender, ethnicity, etc. Plain and simple, no one, Veteran/wounded warrior included, should be hired for any reason other than the fact they are qualified - and have the skills to do the job. For candidates with less visible disabilities, such as learning or psychological disabilities, PTSD and/or TBI, the employment process can be a very difficult experience. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, one in every five Americans has some sort of disability. In actuality, this number is most likely underrepresented, because many people with invisible disabilities fail to report such.

Employees with disabilities should be held to the same standards as those without disabilities. Though it would be an egregious error to make generalizations about any group of people, Veterans do tend to come to the table with a set of highly desirable and universal skills. Good employment and management techniques will generally sort out those who have the technical skills to do the job.

An idea to consider: Many employers are engaged in ensuring that their workplaces and products are accessible to all, employees and customers alike. Universal Design is the creation of products and environments meant to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialization. The intent of Universal Design is to simplify life for everyone by making

products, communications, and the environment more usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost. Universal Design benefits people of all ages and abilities.

True Universal Design is unobtrusive, even invisible. Whenever you pass through an automatic door, you are experiencing a version of Universal Design. A ramp or curb cut is just as welcome to someone with a baby stroller as it is to someone in a wheelchair. In addition to those whose mobility is limited, such design is intuitive to those who cannot read or hear or those who read or speak a foreign language.

Suggested Resources:

- **Universal Design in the Workplace**
  www.dbtacnorthwest.org/_public/site/files/ada/documents/UD_Workplace_Final_02.pdf
- **DO-IT (Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking and Technology) at the University of Washington**
  www.washington.edu/doit/
- **Tools for Universal Design for Instruction**
  www.facultyware.uconn.edu/
- **Universal Design Fact Sheets**
  www.askjan.org/topics/univdes.htm

Staff Training and Disability-Friendly Workplaces

- *"Do I need a special workplace infrastructure to support wounded warriors - particularly those with TBI/PTSD?"*

- *"Where can I find disability employment training for my company?"*

The infrastructure necessary to support Veterans with disabilities in general includes clear and consistent policies and procedures, including a written accommodations process.

Ongoing staff training is important to the growth, health and wellness of any corporate culture. In today's economy, offering training in the areas of positive mental health, stress management, etc., go a long way to promoting productivity in the workplace (not surprisingly, job stress is a common and costly problem in the American workplace).

Fortunately, training assistance is available at a free or nominal cost. The ADA National Network Centers offer training on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other disability-related topics in various formats to meet the needs of different types of employers and diverse learning styles. Each ADA Center offers customized training and many of the training programs provide education credit. Popular training formats include: Audio Conferences, Conferences & Training Events, Courses, Podcasts, Publications/Training Materials, Toolkit /Train-the-Trainer, Videos, and Webcasts.

Suggested Resources:

- **TBI, PTSD and Employment - an Online Training Tool for Employers, Supervisors and Hiring Managers**
  www.americasheroesatwork.gov/forEmployers/presentations/

- **Job Accommodation Network - Accommodation and Compliance Series**
  Employees with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
  www.askjan.org/media/ptsd.html
- **Job Accommodation Network - Accommodation and Compliance Series**
  Employees with Brain Injuries
  www.askjan.org/media/BrainInjury.html
- **Job Accommodation Network - Fact Sheet Series**
  Five Practical Tips for Providing and Maintaining Effective Job Accommodations
  www.askjan.org/topics/accommo.htm