

STARS  AND STRIPES[®]

Transition Magazine

SUMMER 2014

GET THE SUPPORT YOU NEED

Programs that help
Service members transition



WHAT'S YOUR EXIT STRATEGY?



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STARS AND STRIPES
Transition Magazine

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"TAP 101"

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Finding Employment?
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SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE
GIVE ONE TO A FRIEND!

"My Hair...?,
I cut it myself!
LIKE IT...?"

"But, But...,
I Love my
Combat Boots
and
Dress Skirt!?"

"eBenefits?...
Exit Strategy...?
We need help!!!
Grab one of those
Transition Magazines!"

"Looks like you're holding
all the answers....read on
and remember....
DO NOT WEAR SHORTS,
A TIE AND COMBAT
BOOTS TO YOUR FIRST
JOB INTERVIEW!!!!"

www.SEMPERTOONS.COM

Learn more: www.DoDTAP.mil



OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF

WASHINGTON, DC 20318-9999

9 May 2014

To the Men and Women of our Armed Forces:

While our time and service in the military is temporary, the ideals, values, and standards that we live by remain forever. Transitioning out of the uniform—no matter if you complete a single contract or retire after a long career—is a crucial period in your military lifecycle. For that reason, we have redesigned and upgraded our Transition Assistance Program. Partnering with the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Labor, and Education as well as the Small Business Administration, our new and improved program, Transition GPS (for Goals, Plans, and Success), offers in-depth preparation for Service members to achieve their post-military goals. Since its inception, many veterans are enjoying the benefits of Transition GPS!

Our leaders will continue to play a key role in your lifecycle—from individual career development to your final dismissal from formation. With consistent leader involvement, every separating Service member will have the capacity and confidence to excel in the civilian sector.

Each of you deserves every opportunity for success in your next chapter of life, and when Americans see veterans thriving in their communities, our All-Volunteer Force and our Nation flourish.

You inspire us every day with your patriotism, determination, and courage. Our country will remain strong because of her armed forces and our country will remain secure because of *you*! Thank you for your selfless and honorable service!

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What's your exit strategy?

An update on the redesigned Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

A Message from the Director of the Transition to Veterans Program Office

The Transition to Veterans Program Office has partnered with Stars and Stripes to bring you this first ever, stand-alone Transition Magazine. Building on content from the Spring 2014 Transition Guide, this publication is filled with even more tips, tools, and in-depth articles to further assist you with your transition. Whether you are preparing to separate from Service or just starting your military career, I trust you will find this magazine useful and informative as you begin planning for that next phase in life.

The TAP has changed and every Service member has new responsibilities. **Are you ready?** Just as you have to meet mission readiness standards while on Active Duty, you must now meet Career Readiness Standards (CRS) before transitioning from Active Duty to civilian life. As a Service member, you must document that, indeed, you are ready to pursue new career goals in civilian life. Commanders, in turn, have the responsibility to give their Service members the opportunity to attend the mandatory TAP and verify their Service members meet the new CRS before they separate.

Never heard of CRS? Not surprising as

the CRS are new to military life. However, the redesigned TAP curriculum, Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success), was created to help you meet these requirements. The new Transition GPS has been deployed to 206 military installations around the world, giving Service members and their spouses access to a full spectrum of workshops. This includes three additional tracks: Accessing Higher Education and Career Technical Training, for those of you wishing to use the your GI Bill benefits to earn college degrees or certifications and the Entrepreneurship track, for those who want to start a small business. The entire curriculum, including the three tracks, is available virtually to all Service members, at any time, through Joint Knowledge Online (JKO).

The next and final phase of the redesigned TAP will be integrating transition preparation across the Military Life Cycle (MLC). This new model represents a major culture change for the Department of Defense. Beginning in 2015, transition planning will take place throughout a Service member's entire military career. Instead of preparing for career-readiness in their last few months of active duty, Service members will begin planning for transition at their first permanent duty station. This will enable transition

to become a well-planned, organized progression to empower Service members and their spouses to make informed military and civilian career decisions and take responsibility for advancing their personal goals early in their career.

Every Service member – each of you – will eventually separate from Active Duty, if all goes well. As you read through this magazine, regardless of where you are in your military career, I encourage you to begin planning your exit strategy. Such planning does not subtract from your full commitment to a hard-charging successful military career; rather it enables you to align the rich skills, training, and experience you get as a military member with what you want to do in your second career. With better planning, that valuable skill set can posture you and your family well for the long term.

Take advantage of all the opportunities Transition GPS offers and get started today!



*Susan S. Kelly Ph.D.
Director, Transition to
Veterans Program Office
www.DoDTAP.mil*



Did you know...? The redesigned TAP was developed by DoD and the Military Services in partnership with VA, DOL, and SBA with assistance from OPM and ED.

Transition GPS Virtual Curriculum: Virtually any time, any place

The Transition Assistance Program's (TAP) Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success) Virtual Curriculum on Joint Knowledge Online (JKO) brings the new transition curriculum to the convenience of the desktop and the availability of transition-assistance resources to Service members on demand — where you are, when you need it. The Virtual Curriculum does not replace schoolhouse transition assistance training, but is a fundamental component of the overarching Transition Assistance Program redesign and the intended cultural shift to assist with transition planning early and throughout the Military Life Cycle.

Transition GPS and its modular design is intended to provide the opportunity for Service members to make informed decisions throughout their military career for integrated planning toward a civilian career. The continuous, online availability of the Virtual Curriculum provides the resources to assist in planning and aligning your military career goals, skills, and achievements with civilian career needs and objectives at your fingertips when you need it. Unlike classroom training, Service members have constant access to resources with the virtual curriculum and can return to use support resources over and over as they plan their career.

The cornerstone of TAP is the comprehensive, Transition GPS modular curriculum — an approach designed

to translate well to a virtual curriculum. All modules of the curriculum provide outcome-based training designed to meet career readiness standards and better prepare separating Service members for a successful transition to civilian life. The new transition assistance program (TAP) requires pre-separation counseling, development of an individual transition plan (ITP), and certification that career readiness standards are met before separation. The new curriculum provides Service members the framework to meet these program objectives: training and resources to help

make informed decisions in civilian life, the skills needed to meet career goals, and the ability to demonstrate career-readiness.

The core curriculum includes a transition overview highlighting key issues and considerations for transition planning, a financial-planning seminar, counseling to translate military experience and skills to the civilian sector, VA benefits briefings, a Department of Labor employment workshop, and development of an ITP. Training tracks are available for accessing higher education, technical training, and starting your own business. Training

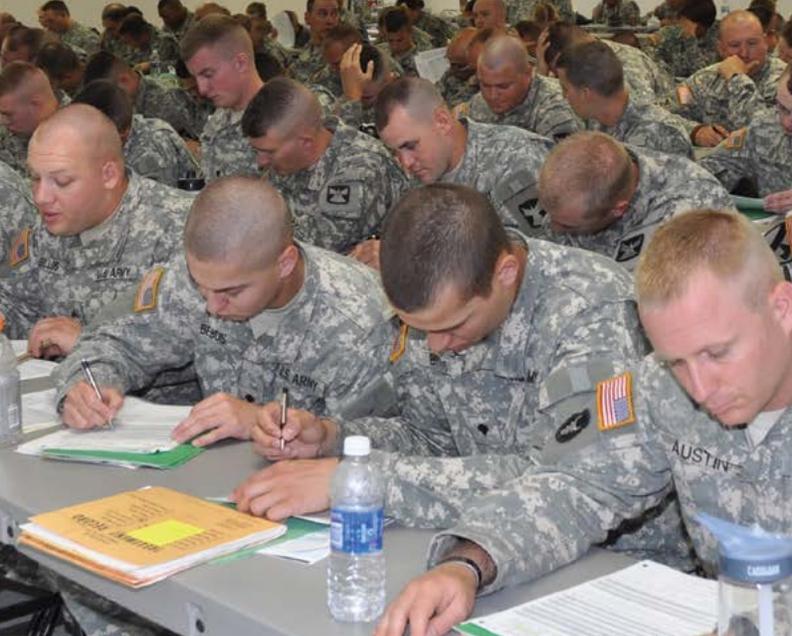
is practical and tangible as individuals prepare a 12-month post-separation budget, develop a job application packet complete with résumé and personal and professional references, and learn how to apply for all applicable VA benefits. Depending on personal goals, Service members may opt for training on identifying and applying to colleges or technical institutions using the Post-9/11 GI Bill, or may use the Entrepreneur Track to learn how to building a business plan.

The Transition GPS Virtual Curriculum mirrors the



Did you know...? 256,051 Service members departed the military in FY 2013.

Transition GPS Virtual Curriculum on JKO



schoolhouse curriculum with ten modules of Web-based courses on JKO — the DoD-distributed learning/training delivery platform — providing access to all separating Service members, including those geographically isolated from installations and classroom training. The JKO team worked collaboratively with instructional experts from the Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Labor, and Education, as well as the Small Business Administration and the Office of Personnel Management to develop the Transition GPS Virtual Curriculum, ensuring that all training modules are based on learning objectives and performance assessments to meet career readiness standards.

JKO provides global, distributed access on military unclassified and classified networks. Additionally, JKO has partnered with the ADL mobile team to develop and deploy the capability to access and leverage JKO training on mobile devices. JKO Mobile is a collaborative effort that leverages the JKO distributed learning architecture

and mobile technology in common use today, to extend delivery of training and performance aids to individuals using mobile devices. The JKO Mobile App is available in both Apple and Android app stores as a free app; simply by searching for "JKO" and downloading. The JKO Mobile App can be downloaded to the Apple iPad, iPod, and iPhone, as well as the Android tablet and phone. Four job aides associated with the Transition GPS Virtual Curriculum are available for use with the JKO Mobile app.

Asked whether the online courses effectively support transition planning from active duty, survey responses of early users indicate 70% either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree." Comments offered reflect a positive experience as well. "This course helped me set a goal on what to do next." "I learned how to make my transition to civilian life a lot easier." "It helped because it provided a framework for the actions/considerations that will need to be considered as I approach retirement, as well as addressing the mental/emotional side of the process and available resources." "It's all good!!"

Planning for Transition is one of the top 5 courses for completions on JKO out of an inventory of 926 courses.



Create JKO Account. Go to <https://jkodirect.jten.mil>. In the "CAC Login" box select "**Login using my CAC.**" Non-CAC users follow instructions provided under the "**Login Options**" section on the login page to submit an account request to the JKO Help Desk.



Select a course. Select the "**Course Catalog**" tab at top of the page and search for Transition GPS course(s) using the search field above "**Course Number**" or "**Title.**" Enter "**TGPS**" and select the "**Search**" button. Your screen will update showing all 10 TGPS courses. You can also browse the catalog using key words such as "Transition Overview" or "Federal Employment" in the search box above the "**Title**" column, select "**Search**" and it will return a listing of all courses in the JKO database containing the key word in the title.



Take course(s). To enroll in a course select the "**Enroll**" button associated with it in the "**Course Status**" column and "**Continue**" to confirm your selection. You can start the course immediately by selecting the "**Launch**" button. To start the course at a later time, or resume a course previously started, select the "**My Training**" tab at the top of the page and click the "**Launch**" button within the course listing. The course title and "**Launch**" button will remain in the course listing until you have completed the course.



Receive course completion certificate(s). After completing a course the record transitions from the course listing in "**My Training**" to the "Certificates" tab. This triggers a completion notice you will receive by email. To access and print course completion certificates, select the "**Certificate**" tab and the "**Certificate**" icon in the "**Certificate**" column at the right of the course title. Your course completion certificate will display for printing and saving. For a complete listing of JKO course completions select the "**Transcripts**" link in the upper right corner of the page.



JKO Mobile for eBooks and Job Aids. The JKO Mobile App is a free download for Apple and Android devices (phones and tablets). Use it to download eBooks on Transition GPS Accessing Higher Education Participant Workbook, Transition GPS Military Occupation Code Crosswalk, and Transition GPS Personal Financial Planning Participant Workbook. Using the JKO Mobile app, select "**Public Access**" and go to "**Library.**" Find the desired Transition GPS content and select the "**yellow**" download icon and the "**green arrow**" to open downloaded content.

CAPSTONE

The culmination of your military career

Today's Service members face a number of challenges as they transition to civilian life. For the many success stories of Service members who are able to utilize the skills, training, experience, and education they receive in the military to become successful and productive citizens, there are, as President Obama has said, stories of others who, "...struggle to find a job worthy of their experience and ... talent."



Image courtesy of Defense.gov



The Department of Defense completely redesigned the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to better prepare departing Service members for their next phase in life whether pursuing employment, higher education, a technical license or certification, or starting their own business. A critical element of the program is Capstone, which closes out the transition process through verifying each Service member has met mandatory Career Readiness Standards (CRS) and developed a viable Individual Transition Plan (ITP).

Like much of the redesigned TAP, Capstone involves a two-way effort: Service members will develop a plan for separation and articulate their unique goals; and TAP managers and Commanders will ensure Service members have the opportunity to take advantage of every service available to help them actualize those plans. During Capstone:

- Each Service member will meet with a TAP counselor at least 90 days before separation, retirement, or release from Active Duty. Together, they will review the Service member's ITP and progress toward meeting CRS to determine whether the Service member is on track to meet their personal goals, such as completing a college degree or obtaining a technical certification. If there are any gaps in the Service member's career readiness preparation, the counselor will connect them to local support to get the assistance they need.
- Once the Service member is ready to depart, Commanders will review the Service member's TAP documents to verify that all CRS were met. If there are any gaps at this point, the Service member will be referred to a representative from a partner agency such as the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Department of Labor in the geographic area where they are planning to live through a process known as a "warm handover."

— Source: *Transition to Veterans Program Office*

At some point in time, every Service member will depart from military service, and preparing them for this challenging transition through the TAP culminates during Capstone. This critical process serves as a final checkpoint for commanders to verify each Service member is career ready, has a plan to achieve post-separation goals, and is firmly positioned to succeed in civilian life.



Did you know...? The redesigned TAP has been launched at 206 installations worldwide.

MILITARY LIFE CYCLE

Are you a new recruit, a Reservist, a careerist approaching retirement, or an enlistee contemplating separation from the military? Regardless of where Veteran status may be on your radar, the DoD's upcoming Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Military Life Cycle (MLC) implementation model will help you successfully move from military to civilian life by helping plan your eventual exit strategy and increasing the marketability of your military experience.

Participation in TAP is already mandatory for Active and Reserve Component personnel in all Service branches who have completed a minimum of 180 days of continuous Active Duty. The MLC model, due for Service-wide rollout in 2015 will enhance your existing TAP services by providing new opportunities to plan for a successful career and gain skills, training, and tools needed to transition to post-military life.

Unlike the current TAP program, which conducts all transition activities in the months just prior to separation, retirement, or release from Active Duty, the MLC-based TAP follows a life cycle approach that begins preparing Service members to be "career-ready" (possessing the skills needed for civilian employment) early in their military careers. This move is a major cultural shift for the DoD. The revamped program's continuous mapping of military responsibilities to civilian

occupations, combined with a mix of instruction, resources, services, and individualized attention, will provide you with ongoing opportunities to work on your personal exit strategy — and transition-related requirements — throughout your military career.

With the MLC model, TAP training is available throughout your military career to help you prepare for transition. Together with several partner agencies — the Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA), Labor (DOL), and Education; the Small Business Administration; and the Office of Personnel Management — the DoD developed Transition GPS (for "Goals, Plans, Success"), an outcome-based, modular curriculum with standardized objectives used as a roadmap for the MLC-based TAP. Transition GPS includes a core curriculum plus additional tracks that focus on higher education, career technical training, and entrepreneurship. Transition GPS is offered both at brick-and-mortar locations and virtually through the DoD's Joint Knowledge Online (JKO) learning management system.

Each military Service has adapted the MLC model into its own, Service-specific transition assistance services. For more information about TAP and how you can use it to posture yourself for career success, contact your local installation's transition assistance office.

Military to civilian; are you career ready?

By Senior Master Sgt. Elizabeth Gilbert, 136th Airlift wing Public Affairs

The Air National Guard Transition Assistance Program has hosted more than 1,250 Service members from all branches of the U.S. military transitioning from Active Duty back to the civilian work force at the 136th Airlift Wing Family Readiness Group at Naval Air Station Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base, Texas, since January 2013.

"We just had a class finish this March," said Heidi Bearden, Family Readiness Program manager, 136th Airlift Wing. "We had a lot of positive reviews from the Service members who attended the program."

What is TAP? The purpose is to provide Service members transitioning from active military service the tools to apply their experiences on Active Duty to the civilian world. Only Service members who have completed 180-continuous days or more on Title 10 orders on or after Oct. 1, 2012 qualify for the free program.

Pictured above: Mrs. Heidi Bearden, Airman and Family Readiness program manager, 136th Airlift Wing, Texas Air National Guard explains to Lt. Gen. Stanley Clarke the importance and impact of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) for returning Veterans after 180-day deployment with no awaiting jobs.

TAP is designed to provide individual assessment and counseling to include a deactivation checklist, individual transition plan, a five-day curriculum of financial planning, Veteran's benefits and services, an employment workshop assisting in resume writing, interviewing skills and dressing for success. TAP also offers three additional two-day classes including; Boots to business (Entrepreneur Class), Higher Education (process of choosing a college, applying for college and paying for college) and finally a vocational/technical track.

"Currently, the 136th Air Wing is the only ANG TAP hub base location in the Nation," said Bearden. "Our classroom has state of the art computers and can hold up to 48 people per session. We have been averaging about 38 Service members per class."

Service members who are near an Active Duty installation are encouraged to attend locally, but due to the high demand for the program some Active Duty installations are not able to accommodate ANG members in a timely manner. Therefore the ANG hub offers availability of classes once a month.

"TAP has been in existence for nearly 20 years however this is the first major overhaul of the program," said Bearden. "In 2011 the president signed the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act which mandated TAP across services. We hosted our first class in January 2013."

TAP was developed with Veterans Affairs, Department of Labor, Small Business Administration, Office of Personnel Management, Department of Education and the Services to fulfill the responsibility to properly prepare and support Service members being "career ready" as they transition from the uniform to the civilian world.

"The program's benefit is in giving the Service members the tools to succeed in the civilian world," concluded Bearden.

"We had a lot of positive reviews from the Service members who attended the program."

The Navy is ready to help you transition

To meet the performance standards raised by the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, the Department of Defense, and Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force requirements, the Navy executed a progressive rollout of the redesigned Transition Goals, Plans, Success (GPS) during fiscal years (FY) 2012-2013 to ensure Service members have the information and skills necessary for a successful move into civilian life.

In FY13, Fleet and Family Support Centers (FFSC) reported that more than 28,000 Service members completed Transition GPS, with many also participating in one of the two-day career track offerings: the Navy-sponsored Accessing Higher Education track, the Veterans Affairs-facilitated Career Technical Training track; and the Small Business Administration's Entrepreneurship Track.

The Navy anticipates an increase in the number of Service members successfully transitioning to new careers in FY14. FFSC classrooms are equipped to facilitate larger capacities with new computers and wireless connectivity, and Veterans Affairs facilitators have spaces at Navy installations. The Navy also compiled web-accessible resources at www.gowifilive.com, developed Transition GPS Participant Guides, and published guidance guaranteeing Service members receive timely and appropriate support services.

The Navy recognizes the importance of Service member participation in the mandatory five-day workshop and two-day career tracks. Service members must show that they have met Career Readiness Standards during the Transition GPS culminating event. If they require additional assistance, FFSC staff will make arrangements with a DoD-partner agency. The Navy will continue to work with FFSC and its partners in FY14 to integrate additional workforce development and academic activities to better assist transitioning Service members.

The Navy's Installations Command webpage lists the FY14 schedules for all Navy installations offering Transition GPS, including the three Career Tracks. For Service members stationed in isolated or remote locations, the virtual curriculum can be accessed through JKO (see page 8) or a Transition GPS Virtual Curriculum DVD.

Navy Transition GPS Homepage

www.cnic.navy.mil/ffr/family_readiness/fleet_and_family_support_program/transition_assistance.html

Navy Transition GPS Workshop Schedules:

www.cnic.navy.mil/ffr/family_readiness/fleet_and_family_support_program/transition_assistance/tap_employment_workshop_schedules.html

— Source: U.S. Navy

Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program: Support for Guard and Reserve

National Guard and Reserve Service members and their families face unique challenges from their Active Duty counterparts. Many often live far from military installations and members of their units. This can make it difficult to locate and access information and support services to cope with the demands of military life, especially deployment.

The Department of Defense Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) was developed in 2008 to connect National Guardsmen, Reservists and their families with resources before, during, and after deployment. Through YRRP events held across the country, Service members and their families can access information on benefits such as health care, education, employment, and financial and legal counseling.

Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program events

YRRP events have prepared more than 1.3 million members of the National Guard and Reserve community for all phases of deployment. Events are offered at key stages in the deployment cycle: Pre-Deployment, During Deployment (for families and designated representatives), and Post-Deployment (at 30, 60, and 90 days after deployment).

Your commanding officer may inform you of mandatory YRRP events that your entire unit will attend, and you may also choose events on your own, depending on your interests.

YRRP events are typically hosted during weekends and cover topics such as:

- Managing family finances during deployments.
- TRICARE and GI Bill benefits.
- Spiritual guidance through chaplains.
- Legal concerns, such as power of attorney.
- Combat stress and other psychological health concerns.
- Employment and higher education options.
- Referrals to additional support services.

YRRP staff work with a network of key organizations, including Military OneSource, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, Small Business Administration, the Departments of Labor and Veterans

Affairs, as well as local service providers. This collaboration helps identify existing resources and design new programs.

Find YRRP events near you

Visit the YRRP EventPLUS Portal (www.yellowribbonevents.org) to find an upcoming YRRP event in your area. Events are searchable by: Service Component, Deployment Phase, Date and Location. If you don't find what you need on the EventPLUS Portal, please contact your local YRRP program coordinator (www.yellowribbon.mil/program_coordinators.html) or ask your commanding officer about additional points of contact. Additionally, mileage reimbursement and child care may be available for certain events, so be sure to inquire about these policies prior to the event.



YRRP can help you reduce the stress of transitioning through each phase of deployment, including reintegrating back home after deployment. Attend a YRRP event to connect with your local support community and learn about resources that will help you meet the unique challenges that members of the National Guard, Reserve and their families may face.

For more information, please visit www.yellowribbon.mil.

— Source: Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program

LIFE

a continuous series of
interconnected
transitions



Army Life is a life of constant transitioning. PCS moves, Soldier deployments and redeployments, Family reintegration upon post-deployment return, promotions, marriage, divorce, having children, etc., are all transitions. Transition can be stressful and overwhelming. However, transition is part of natural human development; our resiliency in successfully managing transition is tied to our individual confidence in properly preparing for it.

Transitioning from Active Duty service is a major event regardless of whether you have worn the uniform for two years or through retirement. Going through the decision making process of determining whether to get a job, further your education or pursue a trade can be a little daunting. Additional requirements of continuing to perform your Army duties and having to attend mandatory transition workshops and counseling sessions can leave you asking the question: "and I do that *how?*"

The "how" is what the Army is working on everyday and continues to be one of the focal points for the White House, senior

Army leaders, and government agencies. By now you should be aware of The Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011. This law, implemented in November 2012, is the catalyst for standardizing the transition assistance program for all Service branches and making it a mandatory program. The intent of re-designing transition assistance is to ensure Soldiers (those who have served 180 days or more of continuous Active Duty service) have the tools and resources to make informed career decisions, be competitive in the workforce, and continue to provide positive contributions to their community after completing their Active Duty service.

The Army is changing the way it transitions Soldiers by developing the services needed to support the objective of preparing Soldiers for life after Active Duty. Part of the change is enhancing the counseling, curriculum, training, information, and resources necessary to meet Career Readiness Standards (CRS). All eligible Soldiers must meet CRS prior to the transition date on their DD Form 214. The requirements for completion are:

- **Preseparation Counseling (DD Form 2648/1);**
- **Individual Transition Plan;**
- **VA Benefits Briefing I & II;**
- **The Department of Labor (DOL) Employment Workshop - DOL Gold card;**
- **12-month post-service budget;**
- **Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) Crosswalk with completion of Gap Analysis;**
- **Complete a job application package including: a private or federal**



resume, references, and two submitted job applications OR a job offer letter;

- Documented continued Military Service opportunity counseling via The United States Army Reserve (USAR) or Army Reserve National Guard (ARNG) — this applies to only Active Component Soldiers;
- Complete an individual assessment tool;
- Capstone event with DD Form 2958; and
- Education and Technical Track (In accordance with a Soldier's Individual Transition Plan):
 - Assessment to identify aptitudes, interest, strengths, and skills;
 - Comparison of academic or training institution of choice;
 - College, university, or technical training application or acceptance letter;
 - Confirmation of one-on-one counseling with a college, university, or technical institution advisor or counselor.

What is the magic answer to successfully accomplish these requirements? Transition is a dual role with shared responsibilities between the Soldier and the commander. Soldiers must take ownership to begin their transition process at least 12 months prior to their transition date. The Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) is the Army's transition program providing transition counseling, employment and education workshops. Soldiers should go early and often to their local ACAP center or visit the 24/7 ACAP Virtual center at www.acap.army.mil.



Transition is part of natural human development; our resiliency in successfully managing transition is tied to our individual confidence in properly preparing for it.



mil. ACAP is a “commander’s program” requiring leadership involvement during the Soldier’s transition process. Commanders are responsible for ensuring Soldiers meet VOW/CRS requirements. In order for a Soldier to successfully meet these requirements, commanders must have a vested interest in understanding the ACAP process and the service it provides.

Commanders who know the abilities and needs of each Soldier and who coach

and mentor Soldiers during their transition process, help facilitate a Soldier’s successful transition. Personal engagement is not only the moral obligation shared by leadership, but simply the best approach of ensuring Soldiers are prepared to transition from Active Duty. Leadership involvement and commitment in the transition process empowers Soldiers to make informed career decisions, be competitive in the workforce, and continue to provide positive contributions to their community after completing their Active Duty service.

The key to getting Soldiers in ACAP is command support at all levels. The Army is changing the method in which it counsels Soldiers and the way transition assistance is delivered.

Now is the time for commanders to focus on supporting transitioning Soldiers and it’s the time for Soldiers to start their transition process early and go often their local ACAP center.

For more information on Army transition, visit www.acap.army.mil.

— Source: Army Transition Division

TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN DETERMINING YOUR FUTURE

Marines, your transition from military service back to civilian life is exciting. You have the opportunity to create a new lifestyle for yourself and your family. You have grown and changed during your time in our Corps, and the world to which you are returning is not necessarily the same world that you left. Since then, you have become a leader and these skills will translate into the civilian job workforce. You need to start preparing yourself.



*Message from Marine
and Family Programs
Division Director
BGen Russell Sanborn,
Headquarters, U.S.
Marine Corps*

The transition process is designed to make you think about your goals and what you would like to accomplish when you embark on your civilian journey.

The Transition Readiness Seminar (TRS) will give you the tools you need to set yourself up for success meeting your goals. You will learn how to prepare yourself financially, emotionally, and mentally to take the necessary action to reach your goals. Just like we prepare for conducting a mission by planning and rehearsing, we must prepare for your mission of transition.

Whether you plan to enter the workforce, pursue higher education of career and technical education, or open your own business you need a plan. Through the TRS you will learn to build that plan.

Make no mistake, this is an active process. You will also capture those things you need to know for your Individual Transition Plan. This planning document will guide you both before and after separation. The process of defining your goals and the actions necessary to achieve them is critical. Invest in the process and your investment is sure to pay off.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18



EMPLOYMENT PATHWAY

The newly created Department of Labor Employment Workshop (DOLEW) is a key part of the Marine Corps' TRS, covering three days of instruction and activities to provide Service members with job search and employment preparation skills necessary to be competitive in a demanding work environment.

The DOLEW is required for most Service members, supporting the importance of providing this training prior to transition from military service. The DOLEW provides Service members with skills in transition planning, career exploration and validation, job search planning, resume building; federal hiring, resume building, and interviewing. Family members and spouses are strongly encouraged to participate in this workshop.

In addition to the training received during the DOLEW, Marines and their families have access to installation P&PD staff who are skilled and highly capable of providing assistance in preparing these individuals for the aggressive job market. It is strongly suggested that Marines become familiar with installation P&PD offices throughout their military lifecycle. Marines and their families can obtain personal advice and counseling on a wide range of topics, including personal financial management, professional correspondence, resume writing, interview preparation, dress for success, salary negotiations, networking, volunteerism, business acumen, etc. Such topics require additional exploration that usually must be accomplished outside of the TRS.

Upon completion of the DOLEW, Service members receive the DOL Gold Card, providing priority access to DOL career and supportive services for Post 9/11 Veterans, similar to the workshop and local P&PD staff, to include case management, assessments, and career navigation. Service members are able to receive nationwide support at all American Job Centers. Service members can locate the closest Career Center at www.servicelocator.org or by calling 877-US2-JOBS / 877-872-5627.

Although attendance at the DOLEW is mandatory, ownership of success belongs to the Service member. Ultimately, personal responsibility for one's career readiness and successful transition lies with the Service member.

EDUCATION PATHWAY

Approximately 40 percent of Marines attending the TRS select the College/University Education Pathway. The accessing Higher Education Curriculum was created to assist individuals seeking to pursue higher educational goals and provide them with information on selecting



Photo by Heather J. Hagan

Veteran Marine Staff Sgt. Ted McCann studies in the library at Marine Corps Base Quantico. "I was able to pin point a salary on what I was currently making to see what it compared to in the civilian sector," said McCann. "I received information on the Post 9-11 GI Bill and the information allowed for a smoother application process to get everything in order."

a degree program, comparing colleges/universities, understanding admission processes and requirements, entrance examinations, educational funding, and other educational resources.

The overall objectives of this pathway include assisting Marines in identifying colleges of interest, understanding the application process, receiving an overview of test preparations, gaining an understanding of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), learning the enrollment process in Veteran Affairs (VA) Educational Benefits programs, and exposure to aspects of the college environment.

The Education Pathway is facilitated by P&PD advisors. These engaging instructors provide interactive, hands-on application and activities, allowing Marines to conduct all appropriate research and exploration for potential colleges/universities. Upon completion of this pathway, Marines will complete a college application package, update their Individual Transition Plan outlining steps to achieve their educational aspirations, complete a personal assessment, and learn how to contact an advisor or counselor at the higher education institution of their choice.

In concert with the P&PD advisors, each installation has an onsite education center with staff to assist Marines and their families with their educational pursuits. Appointments outside of TRS can be made with Educational Specialists capable of providing individualized counseling and support. A common theme in the feedback received from Marines is the

importance of attending the TRS as soon as possible, particularly if they are interested in education. One cannot emphasize enough the need for Marines to begin transition exploration early during the military lifecycle — at a minimum 12-14 months prior to the end of active service.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL TRAINING PATHWAY

Approximately five percent of transitioning Marines participate in the Career and Technical Training Pathway in conjunction with the TRS. The purpose of this training is to prepare Marines and their family members for jobs in an occupational or vocational career field as well as to promote awareness of steps for gainful employment following their military service. This training is also facilitated by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

ENTREPRENEURIAL PATHWAY

Small business ownership and entrepreneurship is a viable option for transitioning Marines. Most transitioning Marines are hardworking, passionate individuals with an intense drive to succeed and the willingness to assume the risk required to start their own business. These skills are imperative for the individuals interested in exploring business ownership. The Entrepreneurship Pathway provides Marines with an overview of the skills required and the many facets of small business ownership. This includes an overview of how to develop a business plan, perform market research, and identify potential sources of capital; in addition

Service members are able to receive nationwide support at all American Job Centers.

to exploring business operations and franchising opportunities.

During TRS, this pathway is facilitated by United States Marine Corps (USMC) Personal and Professional Development (P&PD) staff, and can be supported by local Small Business Administration (SBA) national network partners, to include SCORE Associate Counselors, Women's Business Centers (WBC), Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOC), and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) personnel. SBA partners are often previous or existing business owners who are able to share their small business ownership stories and experiences with pathway participants.

If the pathway participants desire additional information, they can attend the two day "Boots to Business" training provided at all installations within the continental United States. This training has been developed by the SBA and is conducted by SBA or their partners. Following this 2-day training, participants can maintain communication with these partners, as well as decide to participate in an eight week online Small Business Ownership course in association with Syracuse University. This course explores the many components of small business ownership in depth, and will lead to the creation of a solid business plan.

CAPSTONE

The culmination of the transition process is Capstone. Every separating, demobilizing and retiring Marine will experience Capstone.

What is Capstone? Capstone is the exit interview that Marine leaders have traditionally conducted with separating Marines. The Capstone adds structure to a previously more informal process. Marine leaders have always interviewed departing Marines to thank them for serving the country and the Corps and to discuss with them a bit about their future plans. Capstone formalizes the process and helps the Commander and the Marine structure the exit interview.

During Capstone, the Commanding Officer (CO) will meet with the departing Marine not less than 90 days prior to separation, demobilization, or retirement. The CO will review the Marine's Individual Transition Plan (ITP) as well as the Marine's achievement of the Career Readiness Standards (CRS). The CO will examine the Individual Transition Plan Checklist to make sure that the Marine has completed all the actions associated with the Marine's chosen pathway. If the Marine is CRS complete, the CO will sign the ITP checklist and the Marine will be ready to exit the Corps with a reasonable assurance the he is ready to take on life's next challenges.

In the process of the Capstone interview, a CO may find that a Marine has a gap in her



Photo by Heather J. Hagan

Veteran Marine Cpl. Joel Hernandez currently works as the administrator for the Family Readiness Branch, Marine and Family Programs Division, Headquarters, United States Marine Corps. He plans to use his degrees to enhance his skills he gained from his service in the Marine Corps. "TRS helped me understand what I needed to do to apply for a VA Claim, GI Bill benefits, and many other programs," said Hernandez. "I'll be attending Northern Virginia Community College to get my Associates in Business Administration and I would like to go University of Maryland University College to get my Bachelors in Business Administration."

transition plan. If so, the CO will put the Marine in contact with people who have the expertise and resources to assist the Marine to improve her career readiness and help her either meet Career Readiness standard, or help her obtain service or assistance post-service. For example, if a Marine has had trouble developing a twelve month post-separation budget, the CO can refer the Marine to the installation Personal Financial Manager for assistance. If the Marine is unsure about how to find a job, the CO can refer her to the installation transition staff and link the Marine to Department of Labor resources, such as the American Job Center closest to the Marine's post-service location.

How does a Marine prepare for Capstone? The Marine prepares by attending the TRS and any pathways, optional tracks and additional seminars, and workshops pertaining to her post-separation goals. They may also seek assistance from P&PD staff aboard each installation. Department of Veterans Affairs staff or Veteran Service Organizations can help Marines understand and apply for Veterans benefits.

Of course in the end, the Marine is responsible for their own transition and the more time and effort they put into choosing goals and making a good Individual Transition Plan, the better their chances of meeting those goals. Make no mistake; transition involves work by each individual Marine. Just as a individual must prepare for the mission of being a Marine,

they must also prepare for the mission of transitioning from the Marine Corps.

CREDENTIALING

On April 29, 2013, First Lady Michelle Obama announced the launch of the Information Technology (IT) Training and Certification Partnership, which will enable thousands of Service members to earn industry-recognized IT certifications. The Marine Corps will conduct a pilot program to credential qualified Marines in the IT military occupation specialists. The primary purpose of this pilot program is to improve the skills and abilities of IT specialists in their early to mid-careers, and to expand the occupational capabilities of the force. The secondary purpose is to enhance the employability of IT personnel upon their transition from the Marine Corps.

During the pilot programs we are looking to gather information on: the link between military careers and civilian careers, training and education gaps, and cost associated with attaining and sustaining civilian credentials. Marines will have an opportunity to test and qualify for certification free of charge to the Marines and the Marine Corps with the following organizations: American Welding Society, National Institute Metalworking Skills (NIMS), Manufacturing Skills Standard Council (MSSC), Department of Transportation Commercial Driver License (CDL).

Marines completing the MOS schools will have

Approximately 40 percent of Marines attending the TRS select College/University Education Pathway.

to opportunity to test at various CONUS and OCONUS locations.

The following Marine Corps MOS were selected for the White House Manufacturing Initiatives for Credentialing Pilots: Metal Worker, Machinist, Supply Administration and Operation Specialist, Warehouse Clerk, Logistics/Embarkation Specialist, Logistics/Mobility Chief, Motor Transport Operator.

PERSONAL FINANCE

Preparing transitioning Marines and Sailors for civilian life is a priority of the Marine Corps and personal financial education has been added to the Transition Readiness Seminar to improve the overall well-being of those transitioning. It is important that Service members look down the road towards civilian life as soon as possible and research the aspects of transition that will affect their personal budgets so they are better prepared and can make adjustments.

To help those that have served our country, our mission should be to educate them on financial matters such as improving their financial insight, paying off debts, decreasing expenses, researching locations with job opportunities, and other potential financial changes that would impact their goals.

Installation Personal Financial Management Specialists (PFMs) provide education and individual counseling to Marines and Sailors on multiple financial topics including how to increase their savings, decrease their expenses and debt, and how to create a current monthly budget and post-service budget as a tool to track their financial progress. Planning components, such as current finances, short-term objectives, intermediate objectives and long term objectives along with a plan of action for execution, are part of the education. They are taught the S.M.A.R.T method which is Setting goals, making them Measurable, being Action-oriented and Realistic and taking into consideration Time and cost.

PFMs educate Marines and Sailors on how to prepare a budget by discussing factors such as being realistic on their salary expectations and doing their research. The education they receive in the Transition Readiness Seminar prepares them to research and determine realistic employment and salary opportunities. It is important that Service members understand the job market and the demand for the positions they qualify for as well as how this will impact their finances. For example, if a Service member plans to attend college using the 9/11 GI Bill, they can receive a Monthly Housing Allowance to pay their living expenses and debts; this can be considered during the interaction with PFM Specialists who will help them develop a student budget. If the Service member plans on becoming a small business owner, it is even

more important to understand start-up costs, profit turnaround time, and other expenses which will affect personal finances.

Another example is tax-exempt allowances, such as Basic Allowance for Housing and Basic Allowances for Subsistence. These tax-exempt allowances are a significant tax savings, since it averages over 30 percent of a member's total regular cash Pay, and this will change upon transition. Service members need to take all taxation issues into consideration. A great calculator on examples of these tax differences can be found at http://militarypay.defense.gov/pay/tax/01_allowances.html. Understanding how these differences will impact their finances

is important for their future.

Researching the cost of living differences at a new location, such as changes in their housing costs, utility bills, medical and dental costs, day care costs, car and home insurance prices, groceries, and gas prices, are important as well. The action plan and tracking tools of the budget worksheet developed with the PFM Specialists help Marines and Sailors reallocate funds.

The Marine Corps, in conjunction with the Installation PFMs, believe in preparing Service members for their next mission and assisting them in being knowledgeable about their financial future.



MARINE FOR LIFE CYCLE

Beginning in 2014 the Marine Corps began moving to a life cycle model of transition assistance. In the life cycle approach, there are transition activities that occur throughout one's career as a Marine.

While the TRS provides information customized to a pathway as early as 12 to 14 months prior to separation, it remains focused on providing all transition information in a one-time event. With the Marine for Life cycle approach, transition is an ongoing endeavor that begins during the recruiting process and flows continuously through the landscape of a Marine's career as a recruiting prospect, through initial training, deployment, promotion, family status change, re-enlistment, Professional Military Education, voluntary education, permanent change of station, separation, demobilization, retirement, and status as a Veteran Marine.

Services are being designed in a way that prepares Marines to meet their individual goals and the corresponding career readiness standards (CRS). Services will build throughout the course of a Marine's service so that Marines grow toward CRS during their entire period of service.

Services should therefore be viewed as continuous, reinforced and incorporated into the concept of life-long learning and will be delivered at predetermined touch points. At each touch point Career

Planners/Unit Transition Coordinator and P&PD staff will work together to provide relevant services. For example, when a Marine reaches her first permanent duty station touch point and has her initial interview with her Career Planner, she will be directed to take and pass the "Your Readiness" MarineNet course to learn about the reenlistment process, the transition process, developing their Individual Transition Plan and available resources and support. They will also be directed to mandatory personal financial management training that will expose them to: banking and financial services; developing a spending plan; understanding credit management; understanding car buying strategies; saving and investing; consumer awareness; identifying insurance/ risk management; understanding legal issues which include military protections/rights; and understanding the importance of financial planning for deployment.

At this and other touch points Marines will be exposed to topics and training that will aid them in their personal and professional development and help prepare them for the inevitable transition process.

The TRS then becomes the checkpoint for CRS attainment. 12 to 14 months prior to separation, Marines should, with the aid of their Unit Transition Coordinator, conduct a self-evaluation of their progress toward meeting CRS and schedule attendance at the TRS modules that can best assist them to attain CRS. For example, a Marine who has vigorously pursued personal financial management and can demonstrate a working knowledge of financial topics and practices and can demonstrate a proficiency in creating and executing a 12-month budget need not attend the budget and financial management portion of the TRS.

DoD behavioral health programs helping Service members transition with care

Developed in response to a Defense Department recommendation to “maintain continuity of care across transitions,” the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) developed the inTransition program to provide support to transitioning Service members receiving mental health services.

“This joint Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs program helps to bridge potential gaps to ensure that Service members who receive psychological health care do not ‘fall through the cracks’ during transitions such as a relocation to a new duty station or transition from Active Duty to civilian life,” said George Lamb, DCoE’s chief of outreach.

Lamb said transitioning Service members at the greatest risk for disengaging from care include:

- Service members who recently received or are receiving behavioral health care scheduled for a permanent change of station (PCS), an extended temporary duty station or are transitioning care to the VA or TRICARE.
- Wounded, ill and injured Service members who recently received or are receiving behavioral health care and are returning to home station following rehabilitative care at a military treatment facility, “warrior transition unit,” or VA hospital facility.
- National Guard and Reserve Service members being activated who recently received or are receiving behavioral health care and must transition to the VA or military treatment facility, VA or TRICARE.
- Service members making transitions from one location to another, including a deployed setting, who are or have been receiving behavioral health care, and who do not fall into one of the categories above.

inTransition connects eligible Service members with licensed master’s level transition support coaches who can provide one-on-one assistance that is tailored to address each Service member’s unique circumstances and behavioral health care needs.

Lamb said inTransition coaches are trained in military cultural competency on issues related to relocations, family separation and readiness for deployment and transition to civilian life. They use non-medical coaching and motivational interviewing techniques to encourage improved continuity of behavioral health services.

inTransition coaches can help identify local community services, support groups, crisis intervention services and healthy lifestyle resources that are available in the Service member’s new location. The coaches are trained to identify situations or behavior such as suicidal risk concerns that require direct engagement in mental health services.

Service members can call inTransition for a confidential consultation. Three phone numbers are available – toll free within the U.S. (800)424-7877; Defense Switched Network or DSN (800)424-4685, and outside the U.S. collect (314)387-4700. Additional information about inTransition is available at www.health.mil/InTransition.

The inTransition program is only one of many tools and resources offered by the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE). DCoE is a Defense Department agency and a part of the Military Health System and its primary focus is on psychological health and traumatic brain injury prevention and care in the military community.

In May 2009, the DCoE launched the Real Warriors Campaign (www.realwarriors.net), a multimedia public awareness campaign that encourages help-seeking behavior among Service members, Veterans and military families coping with invisible wounds.

Launched by the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) in 2009, the campaign is an integral part of the Defense Department’s overall effort to encourage warriors and families to seek appropriate care and support for psychological health concerns.

To reach the broadest audience possible, the campaign features a variety of strategies including outreach and partnerships, print materials, media outreach, an interactive website, mobile website and social media. The campaign features stories of real Service members who reached out for psychological support or care with successful outcomes, including learning coping skills, maintaining their security clearance and continuing to succeed in their military or civilian careers.

About DCoE

The mission of the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE) is to improve the lives of our nation’s Service members, families and Veterans by advancing excellence in psychological health and traumatic brain injury prevention and care. DCoE serves as the principal integrator and authority on psychological health and traumatic brain injury knowledge and standards for the Department of Defense. The organization is comprised of three centers: Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC), Deployment Health Clinical Center (DHCC) and National Center for Telehealth and Technology (T2). Learn more about DCoE at www.dcoe.mil.

— Source: DCoE Public Affairs. Contact DCoE Public Affairs at 703.604.5704.

Image courtesy of Defense.gov



Did you know...? Army refers to TAP as ACAP (Army Career & Alumni Program).

Don't dismiss the importance of the Transition Assistance Program

By CMSgt (retired) Jim Pepin



My transitional journey was an experience I will never forget. I began my journey, like most, over a year in advance. I had begun writing my resume and researched the areas in which I wanted to be employed. I had heard many times about the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and had dismissed the value of the program. Only when I sat in the seat and started the week long program had I realized how very wrong I was.

The skills and knowledge conveyed to me were instrumental in the ease of my transition from military to civilian. Every aspect of the week-long course, from dressing for success, to interviewing skills and techniques, was an eye-opening experience. I quickly learned I needed to sharpen these skills in order to become successful in my future employment opportunities. The best value came in the resume writing skills exercise. My resume was the key for opening the door to my current employer, Embry Riddle Aeronautical University. Because of the exercises and experiences of TAP, I was extremely comfortable in the interviewing and salary negotiating process.

The success of my transition is a direct correlation to information, experience, and networking of the TAP program. The biggest decision I have ever made is to transition from something I knew for over 29 years. Because of TAP my transition was very smooth into the civilian sector and capitalizing on course material and discussion has made all the difference in the world. TAP is a critical element in your transition that cannot be overlooked.

Entrepreneurship exit strategy: from boots to hometown business

Just days after he completed his transition out of the military, Dr. Tony Turin opened the doors to his own business and fulfilled his dream of starting an optometry practice in his Oregon hometown.

While deployed in 2013, Dr. Turin started to think seriously about starting his own business and began drafting a business plan. When he returned to Fort Bragg, Turin enrolled in the Boots to Business Entrepreneurship Training Track as part of the Transition Assistance Program's Transition GPS curriculum. "So much of our lives in the military have been planned out for us," Turin said, "and it can be pretty intimidating knowing you're going to transition out and be on your own."

The Transition GPS curriculum gives transitioning Service members education and training options to ensure their post-service career success. Boots to Business targets Service members looking for non-traditional employment alternatives such as entrepreneurship and small business ownership.



The program helps participants evaluate the suitability of self-employment for their circumstances. It also provides business management education and provides tools and training for evaluating business concepts and preparing business plans.

"One of the most intimidating things when you start the process of thinking about going into business for yourself is 'how do I get started?' [Boots to Business] has really helped to break it down," Turin said. It helped him determine how to take "practical steps" to develop a business plan and gave him the confidence to succeed.

Service members who elect Boots to Business start with a two-day course taught in a classroom setting on a military installation. As a follow on, Service members can complete an instructor-led eight-week online course offered by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University.

"This is the first time I've ever been involved with any type of online curriculum," Turin said. "I thought it was going to be just a cookie cutter scenario, where you get an assignment and submit it and never get any feedback, but that's truly not the case."

Turin says that he met with his professor during open office hours. The feedback he received on assignments was personalized, with specific comments about what his professor appreciated, questions he would have if he were an investor, and suggestions on ways to improve. "And you get feedback from [your classmates] as well," Turin adds. There are chat rooms where students not only post their own assignment, but are required to provide constructive criticism to their classmates as well. "It's pretty phenomenal," says Turin of the network and the tools that make it all possible.

While completing Boots to Business, Turin was able to improve and finalize the business plan he began writing when he was deployed. Boots to Business "helped me take

what I had already established and learned, and really refine it and narrow it down. It gave me the nuts and bolts of what's important to business ownership, entrepreneurship and pointed me in the direction to find the resources I needed."

"I look at my classmates... and we range anywhere from me being a doctor of optometry to someone wanting to start a childcare business. There's a huge variety. It doesn't matter what your business idea is, [Boots to Business] is a great resource for all of us.

My advice to anyone, even if they have an inclination that [starting a business] might be something down the road, I would pursue it. Start early. Take advantage of [Boots to Business.] It's a great opportunity."

The Boots to Business entrepreneurship track is free of cost and open to all transitioning Service members and their spouse/partner. For more information about the Boots to Business program, visit www.sba.gov/bootstobusiness.

Marine For Life Network helps Service members connect



Marine For Life Network helps Service members, like Corporal Matthew Goldman, connect to a variety of opportunities in civilian communities.

Source: U.S. Marine Corps

The Marine For Life Cycle continues well beyond a Marine's last day on active duty. The Marine For Life Network is a resource for Marines, and Sailors who served with Marine Corps units, to connect with opportunities available in civilian communities across the United States. The network is an outward expression of the Marine Corps motto "Semper Fidelis" (Always Faithful).

Veteran Corporal Matthew Goldman of Dayton, Ohio, completed his Bachelor's degree in German, with a minor in Spanish before going into sales in New York City. Eager for excitement and the opportunity to use his language skills, he enlisted in the Marine Corps and attended the Defense Language Institute to learn Arabic. Goldman became an intelligence analyst serving with an unmanned aerial vehicle unit at 29 Palms, California and deployed to Afghanistan.

The end of Goldman's Active Duty Service led him to explore his options for transitioning back to civilian life. He met Major Dave Baril, Marine For Life Representative from the Western Region, at a job fair and received advice on the job hunt and interview process. "Major Baril was very instrumental in helping me through the transition and looking for work" said Goldman. "He recommended me to a company, and gave a boost to my confidence."

Goldman subsequently interviewed for positions with two Fortune 500 companies where he discovered that his Marine Corps experience had great value. In his first interview, the interviewer was a Marine spouse. In the second, the interviewer's father was a Marine. When asked to give a sales presentation, he gave an intelligence brief for a fictional scenario to "sell" the interview panel on approving the mission. He was offered the position immediately.

Goldman believes his experiences at boot camp and deploying to Afghanistan as well as the daily rigors of the Marine Corps gave him the tools necessary to succeed. The Marine Corps helped him to become more detail oriented, set goals, make a plan, execute that plan, and to do so confidently. And the Marine For Life Network helped him connect with quality opportunities as he returned to civilian life.

Transition Assistance Program: An end to a new beginning



*By Lt. Col. Kenneth Dewlen
502nd Installation Support
Group deputy commander*

All military members have one thing in common — they will transition out of the service at some point. Whether you serve four years or 24, you will leave the military and return to the civilian community. The

question is will you utilize the programs offered by the Military Family Readiness Center as you transition? This Soldier and Airman did, and what a great experience it was and difference it made.

After 25 years in the service to my nation, it is now time for me to transition back to civilian life. My first stop during my transition — and an essential stop for every military member transitioning back to civilian life — is the Military Family Readiness Center. At Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas, the service and guidance are second-to-none and absolutely invaluable.

Designed to help and support Service members and their families, the centers provide a complete "how-to" guide on maximizing acquired skills and securing earned retirement

benefits. I was personally impressed with the resume writing workshop and the expert Veteran Affairs benefits briefing.

The resume class helped me take a quarter century of military jargon and translate it into civilian speak. It made me look at my goals, both short term and long term, and ask this question: "Where do I see myself in 10 years"? The resume portion of the program helped me to understand, illustrate and focus on my key qualifications as well as the skill set that I bring to a prospective employer.

The VA portion of the class was also very informative. It provided information on the post 9-11 GI Bill, as well as buying a home using my VA benefits. Not to mention how to fill out a VA claim for injuries sustained while on active duty -- this sparked

my attention! The combination of the resume writing workshop and the VA benefits class were vital for me acquiring my dream job as an AFJROTC instructor -- mission complete!

I am thankful for the Military Family Readiness Center program and the staff's willingness to assist transitioning Service members and their families. You won't find a course like this in the civilian community for free, so take advantage of the services offered to you — you have earned it!

And just remember, all military members have one thing in common — they will transition out of the service at some point. My time is now. It was my honor to serve and good luck on your transition when it's your time.

CONTINUING TO SERVE AS A CIVILIAN

It's an easy transition on paper: end military service, begin civil service. But figuring out how and where can prove a bit more difficult. Fortunately, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) can help. Below are just a few examples of how this transition can be successful. Read more about OPM and its programs on page 43.

I started my career with the Federal government working through work-study programs at the Department of Veterans Affairs. Through these experiences I received the opportunity to attain permanent employment and career advancement.

Thanks Uncle Sam for the endless support and guidance throughout my career. The Federal government is where I plan on retiring, and the possibilities are endless. – *Cesar P.*

I returned from Afghanistan with the stark realization that the benefits of pay and health and dental insurance enjoyed while on active duty were coming to a close as my EAS date approached. "What will I do with my life now?" I questioned. Anticipating this position of uncertainty, I launched on what often feels like the greatest challenge in times of uncertainty and confusion — finding the next career. Utilizing the internet, I discovered numerous sites and resources to assist me with the discovery of a new career. I spent countless hours quantifying and qualifying my military and civilian work experiences in a resume chronologically. My VA for Vets job coach gave me skills necessary to successfully interview through the STAR method and assisted in describing my work experiences through the aid of the OPM website and O*Net. After a month of planning and development, I applied for my first job on USAJOBS.gov through a developmental program called the Presidential Management Fellowship (PMF). At the time, I had applied to over 1,000 job openings leading to about 10 interviews and only a few offers. I stayed diligent viewing openings on the USAJOBS.gov website tailoring my Federal resume to match the needs of the position specifically. Then, I applied to job openings that matched my resume most closely. While frustrated at times, I stayed diligent and consistent. I attended numerous job fairs. In order to capitalize on my military experience and prefer-

I prepared for my exit from the Air Force after 21 years by attending the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) offered at my location.

ence in hiring, the natural choice was to seek a position with the Department of Veteran Affairs. After researching the agency and talking to employees through informal interview sessions, I discovered the position of Peer Support Specialist. I polished my interviewing skills over and over. I attended the interview and within a few hours, received a call for the offer. I accepted the position nearly 6 months after leaving the military. Around the same time, I received notification that I was listed as a finalist for the PMF Class of 2013. Interview after interview, finally, the call came for appointment in the Veterans Affairs Central Office as a Program Analyst through OPM's PMF program. After nearly 11 months, I had successfully navigated to my most sought-after career. The best piece of advice I can offer is for one to remain consistent and seek mentorship.

– *Semper Fidelis, Sergeant B. L. Berg*

I prepared for my exit from the Air Force after 21 years by attending the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) offered at my location. Through this informative class, I was able to hone my skills on job-searching and resume-writing. As a result of this information I started attending Veterans job fairs and applying for jobs six months before my exit date. This seemed a little early at the time, but gave me valuable training on the web sites and how to properly submit information and documents. I was actually amazed when I got offered two jobs and had to turn one down! I did not land a GS-12 job, but was able to get a job that will give me opportunities for advancement. Due to my preparedness and initiative, I feel I was well equipped to make the transition. –

H. Modglin



Did you know...? Marine Corps refers to TAP as Transition Readiness Seminar (TRS).

MARINE FINDS SMALL BIZ SUCCESS

Story and photo by Heather J. Hagan

U.S. Marine Staff Sgt. Sakou Selli considered starting his own business for nearly a decade. "While sitting in church listening to a message about living out our God-given strengths, I thought about how we go to get a massage and we are cautious about what we eat," said Selli. "That is when the vision and business title Total Wellness Trainers came to my mind."

Selli began his military career in the Marine Corps 20 years ago. Moving through a life cycle model of transition, Selli remembers transitioning from a teenager to a Marine. "I remember standing on the yellow boot prints at Parris Island and now I am getting ready to retire and transition into my own business," said Selli. "Serving as a Marine and being a part of a great organization, I learned the courage to market as a recruiter and to talk to new and different people and how my product and services can benefit them. I loved helping out my junior and senior Marines with courage."

Selli always wanted to be a personal trainer, so he invested \$10,000.00 into his business. He

attended the Transition Readiness Seminar, a program offered as early as 12 to 14 months prior to separation. "The seminar was designed to make me think about my goals and the Marine Corps leadership encouraged me to prepare a year out for retirement," said Selli. "I think the decision to help others by starting my own business was all based on the initial reason I joined the Marine Corps. I was lazy, didn't have focus and I knew that the Marine Corps would challenge me and give me the strength to accomplish my goals."

Selli has earned his Master's Degree in Project Management and Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. "Throughout the years in the Marine Corps I learned courage, leadership, and developing an idea and seeing it through," said Selli.

As an Entrepreneurship Pathway participant, Selli received an overview of the skills required and the many facets of small business ownership.



Marine Entrepreneur Staff Sgt. Sakou Selli coaches Liz Lampkins during Boot Camp at Memorial Park in downtown Fredericksburg, Va.

"Going through the Transition Readiness Seminar we talked about legal responsibility, registering your business, signing documents with my business name, and we talked about investors," said Selli. "The seminar helped me create a trade mark and a strong brand."

Following Selli's two-day entrepreneurial training, he currently maintains communication with supporting agencies and local businesses that are like his own. "I feel confident that my business will work," said Selli. "I have a sound business plan that focuses on my strategy and goals to help people and it is my passion. I also started early in order to increase clientele way before I retire."



Transitioning made easy

by Capt Karena Faust 412th Force Support Squadron sustainment services flight commander

Transitioning, whether it's from one job to another or separating from the military is no easy task. It's also not easy to juggle between work, appointments and classes; however, at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., the Airman and Family Readiness Center staff makes this transitioning process easier and enjoyable. They hold job fairs, classes to help transition into civilian life and always go out of their way to help out anyone.

I recently was able to attend their latest job fair where there were numerous agencies and companies with so much information to offer. The job fair started with smiling faces and a warm welcome greeting, followed by a pamphlet containing the 38 organizations involved, a layout of the fair, and additional information on transitioning and readiness. As I worked my way around the tables, everyone was excited to be there and

they were very engaged with transitioning active-duty military, civilian and dependents.

I never thought about working for BNSF Railway, but the representative made it seem like a dream job, so who knows what I might do next in life. One of the coolest things that the job fair offered was the Los Angeles Police Department entrance exam after the fair ended. At about 2:30 p.m., there were about 12 of us sitting in a room, ready to take this exam and see if we might be interested in pursuing a career in law enforcement. The great thing about having the exam offered at the Airman and Family Readiness Center is that I didn't have to drive all the way down to Los Angeles to take it. They offered it right here on base, and in a couple of weeks, people find out whether or not they passed.

This was a real great opportunity not only



for myself, but others in the room who were transitioning as well. After serving for seven years as an Air Force officer, I'm excited to start a new chapter in my life, but also scared. The Edwards Airman and Family Readiness Center has made transitioning seem much easier and more comforting than I anticipated. I know with all of the classes, job fairs and help, I will be more prepared than most to begin a new life. I couldn't have asked for a better program!

eBenefits:

Your gateway to benefit information

What is eBenefits?

eBenefits is a joint VA/DoD web portal that provides resources and self-service capabilities to Veterans, Service members, and their families to research, access and manage their VA and military benefits and personal information. eBenefits uses secure credentials to allow access to personal information and gives users the ability to perform numerous self-service functions. It also provides a list of links to other sites that provide information about military and Veteran benefits. It is an essential way for Veterans, Service members, and their families to receive access to and service from VA and DoD.

What can I do in eBenefits?

Some of the features within eBenefits allow Veterans and Service members to access official military personnel documents, view the status of their disability compensation claim, transfer entitlement of Post-9/11 GI Bill to eligible dependents (Service members only), and register for and update direct deposit information for certain benefits. For a full list of features, see the end of this article. New features are being added regularly.

How do I access eBenefits?

eBenefits is located at www.ebenefits.va.gov. Before Veterans can access and use eBenefits they must be listed in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) and obtain a DS Logon. Service members can access eBenefits with a DS Logon or Common Access Card (CAC). They can choose from two levels of registration, DS Logon Level 1 (Basic) and DS Logon Level 2 (Premium). Note: If Veterans attempt to register and are informed they have no DEERS record, VA will first need to verify their military service and add them to DEERS. All VA Regional Offices have staff familiar with procedures for adding a Veteran to DEERS.

What is a DS Logon?

A DS Logon is a secure identity (username and password) that is used by various DoD and VA websites, including eBenefits. If you are already registered in DEERS, you are eligible for a DS Logon. Once you have a DS Logon, it's valid for the rest of your life.

How do I register for an eBenefits account?

You can register for an eBenefits account online using the eBenefits DS Logon Account Registration Wizard. There are two types of registration, Basic and Premium. You will be walked through a series of questions to assist you in obtaining a Premium eBenefits Account, which gives you the highest level of access to eBenefits features. With a Premium Account you can view personal data about yourself in VA and DoD systems, apply for benefits online, check the status of your claims, update your address records, and more. To get a Premium eBenefits Account, you must verify your identity.

Many people will be able to verify their identity online by answering a few security questions. Service members may verify their identity online by using their CAC. Military retirees may verify their identity online using their Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) Logon. For those unable to verify their identity online, you will instantly receive a Basic Account. A Basic eBenefits Account lets you customize the site and access information you enter into eBenefits yourself; however, you cannot see your personal information in VA or DoD systems. However, there are other options available to you. Veterans in receipt of VA benefits via direct deposit may have their identity verified by calling 1-800-827-1000 and selecting option 7. Others may need to visit a VA Regional Office or TriCare Service Center to have their identities verified in person.

eBenefits Features

If you are a Veteran, you can:

- Apply for Veterans benefits online.
- Check on your compensation or pension claims status.
- Upload documents to support your compensation or pension claim.
- Check Post-9/11 GI Bill enrollment status.
- Use the VetSuccess employment search.
- View DoD TRICARE health insurance.
- Sign up for Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI) (Time limits apply).
- Search for and select an accredited representative or organization.

- Order prescription medications.
- Message your physician securely.
- Access your medical information via Blue Button.
- Utilize the military skills translator and résumé builder.
- Order medical equipment such as hearing aid batteries and prosthetic socks.
- Check on your appeal status.
- Generate a VA home loan certificate of eligibility.
- Obtain official military personnel documents such as DD Form 214.
- Register for and update direct deposit information for certain benefits.

If you are a Service member, you can:

- Use the eLearning Center for the online transition assistance program and more.
- Transfer Post-9/11 education benefits.
- View DoD TRICARE health insurance.
- View DoD TRICARE reserve select.
- Sign up for Service member out-of-pocket medical expenses (CCD).
- View Service members' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) elections.
- Apply for Veterans benefits online.
- Conduct a health benefits eligibility check.
- Update Service member civilian employment information.
- View Service member personnel information.
- Generate a VA home loan certificate of eligibility.
- Find a job through the Veterans Employment Center.

If you are a Family Member of a Veteran or Service member, you can:

- Check on your compensation and pension claims status.
- Use the eLearning Center to get important health information.
- View Post-9/11 GI Bill enrollment status.
- Check your VA payment history.

— Source: Veterans Benefits Administration


For More Information visit www.ebenefits.va.gov.

Settle in with the VA Home Loan Program

By **Curtis Coy**, Deputy Undersecretary for Economic Opportunity, Veterans Affairs

Stable housing leads to long-term stability, which factors into reliability and other characteristics of successful employees. Are you aware that loans guaranteed by the VA Home Loan Program have had the lowest foreclosure rate in the past 19 quarters compared to all other types of home loans? This is pretty significant given the trials and tribulations of the housing market during the past several years.

Many do not know that VA's Home Loan Program Benefit is not a one-time benefit, but can be reused. Since 1944, more than 20 million Veterans and Service members have enjoyed the benefit of a home purchase through the VA Home Loan program. Veterans who have already used their VA benefit in their home purchase may reuse that benefit to purchase another residence, or to refinance to a lower rate. This is referred to as an Interest Rate Reduction Refinance Loan (IRRRL) or Streamline Refinance Loan. No appraisal or credit underwriting is required.

Consider this: If a Veteran used their benefit, perhaps while on Active Duty, to purchase a home, they should compare their interest rate with current rates in their area. That Veteran can reuse their VA benefit to refinance their home with "no money out of pocket," as costs may be included in the loan. If that Veteran has since separated or retired from the military and receives disability compensation of at least 10%, he or she is exempt from the funding fee. This can be a considerable monthly or total savings for the Veteran. On average, Veterans saved more than \$200 per monthly payment on IRRRLs last year, saving those Veterans over \$900 million in their first two years alone!

Veterans may obtain a Certificate of Eligibility online through eBenefits (ebenefits.va.gov) or through their lender. I encourage Veterans to seek the advice of a financial professional and to contact several lenders for quotes to determine what is in their best interest. If you have any questions, you can contact your closest VA regional office with Loan Guaranty staff by calling 877.827.3702, or visiting www.benefits.va.gov/HOMELOANS/contact_rlc_info.asp.

For more information, visit: www.benefits.va.gov/home loans.

Curtis Coy is VA's Deputy Undersecretary for Economic Opportunity and a U.S. Navy and U.S. Air Force Veteran.

On average, Veterans saved more than \$200 per monthly payment on IRRRLs last year, saving those Veterans over \$900 million in their first two years alone.



Did you know...? Transition GPS (Goals, Plans, Success) is the new standardized TAP curriculum.



VBA SERVES THOSE WHO SERVED

Offers variety of benefits to Service members, Veterans, families

By Colonel Danny Pummill, USA (Ret.)

As Service members transition from the military, they should be aware that the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) offers them a variety of benefits in exchange for their service and sacrifice. At VBA, where more than 50 percent of the employees are Veterans — 30 percent of which have service-connected disabilities — the commitment to service runs deep.

VBA's benefits fall into six broad categories: education and training, vocational rehabilitation and employment, home loan guaranty, life insurance, disability compensation, and pension and fiduciary services.

For separating Service members who want to continue their education, VBA offers the Post-9/11 GI Bill education benefit. The Post-9/11 GI Bill took effect in August 2009, and has provided more than \$39 billion in tuition and benefits to more than 1.1 million Veterans, Service members, and their families. Recently, to make it easier for Veterans to calculate their benefits and learn more about colleges, universities and other education and training programs, VA launched the innovative online GI Bill Comparison Tool. The online tool is just one of a series of resources VA is launching in response to President Obama's Executive order to implement and promote "Principles of Excellence" for those educational institutions that interact with Veterans, Service members, and their families.

Veterans who decide to pursue a civilian career in the same technical field they trained for in the military can get additional skills and training through VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program. Through the program, service-disabled Veterans can gain a competitive edge on finding

employment. After training, VR&E helps job-seeking Veterans search and apply for positions, and, ultimately, secure suitable jobs. In 2013, Veterans who took part in VR&E programs saw their wages increase by 480 percent, from an average of \$7,100 at the time of application, to \$41,450 at rehabilitation. Last year, to further support Veterans' education and training, VA expanded the VetSuccess on Campus program, from 24 to 94 campuses, and greatly increased access to benefits assistance and vocational counseling.

The Post 9/11 GI Bill...has provided more than \$39 billion in tuition and benefits to more than 1.1 million Veterans, Service members, and their families.

Service members who plan to buy a home after separation should check out the home loan guaranty program, through which VBA offers qualified applicants the opportunity to purchase a home with no down payment. In 2013, VA had 2 million home loans on the books, the highest number in the program's history — of which nearly 630,000 were guaranteed in that same year. Since 2009, VA has helped more than 335,000 borrowers avoid foreclosure, and saved Veterans and their families a total of \$11 billion. Home loans backed by VA continue to have the lowest serious delinquency and foreclosure rates in the mortgage industry. The VA home loan guaranty benefit also includes adapted housing grants to help Veterans construct or modify their homes to accommodate a service-connected disability.

VBA also offers life insurance to Service members, Veterans, and their families. This program is the ninth largest of its kind in the U.S. and covers 6.7 million beneficiaries, providing more than \$1.3 trillion in coverage.

Through VBA, Veterans with disabilities resulting from a disease or injury incurred or aggravated during active military service can apply to receive tax-free monetary compensation. In 2013, VBA completed more than 1 million compensation claims and paid almost \$54 billion in benefits to nearly 4 million Veterans.

Additionally, low-income wartime Veterans may qualify for pensions, if they meet certain criteria. In 2013, VBA paid \$5.1 billion in pension benefits to 514,000 Veterans and survivors, and \$5.8 billion in dependency and indemnity compensation (DIC) to 358,000 survivors. DIC is a tax-free monetary benefit generally payable to a surviving spouse, child, or parent of Veterans or Service members who passed away as a result of injuries sustained while serving their country.

Finally, VBA provides fiduciary services to more than 147,000 beneficiaries. The fiduciary program provides oversight for minors under the age of 18, and for the most vulnerable beneficiaries who are unable to manage their benefits because of injury, disease, or the infirmities of advanced age.

VBA employees have the privilege of administering these important Veterans programs. They execute the vitally important mission to help Americans fulfill the Nation's commitment to our Service members and Veterans for their courageous service and sacrifice on our behalf.

Retired Col. Danny Pummill, USA, currently serves as the Principal Deputy Under Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs.

GOOD CREDIT – YOU’LL NEED THAT!

By Holly Petraeus and Corey Stone, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

Did you know that there are now dating websites where potential partners provide their credit score for you to check out? People know it’s important to have good credit. But, there’s still a lot of confusion about how to actually build and keep a good credit report.

First of all, what is a credit report?

In a nutshell, it’s a report that looks at some of your bill-paying history, your applications for credit, and public-record information about you like bankruptcies, liens, and foreclosures.

Credit-reporting companies (the big three are Equifax, Experian and TransUnion) collect this information, organize it into reports, and sell the reports to businesses so they can make decisions about whether to lend to you, and at what rate. Businesses believe that how you’ve handled credit in the past predicts how you will handle credit in the future – and how risky it would be to take you on as a customer.

Based on your credit reports, you will be given a credit score by the credit-reporting companies. You don’t just have one credit score – each company does their own. And there can be other scores, too; the ones businesses use most are calculated for each of your credit reports using formulas from the Fair Isaac Corporation (FICO.) Lenders use these scores as a quick and convenient way to decide whether or not to do business with you, or on what terms. A low credit score can lead to things like your being turned down when you want to rent an apartment, paying a bigger deposit for a cell phone contract, or being charged a higher rate of interest for a car loan or credit card.

Don’t forget that credit reports are also sometimes used by employers to decide whether or not they want to hire you. And, the military looks at credit reports when deciding if you’re eligible to get or keep a security clearance.

So, what builds good credit?

- **Pay your bills on time, every time.** An automatic payment from your bank can be a good way to do that, but make sure you keep an eye on your balance so you always have enough in your account to cover the payment. You don’t want it to bounce.
- **Don’t get too close to your credit limit.** Credit scoring models look at how close you are to being “maxed out” on credit cards. If you use too much of your total credit lines, say by carrying big balances, you can hurt your credit score. Experts advise keeping your use of credit at no more than 30% of your total credit limit – some even say you should keep it at less than 10%.
- **Don’t apply for too much credit in a**

short time. Your credit score may go down if you apply for or open a lot of new accounts in a short time. Buying something and want the discount that comes with opening a new store card? Transferring balances from an old card to a new one? Do that very often and it will show up on your credit report as lots of new credit accounts, which is likely to hurt your credit score.

- **The more extensive your credit history, the better.** Credit scores are partly based on experience over time. The more evidence you have on how you get and pay for credit, the more information there is to determine whether you are a good credit risk.

Here are some more ideas:

- **Buying things with a debit card or cash will not build your credit score.** Some people are afraid of getting into trouble with credit cards, so they vow never to have one. The problem is, buying things with cash or using a debit card doesn’t establish a credit repayment history that will be reported to a credit-reporting company. So when you do need a loan for a big-ticket item like a car or home, you won’t have the credit file to make a lender willing to take a chance on you.
- **Pay with a credit card to build credit but try not to carry a balance and make sure you pay your bill on time.** You’ll build credit by using your credit card even if you pay off your balances in full each month. And, you’ll avoid finance charges since these only kick in when you carry over a balance from month to month, which is what happens when you pay only the minimum amount due or any other amount less than the full balance owed each month.
- **If you can’t qualify for a regular credit card, a “secured card account” that you put a deposit on can build credit, too.** You can get a secured card from many banks or credit unions. With most of these cards your credit line starts out small, but as you demonstrate reliable payments, most companies will extend you more credit and

eventually refund your deposit. Secured cards can be expensive and often come with a number of different fees, though, so before you resort to a secured card consider applying to see if you can be approved for a regular credit card with attractive features and pricing.

- **File an “active-duty alert” with the credit-reporting companies before you go on deployment.** This makes businesses verify your identity before they issue credit in your name and should help protect you from identity theft. If you want to go even farther, you can freeze your credit. A freeze prevents prospective creditors from accessing your credit file at all, which will keep any new accounts from being opened in your name. There may be a small charge



Photo courtesy of DVIDSHUB.net

Holly Petraeus, head of the Office of Service Member Affairs at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, addresses airmen on the role of the CFPB, the resources they offer, and how they are helping service members make smarter consumer decisions.

to set up a freeze, unless you are a victim of identity theft. If you decide to freeze your credit, you’ll have to set up the freezes separately with each of the three big credit-reporting companies: TransUnion, Equifax, and Experian.

- **Keep an eye on your credit reports.** You can get a free copy of your credit report from each of the three major credit-reporting companies every year at www.annualcreditreport.com. There’s a chance you may find incorrect information that is bringing your score down. If you do, file a dispute with the credit-reporting company.

For more information about credit reports and credit scores visit Ask CFPB at www.consumerfinance.gov/askcfpb.

DON’T FORGET THAT CREDIT REPORTS ARE ALSO SOMETIMES USED BY EMPLOYERS TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT THEY WANT TO HIRE YOU.

SUPPORT AND DEFEND YOUR TRANSITION

By Holly Petraeus, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

The process of transitioning from the military back to civilian life is a complex mix of pluses and minuses. Along with the plus of moving on to a new career opportunity, you also get the minus of losing access to a range of benefits, support services and legal protections that you may have taken for granted until now.

Some benefits and services, like access to the commissary and legal assistance, you'll lose the day you're discharged. Other benefits and services, like Service members Group Life Insurance and free personal financial counseling, drop 120-180 days after you transition. Likewise, legal protections like the Service members Civil Relief Act only protect your rights as a military consumer while you are on Active Duty, or in cases of foreclosure protection and mortgage interest rate reduction, for up to one year after leaving Active Duty.

Military retirees have limited access to some benefits and services even after they retire. But for most transitioning Service members these resources sunset on their last day of Active Duty.

So, what then? What do you do if you need access to critical financial planning assistance or consumer protection after you've officially transitioned? Where can you turn for help?

Fortunately, you have access to a number of trusted sources that can help you deal with post-transition financial challenges, strengthen your consumer defenses and plan for your future as a military Veteran.

So, here are a few things to keep in mind as you create, update and follow your financial transition plan.

Make an informed financial plan

Whether you're heading to college or starting a new career, you'll need to define three things: where you're starting from; where you're going; and what you're using to get there.

From a personal financial perspective, knowing where you're starting means doing a baseline self-assessment that factors in things like how much money you have saved up in your transition fund, your immediate debts and expenses, the state of your credit report and your credit score. If you properly assess your current situation, you'll be able to create a realistic spending plan to cover your expenses until you begin earning a steady post-service paycheck.

Knowing where you're going can help you plan for how you'll fund your goal. If you plan to attend college, do you know what the total projected cost of your education will be and how much the GI Bill will cover? Do you know what your loan options are or what types of grants you qualify for? Resources like the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) GI Bill Comparison Tool (see page 14), the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) Paying for College Tool (www.consumerfinance.gov/paying-for-college), and special programs run by your state's Department of Veterans Affairs can help you accurately gauge your future expenses, resources and benefit options. If you plan on following your entrepreneurial spirit, resources like the VA's vetbiz.gov and the Small Business Administration's Veterans Business Outreach Centers (www.sba.gov/content/veterans-business-outreach-centers) can help you get advice on complex career-financing topics and invaluable Veteran small business certifications.

Finding resources that you'll use to reach your end goals may be the most crucial step in planning a smooth financial transition. Regardless of how you plan to reach your dream, you'll need expert advice from trusted sources to help guide you. Many online resources, like the Military Center at the FINRA Investor Education Foundation's SaveandInvest.org provide action steps, such as for creating a spending plan. Mymoney.gov links to financial information from more than 20 federal agencies that can help you manage, grow and protect your money. And, Veterans and military retirees can visit agencies like the Veterans Benefits Administration, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service and sites like eBenefits.va.gov for accurate information on things like VA disability compensation, retiree pay, survivor benefit plans, VA home loan guarantees

and much more. The CFPB also has financial disclosure and shopping sheet tools on products like mortgages and credit cards that can help you "know before you owe" (www.consumerfinance.gov/knowbeforeyouowe) and avoid taking on unnecessary debt in your post military life.

Also, remember that planning your transition doesn't mean that you suspend long-term planning for things like retirement. Make sure to speak with a military Personal Financial Manager before making any changes to, or withdrawals from, your Thrift Savings Plan or other retirement accounts.

Learn where to get help

An unresolved financial problem can be just as much trouble for you after you transition as it would be if you were on Active Duty. You probably won't have to worry about getting counseled by your commander once you're a civilian. But things like incorrectly reported negative information on your credit report or harassment by an aggressive debt collector can keep you from getting that post-transition job, securing a home or education loan, opening a bank account and even endanger any security clearances you may need for your civilian job.

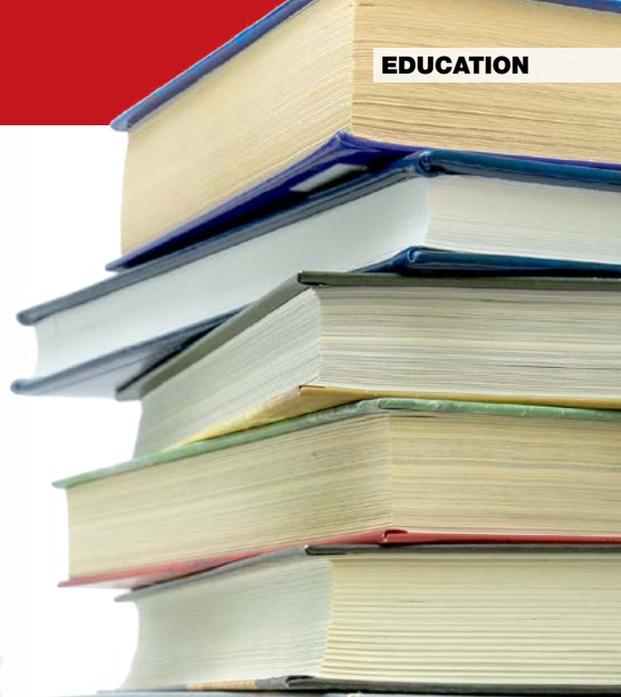
If you need help with a consumer financial issue that you can't solve on your own, you can submit a complaint to the CFPB at consumerfinance.gov/complaint. The CFPB takes complaints on mortgages, credit cards, bank accounts or services, student loans, debt collection, credit reporting and more. Your state Attorney General's office is also a great local resource to turn to for consumer protection issues like reporting scams and abusive or deceptive business practices.

Don't get scammed

Beware of scams that target Veterans. Never pay for advice or access to benefits you can get for free from sources like the VA. And never sell or sign over access to your benefits to anyone. Hard-earned benefits like your GI Bill, retirement and/or disability benefits are lucrative targets for fraudsters. Taking the time to learn about your Veteran and/or retiree benefits as you create your financial transition plan will help you understand how the benefit programs work, how they financially impact you, how to access them and how to protect yourself from scams directed at Veterans.

Did you know...? The TAP Virtual Curriculum is available 24/7 through Joint Knowledge Online (JKO) at <https://jkodirect.jten.mil>.

Preparing for your educational future



Just as location is important in real estate, timing is everything when it comes to preparing for the future.

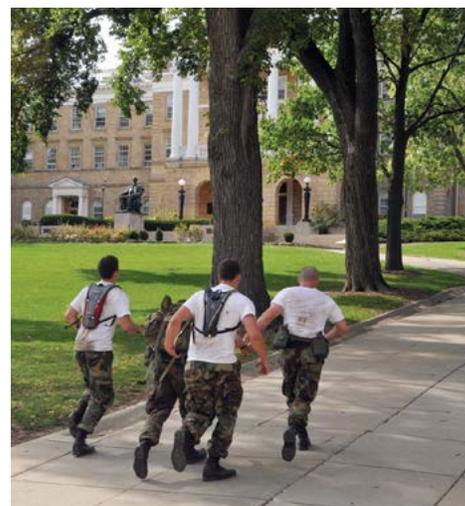
The ideal time for Airmen to start thinking about the future, both for their Air Force career and for employment after the Air Force, is after completion of 5-skill level upgrade training. The first stop Airmen should make is at the base Education Center. The professional academic counselors can help Airmen navigate through the myriad of degrees and credentials. If an Airman is not sure what it is he or she wants to do, the education counselor can administer the Kuder Journey assessment to help determine their career interests. The Kuder Journey is free for Active Duty members and Airmen have access to the Kuder Journey for life.

Fortunately, enlisted Airmen have many programs to choose from to meet their academic goals. The Air Force is the only Service that provides a regionally accredited associate's degree through the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF). Airmen receive college credit from Basic Military Training, Tech school, upgrade training, and PME toward an Associate degree in their AFSC. In addition, 58 civilian credentials have been evaluated for credit towards certain CCAF degrees. In some cases, Airmen may only need 5 classes, or tests, to complete their CCAF degree once

all eligible military credit is applied. Airmen can review their CCAF progress on the Air Force Virtual Education Center (AFVEC) accessed through the AF Portal (www.my.af.mil/afvecprod/afvec/Home.aspx). In addition, the Air University-Associate-to-Baccalaureate (AU-ABC) program allows Airmen to leverage their CCAF credits toward a bachelor's degree. Currently over 50 universities and colleges participate, with another 46 institutes pending program approval. Airmen can view the AU-ABC programs on the AFVEC.

Finally, there are also Military Tuition Assistance and other financial aid programs available — including the opportunity for Airmen to test out of some courses. The exams are free to Service members and are recognized

**The key is
to not wait
until the last
minute.**



by many academic institutions, including CCAF. If an Airman is not sure whether they are ready for college level courses, the Online Academic Skills program (i.e. Peterson's OASC on AFVEC) provides free modules to help Airmen improve basic academic skills in preparation for college courses.

Whether Airmen are interested in improving their career opportunities in the Air Force, preparing for employment after separation or retirement, or considering college attendance, the Air Force can help our Airmen achieve their goals. The key is to not wait until the last minute. Go to your base education center today for help on getting started setting goals or achieving those goals you've already established.

— Source: U.S. Air Force

GI Bill Comparison Tool keeps you informed

What's the first thing you do when shopping for a big ticket item? You might shop around, ask friends and relatives for their opinion or compare items online. In today's world of instant online access to a wealth of consumer information – from online reviews to infographics comparing products, product websites and online shopping sites – consumers are used to finding and comparing information online before they buy.

Thanks to VA's new GI Bill® Comparison Tool (found at <http://department-of-veterans-affairs.github.io/gi-bill-comparison-tool/>), you can now find information online about Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits and the schools and training programs available to education beneficiaries.

Before this tool launched, estimating how much beneficiaries may receive

under the Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit was challenging. Many beneficiaries provided this feedback to our GI Bill Facebook page. The new comparison tool makes it easy to estimate Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits with just one click.

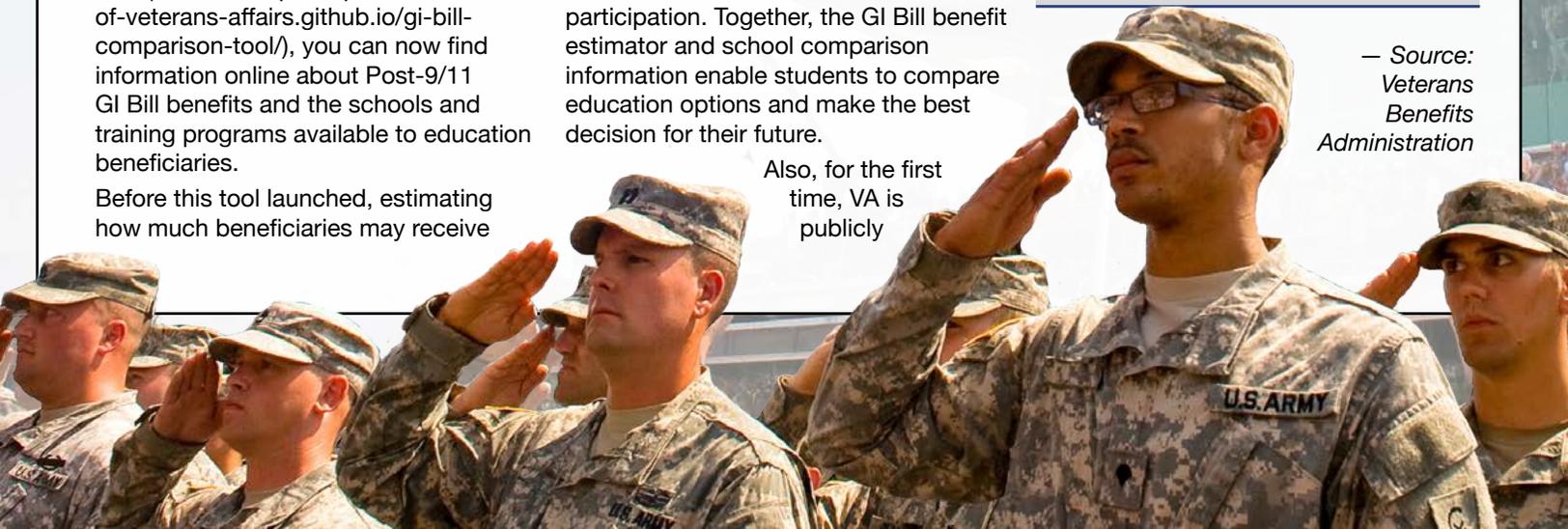
In addition, you can find and compare information on our 10,000+ approved education and training programs, including estimated tuition and fee amounts and your projected housing allowance. Also available are each school's graduation rate, student loan default rate and Yellow Ribbon participation. Together, the GI Bill benefit estimator and school comparison information enable students to compare education options and make the best decision for their future.

Also, for the first time, VA is publicly

releasing information about the number of students receiving VA education benefits at a particular school. Through the online comparison tool, students can now see how many Veterans attend the school of their choice. In the future, VA will add additional functionality to the tool, including the ability to compare up to three schools side-by-side.

**For more information, visit:
department-of-veterans-affairs.
github.io/gi-bill-comparison-tool.**

— Source:
Veterans
Benefits
Administration



New feedback system for GI Bill and Tuition Assistance recipients

By Holly Petraeus, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

In April 2012, at Fort Stewart, GA, I was privileged to watch President Obama sign Executive Order 13607: Establishing Principles of Excellence for Educational Institutions Serving Service members, Veterans, Spouses and other Family Members.

The Order directed the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Defense, in consultation with other government agencies, to create a system that would hold educational institutions accountable for the quality of the programs that they provide to those who use military-related education benefits. Its intent was to give military personnel, Veterans, and their

families the information they need to make informed decisions about where to spend their hard-earned military benefit dollars – and a place to complain if things went wrong.

The CFPB was very pleased to join the Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, Education, and Justice, as well as the Federal Trade Commission, in announcing a new online student complaint system where Service members, Veterans, and their families can report negative experiences at education institutions and training programs administering the Post-9/11 GI Bill, DoD Military Tuition Assistance, and other military-related education benefit programs.

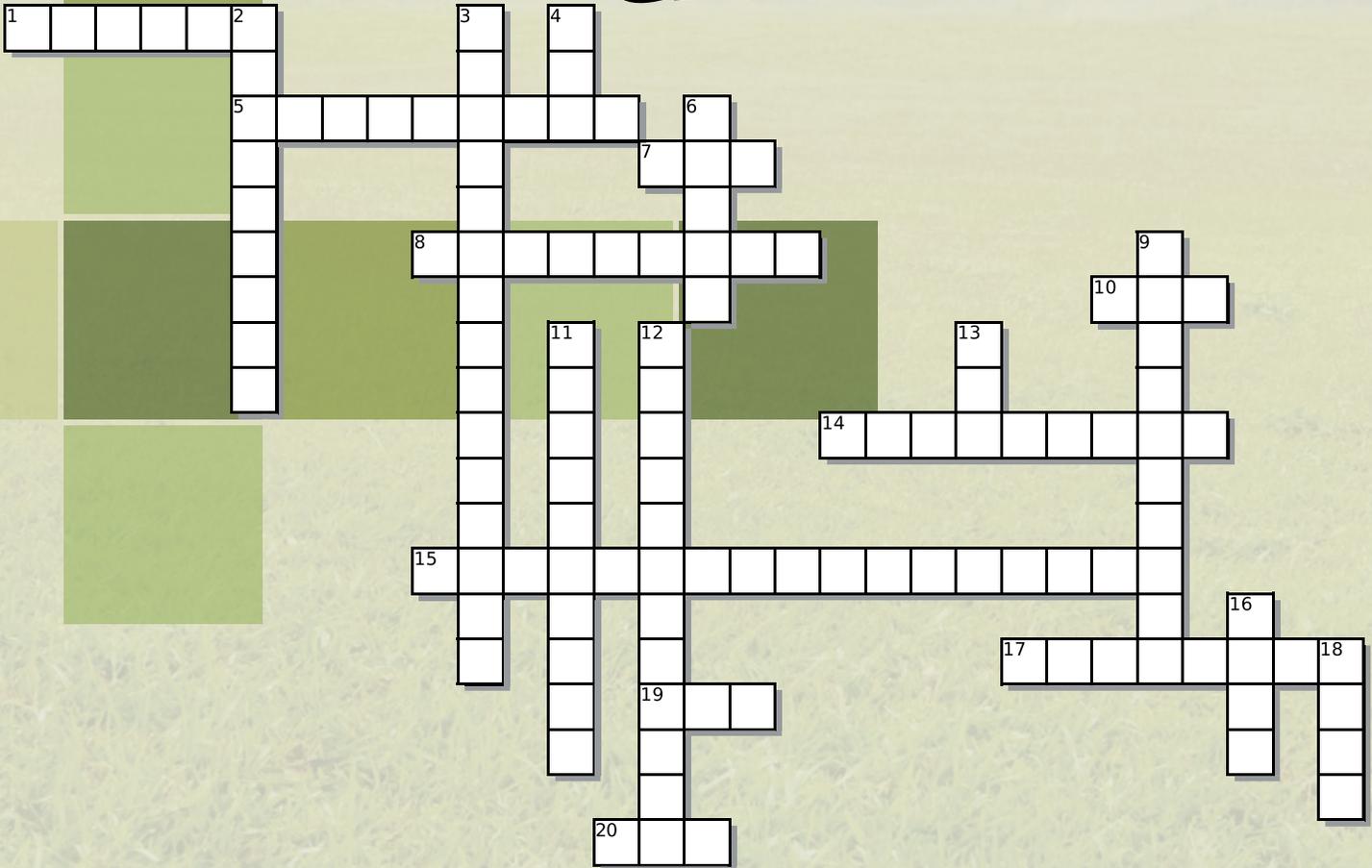
This new feedback system, modeled after

CFPB's complaint system, will help the government identify and address unfair, deceptive, and misleading practices. It's also intended to have the larger effect of ensuring high-quality academic and student support services for Veterans, Service members, and their families.

Thanks to all the interagency partners who worked so hard to create this tool that gives military and Veteran students the ability to help shape and improve the higher-education experience for themselves, their families and future Veterans!

GI Bill recipients can use the new VA GI Bill® Feedback System at www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/feedback.asp. DoD Tuition Assistance recipients can provide their feedback as well at afaems.langley.af.mil/pecs/DoDPECS.aspx.

EXIT STRATEGY CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 Pre-separation counseling begins _____ months prior to separation
- 5 Interagency partner in the TAP governance is Department of _____
- 7 Transition Assistance Program
- 8 Transition Assistance Program is no longer voluntary it is _____
- 10 Veterans Opportunity to Work
- 14 A 12-month post separation budget is part of the _____ curriculum
- 15 MLC
- 17 Event to verify and validate Career Readiness Standards
- 19 What federal agency provides information related to Federal Employment for veterans, transitioning service members, family members and Federal Hiring Officials and is an interagency TAP partner
- 20 Career Readiness Standards

DOWN

- 2 VA website for benefits
- 3 The federal agency that provides benefits and entitlements post separation to Veterans
- 4 Which website provides Transition GPS virtual curriculum
- 6 Department of _____ Employment Workshop
- 9 Transition Assistance Program is a _____'s program
- 11 Accession to _____ is part of the military lifecycle
- 12 When Service members need further assistance post separation from community partners
- 13 Entrepreneurship training "Boots to Business" is provided by the _____
- 16 Completion of the Employment Workshop provides all Service Members with a _____ Card
- 18 All Service members should leave service with a _____ strategy

BUILDING BRIDGES AND VALUABLE CREDENTIALS FOR SERVICE MEMBERS

By Frank C. DiGiovanni

The Department of Defense (DoD) is working collaboratively at all levels to help Service members separating military service to leverage their hard-earned military training, education and experience in the civilian sector. In particular, through its Credentialing and Licensing Task Force, DoD is undertaking a number of efforts to partner with other federal agencies, the military Services, employers, and key stakeholders to create new opportunities and reduce barriers for transitioning Service members. These efforts include:

- Assisting Service members through innovative pilot programs (active-duty members representing more than 50 occupational specialties are currently participating) in earning critical civilian credentials and through sharing lessons from these programs;
- Working closely with state legislatures in an effort to reduce licensing barriers for Service members and Veterans; 35 states have now enacted laws providing a broad range of acceptance for professional licensing for military education, training, and experience;
- Launching a new program called **DoD SkillBridge** to implement recent DoD guidance for how Service members can participate in job and employment training (including apprenticeships and internships) beginning up to six months before their service obligation is complete. The DoD guidance can be found at (see www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/132229p.pdf).

With regard to SkillBridge, tremendous potential exists for Service members, companies, trade unions, and others for leveraging this new DoD authority. To date, almost 1,000 military personnel have already successfully participated in the program,

and the Services as well are currently developing implementing procedures. To take advantage of the SkillBridge authority, the training must be provided at no or relatively little cost to the Service member and must offer a high probability of employment. Also, Service members can only participate if approved by the first field-grade commander in their chain of command and their participation does not degrade the Service's ability to meet mission requirements.



Several hundred Service members have in particular participated through the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry's Veterans in Piping (VIP) training program for welding and pipefitting skills. The United Association provides all training and placement resources without any costs to the government or the Service members.

VIP training programs are already active and available to active-duty Service members at Joint Base Lewis McChord, WA, Fort Carson, CO, Fort Hood, TX, and Camp Pendleton, CA (and will soon be available at Camp Lejeune, NC). The Navy is planning to begin implementing this training program and plans are underway to significantly scale the program within the Army and Marine Corps.

Partnerships like this benefit all involved, with the entire nation benefitting from greater access to a skilled and employed workforce.

Connecting to SkillBridge opportunities

To advance the SkillBridge effort and assist

Task Force outreach efforts, DoD is also developing a cutting-edge Twitter-like application for mobile devices (utilizing tweets, SMS texting, email, etc.) that will help connect Service members with civilian training opportunities that offer high probability of employment. This user-friendly tool is expected to be piloted by late summer 2014 – please check the soon-to-be-available www.DoDSkillBridge.com website around that time for details.

DoD is designing the SkillBridge tool so that Service members can easily use it to receive notifications and search for training opportunities, view training details and ultimately apply to participate in qualified training programs. Eligible and authorized Service members could attend these training activities, if approved by the first field-grade commander, within their last 180 days of service.

The SkillBridge system matches transitioning Service members with appropriate training opportunities, allowing individuals to receive notifications and search for these opportunities and optionally setup user profiles in the SkillBridge app. SkillBridge is then able to push training opportunities to Service members that have a user profile that matches the training opportunity. A user's profile would be configured to send training opportunity notifications to participants through Twitter and email; text messaging is also being evaluated as an additional notification channel.

When the system is up and ready, vetted companies and training provider organizations will be able to login into SkillBridge and enter training opportunities that include information like keywords, location and training dates. These training opportunities would then be made available

DOD IS ALSO DEVELOPING AN APPLICATION THAT CAN HELP

CONNECT SERVICE MEMBERS WITH CIVILIAN TRAINING

OPPORTUNITIES THAT OFFER HIGH PROBABILITY OF EMPLOYMENT.

to Service members via search and can be sent via push notifications. DoD also convened an interagency team to further the development of vetting criteria for reviewing and posting training opportunities, and recently completed user feedback sessions (including feedback from several major employers) on a SkillBridge prototype. Positive system modifications based on this feedback are currently being incorporated.

35 states have now enacted laws providing a broad range of acceptance for professional licensing for military education, training, and experience.

Other resources

There are already now a number of other active programs in place to assist each of you in the next step after your military service, including:

Department of Labor. The Federal government's employment and training initiatives can be found on the Department of Labor (DoL) website "Veterans' Employment and Training Service" (VETS) at www.dol.gov/vets. DoL also administers the US Military Apprenticeship Program. This program allows Service members to earn credit towards journeyman status in 124 registered occupations listed while they are performing their military duties. Currently, some 75,000 Service members are enrolled in registered apprenticeships. In addition, DoD and DoL are working to increase the number of Veterans enrolled in apprenticeship training programs.

Department of Transportation. DoD is also working closely with the Department of Transportation to remove barriers to Service members obtaining a Commercial Drivers License (CDL). Thanks to this collaboration all states passed laws or implemented executive orders to waive driving skills test for CDL requirements and more than 5,000 Service members and Veterans received skill test waivers for their CDL.

Industry. Industry has stepped up also. Energy companies have partnered under the "Troops to Energy" through the Center for Energy Workforce Development (www.troopstoenergyjobs.com); construction companies including KBR, Fluor, Bechtel, Jacobs Engineering, and others, have made commitments to train separating Service members for careers in their industry. Many other companies have committed to hiring Veterans under the First Lady's "Joining Forces" initiative (to see what companies have made this commitment see www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces/commitments).

Information Technology. The information technology (IT) industry is partnering with DoD to assist separating Service members serving in IT-related military occupations earn valuable certifications. To support this initiative, the IT industry donated more than 1,600 scholarships for free training and certification exams. To date, more than 1,000 transitioning Service members enrolled in this job skills training program. DoD is currently meeting with industry representatives to chart a way ahead for a second phase of this successful program.

Farming Sector. The farming community, particularly the organic and hydroponic farming sector, is seeing extensive growth. There are several training opportunities for Service members and Veterans with organizations such as Archi's Acres (www.archisacres.com) and Go Farm University (www.gofarmu.com/Military_Veterans.html).

Labor Unions. Labor unions also have active separating Service member/Veteran training programs, including as mentioned the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry (www.uavip.org) as well as the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (www.teamster.org/content/teamsters-military-assistance-program).

Looking ahead, DoD is committed to expanding efforts to help Service members earn licenses and credentials and prepare for the civilian workforce. We look forward to keeping you posted on new opportunities as they become available, and serving as a true bridge for the valuable skills and capabilities that you have earned from the crucible of your military experience.

Frank C. DiGiovanni serves as the Director, Force Readiness and Training, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Readiness) and leads DoD's Credentialing and Licensing Task Force



DoD's Frank DiGiovanni links with Mike Rowe on Credentialing

Frank DiGiovanni of the Department of Defense (DoD) has two important jobs: Director of Force Readiness and Training in the Office of the Secretary of Defense as well as the lead for DoD's Credentialing and Licensing Task Force. In advancing the Department's mission in carrying out these jobs, DiGiovanni is a firm believer in reaching out to potential allies and outside stakeholders.

Case in point: DiGiovanni recently invited television personality Mike Rowe to visit the Pentagon and explore the issue of Service member and Veteran credentialing efforts in the skilled trades. Rowe, who is based in San Francisco, is probably best known for his show "Dirty Jobs" that aired on the Discovery Channel. Inspired by the workers he met on "Dirty Jobs" and his own experiences, Rowe has shown deep commitment to promoting the nation's skilled labor trades. He started a foundation for doing so called mikeroweWORKS.

Over a lunch discussion and personal tour of the Pentagon, it became clear that Rowe's "trades" initiative dovetailed nicely with the goals of the DoD Credentialing and Licensing Task Force, and Rowe committed to collaborate further with DiGiovanni and DoD to advance their shared interests on these issues.

Rowe later posted favorably about his Pentagon meeting (along with photos) for his almost one million followers on Facebook, and also Tweeted about it. The celebrity/advocate started his positive comments on Facebook by noting, "Busy times here in D.C. Met some very important bureaucrats at the Department of Defense. Great guys actually, looking for a way to transition more soldiers into skilled occupations. I hope to help."

Veterans Employment Center

For Employers

Find Veterans to Meet Your Hiring Needs

Search the bank of exclusively Veteran (and military spouse) resumes to find candidates. New Veterans enter the bank daily.

Make a Veteran Hiring Commitment

Publicly list your commitment to hire Veterans and indicate the types of positions you are looking to fill, encouraging Veteran job seekers to look to you first.

Save a Shortlist

Save relevant resumes for easy reference and review later.

Connect with Resources

Connect to programs and services across the government designed to help them get jobs.

For Service Members & Families

Find Jobs

The Veterans Job Bank has over 1.5 million job openings, with listings updated daily.

Translate Your Skills

Enter your MOC to see a list of relevant skills and civilian careers that best match your military experience. This can help you in practicing for interviews, creating your resume, and focusing your job search.

Post a Public Resume

Creating a public profile helps employers committed to hiring Veterans find you.

View Employer Commitments

See which employers have made a commitment to hire Veterans and the types of positions they are looking to fill. Find opportunities where your military experience provides an even greater competitive edge.

Connect with Resources

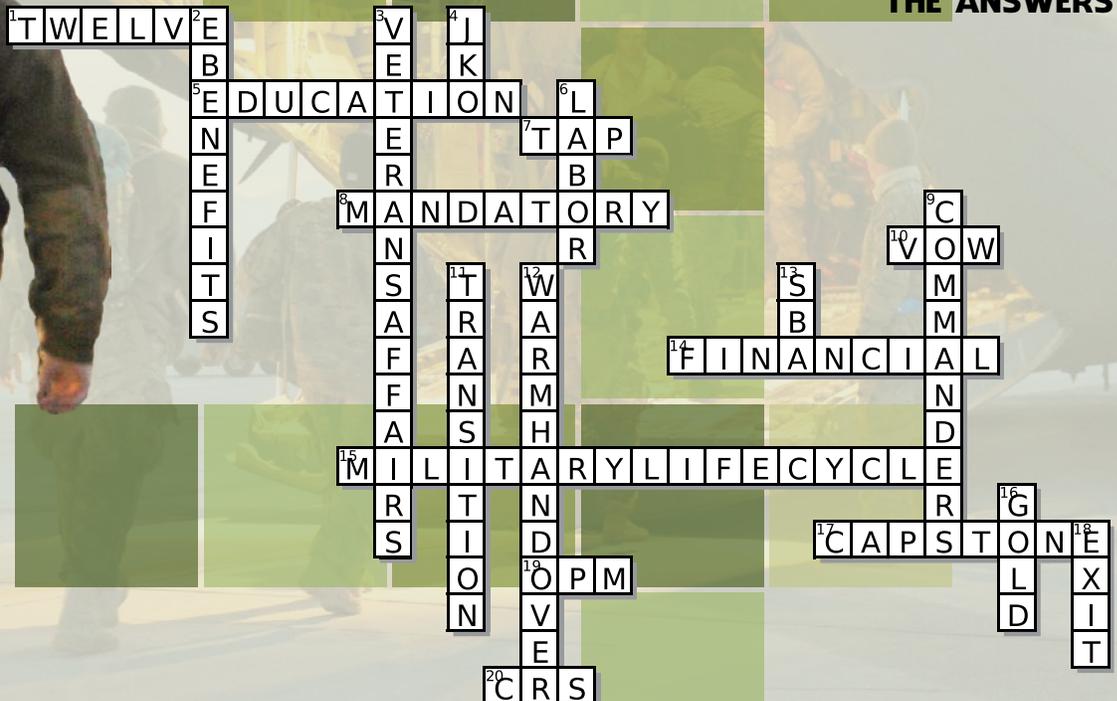
Learn more about incentives for hiring Veterans and discover best practices.

Visit online to learn more: www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/jobs



EXIT STRATEGY

THE ANSWERS



TIPS FOR FINDING EMPLOYMENT IN THE CIVILIAN WORKFORCE

You and your family served our nation in uniform and now you are, or will be, transitioning out of the military. Dr. Nathan Ainspan, the Research Psychologist with the Transition to Veterans Program Office (TVPO) provides the following tips to help you find the right job in the civilian world.

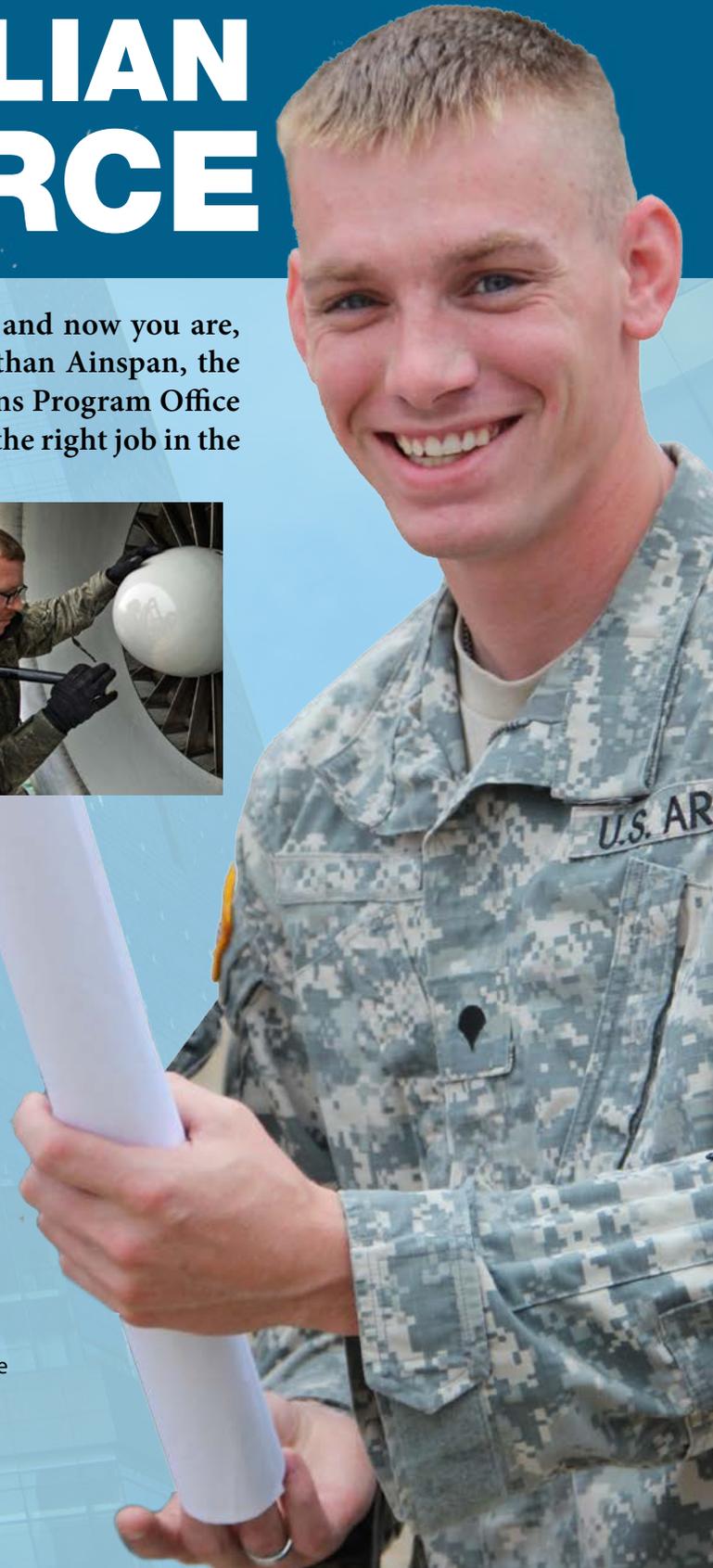


It takes time

One thing that surprises transitioning Service members is how long it can take to find a job. One estimate suggests you should expect your job search to take one month for each \$10,000 of salary you expect to receive (i.e., a \$60,000 job will take six months to locate). In today's economy it may even take longer, especially if you have any complicating factors such as an unusual Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) or a background in a unique field. There will also be costs involved in your job search. You will need to prepare and print your resume, purchase good professional attire for interviews, and potentially incur travel costs if your interviews are out of town.

PREPARING LOGISTICALLY, FINANCIALLY, AND EMOTIONALLY FOR THE LONG HAUL:

Logistically: Start researching the job market before leaving the military. The Department of Labor's MyNextMove website lets you explore the labor market and skill demands in locations across the nation. Start networking with friends who have already transitioned, or social or professional groups that you have joined. Networking can let you know about the jobs landscape in a way no website can, and can provide you with advocates and allies. Once you are out of the military, treat your job search like a full-time job: If



you are looking for a 40-hour-a-week job, resolve to spend 40 hours a week on searching. Treat every interaction you have with professionalism and make sure you have the right equipment (e.g., computer, communications, and clothing) to perform like a professional.

Financially: Try to ensure you have savings available or that someone in your family is working while you look for a job. Also, see if you can be added to a spouse or parent's health insurance plan. If necessary, apply for unemployment insurance and seek temporary employment to help sustain you through this period.

Emotionally: A job search can be challenging. Keep your spirits up and stay motivated on a daily basis so that you can continue networking, sending resumes and letters, making phone calls, and attending interviews. After a career in the military, where every day is purpose-driven, mission-directed and surrounded by comrades who know what you are going through, the idea of being at home with little structure can be overwhelming. The process can become especially difficult when you endure a string of rejections before finally receiving a job offer at the end. The financial hardships mentioned above will add to this emotional toll, and additional stress may come from family members who might not understand your struggles, or think that you are too picky by not taking any job that is offered. To counter these emotional difficulties, follow a daily routine and do not neglect the things that keep you sane. Maintain your social life and contacts, get involved in your community, attend services at your house of worship if it emotionally sustains you, and reward your efforts periodically (go golfing, see a movie, etc.). Staying physically fit can also help you emotionally, so

All course materials are available online for reference through the Transition GPS (Goals, Plans and Success) Virtual Curriculum on Joint Knowledge Online

be sure to follow your exercise routine, eat right, and get sufficient rest. Finally, remember that rejection is a normal part of the process; even the most successful job applicants will likely face some rejection due a variety of factors both within and beyond their control.

If at any point after before or separation you become anxious, depressed, or feel isolated, there are resources through DoD, the VA, and the community that can help. Contact Military One Source at (800) 342-9647, Give An Hour (where mental health providers in local communities provide treatment for free) at www.giveanhour.org, or the suicide prevention hotline at 1-800-273-TALK. Remember, you are not alone in this situation and there are many experts available to assist.

Use the resources available to you

During your time in uniform, you took advantage of training, materiel, and resources to make sure you could complete your mission. Treat your job search the same way and use every tool at your disposal to ensure you meet your career goals. DoD and its partnering agencies are there to equip you for success. For example, to supplement the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) training you took (or will take) at your installation, all course materials are available online for reference through the Transition GPS (Goals, Plans and Success) Virtual Curriculum on Joint Knowledge Online (JKO) at <https://jkodirect.jten.mil>. Each module contains its own list of resources including websites, books, and other materials to

assist you.

Additionally, you have other resources available:

American Job Centers (AJCs): These centers are located in every community nationwide. They are run by the Department of Labor (DOL) and offer many services including resume help, guidance on where to look for work, tests to help you determine your ideal job, and people who can give you advice. As a Veteran, you will receive priority, and most centers have specialists dedicated to helping Veterans. AJCs provide these services for free, whereas many companies and Web resources will charge you for the same services.

The Veterans Employment Center: This is an integrated online tool that can connect you with employers to aid your job search and provide you with access to other services. The new Veterans Employment Center was launched in April 2014 by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to integrate all the services provided by the Federal government to Veterans seeking employment. It provides a unique opportunity for you to build a personal profile and submit it to be seen by hundreds of employers eager to hire Veterans.

Check it out at www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/jobs.

Books: Several books are available with advice to help you understand and succeed in a civilian job search. These books are available in AJCs, public libraries, and book stores. Most have exercises that can help you better understand yourself and narrow down the type of work you would like to do. Much of the material is also covered in the Transition GPS curriculum, but many of these books provide greater depth and more exercises than what is covered in the classes. I have reviewed many of these books and found the following to be helpful. These are in no particular order:

- *What Color Is Your Parachute* by Richard Bolles (considered by many to be the "bible" for job searchers and is updated every year)
- *Out of Uniform: Your Guide to Successful Military-to-Civilian Career Transition* by Tom Wolfe
- *Best Foot Forward* by Deniz Emre
- *Military Transition to Civilian Success: The Complete Guide for Veterans and Their Families* by Mary Hay and others
- *Deployment to Employment* by Russ Hovendick,
- *The Military to Civilian Career Transition Guide* by Janet Farley





- *Military to Civilian Transition Guide* by Carl Savino and Ronald Krannich.

Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs):

VSOs can help you with your job search, disability claims, and provide membership benefits. These groups can also connect you with a support network of Veterans who have been through a job search and available to share their experiences. The VA maintains a website of VSOs at www.va.gov/vso. Look for one that represents your background and interests.

You are your best resource

As stated before, the military provided you with materiel, training, and other resources to ensure you were mission-ready, but when it came time to act you had to use your own instincts, initiative, and knowledge to get the job done. The same is true of your job search: While DoD and its partnering agencies can train you through the TAP, your success in finding a good job will depend on your own resources, initiative, and willingness to respond energetically to situations and opportunities as they arise. During your military career you frequently asked for assignments, feedback, and training, and pushed yourself into unfamiliar or uncomfortable situations. This too will be the case in your civilian job search. Be prepared to ask for help along the way. The AJCs stand ready to serve you and the other resources are

available through any computer with an Internet connection. Consider the Transition GPS Virtual Curriculum, the AJCs, and other resources as part of the paycheck you earned while serving your nation.

Collect intel for your job search mission

In the military you would never go out on a mission without gathering intelligence on what you might face out in the field. Treat your civilian job search in the same way and collect as much INTEL as you can on the job search process you are facing.

Collect information on yourself

To get the right job that will engage you and fill your life with a sense of purpose and mission, you will need a good understanding of your skills and interests, what makes you unique, what kinds of work environments and people suit you best, and ultimately what you want to do with your life. The books, tests, and professionals at the AJCs all can help with this process, but you will need to actively engage with the AJC professionals and the exercises in the books to gain this understanding. Self-examination

for a job search can take some time, and it is important to be honest with yourself. It may be time-intensive and difficult, but this process is crucial if you want to find the right job in the right environment that will be a good match to your skills and interests.

Be realistic – Don't under-estimate or over-estimate

After conducting a self-appraisal, you will need to figure out what you want to do and determine where you can do it. But when you do your research, be realistic – many Veterans under-estimate what they are capable of doing while others may over-estimate what they can do in the civilian world. To succeed, it will be important to find the right balance of realism about your potential opportunities and not sell yourself short.

Over-estimating: Many Veterans believe that because they held a certain rank while they served, they should automatically qualify for senior positions in a company when they transition from the military. There's a good chance you acquired experience in the military that far surpasses what civilians your age have done with their lives. However, those skills and experiences came from a unique environment and culture, and you still must pay your dues in the new civilian environment and culture. Your military service will certainly place you further ahead of other candidates, but you are still just starting out and may need to work your way up through the ranks. Many Veterans with inflated expectations over-

shoot the type of positions they apply for and wind up without a job. You may need to take an entry-level job or other position below your expectations in order to demonstrate your value to an employer and so you can learn to thrive in the new culture. Civilians do this, too. A newly minted lawyer may find that the only way to break into a law firm is to take a clerk's position and perform secretarial tasks.

Under-estimating: Conversely, you do not want to sell yourself short. You may not realize all the skills you developed in the military and how attractive your experiences in uniform will be to a civilian employer. One Army Veteran, who is now a student at Georgetown University, told a reporter that never in his life did he think that he would have the grades or money to attend Georgetown, or that the university would ever accept him. But due to his hard work, the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and the Yellow Ribbon program, he was able to afford the school. And thanks to Georgetown Universities' efforts to understand his background, and the Veteran's effective presentation of his own background, he is enrolled, doing well, and on track to graduate in a few years.

To find the middle ground between under-estimating and over-estimating yourself, do your research: Do the work to gain a thorough understanding of yourself, your interests, capabilities, and background. Once completed, conduct extensive research on the job market and organizations that would be interested in someone with your skills and experiences. And then pursue them.

— Source: *Transition to Veterans Program Office*

There's a good chance you acquired experience in the military that far surpasses what civilians your age have done with their lives.



Did you know...? TAP was completely redesigned in 2013.



Do you think and act like an entrepreneur?

What does it take to start, own and operate a business?

Influential business publications such as Entrepreneur, Inc., and Fast Company promote success through entrepreneurship, and the associated freedom, wealth and self-actualization.

From Steve Jobs to Oprah Winfrey, entrepreneurs are often celebrated as the epitome of the American dream – and with good reason.

Do you have a version of this dream? Have you spent monotonous hours between missions far from home thinking about what to do when you “get out”? Does starting a business occupy a spot on your list of “exit strategy” options?

*Craig Heilman,
Director of Veterans Programs at the
U.S. Small Business Administration*

Since 2011 **56%** of Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities graduates have started a new business

Research shows that military professionals make good business owners and entrepreneurs. According to the latest census, Veterans are 2.4 times more likely to be entrepreneurs than non-Veterans and combined Veteran-owned businesses earned \$1.2 trillion in sales. Great companies such as Fedex and Nike were started by Veterans.

So, what does it take to own a business? Is the lifestyle right for you? What can you do to prepare? Enrolling in the Boots to Business (B2B) entrepreneurship track in the Transition Assistance Program is one step you can take.

Boots to Business can answer your questions about starting a company and connect you to additional resources and business mentors. Read more about B2B in the upcoming Stars and Stripes Transition Guide, Expanded Edition, but first consider this interesting research on entrepreneurship.

\$2.1 billion in lending supported by SBA in 2012 to over 2,800 veteran-owned small businesses

How entrepreneurs think — creating the plan versus planning to create:

An entrepreneurship expert at the University of Virginia, Dr. Saras Sarasvathy, describes entrepreneurs as “effectual” in their reasoning.

“Effectual reasoning does not begin with a specific goal. Instead, it begins with a given set of means and allows goals to emerge contingently over time...”¹ Dr. Sarasvathy’s body of research, based on extensive interviews with successful entrepreneurs, shows that effectual thinking is almost always present in the creation of new businesses.²

The opposite of effectual thinking is “causal” thinking. The causal thinker makes specific plans, forecasts, and goals and then sets a path to achieve them. It is a rational approach taught in business schools, but this approach depends on targeting the right destination in advance and being able to reasonably control the journey.

Creating and operating businesses is inherently uncertain and demands continuous adaptation. Effectuation is well suited for the environment. Yet causal thinking – exemplified by business planning and market research – is still required to be successful. Established corporations excel at this, and entrepreneurs need to learn these disciplines to be profitable over the long term. Many successful business owners effectively blend the different approaches.

Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower said it best: “Plans are worthless but planning is everything.” And, there is the old military adage, “no plan survives first contact with the enemy,” or in this case, the market.

Perhaps one reason for Veterans’ entrepreneurial success is that to be effective in combat one must be creative and execution based as well as strategic and rational – an effectual and causal thinker.

The type of thinking that dominates your thought process may indicate what type of business ownership is right for you. If you are predominantly effectual, then you may be well suited for starting something new; if you are causal, then perhaps buying an established business or franchise is your best route to self-employment.

How entrepreneurs act — skills and motivation:

As a combat or a business operator, the odds and hours can be long. Success requires some specific character traits such as tenacity, self-confidence, flexibility, and the ability to muster resources.

University of Maryland scholars, Dr. Robert Baum, and Dr. Edwin Locke, have researched many of the character traits often associated

with entrepreneurs to see if they correlated to new venture growth over time.³ While Sarasvathy examined how entrepreneurs think, Locke and Baum focused on how they act.

What they found is that character traits, such as tenacity and passion are only indirectly related to new venture success. But these traits lead to what they call “situationally specific motivations” that do impact new business success. These motivations include “new resource skill” and “self-efficacy”.

New resource skill is defined as “...the ability to acquire and systematize the operating resources needed to start and grow an organization...for example finding capital and setting up operations.”⁴

Self-efficacy is about confidence and one’s ability to believe they have the capability to achieve a specific task or goal. This confidence is generally based on past experience or training.⁵

As a military professional, you have the proven ability to adapt and be resourceful, but what if you don’t have any past experience starting or operating a business? Seeking out training will improve your probability of success.⁶

When it is your time to transition, take advantage of the Transition Assistance

Program and get

all the free training you can to inform your planning, because “planning is everything.”

It gives you the knowledge and confidence to change the plan when overcome by events.

15 Veterans Business Outreach Centers providing entrepreneurial development services across the country

Craig Heilman is a Director of Veterans Programs at the U.S. Small Business Administration. He is a Veteran of the U.S. Navy, a former entrepreneur and business and marketing manager, and a graduate of the University of Virginia’s Darden School of Business.

¹Sarasvathy, Saras D. “What Makes Entrepreneurs Entrepreneurial”, 2004. Pg. 2, Web. 14 March 2014 www.effectuation.org/research/papers. ²For an overview of Dr. Sarasvathy’s research see www.inc.com/magazine/20110201/how-great-entrepreneurs-think.html. ³Baum, Robert J., and Locke, Edwin A. “The Relationship of Entrepreneurial Traits, Skill, and Motivation to Subsequent Venture Growth.” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol.89, No. 4 (2004) 587-598. Print. ⁴Ibid. ⁵Ibid. ⁶For an additional thought provoking article on the character traits of entrepreneurs that also references the Baum and Locke research see: www.entrepreneur.com/article/230350.



The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) offers Boots to Business, Veteran Women Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship (V-WISE,) and Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV) courses for Veterans, service-disabled Veterans, Active Duty Service members, and their spouses/companions. Take a look at the table below to see if any of these programs are right for you:

	Boots to Business	V-WISE	EBV
What is it?	A three-step training program developed to introduce and train transitioning Service members to business ownership resources in their local communities.	A premier training program that helps women Veterans find their passion and learn the business skills necessary to turn an idea or start-up into a growth venture	EBV offers cutting edge, experiential training in entrepreneurship and small business management
Who can participate?	Transitioning Service members	Female Veterans, active duty female Service members and female partners/spouses.	Post-9/11 Veterans and active duty Service members with service-connected disabilities.
Training	A short video introduction on entrepreneurship, an intensive 2-day entrepreneurial class, and an instructor-led 8-week online course.	A 15-day online training program, a three-day conference, and ongoing support and community building opportunities.	A 30 day online course, a nine-day residency at an EBV University and 12-months of support from faculty experts.
Curriculum	The curriculum provides valuable assistance for exploring self-employment opportunities by leading participants through the key steps for evaluating business concepts and the knowledge required for developing a business plan.	The curriculum is designed to teach participants the "language of business," how to understand opportunity recognition as it relates to growing a sustainable venture, and present actionable strategies related to new venture creation.	The curriculum focuses on practical training in the tools and skills of new venture creation and growth, reflecting issues unique to disability and public benefits programs; and the establishment of a support structure for graduates.
	www.sba.gov/bootstobusiness	whitman.syr.edu/vwise	whitman.syr.edu/ebv

Top 5 Small Business Administration resources for Veterans

These U.S. Small Business Administration resource partners have almost 1,500 locations across the United States, Guam, and Puerto Rico to help Veterans who want to start their own business or grow an existing business. All partners can advise Veterans on small business loans and provide training and support on a wide variety of challenges small business owners face, from access to capital to marketing.

Veterans Business Outreach Center

Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs) provide entrepreneurial development services such as business training, support and mentoring, and referrals for eligible Veterans who already own or are considering starting a small business. For more information, visit: www.sba.gov/content/Veterans-business-outreach-centers.

Women's Business Centers

Women's Business Centers (WBCs) are designed to assist women start and grow small businesses. WBCs operate with the mission to "level the playing field" for women entrepreneurs, who still face unique obstacles in the world of business. WBCs offer comprehensive training and



guidance on a variety of topics in many languages to help them start and grow their own businesses. For more information, visit: www.sba.gov/content/women's-business-centers.

Small Business Development Centers

Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) provide a vast array of technical assistance to small businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs. SBDCs foster local and regional economic development through job creation and retention. SBDC clients receive free, extensive, one-on-one, long-term professional business ad-

vising, low-cost training and other specialized services. For more information, visit: www.sba.gov/content/small-business-development-centers-sbdc.

SCORE: Counselors to America's Small Business

SCORE is a nonprofit association dedicated to helping small businesses get off the ground, grow and achieve their goals through education and mentorship. Volunteer business counselors, advisors and mentors provide free, confidential business counseling, free business tools, and inexpensive or free business workshops to aspiring entrepreneurs and small business owners. For more information visit: www.score.org.

SBA District Offices

SBA District offices offer one-on-one and group programs on a wide variety of business topics for aspiring and existing small business owners, as well as connections and referral to lenders. Ask to speak to a Veterans Business Development Officer (VBDO) or a staff member who is available to help you start, manage and grow a successful small business. For more information, visit: www.sba.gov/tools/local-assistance/districtoffices.

Transitioning from Military to Federal Civil Service

We should all honor the incredible work that all our service men and women do for us each day. And we are equally honored that when it's time for these brave warriors to take the next step in their careers, they choose to join the civilian Federal workforce.

— Director Katherine Archuleta, U.S. Office of Personnel Management and Vice-Chair, Council on Veterans Employment

President Obama's Veterans Employment Initiative

On November 9, 2009, President Barack Obama launched the Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI) with Executive Order 13518. The order established the Council on Veterans Employment to advise and assist the President and the Director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in coordinating a government-wide effort to increase the number of Veterans employed by the Federal government. Additionally, the Council, which consists of 24 Federal agencies, would serve as a national forum to promote Veterans' employment opportunities in the executive branch.

The President's Council on Veterans Employment is Co-Chaired by Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez, and Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. The Vice-Chair is OPM Director Katherine Archuleta. The Council met on April 29, 2014, to discuss the progress made in implementing Executive Order 13518.

During the meeting, White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough reiterated the President's commitment to Veterans seeking a career in the Federal government and to thank the Council members for their hard work and dedication.

As Vice-Chair of the Council, the Director of OPM maintains a prime leadership role in increasing Federal employment opportunities for Veterans by keeping agencies focused on:

- Actions that agency leaders should take to improve employment opportunities for Veterans;
- Helping develop the skills of transitioning military Service members and Veterans;
- Marketing the Federal government as an employer of choice to transitioning Service members and Veterans;
- Marketing the talent, experience and dedication of transitioning Service members and Veterans to Federal agencies.

Highlights of the VEI

Since the inception of the VEI, there has been a steady increase in the percentage of Veterans hired by the Federal government. In that time, the executive branch hired the highest percentage of Veterans since 1974. And in fiscal year 2013, Veterans made up 31 percent of total new hires. That represents an increase from 29 percent in fiscal 2012. The share of new hires that are Veterans has grown by more than 5 percent since fiscal 2009.

Federal agencies are bound to maintain the momentum of the first five years, with an increased focus on retention of those Veterans currently employed throughout the Federal

government and the reintegration of our deployed Veteran employees.

In 2011, OPM, in its advisory role, identified key occupations, focusing on positions where talent is needed to meet government-wide staffing needs. That led to the launch of the Council-sponsored Vets to Feds (V2F) career development program.

The program recruits and supports the development of our nation's Veterans for careers with the Federal government. Selected Veterans are afforded the opportunity to gain valuable work experience related to some of the government's critical career fields while pursuing academic degrees.

When they complete the program, Veterans are able to smoothly transition into Federal career positions for some of the government's most important and critical occupations.

The first V2F program targeted contracting specialist positions and was followed in 2012 with the V2F Career program for information technology. Close to 100 Veterans were hired by several agencies for these programs.

Agencies most recently used the V2F Program in early 2014 to once again target Contracting Specialists

Information gateway

The www.FedsHireVets.gov (FHV) website was launched in January 2010 to establish an information gateway on Federal employment for Veterans.

The FHV website serves as an information gateway to publicize useful information related to Federal employment for Veterans, transitioning Service members, family members, and Federal hiring officials. The FHV website provides consistent and accurate information and useful training and other resources.

Veterans and Transitioning Service members: www.fedshirevets.gov/job/Veterans.aspx

Family Members: www.fedshirevets.gov/job/family.aspx

Hiring Officials: www.fedshirevets.gov/hire/index.aspx

While it does not take the place of USAJOBS.gov as a clearinghouse of Federal employment opportunities, Veterans and transitioning Service members eligible for special appointing authorities may find employment opportunities posted in the 'News', Spotlight and associated Facebook and Twitter sections.

To aid in transitioning Service members' employment and career goals, and at the direction of the President of the United States, OPM designed a computer-based training module on the Federal employment process to be part of the Department of Labor's Employment Workshop for the

**Veterans made up 31 percent of
Federal new hires in fiscal year 2013.**





White House photo by Pete Souza

President Barack Obama signs an executive order on the employment of Veterans in the federal government in the Oval Office, Nov. 9, 2009.

Transition Assistance Program.

Recognizing that Veterans who were discharged prior to the release of the module could benefit from the training, OPM, through the FHV website, gives them an opportunity to take the course and enhance their knowledge of the Federal employment process.

As part of a government-wide marketing strategy, several forms of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter branded with the “Feds Hire Vets” and “America’s Veteran” logos and the FHV URL, are instrumental in assisting Service members. Many agencies use these tools to specifically target those Veterans eligible for a noncompetitive appointment to Federal

positions. These sites are also used to share real time information, market immediate Federal career opportunities, solicit feedback from the Veterans and their families and specifically target certain Veterans for noncompetitive appointments to Federal positions. These modes of communication also provide an important link between job seekers and employers seeking job- ready candidates.

OPM’s Veterans Services Office uses this technology to promote the VEI. It is also used to provide Federal agencies an opportunity to target their recruiting to Veteran applicants while creating a community of information for those Veterans, transitioning Service members, and their families interested in Federal employment.

Veteran Employment Program Offices

In March 2010, 24 Federal agencies covered under the VEI established Veterans Employment Program Offices. The program managers of these offices, Veterans Employment Program Managers (VEPM), are instrumental in helping their agency identify qualified Veterans for Federal positions. The VEPMs help clarify the hiring process for transitioning

An important part of the work the Veteran Employment Program Office does involves responding to inquiries and frequently asked questions from Veterans, transitioning service members and families. Typically these involve, “How do I tie my military experience, education, and skills to align myself for Federal employment?” Below are some examples of questions and responses:

Q Is there a limit to the number of times I can use my Veterans’ preference when applying for Federal jobs?

A No. There is no limit on how many times you can apply and claim an entitlement to Veterans’ preference. However, it is important to remember that Veterans’ preference does not apply to internal agency actions such as promotions, transfers, reassignments and reinstatements.

Q Who determines eligibility for Veterans’ preference?

A Congress determines eligibility for Veterans’ preference through law in Title 5, United States Code, Section 2108 (5 USC 2108). However, the Federal agency to which a Veteran applies for employment will adjudicate claims for Veterans’ preference. The agency will request a copy of your DD-214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty, or other acceptable documentation in order to adjudicate claims for Veterans’ preference.

Q I don’t understand the lingo of the Federal government?

A Visit USAJOBS.gov and go to the Resource Center. There you will find tips on writing a Federal resume, a glossary of terms and other information that will make your application process go more smoothly.

Q How can I determine what Federal positions are compatible with my Military Occupational Specialty?

A To determine what Federal positions you would qualify for based on your military experience please use the Military Skills Translator Tool located at www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/ which will allow you to cross reference Federal positions related to your military occupational specialty. In addition to identifying those

positions that are related to your military occupation, it will provide you with links to current open vacancies in that field. You can narrow your search to specific locations or other criteria within USAJOBS.

Q What Federal positions should I be looking for that correlate to my education?

A You can search positions related to your education by using the Federal Occupations by College Major link at help.usajobs.gov/index.php/Federal_Occupations_by_College_Major to help you determine which Federal positions you may qualify for based on your education.

Q How can I determine what grade levels I can qualify for in the Federal government?

A Once you determine what Federal positions you would qualify for; either from education, experience or a combination of both, you can then go to the Federal Governments Qualifications Standards website located at www.opm.gov/qualifications/standards/indexes/num-ndx.asp to determine what the minimum qualification standards are for those positions and grades.

Q How/what do we need to do to work with you as a Veteran Employment Program Manager for the Federal government?

A If you are interested in seeking employment with a specific agency, you can send an email or call the Veteran Employment Program Office where you desire to work. The VEPM appreciates speaking with those who have done some research about their agency, its mission and role. Simply saying you are searching for a job or expounding on your leadership attributes does not help them to determine how your skills fit into the position they have to offer. As with any recruiter, they want to place the person who has a desire to work in their agency. Remember, unless you want to work for the VA, saying you want to

Service members and provide assistance to help Veterans adjust to the civilian work environment once they are hired. Veterans and their families are encouraged to contact these subject matter experts for specific information on employment opportunities in those agencies (www.fedshirevets.gov/AgencyDirectory/index.aspx).

OPM created a one-of-a-kind Veterans Employment Program Office to assist Veterans, transitioning military Service members and their families seeking careers, not only with OPM, but throughout the Federal government. Partnering with the Department of Defense's Computer Assisted Technology Program, OPM has computer stations equipped with assistive technology to ensure any disabled Veteran seeking employment services can be accommodated regardless of disability.

Classes and workshops are conducted throughout the year to cover the entire spectrum of Federal employment. Veterans are afforded the opportunity to meet VEPMs from the other agencies, Federal hiring officials and human resources personnel to

discuss Federal employment and ways to stand out from other applicants. Additionally, classes are held to educate hiring officials on the tools available to them to recruit and employ Veterans as well as military spouses. All classes are open to the public.

OPM's Veteran Employment Program Office provides employment assistance and conducts outreach activities in the Washington metropolitan area and at military installations, including Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (Bethesda, MD), Ft. Belvoir, VA, Quantico, VA, and Ft. Meade, MD. OPM also has a Veterans Services Representative at Joint Base San Antonio - Fort Sam Houston (TX) to assist transitioning Service members seeking employment in the Federal government.

The success of the VEI is undeniable, due in no small measure to the work of the VEPMs who are on the front lines, working daily with Veterans, transitioning Service members and their family members enhancing the recruitment of and promotion of employment opportunities within their respective agencies.

work with Veterans may not be the best approach since that position is probably taken. An agency directory is posted on OPM's Feds Hire Vets website (www.fedshirevets.gov/AgencyDirectory/index.aspx).

Q "I've applied to 50 jobs and can't get an interview! What's the problem?"

A Begin by looking at the resume submitted in response to a job announcement. Many times Veterans will use a generic resume to apply for each job without understanding that resumes need to be targeted to a specific position. That will ensure they include the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities the job calls for. Many times Veterans won't even be referred to a hiring official because their resume doesn't meet the basic qualifications called for in the vacancy announcement.

Q "I'm a disabled Veteran – don't they HAVE TO hire me?!"

A Being a disabled vet does not automatically qualify a Veteran for a specific position. While being a disabled vet may make the Veteran eligible to apply, the vet must still meet the basic OPM qualification standards for the series and grade of the position. In most cases, Veterans are competing with their fellow Veterans for available positions.

Tips for applicants

READ and UNDERSTAND the basic requirements for the positions you apply for. Ensure you meet the basic qualifications for the position.

IDENTIFY KEY WORDS in the duty description and tailor your Federal resume based on your knowledge skills and abilities as it applies to the position you are applying to.

TAKE ADVANTAGE of the many employment tools and resources available for Veterans and transitioning service members. There are hundreds out there, and many of them are free.

DO YOUR RESEARCH: Federal resumes are not 'one-size-fits-all' and every agency will not be a good fit.

UNDERSTAND what your passions are, what drives you, and seek a career that is satisfying.

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX: Seek opportunities at smaller, independent agencies. There are over 300 Federal agencies and your skills may be just what they are looking for. For a list of Federal agencies visit www.usa.gov

BOTTOM LINE – don't get frustrated! The RIGHT JOB is out there – waiting for YOU!

Since 2011, OPM has recognized the VEPMs who demonstrate outstanding leadership in furthering the goals of the VEI including the following VEPMs:



Dennis May (VA)—
VEPM of the Year 2011

Dennis May is the Deputy Director of the Veterans Employment Coordination Service, Office of Human Resources Management; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. "After

applying (unsuccessfully) for positions at VA, former Assistant Secretary Mike Hager talked to me about standing up an office dedicated specifically to assisting Veterans with employment within VA. It was a match made in heaven! Having gone through the challenges of post-military transition, this effort had and continues to have personal meaning to me. I draw tremendous satisfaction from being in a position to tangibly help my fellow Veterans!"

Paul Plasencia (DOL)—
VEPM of the Year 2012

Paul Plasencia serves as the Veteran Employment Program Manager for Department of Labor (DOL). According to Mr. Plasencia, "There is no greater satisfaction at the end of the day than knowing that in the position of the VEPM,

I am able to make a positive impact in the lives of my fellow Veterans by being able to assist them in gaining meaningful Federal employment. By listening to the Veteran's needs; asking them their goals and plans for the future; and ensuring that they are able to effectively translate their military skills into civilian skills, I am able to provide them with the necessary tools and advice on the Federal hiring process and Veteran's preference."



Kelly Woodall (OPM)—
VEPM of the Year 2013

In her role as the Veteran Employment Program Manager for OPM, Ms. Woodall expresses great joy in the work she does. "Each day is different. While I know I will not be successful in placing every single person requesting my assistance into a job at OPM, I feel confident that I am giving them the best guidance I can."

American Job Centers offer assistance to transitioning Veterans

Keith Kelly, Assistant Secretary, Department of Labor (DOL), Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS)

ENTERING THE CIVILIAN WORKFORCE AFTER MILITARY SERVICE CAN BE DAUNTING, YET EXCITING. YOUR MILITARY TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE HAVE PROVIDED YOU WITH THE SKILLS AND VALUES THAT EMPLOYERS COVET. BUT EVEN WITH A SOLID SKILL SET, YOU HAVE IMPORTANT CHOICES TO MAKE AS YOU CONSIDER CIVILIAN CAREER OPTIONS. FORTUNATELY, THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR PROVIDES MANY RESOURCES TO ENSURE THAT YOUR TRANSITION IS SMOOTH, YOUR SKILLS ARE UTILIZED, AND YOUR WORK IS REWARDING.

Service members receive an overview of the employment information and resources they need during the Transition Assistance Program. As you begin to think about life after the military, DOL's My Next Move for Veterans website (www.mynextmove.org/vets) is an excellent first step to research careers and industries, including careers similar to your job in the military. Additionally, Veterans are eligible to take advantage of services offered through DOL's network of approximately 2,500 American Job Centers (AJC) located throughout the United States. At an AJC, Veterans are eligible to receive customized services based on employment needs, such as resume development, case management, interviewing skills development, labor market information, job referrals and access to work-based training, including apprenticeships and on-the-job training. All of these services are free of charge, and Veterans receive priority service in all AJCs.

American Job Centers are helping Veterans like these enter into successful civilian careers on a daily basis:

Nadine Wicklander had ice water in her veins when she cleaned and tested underwater mines while serving in the Navy. But she admits she "got tongue tied" in job interviews and her resume needed updating. Veteran's Representative Adrian Morado of California's Employment Development Department came to her rescue. Morado crafted Wicklander's resume to match her military skills to civilian-friendly occupations. He helped her find job openings through social media and coached her on delivering an effective 30-second "elevator speech." Morado, also a Navy Veteran, said he works hard to "pay forward" the employment help he feels all Veterans deserve for serving their country.

Within two months of receiving assistance, Wicklander accepted a job with a large retail company. Shortly thereafter, Wicklander's revamped resume came to the attention of a large bottling company that offered her training to become a supervisor.

After two tours of duty in Afghanistan as a telecommunications specialist, Army Veteran Joe Hernandez was determined

to find a good career position stateside to support his wife and infant daughter. So he turned to the Veterans Network Workshops, run by California's Employment Development Department. Under the guidance of Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialist John Plane, also a Vietnam Army Veteran, Hernandez received help crafting his resume, looking for employment and preparing for job interviews. "Joe absorbed the workshop lessons with astonishing speed and moved his resume from military jargon to civilian bullet points," Plane said. Hernandez's hard work soon paid off. Recently he was hired by the California Highway Patrol as an associate information systems analyst. "It is good to know people care about you being a vet," Hernandez said of the help he received.

Veterans from all over the country are taking advantage of these services to shape their own success stories. To find the nearest American Job Center visit www.servicelocator.org. When you arrive, please remember to inform AJC staff of your military service to receive the full range of resources that are available. If you are transitioning from an overseas location, please utilize DOL's online resources such as My Next Move for Veterans at www.mynextmove.org/vets or the Employment Center at www.ebenefits.va.gov and when you return to the states you can receive AJC services in-person.



Did you know...? Over 100,000 Service members and their Spouses have completed the Transition GPS Virtual Curriculum.





CAREER READINESS STANDARDS

Career Readiness Standards (CRS) are a common set of career preparation activities Service members must complete to depart the military and be considered “career ready.” The standards provide Service members with a clear, comprehensive set of activities to ensure they have the training and skills needed to transition successfully into civilian life. Completion of CRS activities is mandatory for all Service members retiring, separating, or being released after 180 days or more of active duty.

- Complete pre-separation counseling (DD Form 2648)
- Prepare a DoD standardized 12-month budget
- Complete a standardized DoD Individual Transition Plan (ITP)
- Register on eBenefits (www.ebenefits.va.gov)
- Complete Continuum of Military Service counseling
- Evaluate transferability of military skills to the civilian workforce (complete Military Occupational Code Crosswalk and DoD standardized gap analysis)
- Document requirements and eligibility for licensure, certification, and apprenticeship (as applicable)
- Complete an assessment tool to identify personal interests and leanings regarding career selection
- Complete a job application package or present a job offer letter
- Receive a Department of Labor (DOL) Gold Card and demonstrate understanding of post 9/11 Veteran priority American Job Centers
- Attend VA Benefits I and II Briefings
- Attend the DOL Employment Workshop



www.DoDTAP.mil