



THE VETERAN ADVANTAGE:

DAV's Hiring Guide for Employers of the Military Community



“America has a solemn obligation to ensure that the men and women who have served and sacrificed for this country and the cause of freedom will never be forgotten or neglected.”

—Jesse Brown, Past DAV Washington Headquarters Executive Director
and Former Secretary of Veterans Affairs

PURPOSE

This guide is intended to help employers develop strategies and implement tactics for attracting and hiring the best talent from the military community while equipping you to make sound employment decisions that include veterans with disabilities.

You'll find helpful information regarding hiring veterans in many employment scenarios:

- Starting or expanding a veteran-hiring initiative
- Seeking to reduce barriers to employment
- Promoting job satisfaction, productivity and retention
- Translating and understanding the skills and experiences that veterans can bring to your workforce

Use this guide to navigate the often-unclear terrain of recruiting, hiring and retaining veterans, including those with disabilities. Over 5 million veterans have a service-connected disability and are among the most resilient members of society, having served in the military and overcome adversity.

Disability is complex, multidimensional and very personal. The definition of "disability" often depends on the context—and conflicting definitions are common.

This guide should help you better navigate this complicated terrain; consider it a map to empowering your organization to become a thought leader in the veteran employment space while making it easier to do the right thing for the country and your company.

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THE BUSINESS CASE FOR HIRING VETERANS

Why hire veterans? Hiring veterans benefits everyone. Businesses gain a highly skilled, adaptable and disciplined workforce. Veterans gain meaningful employment and a new mission. This contributes to a stronger economy, a more diverse and inclusive workplace, and a society that recognizes the contributions of its veterans.

Replenishing Talent

Every year, about **200,000** people transition out of the military, with most seeking employment.

Skilled Workforce

More than **80% of military jobs** overlap with civilian occupations, but due to a lack of skills translation, veterans' résumés are often overlooked.

Cultural Impact

Veterans bring **strong values** and work ethic that make them an asset to their team.

Financial Incentives

Companies that hire **disabled veterans** often qualify for tax credits, and most accommodations are available at no cost to employers.

THE RECRUITMENT STAGE



When preparing to add veterans to your team, it's important to understand this particular candidate group, including their background, training, experience and the general values that drive them. This understanding will help you recruit, hire and retain the best veteran talent for your open roles.

Military Training Instills Valuable Traits

During military training, service members acquire a wealth of valuable skills that are highly transferable and sought after in civilian employment. Military training is a structured and intense journey designed to transform civilians into disciplined and effective service members.

While there are variations between branches (Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Space Force and Coast Guard), the core components and progression are similar.

All service members, whether enlisted or commissioned officers, begin their careers with initial training that prepares them for military life. Core factors include the ability to follow instructions, lead and support a team, demonstrate mental fortitude under pressure, and conduct themselves with discipline.

Upon completion of training, service members report to their first operational unit or duty station. There, they apply their learned skills in real-world scenarios while receiving further on-the-job training, mentorship from experienced personnel and continuing education.

The Value of Military Skills and Experience in the Workplace

While in the military, service members undergo training programs to become experts in a wide range of skills and concepts that are transferable to the civilian workplace. This ongoing training instills broadly categorized soft skills (interpersonal and personal attributes) and hard skills (technical and measurable abilities).

Soft Skills Attributed to Military Service

- **Adaptability:** Military life demands flexibility to new environments and assignments.
- **Communication:** A main component of force protection includes communicating key details and updates to supervisors and peers.
- **Discipline:** The security of military personnel and equipment requires strict adherence to protocols.
- **Integrity:** Ethical standards are built early and maintained throughout service, fostering traits like accountability and trustworthiness.
- **Leadership:** Military structure consists of small teams, creating multiple opportunities for service members to guide or train junior personnel, with increased levels of responsibility as they progress in rank.
- **Problem-Solving:** Often working with limited resources, service members have learned to analyze complex situations, identify risks and implement solutions.
- **Stress Management:** Training involves intentionally high-stress situations, teaching service members to remain focused under pressure and make strategic decisions in chaotic environments.
- **Teamwork:** The military community is built on a foundation of collaboration with diverse work groups, unique team dynamics and a need for reliability.

Hard Skills Attributed to Military Service

Many military occupations (also known as MOSs, AFSCs or ratings depending on the branch of service) provide technical training that directly translates to civilian roles.

- **Engineering and construction**

- Army 12-series (Engineer): 12B Combat Engineer, 12C Bridge Crewmember, 12H Construction Engineering Supervisor, 12N Horizontal Construction Engineer
- Marine Corps 13XX series (Engineer, Construction, Facilities & Equipment): 1371 Combat Engineer, 1345 Engineer Equipment Operator
- Air Force and Space Force 3E0–3E9 series (Civil Engineering): 3E5X1 Engineering, 3E3X1 Structural, 3E4X1 Utilities, 3E2X1 Pavements and Construction Equipment
- Navy Seabees: Builder, Construction Mechanic, Engineering Aide, Equipment Operator, Steelworker, Utilitiesman
- Coast Guard Damage Controlman, Machinery Technician, Electrician's Mate

- **Health care and medicine**

- Army 68-series: 68W Combat Medic, 68C Practical Nursing, 68P Radiology Specialist, 68E Dental Specialist
- Marine Corps Hospital Corpsman
- Air Force and Space Force 4N0X1 Aerospace Medical Service, 4A0X1 Health Services Management, 4C0X1 Mental Health Service
- Coast Guard Health Services Technician

- **Heavy equipment operation**

- Army 12N Horizontal Construction Engineer, 21E Heavy Construction Equipment Operator
- Marine Corps 1345 Engineer Equipment Operator
- Air Force and Space Force 3E2X1 Pavements and Construction Equipment
- Navy Seabees: Equipment Operator
- Coast Guard Machinery Technician, Damage Controlman

- **Information technology (IT) and cybersecurity**

- Army 17-series (Cyber): 17C Cyber Operations Specialist; 25-series (Signal): 25B IT Specialist, 25D Cyber Network Defender
- Marine Corps 17XX Information Maneuver, 0651 Data Network Specialist, 0671 Data Systems Administrator
- Air Force and Space Force 1D7X1 Cyber Defense Operations, 3D0X2 Cyber Systems Operations, 3D1X2 Cyber Transport Systems
- Navy Information Systems Technician, Cryptologic Technician Networks, Cyber Warfare Technician

- Coast Guard Information Systems Technician

- **Logistics and supply chain management**

- Army 92-series (Quartermaster/Logistics): 92A Automated Logistical Specialist, 92Y Unit Supply Specialist
- Marine Corps 30XX series (Supply/Admin): 3043 Supply Admin, 3051 Warehouse Clerk
- Air Force and Space Force 2S0X1 Supply Management, 2T0X1 Traffic Management, 2T3X1 Vehicle Maintenance
- Navy Logistics Specialist, Aviation Storekeeper, Storekeeper
- Coast Guard Storekeeper

- **Maintenance and repair**

- Army 91-series (Maintenance): 91B Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic, 91C Utilities Equipment Repairer, 91D Power Generation Equipment Repairer
- Marine Corps 35XX Motor Transport Maintenance, 60–64XX Aircraft Maintenance/Avionics
- Air Force and Space Force 2A3X3 Tactical Aircraft Maintenance, 2A6X1 Aerospace Propulsion, 2A7X1 Aircraft Metals Tech
- Navy Aviation Machinist's Mate, Machinist's Mate, Hull Maintenance Technician
- Coast Guard Machinery Technician, Aviation Maintenance Technician

- **Operations and project management**

- Army 90A Logistics (officer), 11-series Infantry Ops, 13-series Field Artillery Ops
- Marine Corps 0302 Infantry Officer, 0402 Logistics Officer, 1302 Engineer Officer
- Air Force and Space Force 63A Acquisition Manager, 64P Contracting, 38PX Force Support, 11X Pilot Ops
- Navy Operations Specialist, Surface Warfare Officer
- Coast Guard Operations Specialist

- **Security and law enforcement**

- Army 31-series (Military Police): 31B Military Police, 31E Internment/Resettlement
- Marine Corps 5811 Military Police, 5821 Criminal Investigator
- Air Force and Space Force 3P0X1 Security Forces
- Navy Master-at-Arms
- Coast Guard Maritime Enforcement Specialist

Resources like this guide, military skills translators (like O*NET's Military Crosswalk Search) and career counselors can be invaluable for employers to effectively translate these military-specific terms and experiences.

Challenges and Barriers to Veteran Employment

While employers generally recognize the value that veterans bring to the workforce, they encounter several challenges when recruiting and onboarding:

- **Skills and Experience Translation:** Military roles don't always align with civilian job titles or descriptions.
- **Misconceptions and Bias:** Stereotypes about veterans may lead to unconscious biases in hiring.
- **Targeted Outreach:** Employers, especially smaller organizations, may struggle to identify effective channels to reach and attract veteran talent.
- **Cultural Shifts:** The cultural differences between the military and civilian workplace can be a hurdle for both veterans and employers to navigate.
- **Résumé Interpretation:** Automated screening systems may filter out résumés with military acronyms and terminology.
- **Certifications and Licenses:** Some jobs require accreditations that require extra work and time for veterans to catch up to civilian peers.
- **Mental and Physical Health:** Veterans may be dealing with visible and invisible disabilities, which vary in their severity and need for accommodations.
- **Support Networks:** When transitioning out of the military, veterans may lack professional networks that are crucial for job searching and career advancement.
- **Veteran Self-Identification:** Not all veteran applicants self-identify as such, making it harder for employers to track and engage with this talent pool.

Understanding these challenges will help employers build an effective model for recruiting, hiring and retaining this hidden talent group.

Understanding the Military-to-Civilian Transition

While there is no one typical transition to the civilian workforce, veterans do share common challenges.

Many members of the military are transitioning out of a system that focuses on mission first. These

individuals are coming from an all-encompassing life system structured to ensure their basic needs such as food, housing and income are met.

Veterans are resilient and able to adapt to unique situations, but that requires trust and transparency from leadership. Here are some of the most common life changes that military members face when they transition out of the military:

- **Structure and Identity**
 - Veterans transition from a structured military environment to one with less-defined routines and hierarchy, which can be disorienting.
 - Military service often becomes a fundamental part of one's identity. Transitioning out can lead to a sense of loss and a struggle to redefine purpose outside of the uniform.
 - The shift from a military environment where many necessities were provided to civilian life with numerous choices can be overwhelming.
- **Social Adjustments**
 - Many veterans miss the deep bonds and sense of community found in the military and experience loneliness and isolation after transition.
 - The lack of shared experiences can make it challenging for veterans to connect with civilians, leading to a sense of "otherness."
 - Reestablishing family roles and routines after prolonged absences, such as deployments, can be challenging for both the veteran and their loved ones.
- **Practical Adjustments**
 - Learning to manage personal finances, budgeting and understanding civilian compensation can be a new experience for those who relied on military pay and benefits.
 - Finding suitable and affordable housing can be a challenge, especially in new locations.
 - Administrative tasks associated with separating from service and accessing veterans benefits such as disability compensation and education benefits can be complex and frustrating.

Ultimately, a veteran's transition experience is influenced by factors including the length and nature of service, combat exposure, preexisting conditions, and the strength of personal and professional support networks.

WHILE BOTH THE MILITARY AND THE CIVILIAN WORKPLACE ARE DEDICATED TO ACHIEVING, THE WAYS THEY OPERATE CAN DIFFER SIGNIFICANTLY.

MILITARY WORK CULTURE	CIVILIAN WORK CULTURE
Displayed hierarchy (on uniforms)	Necessary introductions
Codified and explicit processes and procedures	Often unwritten rules or expectations
Support and mentorship fostered through small teams	Initiative and self-teaching expected
Strong sense of community and mission focus	More focus on independence and individual work than team success
Direct communication	More passive communication
Clear chain of command	Unofficial stream of influence
Daily routine and expectations	Choice; personal freedom
Rank-based respect	Earned and built trust and respect
Well-defined career ladder and growth	Variable career paths and self-promotion
Structured, mission-first leadership	Ambiguous structure or mission

Understanding Military Demographics

The veteran population in the U.S. is a dynamic demographic, reflecting trends on a larger scale.

- **Declining Population:** The number of living veterans in the U.S. has been steadily declining for decades due to the aging and death of veterans from the World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War eras.
- **Gender Representation:** Though the majority of veterans are still men, women comprise a rapidly growing share of the population and have made contributions in every major U.S. conflict.

- **Increasing Diversity:** Post-9/11 veterans are notably more racially and ethnically diverse than those from earlier eras. Besides demographics, veterans also bring diversity of thought and world experience.
- **Education:** Veterans must complete extensive training to serve. A majority have at least some college experience—an associate degree, bachelor's degree or higher. However, even without a college degree, many veterans have specialized training that is valuable to employers.



Building a Veteran Hiring Initiative

To successfully recruit veterans, employers need a strategy that recognizes the specific needs of transitioning service members and veterans and that makes the appropriate adjustments.

1. Secure Executive-Level Support

- **Why:** A successful veteran hiring initiative needs support from the top. When executive leadership champions the cause, it signals a genuine commitment throughout the organization and provides resources for effective implementation.
- **How:** To secure executive buy-in for a veteran hiring initiative, it must be presented as a strategic business solution, not merely a charitable endeavor. Highlight the tangible benefits such as veterans' transferable skills, potential for reduced turnover, and positive impact on company culture and brand reputation. Support with data, demonstrating the potential return on investment (ROI) and aligning it with organizational priorities.

2. Set Goals and Outcomes

- **Why:** Establishing enterprise-wide military hiring and retention goals creates a framework for growth and a way to monitor performance. To effectively set goals and outcomes for veteran hiring, companies should adopt a strategic approach that goes beyond simply increasing the number of veteran hires. This involves aligning veteran recruitment with specific business objectives and creating a supportive environment that encourages their long-term success.
- **How:** Use clear, measurable objectives, such as filling a specific percentage of open roles with veterans within a given time frame. Then, define a successful outcome. Metrics like veteran retention rates, performance evaluations and career advancement opportunities ensure long-term positive impact and ROI.

3. Optimize Brand and Messaging

- **Why:** Veterans are a unique talent pool with a distinct culture and value system. Traditional civilian recruitment strategies often fail to effectively communicate how veterans' skills and experience translate directly into corporate roles. Specialized messaging demonstrates that an employer genuinely understands and values the needs and perspectives of veterans, fostering trust and a sense of belonging in the company. This tailored approach addresses veterans' concerns and showcases a company culture that aligns with their desire for purpose, community and support.
- **How:**
 - **Develop a Military-Centric Employment Brand:** Beyond just saying you hire veterans,

demonstrate it. Create a compelling narrative that highlights your commitment to veterans.

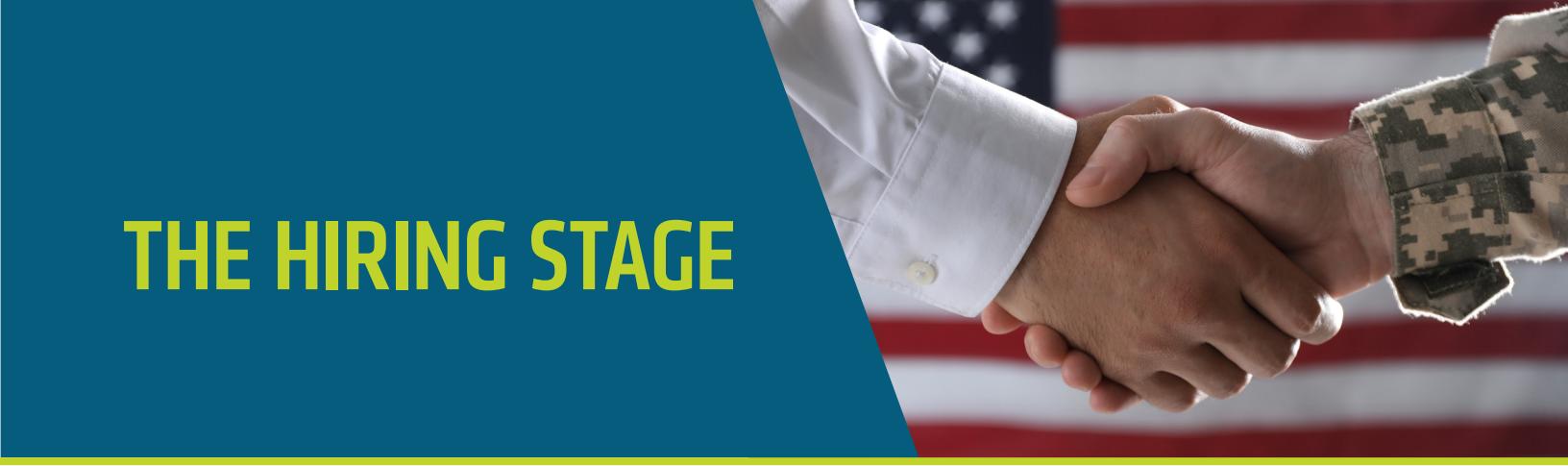
- **Create a Dedicated Veteran Careers Page:** Establish a specific section on your company's career website that speaks directly to veterans. Include testimonials from veteran employees, information on veteran employee resource groups (ERGs) and any specific veteran hiring initiatives.
- **Display Authentic Visuals:** Use accurate and respectful military images and depictions in your recruiting materials. Avoid stereotypes. If possible, feature actual veteran employees in your marketing.
- **Highlight Transferable Values:** Craft messaging that emphasizes qualities valued in both military and civilian life, such as leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, integrity, discipline and a mission-driven approach.

4. Engage and Train Internal Teams

- **Why:** Without familiarity with military culture, terminology and experiences, the workplace may seem foreign to new veteran hires. Effective training and engagement can help improve retention rates and lead to greater success in integrating veterans.
- **How:**
 - **Educate Hiring Managers and Human Resources:** Provide training on military culture, understanding military résumés and effective interviewing techniques for veterans. This helps hiring managers and human resources teams recognize transferable skills and conduct more welcoming interviews.
 - **Create Referral Programs:** Create a robust internal referral program where current employees are incentivized to refer other veterans. Trust and word of mouth often go hand-in-hand within the veteran community.
 - **Empower Employee Resource Groups:** Encourage your ERG to be active in veteran appreciation and community events, recruitment strategy for the organization, and mentorship for new veteran hires.
 - **Leverage Current Veteran Employees:** Identify one or more veterans in your organization to help with the hiring initiative and help assess how a candidate may best fit into your organization.

Once buy-in from the executive team is complete, goals and outcomes are determined, messaging is optimized and internal teams are engaged, the groundwork is set for a successful veteran hiring initiative

THE HIRING STAGE



Once your organization has begun to set up a veteran hiring initiative, it's imperative to know where to find and how to connect with veteran talent and determine the best ways to interview and onboard this unique group.

Veterans come from a background of mission focus and camaraderie, so it's no surprise that hiring multiple veterans into an organization can result in better retention rates and company culture.

As a group, veterans can be wary of organizations they don't recognize. However, even small companies that can prove they're a good place for veterans often experience better recruitment. (See our [Small Employer of the Year awardees](#) for examples of companies doing it well.)

Financial Incentives for Hiring Veterans

Hiring veterans comes with several financial incentives and important legal considerations for employers. Understanding these can help businesses maximize benefits while ensuring compliance and fostering a supportive workplace.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)

The [WOTC](#) is a federal tax credit available to employers who hire individuals from certain target groups, including qualified veterans.

A WOTC "qualified veteran" is any of the following:

- A member of a family receiving assistance under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (food stamps) for at least a three-month period during the 15-month period ending on the hiring date
- Unemployed for periods of time totaling at least four weeks (whether or not consecutive) but less than six months in the one-year period ending on the hiring date
- Unemployed for periods of time totaling at least six months (whether or not consecutive) in the one-year period ending on the hiring date

- Entitled to compensation for a service-connected disability and hired not more than one year after being discharged or released from active duty in the U.S. armed forces
- Entitled to compensation for a service-connected disability and unemployed for periods of time totaling at least six months (whether or not consecutive) in the one-year period ending on the hiring date

To verify whether a job applicant is a first-time, qualifying member of a targeted group, employers are required to submit IRS Form 8850 together with Employment and Training Administration (ETA) Form 9061 or ETA Form 9062 to the workforce agency for the state in which the employer's business is located (where the employee works) **within 28 calendar days after the new hire's start date**. This deadline is crucial for eligibility.

Credit for Employer Differential Wage Payment

This [credit provides employers with a payment](#) for each employee serving in the Reserve or National Guard when they are away from work on active duty.

Workplace Accessibility Grants/Support

For veterans with service-connected disabilities, the [Department of Veterans Affairs may provide funding for modifications](#) to the workplace to make it more accessible. It can also provide accessible technology and specialized tools, which benefits not only the veteran but often the entire workforce.

Reduced Turnover and Higher Retention

Studies consistently show that veterans often have lower

turnover rates and higher job satisfaction. While not a direct financial incentive, this translates to significant cost savings by reducing recruitment and training expenses associated with employee churn.

Navigating Veteran Job-Preparation Benefits

Veterans transitioning out of the military also come to employers with a range of VA-provided benefits that advance their knowledge, experience and bona fides. Employers of veterans can benefit from these programs, paid for by the federal government.

Many veterans also receive benefits related to their health and financial security. For example, various health care options exist for military veterans with a service-connected disability. These options can range from extension of the military's TRICARE coverage to health care or financial benefits from the VA. Benefits will vary depending on factors such as the time and place a veteran served, their length of service, and the type of discharge they received.

Veterans may use their benefits for:

- Associate, undergraduate or graduate degrees
- On-the-job training
- Apprenticeships and technical and vocational programs
- Licensing and certification exams

Veteran Readiness and Employment Program

The VA sponsors the [Veteran Readiness and Employment \(VR&E\) program](#), which works to match veterans with employers for successful careers and offers incentives including:

- Several vocational and employment services for veterans with service-connected disabilities to help them obtain suitable employment
- Subsidies of veterans' salaries so employers pay an apprentice-level wage while training veterans, via on-the-job training programs
- Specialized tools, equipment and workplace modifications—at no cost to employers—to eligible veterans with disabilities, allowing them to perform their duties

GI Bill Benefits

The [GI Bill](#) provides an avenue for service members to gain education or certification without undertaking student loans. For businesses, the GI Bill helps create a pool of highly skilled, well-trained and motivated workers while increasing employee retention through



approved apprenticeship and on-the-job training programs.

The most common types of GI Bill benefits include:

- **Post-9/11 GI Bill:** Covers education and training expenses for veterans who served on active duty after Sept. 10, 2001
- **Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty (MGIB-AD):** Covers education and training programs for veterans who served at least two years on active duty
- **Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR):** Covers up to 36 months of education and training benefits for members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps or Coast Guard Reserve; Army National Guard; or Air National Guard
- **Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance:** Covers education and training expenses for dependent spouses or children of a qualified veteran

[New legislation signed in 2025](#) requires the VA to expand access to high-tech training and education programs for veterans transitioning to civilian careers.

Other Veteran Readiness Resources

Employers can also leverage multiple state- or department-specific resources to build an educated and well-trained veteran workforce.

- The U.S. Department of Labor's [Veterans' Employment and Training Service \(VETS\)](#) assists veterans, reservists and National Guard members in securing employment.
- [CareerOneStop](#), a U.S. Department of Labor resource, helps employers looking to recruit, hire,

train and retain veteran employees through the Veteran and Military Transition Center.

- **American Job Centers**, physical locations sponsored by CareerOneStop, assist job seekers in a variety of career- and employment-related needs.
- State veterans affairs offices may offer additional assistance and financial resources for companies hiring veterans with disabilities.

Legal Considerations (Protections and Obligations for Employers)

Hiring teams can avoid hefty fines and accidental discrimination by understanding and complying with federal laws that protect service members throughout their careers. Protections in place include:

Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)

USERRA laws protect individuals who serve or have served in the military from disadvantages in the civilian workplace. Virtually all U.S. employers, regardless of size, are subject to USERRA and obligated to notify employees of their rights. Key employer obligations include:

- **Reemployment:** The act requires that service members are promptly reemployed in their civilian jobs, with the same seniority, status and pay upon their return from duty.
 - **Refresher Training:** Employers are obligated to provide any refresher training or other training necessary to update a returning employee's skills to perform the essential tasks of the reemployment position.
 - **Exceptions:** Reemployment rights depend on factors like length of service, honorable discharge and proper notice of service.
- **Nondiscrimination:** USERRA prohibits discrimination based on past military service, current military obligations (e.g., National Guard or Reserve duty) or intent to serve. This applies to hiring, firing, promotion and any benefit of employment.
- **Non-retaliation:** Employers cannot retaliate against anyone (whether or not they have performed military service) who acts to enforce USERRA rights.
- **Health Insurance:** Service members have the right to elect to continue their employer-based health plan coverage for up to 24 months while in the military.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The ADA, enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), requires protection for veterans with service-connected disabilities. Key employer obligations include:

- **Reasonable Accommodation:** Employers are required to provide reasonable accommodation to veterans with a service-related disability (like post-traumatic stress disorder or a traumatic brain injury) when it comes to applying for jobs, performing their jobs, and enjoying the equal benefits and privileges of employment. Reasonable accommodations may include modifications to the workplace, flexible schedules for appointments or assistive technology.
- **Medical Inquiry Limitations:** Employers cannot generally ask job applicants or employees about the existence or nature of a disability, unless the employer has been made aware of the disability or an accommodation need. Questions must be job-related and consistent with business necessity.
- **Nondiscrimination:** All stages of employment (including hiring; promotions; job assignments; training; termination; and any other terms, conditions and privileges of employment) must contain anti-discrimination measures.
- **Disabled Veteran Protections:** Veterans with service-connected disabilities are protected under the ADA, just like any other individual with a disability. This means employers cannot discriminate against them based on their disability.

Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities within the federal government, including employment by the executive branch of the federal government, employment by federal government contractors, and activities funded by federal subsidies or grants.

- Section 503 prohibits federal contractors and subcontractors from discriminating in employment against individuals with disabilities. It also requires employers to take affirmative action to recruit, hire, promote and retain these individuals.
- Section 504 forbids organizations and employers from excluding or denying individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to receive program benefits and services.



Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

The [FMLA](#) grants unpaid leave to employees experiencing health-related issues preventing them from performing job duties. In most cases, the employee is guaranteed to return to work in the same or comparable position.

The FMLA applies to private employers, state and local governments, and most federal employers. Military-related provisions include:

- **Exigency Leave:** Eligible employees who are the spouse, child or parent of a military member may take up to 12 weeks of FMLA leave during any 12-month period to address the most common issues that arise when a military member is deployed to a foreign country, such as attending military-sponsored functions, making appropriate financial and legal arrangements, and arranging for alternative child care. This applies to the families of members of both the active-duty and Reserve components of the armed forces.
- **Military Caregiver Leave:** Eligible employees who are the spouse, child, parent or next of kin of a covered service member may take up to 26 weeks of FMLA leave during a single 12-month period to care for the service member who is undergoing medical treatment, is in outpatient status or is on the temporary disability retired list for a serious injury or illness incurred or aggravated in the line of duty. This applies to the families of members of both the active-duty and Reserve components of the armed forces.

Employers are required to post a notice explaining the FMLA's provisions and the procedures for filing violation complaints. Any employer that violates this posting requirement may be subject to a penalty.

The Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act (VEVRAA)

[VEVRAA](#) requires that businesses with a federal contract take affirmative action to employ and advance qualified disabled veterans. VEVRAA protects the employment rights of several categories of "protected" veterans.

This includes:

- Disabled veterans
- Recently separated veterans
- Active-duty wartime or campaign veterans
- Campaign badge and Armed Forces Service Medal veterans

Following the recruiting, hiring and recruiting checklists and strategies in this guide will ensure your organization is VEVRAA compliant.

Hiring Veterans With Disabilities

Make your organization's hiring process veteran-friendly. For employers, effectively integrating veterans with disabilities into the workforce benefits from some special considerations:

- **Visible and Invisible Disabilities:** Many veterans live with service-connected disabilities. Some are visible, like limb loss; others are invisible, like traumatic brain injuries. Education and awareness are critical for employers and their teams.
- **Environment:** It's crucial for employers to create an inclusive environment where veterans feel comfortable disclosing their accommodation needs.
- **Job Postings:** Announcements on open positions should communicate support for hiring veterans with disabilities and how veterans' skill sets fit in your workplace.
- **Performance Standards:** With proper accommodations, employers should expect the same level of performance from all staff, regardless of age, ability, gender or ethnicity.

Understanding Invisible Disabilities

Invisible disabilities are often more nuanced to address than visible disability. Some injuries may take months or even years after the event to manifest, making identification and treatment a challenge. Additionally, many mental health conditions still carry stigma, leading

some to hide their symptoms or struggle to get their needs recognized. Understanding these disabilities will help you better support your veteran hires.

Some invisible disabilities you may find in the veteran community:

- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** Whether from a vehicular accident or an experience on the battlefield, PTSD is characterized by anxiety, hypervigilance, flashbacks and emotional detachment resulting from traumatic experiences. It's an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a traumatic event or ordeal in which a person thinks their life or others' lives are in danger.
- **Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI):** Caused by injury to the head, TBIs are marked by memory issues, concentration problems and difficulty with emotional regulation.
- **Sleep Disorders:** Disordered sleep can be caused by stress, trauma and disrupted sleep patterns.
- **Hearing Loss:** Loss of hearing is often undiagnosed in service members.
- **Tinnitus:** Tinnitus consists of persistent ringing or other sound in the ears.
- **Chronic Pain:** Conditions such as back or joint pain and migraines can limit mobility and affect daily activities.

As these conditions do not have immediately obvious physical markers, they can be difficult to recognize. Fortunately, accommodations often are simple to put in

place and do not cost much time or effort on the part of the employer.

Accommodations and Assistance

Create a work environment where veterans with disabilities feel valued by providing an appropriate range of accommodations and assistance like you would for other disabled team members. Following guidance and legal obligations under the ADA and USERRA as well as implementing best practices for fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace will go far in making your veteran employees feel supported.

The interactive process allows dialogue, trial and error, and an opportunity for the veteran with a disability to believe they can fit into your company. It should be an ongoing conversation between the employer and the veteran.

Keep in mind that some veterans with disabilities may be reluctant to ask for help. They are trained to be independent and to solve problems themselves, so it can be helpful to design a support system that's easy to use and promotes an ongoing conversation with the veteran employees.

What Is a Reasonable Accommodation?

A reasonable accommodation is any change in the work environment or process that allows a person with a disability to enjoy equal employment opportunities. This spans from the application process to the work environment to benefits.

Examples of reasonable accommodations include:

- **Environment:**
 - Distraction reduction (like a quiet workspace, noise-canceling headphones or white noise machines)
 - Lighting adjustments (like natural light or dimmer switches)
 - Physical accessibility (like ramps, accessible restrooms, adjustable desks or ergonomic equipment)
 - Mirrors or sensors at cubicle entrances for those easily startled
 - Service animal accommodations
- **Technology:** Providing specialized equipment or software (such as voice-activated software, screen readers, large-print materials or one-handed keyboards)
- **Scheduling and Leave:** Ensuring managers are aware of and support the need for flexibility,



including modified work schedules or adjusted start and end times to allow time for VA appointments

- **Supervision:** Training managers on how to effectively lead and support employees with disabilities, focusing on communication, performance management and an inclusive team environment
- **Reassignment:** If an accommodation is not possible in the current role, reassigning to a vacant, equivalent position for which the veteran is qualified
- **Confidentiality:** Keeping all medical information related to an employee's disability or accommodation request confidential and separate from their general personnel file

Best Practices Beyond Legal Minimums

While legal compliance is essential, a truly veteran-friendly employer goes beyond the minimum to provide support that aids in successful integration and retention.

- **Training:** Disability awareness and reasonable accommodation training is helpful for managers and supervisors in organizations of all sizes. This training should be an ongoing dialogue and effort, not a one-time event.
- **Job Accommodation Network (JAN):** A leading source of expert and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and disability employment issues, JAN serves both employers and employees across the U.S. and around the world. While this service offers one-on-one consultation about all aspects of job accommodations and the ADA, JAN-trained counselors also offer guidance to help managers approach a worker in an appropriate way about issues related to a disability.
- **Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs):** Veteran employees should be made aware of and encouraged to use EAPs, which can provide confidential counseling for stress, family issues or mental health concerns.
- **Health and Wellness Programs:** Employers should promote wellness programs that address physical and mental health, including resources for managing stress or accessing specialized care.
- **Veteran Employee Resource Groups (ERGs):** These groups are invaluable. They provide a built-in community, networking opportunities and a platform for veterans to share experiences and advocate for their needs.
- **Appreciation Events:** Employers should recognize

and celebrate the contributions of all employees, including veterans with disabilities.

- **Skills-Based Hiring:** This approach shifts from credential-focused recruiting to directly assessing candidates' practical abilities and future potential, recognizing that valuable capabilities can develop through various pathways beyond formal education and work history. Employers who can effectively identify and leverage these transferable military skills gain a significant competitive advantage in their talent acquisition strategy.

Where to Find Veteran Talent

While veterans bring unique skills and experience to the workplace, employers often face challenges when it comes to finding these job seekers. Whether due to lack of self-identification on the veteran's side or lack of reach on the employer's side, there is often a disconnect between the two.

Veterans are often found in specific ecosystems. Going to them is more effective than waiting for them to find you. Connect with military and veteran talent through:

- **National and Local Veterans Service Organizations:** Some veterans organizations, like DAV, host job fairs and can connect employers directly with job-seeking veterans in their communities.
- **Nonprofit Veteran Employment Organizations:** Specializing in connecting veterans with civilian employers, these organizations often provide résumé translation, interview coaching and direct placement services.
- **State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies:** These agencies often have pipelines of job-seeking individuals with disabilities, including veterans.
- **Base Career Fairs and Employment Offices:** Many military installations host regular job fairs and have dedicated employment offices that work to place transitioning service members. *DAV offers this service through our partnership with RecruitMilitary.*
- **Veteran Career Fairs:** Employers should participate in and sponsor veteran job fairs, both in person and virtual. *DAV offers this service through our partnership with RecruitMilitary.*
- **Dedicated Veteran Job Boards:** Employers can post openings on platforms specifically for a military audience. *DAV offers this service through our partnership with RecruitMilitary.*

- **LinkedIn for Veterans:** LinkedIn offers a one-time, 12-month free premium subscription and learning courses to veterans. It's a powerful networking tool where employers can identify and connect with veteran talent.
- **Local Community Involvement:** Employers can support veteran-focused community events, volunteer with veteran organizations or sponsor veteran initiatives. This builds a positive employer brand within the veteran community.
- **Transition Assistance Program (TAP):** This mandatory program for separating service members prepares them for civilian life. Employers can partner with TAP offices on military bases to offer workshops, conduct mock interviews or even recruit directly.
- **DOD SkillBridge:** This Department of Defense program allows service members to participate in civilian job training, internships or apprenticeships during their last 180 days of service.
- **Military Education Institutions:** Many colleges and universities have strong veteran student populations or specific veteran resource centers.
- **Recognition Programs:** Once your organization has established hiring practices that effectively add veteran hires to your teams, you will want to amplify that success. One way to do this is by nominating your organization for recognition in the veteran hiring space. *DAV's Patriot Employer Awards recognize employers who demonstrate strong military hiring and retention practices.*

Note: DAV's employment program partners with RecruitMilitary to provide a job board and career fairs for employers to connect with a wide range of the job seekers from the military community.

Job Descriptions and Veteran Résumés

Not only do employers often need help translating military terms, but many veterans may also need some help understanding corporate job descriptions. Optimizing job descriptions for veteran candidates will result in a noticeable difference in the type of candidates who respond.

How to Optimize Job Descriptions for a Military Candidate

- Use military skills translators to illustrate how military job codes (MOS, AFSC, rating) and experience align with civilian job requirements.

- Avoid corporate jargon. Instead, use clear, concise language and highlight attributes that resonate with veterans, such as teamwork, leadership, problem-solving and mission-driven work.
- Emphasize the impact and results of a role, which resonate with the mission-oriented mindset of veterans.
- Allow more time for review. Unlike civilian résumés that may be quickly scanned for keywords, a more in-depth review of veteran résumés can help uncover the depth of their experience.
- Encourage recruiters to read the cover letter for additional context. Veterans are often advised to use their cover letter to translate military experience and express their career goals and values in civilian terms.

When reviewing a veteran's résumé, employers should focus on translating their robust training and experience into civilian-applicable skills. Since many veterans are taught to prioritize the mission and team over personal accomplishments, their résumés may require extra attention to reveal their individual impact.

The more familiar recruiters and hiring managers become with interpreting résumés with military-related language and experiences, the more successful your screening process will be.

Veteran Résumé Characteristics

- **Functional Versus Chronological:** Veterans, especially those with multiple deployments or varied assignments, may use a functional résumé format that groups skills by competency rather than strictly chronological work history.
- **Military Jargon and Job Titles:** Military acronyms, ranks, unit names and terminology may appear in veteran résumés. Focus on the responsibilities and competencies listed for context.
- **Education and Training:** Military training is often specialized and equivalent to civilian certifications and degrees.
- **Security Clearances:** Many military roles require a security clearance—a significant asset to certain employers.
- **Experience:** Veterans, even at junior levels, often have had significant responsibilities for equipment worth millions of dollars and have led teams at a much younger age than their civilian counterparts.
- **Awards and Decorations:** While employers don't need to know the specifics of every medal,

recognizing that military awards often signify exceptional performance, leadership or bravery can be insightful.

- **Employment Gaps:** Gaps often indicate deployments, extensive training or a structured transition period. Context may be provided in the résumé itself or the cover letter.

Simplifying the Application Process

Provide clear instructions and guidance on how veterans can best present their military experience on a civilian résumé. Offer résumé translation assistance.

Ensure your online application and résumé system is fully accessible for individuals using assistive technologies.

Provide contact information for a member of your team whom a veteran can reach out to directly with questions about the hiring process and how their military experience can translate to a job at your company. Ideally, this team member should be a veteran.

By adopting these strategies, employers can move beyond the unfamiliar terminology and recognize the potential and skills that veterans bring to the workforce.

How to Interview Veterans

For the most part, interviewing a veteran (with or without a disability) should be performed no differently from interviewing any other candidate.

For promising candidates, connect them with an employee who is a veteran to provide tips before the interview.

The standard behavioral questions should be the same as those you would ask nonveterans. Employers may want to adjust their approach with veterans, but the ultimate goal is to ensure the candidate can perform the job.

Create a Welcoming and Inclusive Environment

- **Recognize Their Service:** Thanking a veteran for their service is a respectful gesture and can help set a positive tone.
- **Be Patient:** Veterans may not have extensive experience with civilian interviews. They may need a moment to reframe their answers in civilian terms. Be patient and allow them time to formulate their responses.
- **Provide Proactive Accommodations:** When inviting the candidate to interview, include a statement on requesting accommodations. Initiate

the interactive process immediately upon a disability disclosure or observed need (if applicable and appropriate) to determine necessary reasonable accommodations.

- Ensure that the interview location is accessible for all potential accommodations.
- Train interviewers on disability etiquette and the importance of a welcoming, inclusive demeanor.
- Strictly maintain the confidentiality of all medical information.

Interpret Military Communication Styles

- **Directness and Efficiency:** Veterans may not elaborate or “sell themselves” in the way a civilian candidate may, as humility and team orientation are highly valued in the military. Follow-up questions can help uncover the full scope of their accomplishments and responsibilities.
- **Formalities:** Many veterans show respect by using formalities such as “Sir” or “Ma’am.” To help put them at ease, let them know first names are acceptable.
- **Team-Oriented Language:** Veterans often speak in terms of “we” and “our unit” rather than “I.” This reflects the strong emphasis on teamwork and collective achievement in the military. Encourage them to articulate their individual contributions within team contexts.
- **Body Language:** Some veterans may exhibit a more formal posture, which can be misinterpreted as stiffness or lack of warmth. Understand this as a product of their training and a sign of respect.
- **Jargon and Acronyms:** If a veteran uses unfamiliar military jargon during the interview, politely ask for clarification.



Focus on Transferable Skills and Outcomes

- **Job Requirements:** Clearly describe the civilian job role and its responsibilities, then ask the veteran to explain how their military skills and experience align with those specific requirements.
- **Behavioral Questions:** Ask questions that allow interviewees to draw on their experiences.
 - “Tell me about a time you had to lead a team to accomplish a complex task.”
 - “Describe a situation where you had to quickly adapt to an unexpected challenge.”
 - “Give an example of how you solved a significant problem with limited resources.”
 - “How did you ensure clear communication within your team, especially when stakes were high?”
- **Outcomes:** Prompt the explanation of their experiences and responsibilities in civilian terms and quantify their achievements and the impact of their work.
 - “That sounds interesting. Could you explain what that entails in a way a civilian would understand?”
 - “How would that translate to a civilian business setting?”

Stick to Legally Permissible Topics

- Military duties, responsibilities and specific skills and training acquired
- Experiences that prepared them for the role
- Examples of skills needed for the job
- Military certifications or licenses relevant to the position
- Ability to perform job functions with or without reasonable accommodation
- Availability to work the required hours or shifts

Avoid Sensitive Topics

- **Combat Experience:** Inquiring about specific combat experiences can be retraumatizing and is generally inappropriate. Questions related to deployments to war zones or conflicts may be interpreted as trying to determine if the veteran has post-traumatic stress disorder or a brain injury and could be construed as a violation of USERRA or the ADA.
- **Mental Health Conditions:** Directly asking about mental health conditions is prohibited under the ADA. Focus on their ability to perform job functions.

- **Physical Disabilities or Injuries:** Avoid asking about specific physical disabilities or injuries. Instead, focus on whether they can perform the essential functions of the job, with or without reasonable accommodation. Always maintain the confidentiality of all medical information.
- **Discharge Status:** Only organizations that assign a veteran's hiring preference or have requirements related to security clearances can ask questions related to military discharge, especially in a preemployment phase.
- **Future Military Obligations (Unless Directly Relevant):** Avoid asking if they are still in the Reserve or National Guard or could be called up for duty, unless these obligations directly and demonstrably interfere with the essential functions of the specific job. Focus on their availability for the work schedule required.

Successfully Onboarding Veterans

Successfully onboarding veterans often goes hand-in-hand with successful retention—it takes dedication beyond the initial hiring process to create an environment that bridges the military-to-civilian workplace culture gap.

Designing a specialized onboarding program for veteran hires can help them better integrate into the civilian workforce and find their stride. Use the following strategies to create a veteran-centric onboarding experience.

Before the Veteran's First Day

- **Incorporate Veteran Values:** Remember veteran values when setting up the onboarding program. Structure, clear expectations and direct communication are imperative to helping these hires feel comfortable.
 - Add information to your onboarding process that is specific to veterans. This can include your organization's structure, promotion pathways, and employment and disability resources.
- **Provide Proactive Communication:** Before the new veteran hire's first day, reach out to confirm start date, time, dress code, parking, who will greet them and what to expect. This helps alleviate anxiety about the unknown.
- **Train Team and Managers:** Brief the veteran's direct manager and team about military culture, communication styles and the value veterans bring.

- Educate them on potential transition challenges and tools to effectively lead and support veterans. This includes understanding military backgrounds, communication styles, the importance of feedback and ways to leverage veterans' strengths (leadership, problem-solving, discipline).
- Identify employees who can serve as mentors to new veteran hires. Mentoring helps veterans understand what it takes to be successful in a business environment versus a military one. Pair your new employee with someone who has long-term experience.
- **Ready the Workspace:** Ensure their workspace is clean, organized, and equipped with all necessary tools and supplies before they arrive. This signals professionalism and respect.

The Veteran's First Day

- **Give Clear Expectations:** Veterans thrive on clarity and structure. Provide a detailed onboarding plan with clear goals, expectations and measurable benchmarks in the first 30, 60 and 90 days. This helps explain the mission and how to succeed.
- **Assign a Mentor:** When possible, connect a new veteran hire with an existing veteran employee to provide invaluable guidance, support and a safe space to ask questions.
 - A veteran mentor can help translate corporate jargon, navigate cultural nuances and share their own transition experiences. For veterans with disabilities, pair them with an employee who also has a disability.
- **Provide Reference Materials:** Written policies and easy-to-find resources can make all the difference in situating your new hires from the military.
 - **Organizational Chart:** An overview of your company's organizational structure and important contacts. Veterans often understand chain of command. Help them understand where their role and department fit into the overall organization.
 - **Company Policies:** Expectations of the workplace, responsibilities of the employee,

and the process for performance reviews and promotions.

- **Resources:** Company policy and information on accommodations and resources for veterans with disabilities (see Legal Considerations section), as well as information on employee resource groups.
- **Access to Resources:** A clear road map to all company resources, including human resources, IT support, policies, benefits information and training materials. Don't assume your new hires will know where to look.
- **Introduce Employee Resource Groups:** Introduce the new hire to your veteran ERG immediately. ERGs provide a built-in community, networking opportunities and a sense of belonging that can significantly aid in retention. If you don't have one, start one.

The Veteran's First 90 Days

- **Encourage Company Culture Immersion:** The civilian workplace can be ambiguous for veterans. Dedicate time to explain the company's cultural norms, communication, decision-making processes, unwritten rules and social dynamics. Discuss how feedback is given and received in the organization, which can differ significantly from the military.
- **Keep Flexibility for Appointments:** Clearly communicate policies for time off, and honor them without retaliation or punishment.
- **Conduct Regular Check-Ins:** Schedule frequent, structured check-ins, especially in the first few months, to provide an opportunity for feedback and offer support. Follow a 30-60-90-day plan.
- **Create a Feedback Loop:** In addition to providing feedback to the veteran on their performance, improve practices and systems by listening to your veteran hire. Create a system to regularly hear from your employees to gauge satisfaction and morale.

By implementing these practical strategies, employers can create a truly veteran-friendly hiring ecosystem that attracts, hires and retains this highly skilled and dedicated talent pool, ultimately benefiting the entire organization.

Note: We have provided an example 30-60-90-day plan for your reference. Find it in the Retention Stage section on Page 20.

THE RETENTION STAGE



Employers with strong retention strategies experience reduced turnover costs, increased financial incentives and a more stable workforce. Veterans are instilled with a special sense of loyalty in uniform. But that shouldn't be taken for granted. High turnover, especially in an employee's first year, can be costly and often signals a lack of effective support. Avoid this by creating a strategy that ensures long-term success for all parties.

Strategies for Veteran Retention

It's never too late to begin incorporating retention strategies. Many of these practices are ongoing from the onboarding stage and provide stability to veteran hires as they become star performers.

- **Professional Development:** Offer access to training, certifications and education that will support veterans' career growth.
- **Ongoing Feedback:** Seek feedback from veteran employees about their experience at the company and overall job satisfaction. Use this feedback to continually improve your programs.
- **Flexibility:** Be understanding and flexible regarding Department of Veterans Affairs appointments or ongoing military service. Clearly communicate policies for time off for these obligations.
- **Career Mapping:** Work with veterans to identify clear career paths within the company. Discuss opportunities for growth and professional development and how they can further develop their military skills for future roles.
- **Training:** Distinct from disability awareness, provide training so that civilians have a chance to increase their knowledge and understanding about military culture and can better understand and support your military-affiliated employees.
- **Support:** Provide mentors and an employee resource group for veteran employees to encourage retention. Show organizational support externally through recognition, participation and volunteerism in military and veteran community spaces.

Veteran Employee Resource Groups

Employee resource groups (ERGs) are voluntary groups formed around a shared characteristic or life experience. While led by employees, these groups are formally recognized and supported by the organization. These groups help promote an inclusive workplace where all employees feel valued and respected.

Benefits of ERGs for the Employee

- **Community:** Among the most significant losses for veterans transitioning out of the military are the tight-knit camaraderie and strong sense of shared purpose they experienced. ERGs can reduce isolation and recreate community by connecting veterans with others who understand their unique background and can share helpful information.
- **Transition and Adaptation:** ERGs offer a psychologically safe space for veterans to discuss the challenges of transitioning to civilian life, corporate culture and workplace norms without fear of judgment. Veteran ERGs often facilitate formal or informal mentorship programs, pairing new veteran hires with seasoned veterans who can guide them through the nuances of corporate life, help translate military skills and offer career advice.
- **Professional Development:** ERGs can host workshops, speaker events and training sessions focused on advancing careers and developing leadership in a civilian context. They provide a built-in network within the company, allowing veterans to connect with colleagues across different

departments and levels, which can open doors for new opportunities.

- **Advocacy:** ERGs give veterans a collective voice to communicate their needs, concerns and suggestions to leadership, helping to ensure that company policies and practices are truly veteran-friendly.

Benefits of ERGs for the Organization

- **Unique Skills:** Veterans bring unique perspectives to innovation and problem-solving. An ERG can serve as a platform to share these diverse viewpoints across the business. ERG leadership roles provide opportunities for veteran employees to continue developing skills in a civilian context.
- **Community Engagement and Corporate Social Responsibility:** Many veteran ERGs engage in community service projects and partnerships with veteran nonprofits, allowing the company to give back to the veteran community and enhance its corporate social responsibility efforts. Active involvement in veteran causes through an ERG can enhance the company's reputation.
- **Enhanced Recruitment and Employer Brand:** A visible and active veteran ERG can be a powerful recruiting tool. It signals to prospective veteran candidates that the company truly values their service, and it demonstrates a genuine commitment beyond just hiring quotas. ERG members can assist recruiters at career fairs, provide insights into veteran résumés and help translate military roles for civilian job descriptions.

In essence, a veteran ERG transforms a veteran-friendly hiring philosophy into a tangible, supportive and empowering reality within the workplace. It's a strategic investment that yields returns in recruitment, retention, employee well-being and overall organizational strength.

Launching a Veteran ERG

Creating an ERG is similar to creating a veteran hiring strategy—it's most effective when it starts with support at the top.

1. **Secure Executive Sponsorship:** Gain buy-in from senior leadership to provide legitimacy and resources.
2. **Recruit Passionate Leaders:** Find enthusiastic employees to champion the group's vision and mission.
3. **Build Clear Goals:** Begin with one or two measurable objectives, such as a mentorship or résumé translation program.

4. **Focus on Membership:** Include veterans, military family members and allies to foster inclusivity and engagement.
5. **Collaborate on Support:** Partner with disability resource groups to support veterans with disabilities and other employees with shared experiences.
6. **Market the Group:** Use creative messaging and company channels to promote the ERG and its mission.

Mentorship Programs

Pairing a new veteran employee with a tenured employee can help foster successful integration. Mentorship can lead to higher performance evaluations, faster career progression, increased job satisfaction and lower turnover rates for mentees.

Mentors benefit by developing their leadership skills and gaining personal satisfaction from helping others.

Types of Professional Mentorships

- **One-on-One:** In this traditional model, a single, more experienced mentor offers guidance to one mentee.
- **Peer-to-peer:** In this collaborative partnership, individuals at similar career stages or levels offer each other mutual support and share experiences.
- **Group:** A more experienced mentor guides and facilitates learning for a small group of mentees at the same time.
- **Reverse:** A junior employee mentors a more senior colleague, often in a specialized area where the junior employee has more up-to-date knowledge, such as technology.

Why Veteran Mentorship Matters

The transition from the military into the workforce can sometimes cause veterans to feel isolated and experience a loss of identity. Providing a mentor, particularly a fellow veteran, can help provide insights and coping strategies for successful integration and job satisfaction.

Veteran mentorship also helps by:

- **Explaining Unwritten Rules:** A mentor can help the veteran understand the company culture, communication protocols and decision-making processes. They can guide the veteran on how to adapt to a less-regimented environment.
- **Building a Professional Network:** A mentor can introduce the veteran to key colleagues, company leaders, industry contacts and beyond, helping

them build their professional network. This can open doors to new opportunities that may not be publicly advertised.

- **Guiding Career Development:** Mentors can help veterans set achievable goals—providing encouragement and constructive feedback along the way—and can recommend relevant training programs. Mentors can help mentees align their career paths with their skills, values and interests.
- **Encouraging Performance and Growth:** Veterans are accustomed to regular and direct feedback on their performance. A mentor can provide this crucial feedback in a civilian context, helping them understand how they're doing and where they can improve.
- **Boosting Confidence:** Mentors can provide reassurance, celebrate small wins and help veterans recognize the immense value of their military-honed skills, which may otherwise go unrecognized or unappreciated in a new environment. This boost in confidence is vital for navigating a new career.
- **Providing Leadership Opportunities:** Opportunities for veterans to lead projects, mentor others or take on new responsibilities may leverage their inherent abilities.

Professional Development and Performance

Unlike the military, the civilian workforce is not generally known for having a consistent and regimented structure. In comparison, decentralized processes and procedures are more the rule than the exception in the private sector.

Transitioning service members and veterans may find this challenging, as they are accustomed to military ranks and a structured career path. It's helpful to communicate professional standards and what is expected of them to advance.

- **Provide Transparency:** Be clear about career pathways and growth opportunities, especially regarding how the performance management process affects both.
- **Focus on Mission:** Help veteran employees understand how their jobs affect the organization and where and how they fit in. Offer meaningful training opportunities and ways to connect everyday responsibilities to overall organizational purpose, vision, mission and values.
- **Track Results:** Track job satisfaction and retention to understand how well your veteran recruiting and

hiring strategies are working.

- **Align Skills:** Continually assess job fit and ensure veterans are placed in roles where their leadership as well as their technical and problem-solving skills are genuinely leveraged. One significant reason for veteran turnover is being placed in roles that don't fully use their skills or that feel disconnected from their sense of purpose. Consider using military translator tools for internal career mapping.
- **Support Invisible Wounds:** Train managers to recognize potential signs of stress or difficulty (without diagnosing), and direct employees to appropriate confidential resources.
- **Offer Trust and Autonomy:** Avoid micromanagement. Instead, set clear goals and allow them to execute—veterans thrive with clear direction followed by autonomy.
- **Lead by Example:** Ensure senior leadership visibly supports veteran initiatives, participates in veteran ERGs and communicates the company's commitment to veteran success.
- **Show Appreciation:** Regularly recognize and thank veteran employees for their contributions and their service.



Example 30-60-90-Day Plan for a Veteran Hire

A 30-60-90-day plan for new veteran hires can help situate them in their new environment while giving them the vantage point to know what to expect down the line. At the 90-day mark, seek feedback from your new hire on how your organization can improve the onboarding process for veterans.

This example plan, which you can provide a veteran employee, focuses on orientation, relationship building and skills application with integrated support from a veteran ERG. Use this plan as a road map to help a veteran transition smoothly from military to civilian workplace culture by setting clear goals for the first 90 days.

DAY 1-30: Absorb company knowledge, navigate the environment, and establish foundational relationships

- Complete all standard new-hire training, including company history, mission and core values. Learn how the company's structure and goals connect to your new role.
- Meet one-on-one with your manager and team members. Take an office tour (physical or virtual), and get familiar with your workspace, systems and tools.
- Finish one small, low-risk project or task without supervision. Use this opportunity to apply knowledge from your initial training.
- Connect with your assigned mentor and attend an ERG meeting to start building your internal network.

DAY 31-60: Apply new knowledge, take on more complex tasks, and expand your professional network

- Schedule informational interviews with key colleagues outside your immediate team. Understand their roles and how your work intersects.
- Take on more direct responsibilities related to your job description. Start contributing actively to team projects.
- Work with your ERG mentor to identify specific military skills, training and experiences that can be highlighted for career growth within the company.
- Provide feedback to your manager about the onboarding process. This shows initiative and helps the company improve future veteran integration.

DAY 61-90: Become independent in your role, seek growth opportunities, and deliver measurable results

- Take full ownership of a project or key process. Demonstrate confidence and self-sufficiency in your daily tasks.
- Meet with your manager to discuss your long-term career path. Create a personal development plan that aligns your skills with the company's future needs.
- If you feel comfortable, volunteer to become a mentor for a future new hire. This reinforces your knowledge and strengthens the veteran support network.
- At the 90-day mark, brief your manager on your progress. Include your accomplishments, lessons learned and goals for the next quarter.

HIRING AND RETAINING MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE



Hiring individuals with military experience is a great advantage, but it's important to understand the differences between those in the National Guard or Reserve and those who were previously on active duty.

Key Differences of Active Duty Versus National Guard and Reserve

National Guard and Reserve Personnel

- Serve part time, typically attending drills one weekend a month and completing a few weeks of annual training each year
- Live off-base and maintain civilian jobs outside of their military duties
- Can be called to active duty, which may result in temporary absences from their civilian jobs
- Participate in ongoing military training that can enhance their civilian skills, providing continuous learning and development at no cost to the employer
- Must receive accommodation for military leave from their employers, according to the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)

Active-Duty Personnel

- Serve the military full time
- Often live on or near a military base
- Transition to the civilian workforce after completing their service
- Do not receive accommodation under USERRA after completing their active-duty service

4 Things Employers Should Know When Hiring National Guard and Reserve Members

Just like hiring and retaining active-duty veterans, adding members of the National Guard or Reserve to your team may require extra support and training, but the effort pays off in the value this talent adds to your organization.

1. **Know Their Rights and Yours:** Programs like Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) help employers navigate USERRA compliance and foster a supportive environment for these employees.
2. **Assign a Supervisor or Mentor:** Ease the transition of your employees return to work by assigning a supervisor or mentor who can explain any organizational updates and help formulate a reentry plan.
3. **Provide a Support System:** The [Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program](#) promotes the well-being of National Guard and Reserve members and their families by connecting them with resources throughout the deployment cycle.
4. **Show Appreciation:** Acknowledge and celebrate military service within the organization. With the employee's permission, feature them in the company newsletter or social media channel.

HIRING AND RETAINING MILITARY SPOUSES



Military spouses represent an often-overlooked and incredibly valuable talent pool. Their unique experiences, shaped by the demands of military life, create a specific set of strengths that are highly desirable in any civilian workplace.

Strengths of Military Spouses in the Workplace

- **Adaptability:** Frequent relocations, unpredictable schedules and deployments hone their ability to adjust to constant change—a critical asset in today's fast-paced business world.
- **Resilience:** Military spouses are adept at managing complex logistics—often single-handedly during deployments—finding solutions with limited resources and demonstrating perseverance in overcoming obstacles.
- **Organization:** Frequent moves require expert-level planning and budgeting. Military spouses often excel at juggling numerous responsibilities simultaneously.
- **Communication:** Military spouses have often experienced a wide array of communities—fostering strong networking and collaboration skills.
- **Diverse Skills:** Their unique lifestyle often requires taking on multiple roles and working in various industries or locations. This results in a versatile and well-rounded skill set.
- **Access:** They often have strong ties within the military community. If they do need to relocate, they can serve as a conduit for attracting more talent, reducing recruitment costs over time.

Challenges Faced by Military Spouses in the Workplace

While military spouses possess a remarkable array of strengths, their unique lifestyle presents significant and often systemic challenges that can hinder their career development and employment stability. Employers who understand these hurdles are better positioned to hire and retain this valuable talent pool.

- **Career Disruption:** Military families move every two to three years, disrupting career progression and often leading to employment gaps. This can result in lost seniority, benefits and momentum.
- **Résumé Gaps:** Frequent moves can create gaps in résumés, which some employers may misinterpret as a lack of commitment rather than a consequence of military life.
- **Underemployment:** Often highly educated, military spouses may accept jobs below their skill level to secure employment in new locations, leading to underemployment and job dissatisfaction.
- **State-Specific Requirements:** Many military spouses work in licensed professions like nursing or teaching, but licenses are typically state-specific, requiring complex and expensive relicensing processes with each move. This can lead to unemployment or underemployment periods while awaiting new licenses, incurring financial burdens from fees and lost wages.
- **Child Care Availability and Cost:** During a service member's deployment, the spouse often assumes sole caregiver responsibilities, potentially limiting their employment options. Access to affordable, quality child care near military installations can be scarce, forcing spouses to choose part-time work, work inconvenient hours or forgo employment.

These challenges highlight the need for systemic solutions and employer support to enable military spouses to build stable and fulfilling careers. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from employers, policymakers and military support organizations to create a more supportive and accessible employment landscape for military spouses.

Strategies for Hiring and Retaining Military Spouses

To successfully attract and hire military spouse employees, implement targeted strategies that acknowledge their unique experiences and needs.

Educate Hiring Teams

- Train human resources and hiring managers on the inherent strengths military spouses possess, such as adaptability, resilience, rapid learning and diverse perspectives gained from frequent relocations and managing complex households.
- Help hiring teams understand that résumé gaps often stem from Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves, not a lack of commitment. Encourage them to look for volunteer work, temporary assignments, certifications and educational pursuits undertaken during these periods.

Optimize Job Descriptions

- Emphasize competencies and transferable skills rather than requirements for continuous employment.
- Clearly highlight if positions offer remote, hybrid or flexible work options. These are crucial for military spouses managing frequent moves and unpredictable schedules.

Conduct Targeted Sourcing

- Partner with organizations that can connect employers with military spouses, like the Military Spouse Employment Partnership ([MSEP](#)).
- Post openings on platforms designed for military spouses, such as Spouse Education and Career Opportunities ([SECO](#)) from CareerOneStop or through [RecruitMilitary](#)'s job board.
- Participate in online job fairs tailored for the military spouse community. *DAV offers this service through our partnership with RecruitMilitary.*

Offer Family and Caregiver Support

- Provide robust caregiver benefits, such as Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) military leave provisions and caregiver support resources, to show commitment to their family's well-being and reduce a major source of stress during deployment.
- Establish a dedicated employee resource group (ERG) for military spouses to connect, share experiences and receive peer support.

Provide Career Development Resources

- Provide portable career development, including access to online learning, mentorship and internal transfer opportunities, to allow military spouses to continue their careers during frequent relocations.

By implementing these strategies, employers can create an environment that benefits from the unique skills of military spouses while providing the stable and supportive employment they seek.



CHECKLIST FOR RECRUITING, HIRING AND RETAINING VETERANS

Hiring veterans (including disabled veterans) requires more than just good intentions; it demands a deliberate and well-executed strategy that addresses the unique aspects of military service and the transition to civilian life.

Recruitment Strategy (Veteran Hiring Initiative):

- Secure Executive-Level Support
- Set Goals and Outcomes
- Optimize Brand and Messaging
- Engage and Train Internal Teams
- Optimize Job Descriptions for Veterans

Sourcing and Attraction:

- Connect With Military Transition Programs
- Partner With Veteran-Focused Nonprofits
- Use Veterans Service Organizations
- Leverage Veteran-Specific Job Boards and Platforms
- Participate in Veteran Career Fairs

Interviewing and Hiring:

- Create a Welcoming and Patient Environment
- Interpret Military Communication Styles
- Focus on Transferable Skills
- Stick to Legally Permissible Topics
- Avoid Sensitive Topics

Onboarding and Integration:

- Introduce a Structured Onboarding Program
- Assign a Veteran Mentor
- Provide Ongoing Support

Retention:

- Promote Veteran Employee Resource Groups
- Support Mentorship Programs
- Provide Professional Development

MILITARY TERM GLOSSARY

AFSC Air Force Specialty Code

AIT Advanced Individual Training

ASVAB Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery

BCT Basic Combat Training

BMT Basic Military Training

BRS Blended Retirement System

CO commanding officer

CONUS continental United States

DD-214 Certificate of Release or Discharge From Active Duty

DEP Delayed Entry Program

DEROS Date Estimated Return From Overseas

DOD Department of Defense

EOD explosive ordnance disposal

IET Initial Entry Training

MEPS Military Entrance Processing Station

MOS Military Occupational Specialty

MP military police

NCO noncommissioned officer

OCONUS outside continental United States

OJT on-the-job training

PCS Permanent Change of Station

PME Professional Military Education

Rating Navy/Coast Guard job code

TDY temporary duty

TRICARE military health care program

TSP Thrift Savings Plan

VA Department of Veterans Affairs

VR&E Vocational Readiness and Education

VSO veterans service organization

XO executive officer

ABOUT DAV

A leading nonprofit, DAV provides a lifetime of support for veterans of all generations and their families. Every year, DAV helps more than 1 million veterans in positive, life-changing ways by helping them access the benefits they earned—like health care, education and disability—and connecting them to meaningful employment. Veterans helping veterans, DAV has over 1,000 chapters and nearly 1 million members across the country.





To learn more, scan the code or visit
dav.org/get-involved/hire-veterans



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