

DOL and Other Government Programs that Support Veterans Initiatives

This resource highlights some DOL and other government programs that support veterans initiatives that DPNs may wish to connect with at the local, regional or state level.

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1. **Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), U.S. Department of Labor**
<http://www.dol.gov/vets/>

The mission for the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) is to provide Veterans with the resources and services to succeed in the 21st century work force by maximizing their employment opportunities, protecting their employment rights and meeting labor-market demands with qualified Veterans.

2. **VETS Staff Directory**

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/contacts/main.htm>

Includes contact information for national, regional and state offices.

3. **VETS Programs Fact Sheets**

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/fact.htm>

Includes links to fact sheets for the following VETS programs:

- Fact Sheet 1 — Employment Services for Veterans
- Fact Sheet 2 — Transition Assistance Program
- Fact Sheet 3 — Job Rights for Veterans and Reserve Component Members
- Fact Sheet 4 — Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project
- Fact Sheet 5 — Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP)
- Fact Sheet 6 — Federal Contractor Program
- Fact Sheet 8 — Veterans' Preference
- Fact Sheet 9 — National Veterans' Training Institute

4. **VETS Program Information**

A. **REALifelines – Recovery & Employment Assistance Lifelines**

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/REALifelines/index.htm>

The Recovery and Employment Assistance Lifelines (REALifelines) initiative is a joint project of DOL, the Bethesda Naval Medical Center and the Walter Reed Army Medical Center to create a seamless, personalized assistance network to ensure that seriously wounded and injured service members who cannot return to active duty are trained for rewarding new careers in the private sector.

The program creates a team to work full-time with America's recovering wounded. Dedicated professionals stationed on site meet personally with each wounded veteran at the Walter Reed and Bethesda Naval Hospitals. They help each person discover his or her special interests and unique talents. They help each veteran find the right career path to suit his or her special needs. And they are there to answer questions and provide insight into the processes of choosing job training opportunities and career paths. In addition, to ensure that everyone is served, a national follow-up system will be established to ensure that each wounded veteran receives personalized assistance as he or she returns home and transitions to the private sector.

A key part of the program is the services available at the One Stop Career Centers. In addition to assisting wounded veterans, job training and employment services will be made available to spouses in families that have suffered an active duty casualty, as well as to family members who have temporarily left their jobs to be with their loved ones during recovery.

REALifelines Advisor

<http://www.dol.gov/elaws/realifelines.htm>

The Recovery and Employment Assistance Lifelines (REALifelines) Advisor provides veterans and transitioning service members wounded and injured as a result of the War on Terrorism, and their family members, with the resources they need to successfully transition to a rewarding career. The REALifelines Advisor provides valuable information and access to contact information for one-on-one employment assistance and online resources to assist wounded and injured transitioning service members and veterans in their reintegration into the civilian workforce.

While this site is intended for use by wounded and injured transitioning service members, it offers extensive information and resources that can benefit all veterans.

B. Employment Services for Veterans

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/empserv/main.htm>

VETS offers employment and training services to eligible veterans through a non-competitive Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program. Under this grant program, funds are allocated to State Workforce Agencies in direct proportion to the number of veterans seeking employment within their state. The grants support two principal staff positions: **Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs)** and **Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs)**. This grant provides funds to exclusively serve veterans, other eligible persons, transitioning service members, their spouses and, indirectly, employers.

DVOP and LVER staff provide services to all veterans that Title 38 indicates are eligible for their services, but their efforts are concentrated, according to their respective roles and responsibilities, on outreach and the provision and facilitation of direct client services to those who have been identified as most in need of intensive employment and training assistance. DVOP and LVER staff, through outreach with employers, develop increased hiring opportunities within the local work force by raising the awareness of employers of the availability and the benefit of hiring veterans.

Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists provide intensive services to meet the employment needs of disabled veterans and other eligible veterans, with the maximum emphasis directed toward serving those who are economically or educationally disadvantaged, including homeless veterans, and veterans with barriers to employment. DVOP specialists are actively involved in

outreach efforts to increase program participation among those with the greatest barriers to employment which may include but should not be limited to: outplacement in Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program offices; DVA Medical Centers; routine site visits to Veterans' Service Organization meetings; Native American Trust Territories; Military installations; and, other areas of known concentrations of veterans or transitioning service members. The case management approach, taught by the National Veterans' Training Institute, is generally accepted as the method to use when providing vocational guidance or related services to eligible veterans identified as needing intensive services.

Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) conduct outreach to employers and engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for veterans, encourage the hiring of disabled veterans, and generally assist veterans to gain and retain employment. LVER staff conduct seminars for employers and job search workshops for veterans seeking employment, and facilitate priority of service in regard to employment, training, and placement services furnished to veterans by all staff of the employment service delivery system.

To meet the specific needs of veterans, particularly veterans with barriers to employment, DVOP and LVER staff are thoroughly familiar with the full range of job development services and training programs available at the One-Stop Career Centers and Department of Veterans' Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program locations.

C. **National Veterans' Training Institute**

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/nvti/main.htm>

DOL, through the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training (OASVET), established the National Veterans' Training Institute in 1986 to provide specialized training and professional skills enhancement of State Employment Security Agency and other veterans' service providers' staff.

To perform most effectively, veterans' services specialists require specialized training; and State Employment Security Agencies' local job service office and other program management staff need more generalized training. The NVTI strives to meet both needs.

The NVTI basic training focuses on improving employment services for veterans through a professional skills-development program. About 70 percent of participants are Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program specialists and Local Veterans' Employment Representatives; the remaining participants are state employees and administrative staff, Federal employees and others involved with veterans' employment and training issues.

The NVTI training curriculum is designed to ensure that participants are trained in competencies that meet customers' needs. In addition to the basic employment and training professional-skills course, training is offered in veterans' benefits, transition assistance, case management, marketing and accessing the media, and management of veterans' services. NVTI also offers courses in veterans' reemployment rights case investigation and grants management, to address the training needs of the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) staff.

The University of Colorado at Denver operates the NVTI under a competitively-awarded contract with VETS. Classes are delivered in a variety of modes, including residential weeks in Denver and selected locations around the country, and via distance learning approaches. NVTI courses are accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Universities; satisfactory course completion can earn participants two hours of academic credit per average five-day course.

NVTI's administrative office in Denver houses the Resource and Technical Assistance Center (RTAC), a repository for a variety of materials and information resources on veterans' issues and services that offers on-going support for individuals who have completed NVTI training.

DVOP/LVER Locator

<http://networker.nvti.cudenver.edu/>

The primary purpose of the DVOP/LVER Locator is to provide the user with the ability to quickly locate other veterans' service professionals in a particular geographic area.

D. Transition Assistance Program

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/main.htm>

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) was established to meet the needs of separating service members during their period of transition into civilian life by offering job-search assistance and related services. The law creating TAP established a partnership among the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Transportation and the DOL VETS program, to give employment and training information to armed forces members within 180 days of separation or retirement.

TAP helps service members and their spouses make the initial transition from military service to the civilian workplace with less difficulty and at less overall cost to the government. An independent national evaluation of the program estimated that service members who had participated in TAP, on average, found their first post-military job three weeks sooner than those who did not participate in TAP.

TAP consists of comprehensive three-day workshops at selected military installations nationwide. Professionally-trained workshop facilitators from the

State Employment Services, military family support services, Department of Labor contractors, or VETS' staff present the workshops.

Workshop attendees learn about job searches, career decision-making, current occupational and labor market conditions, and resume and cover letter preparation and interviewing techniques. Participants also are provided with an evaluation of their employability relative to the job market and receive information on the most current veterans' benefits.

Service members leaving the military with a service-connected disability are offered the Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP). DTAP includes the normal three-day TAP workshop plus additional hours of individual instruction to help determine job readiness and address the special needs of disabled veterans.

Although experience shows that veterans generally enjoy a favorable employment rate in the nation's job market, many veterans initially find it difficult to compete successfully in the labor market. The TAP program addresses many barriers to success and alleviates many employment related difficulties.

E. **Job Rights for Veterans and Reserve Component Members**

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/main.htm>

DOL, through the VETS program, provides assistance to all persons having claims under USERRA. The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) clarifies and strengthens the Veterans' Reemployment Rights (VRR) Statute. USERRA protects civilian job rights and benefits for veterans and members of Reserve components. USERRA also makes major improvements in protecting service member rights and benefits by clarifying the law, improving enforcement mechanisms, and adding Federal Government employees to those employees already eligible to receive Department of Labor assistance in processing claims.

USERRA establishes the cumulative length of time that an individual may be absent from work for military duty and retain reemployment rights to five years (the previous law provided four years of active duty, plus an additional year if it was for the convenience of the Government). There are important exceptions to the five-year limit, including initial enlistments lasting more than five years, periodic National Guard and Reserve training duty, and involuntary active duty extensions and recalls, especially during a time of national emergency. USERRA clearly establishes that reemployment protection does not depend on the timing, frequency, duration, or nature of an individual's service as long as the basic eligibility criteria are met.

USERRA provides protection for disabled veterans, requiring employers to make reasonable efforts to accommodate the disability. Service members convalescing from injuries received during service or training may have up to two years from

the date of completion of service to return to their jobs or apply for reemployment.

USERRA provides that returning service-members are reemployed in the job that they would have attained had they not been absent for military service (the long-standing "escalator" principle), with the same seniority, status and pay, as well as other rights and benefits determined by seniority. USERRA also requires that reasonable efforts (such as training or retraining) be made to enable returning service members to refresh or upgrade their skills to help them qualify for reemployment. The law clearly provides for alternative reemployment positions if the service member cannot qualify for the "escalator" position. USERRA also provides that while an individual is performing military service, he or she is deemed to be on a furlough or leave of absence and is entitled to the non-seniority rights accorded other individuals on non-military leaves of absence.

Health and pension plan coverage for service members is provided for by USERRA. Individuals performing military duty of more than 30 days may elect to continue employer sponsored health care for up to 24 months; however, they may be required to pay up to 102 percent of the full premium. For military service of less than 31 days, health care coverage is provided as if the service member had remained employed. USERRA clarifies pension plan coverage by making explicit that all pension plans are protected.

The period an individual has to make application for reemployment or report back to work after military service is based on time spent on military duty. For service of less than 31 days, the service member must return at the beginning of the next regularly scheduled work period on the first full day after release from service, taking into account safe travel home plus an eight-hour rest period. For service of more than 30 days but less than 181 days, the service member must submit an application for reemployment within 14 days of release from service. For service of more than 180 days, an application for reemployment must be submitted within 90 days of release from service.

USERRA also requires that service members provide advance written or verbal notice to their employers for all military duty unless giving notice is impossible, unreasonable, or precluded by military necessity. An employee should provide notice as far in advance as is reasonable under the circumstances. Additionally, service members are able (but are not required) to use accrued vacation or annual leave while performing military duty.

DOL, through the VETS program, provides assistance to all persons having claims under USERRA, including Federal and Postal Service employees. If resolution is unsuccessful following an investigation, the service member may have his or her claim referred to the Department of Justice for consideration of representation in the appropriate District Court, at no cost to the claimant. Federal and Postal Service employees may have their claims referred to the Office of

Special Counsel for consideration of representation before the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). If violations under USERRA are shown to be willful, the court may award liquidated damages. Individuals who pursue their own claims in court or before the MSPB may be awarded reasonable attorney and expert witness fees if they prevail.

F. **Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project**

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/hvrp/main.htm>

The purpose of the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) is to provide services to assist in reintegrating homeless veterans into meaningful employment within the labor force and to stimulate the development of effective service delivery systems that will address the complex problems facing homeless veterans.

HVRP was initially authorized under Section 738 of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act in July 1987. It is currently authorized under Title 38 U.S.C. Section 2021, as added by Section 5 of Public Law 107-95, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Assistance Act of 2001. Funds are awarded on a competitive basis to eligible applicants such as: State and local Workforce Investment Boards, public agencies, for-profit/commercial entities, and non-profit organizations, including faith based and community based organizations.

Grantees provide an array of services utilizing a case management approach that directly assists homeless veterans as well as provide critical linkages for a variety of supportive services available in their local communities. The program is "employment focused" and veterans receive the employment and training services they need in order to re-enter the labor force. Job placement, training, job development, career counseling, resume preparation, are among the services that are provided. Supportive services such as clothing, provision of or referral to temporary, transitional, and permanent housing, referral to medical and substance abuse treatment, and transportation assistance are also provided to meet the needs of this target group.

Since its inception, HVRP has featured an outreach component using veterans who themselves have experienced homelessness. In recent years, this successful technique was modified to allow the programs to utilize formerly homeless veterans in various other positions where there is direct client contact such as counseling, peer coaching, intake, and follow-up services.

The emphasis on helping homeless veterans get and retain jobs is enhanced through many linkages and coordination with various veterans' services programs and organizations such as the DVOPs and LVERs stationed in the local employment service offices of the State Workforce Agencies, Workforce Investment Boards, One-Stop Career Centers, Veterans' Workforce Investment Program, the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign

Wars, and the Departments of Veterans' Affairs, Housing and Urban Development, and Health and Human Services.

G. Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP)

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/vwip/main.htm>

The statutory intent of P.L. 105-220, Workforce Investment Act, Section 168, Veterans= Workforce Investment Programs (VWIP), is to support employment and training programs, through grants or contracts, program to meet the needs for workforce investment activities of veterans with service-connected disabilities, veterans who have significant barriers to employment, veterans who served on active duty in the armed forces during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized, and recently separated veterans.

The VWIP program is administered by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training (OASVET). The annual funding for Veterans= Workforce Investment Programs (VWIP) is authorized by legislation and derived as a percentage of the total annual Workforce Investment authorization. Most of the appropriated funds are used to support two-year grants awarded to eligible entities through a competitive, Solicitation-of-Grant Applications (SGA) process conducted in even-numbered years. Eligible entities include state and local governments, private, not-for-profit organizations including community based and faith based organizations.

The competitive process allows for two-year grant programs, the second year funding is based on performance and availability of funds. The intent of VWIP is to provide employment and training services to eligible veterans in the attempt to place veterans into gainful employment.

These programs can provide for, but are not limited to training (formal classroom or on-the-job training), retraining, job placement assistance, and support services, including testing, counseling. Grantees may choose to supplement the core training by offering other services that also enhance the employability of participants. These programs complement services generally provided by States through mainstream WIA program operators under Title 1, and the Wagner-Peyser Act.

Veterans may also be eligible for services under other WIA titles, which assist economically disadvantaged or dislocated workers with employment, training, and other workforce development services. VWIP allows for specialized employment, training and educational resources to be tailored to meet the needs of the specific target populations of veterans served. In many programs, minority, female, economically disadvantaged, homeless and/or disabled veterans can be targeted to receive these specialized resources. Projects that enhance direct veterans' training-related services, that emphasize service to sub-categories of the eligible veterans target groups, and demonstration or research projects that are considered unique or innovative receive priority consideration.

H. **Veterans' Preference**

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/vetspref/main.htm>

The U.S. Government has laws to assist veterans who seek Federal employment from being penalized for their time in military service. Veterans who are disabled or who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during certain specified time periods or in military campaigns are entitled to preference over others in hiring from competitive lists of eligibles and also in retention during reductions in force. Preference applies in hiring for virtually all jobs, whether in the competitive or excepted service. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) administers entitlement to veterans' preference in Federal employment under title 5, United States Code, and oversees other statutory employment requirements in title 5 and 38. However, the veterans' preference laws do not guarantee veterans a job, nor do they give veterans preference in internal agency actions such as promotion, transfer, reassignment and reinstatement.

For more specific information on veterans' preference, OPM has developed the VetsInfo Guide. This guide explains how the Federal employment system works and how veterans' preference and the special appointing authorities for veterans operate within the system. It is available on the Internet at:

<http://www.opm.gov/veterans/html/vetsinfo.htm>.

I. **Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Initiative**

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/vre/main.htm>

Since 1995, the DOL VETS and the Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) have been involved in a joint initiative to improve the way vocational rehabilitative services are provided to disabled veterans (Chapter 31 participants). A memorandum of understanding between the agencies contains a key provision that:

“Personnel in their respective agencies, as well as those employed with their federally funded agencies and programs, are expected to work together to maximize the services they provide on behalf of disabled veterans and their dependents. Their ultimate goal is successful job placement and adjustment to employment for disabled veterans without duplication, fragmentation, or delay in the services provided.”

Through this joint initiative, DOL/VETS and VA/VR&E have focused on improved cooperation, coordination, and measurable interaction between the agencies on behalf of disabled veterans enrolled in the VR&E program.

5. **State Level Employment Outcomes for Veterans and Disabled Veterans**

<http://www.dol.gov/vets/vetoutcomes/index.htm>

State Workforce Agencies nationwide operate One-Stop Career Centers that provide employment and workforce information services in local communities. These centers serve at no cost to employers or job seekers who access the services available. State

Workforce Agencies also provide priority of service and supplementary assistance to veterans and disabled veteran job seekers.

There are two key measures of the outcomes experienced by participating job seekers. The first is the Entered Employment Rate (EER), which is the percent of the participants who are employed in the quarter after the last quarter in which they received services. The second measure is the Employment Retention Rate (ERR), which is the percent of those entering employment who also are employed in the first and second quarters after entering employment. The definitions established under the Common Measures for the EER and ERR were applied for the first time to the results reported by State Workforce Agencies through December 2005. Access the URL to view the results achieved by each State for these two measures, as applied to both veteran and disabled veteran participants.

6. HireVetsFirst

<http://www.hirevetsfirst.gov/>

The comprehensive career website for hiring veterans of America's military includes information for managers, human resources specialists and veterans seeking employment. The website includes resources for matching employment opportunities with veterans. The President's National Hire Veterans Committee, which was created by the Jobs for Veterans Act (Public Law 107-288), has designed this website to help employers find qualified veterans, and to help veterans make the best use of a national network of employment resources.