



From Deployment to Employment **Goodwill's Call to Action on Supporting** **Military Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families**

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Abstract

In 2010, more than 20 million men and women ages 18 and over were veterans. This population is particularly vulnerable to a variety of challenges that keep them from fully participating in the civilian workforce and providing for themselves and their families.

A range of stakeholders including federal agencies, veterans service organizations and community-based organizations like Goodwill® work to support not only veterans but active-duty service members and their families as they seek jobs and other resources that lead to successful futures.

As the United States works to withdraw from Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the longest military engagement in U.S. history, the need for a continuum of coordinated services is even greater than before. On bumper stickers and signage across the country, the familiar phrase "Support Our Troops" is a call to action for both individual Americans as well as those organizations that provide services to veterans and active duty military members.

This paper addresses the myriad and often co-existing challenges faced by veterans, military personnel and their families, particularly post-deployment. It explores a variety of resources offered by Goodwill Industries® and other stakeholders that are dedicated to making sure service members' contributions are valued long after their military service ends.

While a variety of supports are already available, there is still a clear need for agencies to improve and increase services to this specific population. Goodwill Industries® outlines its recommendations for both Goodwill member agencies and U.S. policymakers.

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Executive Summary

In 2010, more than 20 million men and women in the United States over the age of 18 were veterans. This population is particularly vulnerable to a variety of challenges that keep them from fully participating in the civilian workforce and providing for themselves and their families. These challenges include physical disabilities such as traumatic brain injury (TBI), psychological disabilities such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance abuse, homelessness, long waits for benefits and other supports, lack of access to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) facilities and declining federal dollars set aside for those supports.

Military spouses and families face challenges of their own. Managing the household and caring for their children alone are major stressors for spouses. Because military families tend to move more frequently than non-military families, they may find it difficult to pursue long-term employment and career-advancing opportunities.

A stubbornly bleak job market translates to high unemployment for veterans — especially those ages 18–24, who face an unemployment rate of 20.9 percent, which is more than twice the national average. Studies show that recently separated service members have more difficulty finding their first civilian job within the first two years after separation when compared to their peers with the same educational attainment and demographic characteristics. They are also more likely to earn lower wages, especially among the college educated.¹ Mechanisms are needed to translate skills obtained during military service into certification and/or college credit to make veterans more job-ready.

For veterans with disabilities, the job outlook is even worse. Despite advances made since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), employment of people with significant disabilities has declined over the past decade. In April 2011, this population's unemployment rate was 15.6 percent, compared with 8.9 percent for those without disabilities.²

Existing supports and infrastructure are ill-equipped to provide all of the resources that many returning service members may need and have earned. For example, the sheer number of pending VA compensation claims has increased by more than 65 percent (from 207,000 in 1999 to 343,000 in 2008), and it takes an average of 123 days to process a claim.³ Concern over the national debt and deficit will likely deter policymakers from allocating additional federal dollars for veteran support. Although additional investments are needed, they are not a panacea nor can they be expected when federal spending is being scrutinized.

¹ Employment Histories Report (Final Compilation Report). Prepared for U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs by Abt Associates. March 24, 2008. Accessed October 7, 2009, from www1.va.gov/vetdata/docs/Abt_Emplymnt_Histories_FINAL_COMPILATION_REPORT_Sept28.pdf.

² U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Economic News Release. Table A-6. Employment status of the civilian population by sex, age and disability status, not seasonally adjusted. Accessed April 21, 2011, from www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t06.htm.

³ Bertoni, Daniel, Director Education, Workforce, and Income Security. U.S. Government Accountability Office. Testimony Before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, U.S. Senate. Veterans' Disability Benefits: Preliminary Findings on Claims Processing Trends and Improvement Efforts. July. 29, 2009. Accessed on May 9, 2011, from www.gao.gov/new.items/d09910t.pdf.

A range of stakeholders including federal agencies, veterans service organizations and community-based organizations like Goodwill Industries® already work to support not only veterans but active-duty service members and their families as they seek jobs and other resources that lead to successful futures. Goodwill Industries International calls upon these stakeholders, including 158 Goodwill® member agencies in the United States, to come together to ensure that the support system for military service members, veterans, and their families:

- Is easy for service members, veterans and family members to access, understand and navigate.
- Coordinates services and information sharing between the VA, the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD), the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and other federal agencies.
- Facilitates and promotes collaboration between veterans service organizations and community-based organizations to leverage local resources and supports.

Goodwill has been a long-time advocate for and provider of services to veterans. In 2010, Goodwill provided job training, employment services and other supports to more than 2.4 million people,⁴ including 25,766 veterans. Of that number, 4,449 had documented disabilities (1,363 of which were service connected). The majority of veterans who seek services from local Goodwill agencies served during the Vietnam era and many are homeless.⁵ While the number of veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan requesting Goodwill services is relatively low and is increasing more slowly than expected, Goodwill anticipates more will turn to the nonprofit when commonly accessed veteran services and resources are stretched thin.

Goodwill has made a national commitment to provide face-to-face career and family strengthening services to more than 15,000 military spouses, veterans and their families by December 31, 2011. In addition, the social service enterprise will expand virtual career services, linked from military websites, to tens of thousands more people.

While some of the challenges faced by veterans are unique to their experiences, many disadvantaging conditions — from homelessness and poverty to severe physical disabilities — are obstacles that Goodwill has helped millions of individuals overcome for more than a century. In response to a call to action from First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, Goodwill Industries International launched a new initiative: Goodwill for America's Heroes and Their Families. The program aims to expand the organization's job training, placement and employment services to thousands of American veterans, as well as their spouses and families. Goodwill is proud to be one of the first responders to the First Lady's call.

⁴ Annual Statistical Report, 2010. Goodwill Industries International, Inc. Rockville, MD. June 2011.

⁵ Annual Statistical Report, 2008. Goodwill Industries International, Inc. Rockville, MD. June 2009.

As part of its commitment to veterans and their families, Goodwill has developed a list of recommendations for its member agencies and policymakers:

- **Goodwill members** are asked to consider designing programs that meet specific needs of veterans and their families, and to make hiring of veterans and service members' spouses a priority. Recommendations also include leveraging partnerships with stakeholders that provide supportive services beyond employment.
- **Policymakers** are asked to give priority to federal grant applications that demonstrate partnership and coordination among local providers and stakeholders, and to enact policies that create a more seamless service delivery system for military service members, veterans and families who seek support. Goodwill has also called upon policymakers to make the workforce system more accessible and convenient for veterans by including provisions in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) that would promote the feasible co-location of one-stop career centers in VA medical centers and other facilities that serve veterans specifically.
- **All stakeholders** are encouraged to become more familiar with the legal protections afforded veterans as well as the various supports offered by federal agencies, veterans support organizations and others.

The Problem

Of the 20.1 million veterans in the United States today, approximately half served during World War II, the Korean War or Vietnam, which accounts for a third of this group.^{6 7} While the number of these veterans declines, more men and women are returning from the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), approximately 2.2 million veterans have served in the U.S. Armed Forces since September 2001 alone.⁸

The servicemen and women returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) are coming home during a time of particular economic difficulty. Unemployment rates are slowly declining from a peak of nearly 10 percent — the highest rate experienced in decades. In addition to a bleak job market, a significant number of returning service members have or are likely to develop conditions that may hinder them from fully reintegrating into civilian life. Such disadvantaging and disabling conditions include homelessness, family disruption, physical injuries, mental health disorders, traumatic brain injuries, substance abuse and others.

The result is a growing unemployment rate for Gulf War-Era II veterans, or those who served in the military since 2001.

⁶ U.S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Economic News Releases. Employment Situation of Veterans Summary. March 11, 2011. Accessed May 27, 2011, from <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/print.pl/news.release/vet.nr0.htm>.

⁷ U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Census Bureau. Veterans: 2000. U.S. Census 2000 Brief. May 2003. Accessed July 24, 2009, from www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/c2kbr-22.pdf.

⁸ U.S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Economic News Releases. Employment Situation of Veterans Summary. March 11, 2011. Accessed on May 6, 2011, from <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/print.pl/news.release/vet.nr0.htm>.

Unemployment Rates for Gulf War-Era II Veterans Compared to General Civilian Labor Force		
Year	Gulf War-Era II	Civilian Labor Force ⁹
2007	6.1 percent ¹⁰	4.6 percent
2008	7.3 percent ¹¹	5.8 percent
2009	10.2 percent ¹²	9.3 percent
2010	11.5 percent ¹³	9.6 percent

The VA is likely to inherit long-term responsibility for many new veterans with significant service-connected disabilities that have lifelong implications. Additional public and private stakeholders should be prepared to take on a greater role in meeting increased needs related to physical and mental health, housing and employment.

Nearly one in four Gulf War-Era II veterans reported in 2010 that they have service-connected disabilities, compared to 13 percent for all veterans.¹⁴ When comparing the wounded-injured-or-ill-to-killed ratio for Vietnam (2.63 to 1) to that of OEF/OIF (16.23 to 1), people who serve in OEF/OIF are more likely to have survived traumatic experiences that would have resulted in a fatality in the past — likely due to medical advancements, swifter emergency medical transport and better protective equipment.

Because the signature wound for OEF/OIF is often invisible brain injury, the number of those wounded in OEF/OIF is likely to be higher. Many may not even realize they have an injury until later in life and/or they may not report that they were involved in an incident that put them at risk of suffering a traumatic brain injury.

⁹ U.S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Household Data (Historical). Employment status of the civilian non-institutional population 16 years and over, 1970 to date. Accessed May 6, 2011, from www.bls.gov/web/empsit/cpseea01.pdf.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Employment Situation of Veterans News Release. April 10, 2008. Accessed July 24, 2009, from www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/vet_04102008.htm

¹¹ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Employment Situation of Veterans Summary. March 20, 2009. Accessed July 24, 2009, from www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.nr0.htm.

¹² U.S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Economic News Releases. Employment Situation of Veterans Summary. March 12, 2010. Accessed November 18, 2010, from <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/print.pl/news.release/vet.nr0.htm>.

¹³ U.S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Economic News Releases. Employment Situation of Veterans Summary. March 11, 2011. Accessed May 6, 2011, from <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/print.pl/news.release/vet.nr0.htm>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Casualties ¹⁵	Vietnam (1965–1973)	OEF (2001–2010)	OIF (2003–2010)	OEF/OIF (2001–2010)
Total Dead	58,200	1,558 ¹⁶	4,408 ¹⁷	5,966
Wounded, injured or ill	153,303	24,525 ¹⁸	72,353 ¹⁹	96,878
Ratio: Wounded or injured to dead	2.63 to 1	15.74 to 1	16.41 to 1	16.23 to 1
Total deaths, wounded in action and non-hostile medical air transports	211,503	26,083 ²⁰	76,761 ²¹	102,844

As more service members return from OEF/OIF, the national veteran- and military-support infrastructure is having difficulty keeping pace. For example, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' claims processing has been the subject of concern among stake-holders for several years.

While the VA has improved its claims processing capability from 458,000 claims processed in 1999 to 729,000 claims processed in 2008, the number of *pending* compensation claims has increased by more than 65 percent, from 207,000 in 1999 to 343,000 in 2008. And although the average number of days that it takes for a claim to be processed has been reduced from its 2001 peak of 188 days to 123 days in 2008, this wait still presents considerable challenges for veterans. ²²

Congressional testimony provided by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) lists several factors that have contributed to these trends, including the following:

¹⁵ The casualty numbers report deaths (hostile and non-hostile), wounded (requiring air transport and not requiring air transport), and injured and ill (requiring air transport). These numbers cannot be compared to survey numbers regarding Gulf War II veterans with service-connected disabilities as reported by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics later in this white paper.

¹⁶ Operation Enduring Freedom – Military Deaths: October 7, 2001 – May 2, 2011. Accessed May 6, 2011, from <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/oefdeaths.pdf>.

¹⁷ Global War on Terrorism – Operation Iraqi Freedom: By casualty category within service (March 19, 2003, through May 2, 2011). Prepared by Defense Manpower Data Center. Accessed May 6, 2011, from <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/oif-total.pdf>.

¹⁸ Global War on Terrorism – Operation Enduring Freedom: By casualty category within service (October 7, 2001, through May 2, 2011). Prepared by Defense Manpower Data Center. Accessed May 6, 2011, from <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/wotsum.pdf>.

¹⁹ Global War on Terrorism – Operation Iraqi Freedom: By casualty category within service (March 19, 2003, through May 2, 2011). Prepared by Defense Manpower Data Center. Accessed May 6, 2011, from <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/oif-total.pdf>.

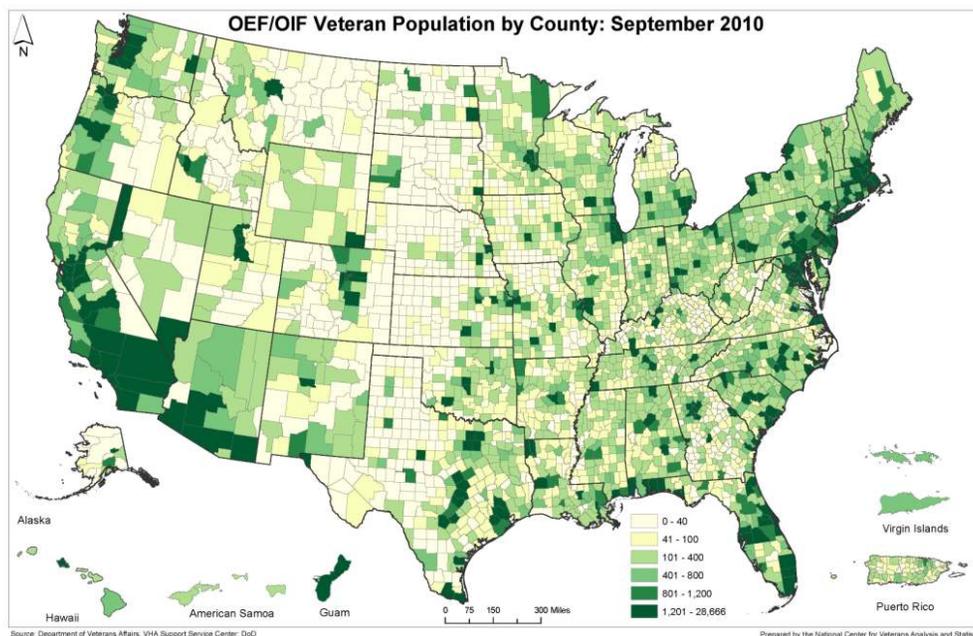
²⁰ Global War on Terrorism – Operation Enduring Freedom: By casualty category within service (October 7, 2001, through May 2, 2011). Accessed on May 6, 2011, from <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/wotsum.pdf>.

²¹ Global War on Terrorism – Operation Iraqi Freedom: By casualty category within service (March 19, 2003, through May 2, 2011). Prepared by Defense Manpower Data Center. Accessed May 6, 2011, from <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/oif-total.pdf>.

²² Bertoni, Daniel, Director Education, Workforce, and Income Security. U.S. Government Accountability Office. Testimony Before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, U.S. Senate. Veterans' Disability Benefits: Preliminary Findings on Claims Processing Trends and Improvement Efforts. July. 29, 2009. Accessed on May 9, 2011, from www.gao.gov/new.items/d09910t.pdf.

- There has been a steady increase in the number of claims filed — including those filed by veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts.
- The claim rate from veterans of OEF/OIF has increased 35 percent.
- Claims have increased and are expected to continue increasing from veterans who currently receive VA compensation and whose conditions have worsened.
- Prior VA regulations and legislation expanding eligibility for benefits have added to the volume of claims.
- The VA has enhanced its outreach and education on benefits available.

While the VA claims backlog is a very real detriment, additional challenges also make it difficult for veterans to get all the support for which they are eligible. For example, veterans who return to rural areas are often miles from the nearest VA and the services and supports they need. Some regions have only one centrally located facility, with limited hours, resulting in long waits for the services veterans seek. Although there are some clinics located in outlying areas, medical exams and special treatments are only conducted at VA hospitals. For some, lack of reliable transportation compounds the problem.



In addition to the 20.1 million veterans reported in 2010, **more than 1.4 million people are currently serving on active duty**. While the United States is withdrawing from combat operations, the duration for which the U.S. military must remain in Iraq and Afghanistan remains unclear.²³ Many military families are able to find and develop support

²³ Active Duty Military Strength Report for April 30, 2011. Department of Defense Personnel and Procurement Statistics. Accessed May 26, 2011, from <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/MILITARY/ms1.pdf>.

networks among other military families living on or near a military bases; however, they may benefit from additional supports that are not easily made available by the military.

In addition, OEF/OIF has heavily utilized the National Guard and the Reserves. Family members of individuals serving in the National Guard or the Reserves are less likely to live in close proximity to a military base and often do not have access to the formal and informal supports more commonly found on or near those bases. Even after the service member has left the military, many families continue to make sacrifices. For example, some military family members find themselves acting as caretakers for a veteran who suffers from wounds received during his or her military service. Increasing family demands related to caring for wounded family members and navigating U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) and VA benefits and support systems may make it more difficult for the working spouse to meet professional expectations.²⁴

The bottom line is that the implications are too significant to expect the federal government and stakeholders to address without more deliberate collaboration and integration among all stakeholders.

Challenges Faced by Military Service Members and Veterans

Any one of the following challenges can be difficult to overcome; however, military service members, veterans and their families typically face several of these issues at one time, making it more difficult for recently separated veterans to transition back home to daily living, including the workforce. The challenges listed below are among the predominant issues that many military service members, veterans and their families face. The list is by no means an exhaustive one.

- Unemployment
- Homelessness
- Mental Health Problems and Substance Abuse
- Physical Disabilities
- Incarceration, Previous Criminal History
- Unique Challenges Facing Female Service Members and Families

Unemployment

Although the employment rate for veterans ages 18 and over in 2010 was slightly higher than that of nonveterans (91.3 percent compared to 90.6 percent), younger men and women are finding it particularly difficult to transition from the military to civilian employment. BLS data suggests that younger veterans, those who are between 18 and

²⁴ Perdew, J.. September 18, 2007. Accessed April 1, 2009, from www.nmfa.org/site/DocServer/House_Workforce_Protection_FMLA_9-18-07.pdf?docID=10921.

24 years old, may be less prepared to make the transition. For example, the 2010 unemployment rate for young veterans in this age group was 20.9 percent, compared to 17.3 percent for non-veterans in the same age group.²⁵ Without services in place to support veterans — particularly those who are younger — the path to employment and adaptation back into a civilian life is often very difficult.²⁶

²⁵ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Economic News Releases. Employment Situation of Veterans Summary. March 11, 2011. Accessed May 6, 2011, from <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/print.pl/news.release/vet.nr0.htm>.

²⁶ Dreazen, Y. (2008, March 25). Green Change: Veterans struggle to join work force. Accessed April 1, 2009, from www.greenchange.org/article.php?id=2322.

Employment Status of Persons 18 Years and Over — 2009 Annual Averages (Numbers in the thousands) ²⁷						
	Civilian Labor Force	Employed		Unemployed		Not in the Labor Force
		Total	Percent of Labor Force ²⁸	Total Unemployed	Percent of Labor Force	
Veterans						
Total, 18 years and over	11,758	10,738	91.3	1,020	8.7	10,253
18 to 24 years	219	174	79.5	46	20.9	79
25 to 34 years	1,352	1,182	87.4	170	12.6	271
35 to 44 years	2,185	2,026	92.7	159	7.3	251
45 to 54 years	3,084	2,826	91.6	258	8.4	593
55 to 64 years	3,272	3,003	91.8	269	8.2	2,026
65 years and over	1,646	1,527	92.8	119	7.2	7,033
Nonveterans						
Total, 18 years and over	140,130	126,908	90.6	13,222	9.4	66,745
18 to 24 years	18,714	15,486	82.8	3,229	17.3	9,992
25 to 34 years	32,262	29,046	90.0	3,216	10.0	7,018
35 to 44 years	31,181	28,637	91.8	2,544	8.2	6,473
45 to 54 years	32,879	30,365	92.4	2,514	7.6	7,744
55 to 64 years	20,025	18,633	93.0	1,392	7.0	10,563
65 years and over	5,068	4,741	93.5	327	6.5	24,955

Why do younger veterans have more difficulty attaching to the labor market? Goodwill believes there are several likely intertwined causes. First, they often have less training or job experience. In addition, some may have joined the military right out of high school, and some private-sector employers do not recognize military credentials and technical skills. Therefore, younger veterans are more likely to lack an industry-recognized degree or credential that many employers require. Research also indicates that younger veterans (18–25) disproportionately experience serious psychological distress (SPD), substance use disorder (SUD), and co-occurring SPD and SUD. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), veterans between the ages of 18 and

²⁷ U.S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Economic News Releases. Employment Situation of Veterans Summary. March 11, 2011. Accessed May 6, 2011, from <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/print.pl/news.release/vet.nr0.htm>.

²⁸ Total number of those employed divided by total number in the civilian labor force.

25 were more likely to have SPD (20.9 percent) than veterans aged 26 to 54 (4.3 percent) or those aged 55 or older (4.3 percent).

Furthermore, 25 percent of veterans between the ages of 18 and 25 met the criteria for SUD in the past year compared with 11.3 percent of veterans aged 26 to 54 and 4.4 percent of veterans aged 55 or older. Younger veterans were also more likely to experience co-occurring SPD and SUD. SAHMSA asserts that 8.4 percent of younger veterans aged 18 to 25 had co-occurring SPD and SUD compared to 2.7 percent of veterans aged 26 to 54 and 0.7 percent of veterans older than 55.²⁹

Employers' perceptions of veterans may also affect the population's employment prospects. For example, some employers may be reluctant to hire veterans due to concerns that they may have returned from OEF/OIF with a physical or mental condition that could complicate their employment. Research also suggests that some employers have not hired recently returned service members because those they interviewed did not seem prepared for the jobs being offered in the civilian labor market. A report from Abt Associates notes that human resources officers indicated that recently separated service members who interviewed for jobs "did not seem prepared to market themselves to the business environment" and "did not seem to understand the culture and expectations; thus were not career ready."³⁰ The study also suggests that "recently separated service members have had difficulties in finding their first civilian jobs within the first two years after separation as compared to their peers with the same educational attachment and demographic characteristics, and were more likely to earn lower wages, especially among the college educated."³¹

Members of the Military Reserves and National Guard have been heavily called upon to serve in OEF/OIF. Due to differences in how members of the National Guard are activated and processed, they face some challenges that differ from those faced by members of the Army, Navy and Air Force. For example, media reports suggest that some employers may be reluctant to hire members of the Military Reserves or the National Guard due to concerns that their units could soon be called to active duty and deployed with little notice to the employer. In addition, due to the recession and slow job growth, many of these individuals are returning home to find that their jobs have been eliminated due to downsizing.

While the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) requires employers to re-employ reservists and guard members who have been called to active duty at the same rate of pay prior to their deployment, reports also suggest that some employers may violate USERRA by denying re-employment. For

²⁹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. November 1, 2007. The NSDUH Report: Serious Psychological Distress and Substance Use Disorder among Veterans. Rockville, MD.

³⁰ Employment Histories Report (Final Compilation Report). Prepared for U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs by Abt Associates. March 24, 2008. Accessed October 7, 2009, from www1.va.gov/vetdata/docs/Abt_Emplymnt_Histories_FINAL_COMPILATION_REPORT_Sept28.pdf.

³¹ Ibid.

example, a *Washington Post Magazine* feature published on May 24, 2009, tells the story of high school teacher Craig Lewis, who was sent to flight school with less than one week's notice. He served in Iraq and returned to Fluvanna High School for re-employment. He was told, "I don't have any openings and I can't promise anything." After several frustrating months job searching, he responded to a posting for a youth counselor. Although he felt he aced the interview and would be offered the position, he was not. Then he remembered a question that had been asked during the interview: "What's the likelihood of you being deployed again?" He asked other veterans if they'd had similar experiences and discovered that they even had a term for it: military service penalty.³²

Military spouses also face employment challenges. In many cases, employers are often reluctant to hire a military spouse out of the fear that the new employee may soon be relocated. In addition, relocating often results in a military spouse not having contacts in the local labor force and/or the move results in a remotely located military base where there are fewer employers, yet numerous military spouses in the local labor market looking for work.

Homelessness

Homelessness among veterans is all too common. Veterans face a variety of challenges that may lead to homelessness: physical disabilities, mental illness, substance abuse disorders and skill sets that do not readily transfer to the civilian labor market. For young veterans, economic hardships usually involve employment issues and mounting debt. The recent economic downturn works against this group in terms of both housing cost burden and employment security.³³ The difficulties of managing one or more of these issues can become so overwhelming that individuals literally lose the walls around them.

The VA estimates that 75,609 veterans were homeless on a single night in January 2009, and that 136,334 veterans spent at least one night in an emergency shelter or transitional housing program between October 1, 2008, and September 30, 2009. While this represents a decline in the estimated number of homeless veterans, veterans continue to be disproportionately represented among the general homeless population. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) conservatively estimates that veterans represent 16 percent of all adult homeless people, yet they represent less than 8 percent of the civilian population 18 years and over.³⁴

³² Davenport, Christian. "The Fight to Fit Back." *Washington Post Magazine*. May 24, 2009. Accessed March 9, 2010, from www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/05/15/AR2009051501699.html.

³³ "National Coalition for Homeless Veterans – Veteran Homelessness Prevention Platform." National Coalition for Homeless. Accessed June 28, 2010, from www.nchv.org/content.cfm?id=79.

³⁴ Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2009 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress. The Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Veterans Affairs. (February 17, 2011). Accessed May 27, 2011, from www.vtaffordablehousing.org/news/2011/02/veteran-homelessness-a-supplemental-report-to-the-2009-annual-homeless-assessment-report-to-congress.

The National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (NCHV) describes veteran homelessness as the result of problems that an individual cannot resolve without assistance. Generally, these problems can be grouped into three categories: health issues, economic hardships and lack of affordable housing.³⁵ Nearly half of these homeless veterans served in the Vietnam War.³⁶ However, the homelessness rate among veterans returning from OEF/OIF is expected to rise because of the violent nature of combat in those theaters.

According to the VA, the portion of women served by its specialized homeless services (4 percent) is expected to increase to reflect the current portion of women who are serving in the military (15 percent). Furthermore, due to “extensive use of the National Guards and Reserve units in Iraq and Afghanistan...in addition to the typical influx of new, younger veterans expected from any conflict, a greater proportion of ‘new’ veterans will be older and have families.”³⁷

According to the 2009 VA Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Groups (CHALENG) Report, one of the highest-rated unmet needs among veterans in every region of the country is access to safe, affordable housing.³⁸ Since limited public assistance resources are available, access to public housing is usually subject to a priority system that favors single parents with dependent children, the elderly and persons with disabilities, over veterans without an obvious substance abuse condition, mental illness or other disability.³⁹

Mental Health Problems and Substance Abuse

Terms for service-related psychological trauma have changed throughout history — from “shell shock” to “battle fatigue” to “post-traumatic stress disorder” — but veterans from all eras have sustained often long-lasting psychological effects as a result of strain and trauma endured while serving. Once veterans return home, although they are physically away from the traumatic events, they have recurring memories of their experience. For example, Douglas A. Etter, a National Guard chaplain and Gulf War-Era II veteran, describes the effect of constant exposure to violence and carnage. In his words, “The experience of combat is unlike anything we knew before or we will experience again. And it’s not simply the fighting, the fear, sweat, blood, smells, noise, exhaustion, strain and pain;

³⁵ "National Coalition for Homeless Veterans - Media Information." National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. Accessed June 28, 2010, from www.nchv.org/page.cfm?id=108.

³⁶ "National Coalition for Homeless Veterans - Background & Statistics." National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. Accessed June 28, 2010, from www.nchv.org/background.cfm.

³⁷ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education and Networking Group (CHALENG) For Veterans (FY 2009): Services For Homeless Veterans Assessment And Coordination. March 17, 2010. Accessed August 9, 2010, from www1.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/chaleng/chaleng_sixteenth_annual_report.pdf.

³⁸ Community Homelessness Assessment, Local Education And Networking Group (CHALENG) For Veterans, The Fifteenth Annual Progress Report On Public Law 105-114, Services For Homeless Veterans Assessment And Coordination. Report. U.S Department of Veterans Affairs, March 11, 2009, pg. 18. Accessed June 28, 2010, from www1.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/chaleng/chaleng_15th_annual_chaleng_report_fy2008.pdf.

³⁹ "National Coalition for Homeless Veterans – Veteran Homelessness Prevent Platform." National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. Accessed June 28, 2010, from www.nchv.org/content.cfm?id=79.

it's also the everyday living." Of the transition, one of the things he noted: "For 18 months, I studied every piece of garbage or discarded junk along the road. When I came home, I couldn't stop. Riding in the passenger seat always made me nervous when someone would drive over a piece of trash."⁴⁰

People with mental health disorders such as PTSD often self-medicate by using drugs, most commonly alcohol. Without substance abuse treatment and or mental health services, people who have mental health disorders and substance abuse problems are at an increased risk of overdose, homelessness, or incarceration. In addition, their chances of finding jobs and advancing in careers are compromised.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

According to the VA, "Among the newly returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan, 20 percent are diagnosed with PTSD."⁴¹ PTSD and TBI have become the signature injuries for OEF/OIF. Given that the symptoms of severe trauma put the individual at risk for aggression, hyper-vigilance and mood swings, these invisible and complex injuries not only affect military service members and veterans themselves, but their parents, spouses, children and friendships."

According to research conducted by RAND Corporation's Center for Military Health Policy Research, about one-third of returning service members from OEF/OIF report symptoms of mental illness or cognitive condition. Approximately 18.5 percent of service members have PTSD and 19.5 percent report experiencing a traumatic brain injury during deployment. "If these numbers are representative, then of the 1.64 million deployed to date, the study estimates that approximately 300,000 veterans who have returned from Iraq and Afghanistan are currently suffering from PTSD or major depression and about 320,000 may have experienced TBI during deployment."⁴²

A traumatic brain injury results from a physical blow to the head or from a violent shifting of the brain within the skull. Depending on the source of the blow and the affected section of the brain, individuals may experience anything from a mild concussion to a severe injury causing significant permanent damage. Brain and "blast" injuries have been particularly common in the most recent conflicts due to increased use of explosives and missiles.

TBIs can have short- or long-term affects including headaches, dizziness, memory impairment, impulsivity, poor judgment, inability to concentrate, impaired processing and diminished motor skills. Cognitive functioning, judgment, memory and self-awareness may also be affected, subsequently influencing instrumental activities of

⁴⁰ *Resource Links* (Vol. 6, Issue 1). Institute for Research, Education and Training in Addictions (IRETA). Fall 2007. Accessed April 1, 2010, from www.ireta.org/products/nwl988-DLD1.pdf.

⁴¹ VA Queri Update: Substance Use Disorders. SUD-PTSD Task Group. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Research Development, Health Services Research and Development Services. June. 2010. Accessed January 11, 2011, from www.queri.research.va.gov/about/impact_updates/SUD-PTSD.pdf.

⁴² Invisible Wounds: Mental Health and Cognitive Care Needs of America's Returning Veterans (Research Highlights). RAND Corporation, Center for Military Health Policy Research. 2008. Accessed April 2, 2010, from www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/2008/RAND_RB9336.pdf.

daily living. In some cases, veterans are leaving the service without knowing they have brain injuries, oblivious to the reasons that they struggle with everyday activities. While mild concussions will heal with time and rest, a more severe injury may become progressively worse without official diagnosis and treatment.

Brain injuries clearly act as a barrier to a successful transition into the community, primarily because they may be undetected and the individuals may be unable to pinpoint why they have difficulty at home or work. The result of this psychological strain manifests in a variety of negative coping behaviors including substance abuse, anger and aggression, domestic violence, child abuse and suicide. Without proper treatment, mental health issues can become overwhelming and feelings of hopelessness can sneak in. Veterans are twice as likely to commit suicide as non-veterans, with 18 committing suicide every day and 1,000 attempting suicide while in VA care every month.^{43 44} Suicide hotlines exist to address this concern; however, veterans are responsible for reaching out independently to these resources, and they do not always opt to call. Therefore, all stakeholders must be empowered to move quickly to erect a network of holistic supports designed to help veterans smoothly transition to the civilian workforce and resume their lives.

Substance Abuse

According to VA estimates, 19 percent of returning service members from Iraq and Afghanistan are known to have substance abuse disorders. Faced with fear, stress, loneliness, separation from their families and PTSD, service members and veterans often use drugs (most commonly alcohol) to cope. A 2007 report from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health summarizing drug use among veterans aged 18 and older indicated that 7 percent of the veteran population has a substance use disorder.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the DOD finds that while service members have been using illicit drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, heroin and meth-amphetamines at a low rate in recent years, the misuse of prescription drugs — particularly pain relievers — has increased from 2 percent in 2002 to 11 percent in 2008. While the percentage of service members who report using prescription drugs (11.5 percent) is twice that of civilians (4.4 percent), the problem appears to be more serious among women service members who report using prescription drugs (13.1 percent) compared to civilian women (3.2 percent).⁴⁶ Often, prescription drugs are taken in combination with alcohol, which increases the user's risk of overdose. Unfortunately, the majority of people who abuse substances don't seek treatment for a broad range of reasons, including fear of stigma, concerns about the cost, or lack of support.

⁴³ Koopma, John. "Veteran disability payments to increase as number of veterans decreases." *The San Francisco Chronicle*. Accessed May 13, 2008, from www.news-medical.net/news/2008/05/13/38309.aspx.

⁴⁴ Bertoch, S., & Ruff, E. (n.d.). *War: The Impact and Implications of Public Policy and Advocacy for the Career Development of Veterans*. Accessed March 29, 2009, from www.career.fsu.edu/documents/NCDA_2008/1-11.doc.

⁴⁵ Serious Psychological Distress and Substance Use Disorder among Veterans. Rep. Rockville: Office of Applied Studies, 2007. Serious Psychological Distress and Substance Use Disorder among Veterans. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, November 1, 2007. Accessed June 23, 2011, from www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k7/veteransDual/veteransDual.pdf

⁴⁶ Office of National Drug Control Policy. ONDCP Update. February 2010. Accessed January 7, 2011, from www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/update/update-feb2010.pdf.

Physical Disabilities

The dangers service members face in war often result in service-connected injuries or illnesses that can deteriorate over service members' lifetimes and have a range of long-term implications, including unemployment. Yet Goodwill believes that employment can help many with significant disabilities to reintegrate successfully into their communities. Many people with disabilities have the skills needed to qualify for employment opportunities and advance in their careers. Unfortunately, most people with disabilities — both veteran and civilian — face a bleak employment picture.

In March of 2011, the BLS reported that among veterans who served in Gulf War-Era II, about one in four (530,000) reported having a service-connected disability in July 2010, compared with about 13 percent of all veterans. Of the 530,000 Gulf War-Era II veterans, 114,000 reported having service-connected disabilities rated at 60 percent or higher, 41,000 of whom are not participating in the labor force. As a result, the labor force participation rate for Gulf War-Era II was 63.7 percent compared to 86.2 percent for veterans without service-connected disabilities.^{47 48}

While many veterans are guaranteed VA benefits because they acquired their disabilities while serving in the military, others acquire their disabilities outside of military service and therefore may not be eligible for VA benefits. A number of challenges create work disincentives or limit employment opportunities for veterans with disabilities. Unless these challenges are addressed, many veterans will be prevented from reintegrating into the workforce and contributing to their communities.

For example, many veterans with disabilities are eligible to receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits; however, returning to work may cause their income to exceed income-eligibility requirements, resulting in the loss of SSDI benefits.

People with significant disabilities face numerous obstacles to employment, often because of misconceptions that they are not up to the job or require too many special accommodations. Despite advances made since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), employment of people with significant disabilities has declined over the past decade. In April 2011, the portion of people with disabilities in the labor force was only 21 percent compared to 69.7 percent for persons without disabilities. Furthermore, the unemployment rate for those with disabilities was 15.6 percent, compared with 8.9 percent for those without disabilities, not seasonally adjusted.

As the economy and the labor market improve, one would expect that people with disabilities would benefit; however, while the unemployment rate for people without disabilities declined from 9.3 percent in August 2010 to

⁴⁷ U.S. Department of Labor. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Economic News Releases. Employment Situation of Veterans Summary. March 11, 2011. Accessed May 27, 2011, from <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/print.pl/news.release/vet.nr0.htm>.

⁴⁸ The statistics cited are the result of a survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, and cannot be compared to casualty numbers — cited earlier in this white paper — as reported by the U.S. Department of Defense.

8.8 percent in August 2011, the unemployment rate for people with disabilities increased from 15.6 percent in August 2010 to 16.1 percent in August 2011.⁴⁹

Despite the advances the country has made to improve opportunities for people with disabilities, these statistics indicate that there are not enough employment opportunities for people with significant disabilities and few incentives for employers to hire these workers. Yet, when they are given the opportunity to work, people with disabilities consistently prove to be assets to workplaces. In 2010, Goodwill served more than 253,665 people with disabilities and employed 97,000 people, many whom have disabilities. As an employer, Goodwill knows that people with disabilities are hardworking and enthusiastic employees. They want to experience the pride and independence that come from a day's work, just like everyone else. A motivated person with a strong work ethic has the makings of a great employee.

Many people with disabilities need little or no accommodation to do their jobs, and advances in technology are helping many workers increase their productivity, including those with disabilities. Employers can demonstrate social responsibility and economic commitment to their communities by hiring people with disabilities, especially veterans.

Incarceration, Previous Criminal History

According to a 2007 report released by the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), veterans represented about 10 percent of the state prison population in 2004. While this is a significant decline compared to 20 percent in 1986, the study attributes the reduction, in part, to the dropping number of veterans in the U.S. population. With a new wave of service members returning home after experiencing combat, history tells us to prepare for an increase in the number of veterans in the criminal justice system.

For example, 34 percent of new admissions into 11 U.S. prisons between 1946 and 1949 were World War II combat veterans. In 1985, 21 percent of all men in state prisons and 23 percent of all men in federal prisons were veterans — a direct legacy of Vietnam.⁵⁰

The BJS report notes that veterans who are incarcerated in state prisons are more likely than incarcerated non-veterans to be serving time for violent offenses (with 57 percent of veterans compared to 47 percent of non-veterans in state correctional facilities serving time for violent offenses). This includes sexual offenses, with 23 percent of veterans compared to 9 percent of non-veterans incarcerated for rape or sexual assault.

⁴⁹ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Economic News Release. Table A-6. Employment status of the civilian population by sex, age and disability status, not seasonally adjusted. Accessed April 21, 2011, from www.bls.gov/news.release/empst.t06.htm.

⁵⁰ Drug Policy Alliance. Healing a Broken System: Veterans Battling Addiction and Incarceration. November 4, 2009. Accessed January 11, 2011, from www.drugpolicy.org/docUploads/DPA_IssueBrief_Veterans.pdf.

Although veterans who are incarcerated tend to be better educated than their civilian counterparts, states have many so-called “collateral consequences” laws that prevent people with criminal records — particularly those whose crimes are drug related, violent or sexual in nature — from working in many jobs or accessing public supports. As a result, veterans who re-enter their communities after serving time in prison are affected by the collateral consequences of their crimes. Collateral consequences are likely to be more restrictive for veterans because, as research suggests, they are disproportionately incarcerated for drug-related, violent or sexual crimes. For more information about Goodwill Industries International’s positions on the challenges faced by people with criminal backgrounds, see *The Road to Reintegration: Ensuring Successful Community Re-Entry for People Who Are Former Offenders*.⁵¹

Challenges Specific to Female Veterans and Service Members

On October 1, 1994, women became eligible for jobs in combat aviation, aboard combat ships and in ground combat support.⁵² As a result, the Afghanistan and Iraq invasions mark the first wars in which women have been exposed to new military roles, and more women are veterans today than any other time in our nation’s history. As of 2012, the U.S. veteran population was estimated at 21,806,500, and 1.8 million (8 percent) were women.⁵³ In 2010, the BLS reported that 12 percent of the 2.2 million veterans serving during Gulf War-Era II were women, compared to 3 percent of the female veteran population who served during World War II, the Korean War and in Vietnam.⁵⁴

With more women in the military than ever before and roughly 260,000 women having been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, women are increasingly turning to an already overextended VA for help.⁵⁵ They utilize the VA for both physical and mental health services, including primary care, disease prevention, hormone replacement therapy, gynecological care, maternity, substance abuse treatment, acute medical/surgical, rehabilitation and long-term care.⁵⁶ Over the course of 2011, the VA will spend \$241 million for its 300,000 female patients on gender-specific health care needs.⁵⁷ The funding increase comes at a time when dissatisfaction with VA health care by females is

⁵¹ The white paper can be downloaded from www.goodwill.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/06-15-09-Road-to-Re-Integration.pdf.

⁵² Curnutte, Mark. “For female soldiers, last battle is within.” *Army Times*. May 22, 2009. Accessed September 22, 2011, from www.armytimes.com/news/2009/05/gns_female_soldiers_052209.

⁵³ Veteran Population by State. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, September 30, 2010. Accessed September 22, 2011, from www.va.gov/vetdata/Maps.asp.

⁵⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Situation of Veterans Summary, March 11, 2011. Accessed September 22, 2011, from www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.nr0.htm.

⁵⁵ “Vets Start Female focused VFW Post.” *Army Times*. April 25, 2011. Accessed September 22, 2011, from www.armytimes.com/news/2011/04/usat-women-vfw-042511w.

⁵⁶ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Center for Women Veterans FAQ, March 2011. Accessed September 22, 2011, from www.va.gov/WOMENVET/docs/25FAQs-March2011-FINAL.pdf.

⁵⁷ “VA scopes out medical needs of female veterans.” *USA TODAY*. March 31, 2011. Accessed September 22, 2011, from www.usatoday.com/printedition/news/20110301/womenva01_st.art.htm.

high. A recent survey conducted by the American Legion polled 3,000 female veterans who expressed a significant frustration getting medical care — even in VA facilities with female-specific services. The results show a combination of a lack of understanding by women about what health care services are available and a lack of awareness of women's needs at the VA.⁵⁸

Female veterans face obstacles that are more commonly unique to their gender such as sexual trauma. A VA study showed that between 2001 and 2007, of the 125,729 veterans who received primary care or mental health services, 15 percent of women and 0.7 percent of men reported military sexual trauma.⁵⁹ Many women do not report sexual trauma and then attempt to resume their pre-service lives while continuing to process these significant and traumatic events. The DOD's Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office has a 24-hour system in place to respond to reports of sexual assault and includes a response coordinator who supports victims through every step of the process, including medical care counseling and other services.⁶⁰

After women in the military experience sexual assault or combat stress, it is found that they seek mental health treatment, often resulting in a diagnosis of PTSD. The National Center for PTSD reports that among female veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, almost 20 percent have been diagnosed with PTSD. The department plans to open more PTSD clinics but, as of this writing, are four. They are located in Bay Pines, FL; Boston, MA; Cincinnati, OH; and Palo Alto, CA.⁶¹

Lessons learned from women's expanded role in U.S. military combat operations have led to policy changes. For example, a VA study found that 50 percent of female veterans' claims of PTSD were being denied compared to 37 percent for males veterans because of a rule requiring service members to have had a combat role to be eligible for benefits.⁶² The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) reviewed this stipulation and determined that women who have not served directly in a ground combat role could still experience psychological war trauma. The VBA overturned the rule so that more women could have access to medical benefits they deserve. Recent surveys also assert that women in the military are four times more likely to abuse prescription drugs than their civilian

⁵⁸ "Survey: Female vets frustrated with VA health care." *Stars and Stripes*. March 22, 2011. Accessed September 22, 2011, from www.stripes.com/news/survey-female-vets-frustrated-with-va-health-care-1.138566.

⁵⁹ "Military Sexual Trauma." *PTSD Research Quarterly*. National Center for PTSD. Spring 2009. Accessed September 22, 2011, from www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/newsletters/research-quarterly/v20n2.pdf.

⁶⁰ "DOD officials release sexual assault statistics." News Release. U.S. Air Force. March 18, 2009. Accessed September 22, 2011, from www.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123140293.

⁶¹ "Traumatic Stress in Women Veterans." National Center for PTSD. Accessed September 22, 2011, from www.ptsd.va.gov/public/pages/traumatic-stress-female-vets.asp.

⁶² Senator Mark Werner Letter. Accessed September 22, 2011, from <http://media2.wavy.com/html/PDFs/Womens%20PTSD-Follow-up%20to%20Shinseki.pdf>

counterparts. The stress of child care responsibilities and trauma resulting from physical or sexual abuse contribute to this alarming statistic.⁶³

A depressed job market has also resulted in higher unemployment rates for female veterans compared to their civilian counterparts. The BLS reports that Gulf War-Era II female veterans in 2010 had an unemployment rate of 12 percent compared to 8.4 percent for civilian women.⁶⁴ The VA reports that more than 150,000 women will transition out of the military over the next few years and seek meaningful jobs. These veterans will need alternative employment training and resources to make the transition. For those who struggle with substance abuse problems or undiagnosed mental health problems, homelessness is a real possibility. While women make up a small share of the sheltered veteran homeless populations (7.5 percent in 2009 according to HUD and the VA), their numbers are expected to increase as the total veteran population increases.⁶⁵

VA services for female veterans have not kept pace with the increased number of women in the armed services. A 2008 article published by Change.org reveals that only 300 out of 500 VA shelters will accept women and only 22 offer programs specifically for female veterans or have accommodations separate from men.⁶⁶ The VA in Boston developed a solution: the Women Veterans' Homelessness Program provides specialized treatment for women with a variety of mental health and substance abuse problems and helps them secure safe and affordable housing.⁶⁷ More programs like this are needed to put an end to homelessness for women who have served.

Listening sessions between the DOL's Women's Bureau and service providers and formerly and currently homeless female veterans in 2009 revealed a number of reasons why female veterans don't seek help. The women expressed concern that the level and types of assistance provided to men and women weren't equal. Findings from the listening sessions suggest that programs should include: sex-segregated residential centers; child care, housing and programs for female veterans with children; career counseling, skills assessment, job training and placement assistance; personal, family and financial counseling; and women veterans resource professionals.⁶⁸

⁶³ Office of National Drug Control Policy. ONDCP Update. February 2010. Accessed January 7, 2011, from www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/update/update-feb2010.pdf.

⁶⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Situation of Veterans Summary, March 11, 2011. Accessed September 22, 2011, from www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.nr0.htm

⁶⁵ Veteran Homelessness: A Supplemental Report to the 2009 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development; and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, The National Center on Homelessness Among Veterans. Accessed April 25, 2011, from www.hudhre.info/documents/2009AHARVeteransReport.pdf.

⁶⁶ Moriarty, S.. "An American Atrocity: Female Veterans Left Out In the Cold" October, 20, 2008. Accessed April 11, 2009, from http://homelessness.change.org/blog/view/an_american_atrocity_female_veterans_left_out_in_the_cold

⁶⁷ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Women Veterans' Housing Programs. Accessed September 22, 2011, from www.mass.gov/?pageID=veteransterminal&L=2&L0=Home&L1=Housing&sid=Eveterans&b=terminalcontent&f=housing_women&csid=Eveterans

⁶⁸ U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau. Homeless Women Veterans Listening Sessions. 2010. Accessed June 8, 2011, from www.dol.gov/wb/programs/listeningsessions.htm.

Challenges Military Families Face

The families of military service members and veterans also face stressors and challenges. Past or present military service can affect family dynamics, generating feelings of resentment, abandonment, loneliness, depression and anger. Veterans may return to find profoundly changed relationships with their spouses, children, parents and other important family members, making it difficult to re-establish family roles.

For military spouses, managing the household and caring for children alone are major stressors. Because military families tend to move more frequently than non-military families, spouses may find it difficult to pursue long-term employment and career-advancing opportunities. Professional licenses or certificates obtained from one state are often not recognized in other states, limiting job opportunities.

While employers are not allowed to ask job candidates for information about marital or military status, they may not hire military spouses because they fear the employee may be transferred or take too much unscheduled leave because they must manage their households alone. Military spouses should know their rights and should not volunteer this information to prospective employers.

While service members have certain rights under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, their family members do not. Often, a military spouse is forced to choose between attending an important school event for a child who is missing a deployed parent or losing a job that keeps the family financially solvent.⁶⁹

Military children face different challenges. When their parent is transferred, children must cope with the stress of changing schools and making new friends. When one or both of their parents are deployed, children must cope with long parental absences and the fear that their parent(s) may be wounded or killed. According to testimony provided by Kathleen Moakler of the National Military Family Association, "More dedicated resources, such as youth or teen centers and enhanced partnerships with national youth-serving organizations, would be important ways to better meet the needs of our older youth and teens during deployment."⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Perdew, J. Deputy Director of Government Relations, The National Military Family Association. Testimony before the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections of the House Committee on Education and Labor. September 18, 2007. Accessed April 1, 2009, from www.nmfa.org/site/DocServer/House_Workforce_Protection_FMLA_9-18-07.pdf?docID=10921

⁷⁰ Moakler, Kathleen B., Government Relations Director of the National Military Family Association. Statement before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel of the United States Senate Armed Services Committee. April 13, 2011. Accessed April 27, 2011, from <http://armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2011/04%20April/Moakler%2004-13-11.pdf>

Call to Action

A large number of service members deployed in OEF/OIF and other conflicts will soon transition from the military to civilian life in a job market that is likely to remain difficult. As military strategists work to achieve their objectives abroad, Goodwill Industries continues its long tradition of helping veterans re-enter the civilian workforce. While increased investments in existing and new programs are part of the solution, policymakers' concern about the increasing national debt is likely to result in level or reduced spending on government programs for veterans.

Goodwill calls upon all stakeholders — veterans and family members, policymakers, military leaders, service members, community-based organizations (including local Goodwill agencies), veterans service organizations and human service providers, educators, foundations and employers — to come together to ensure that the veterans' support system:

- Is easy for service members, veterans and family members to access, understand and navigate.
- Coordinates services and information sharing between the DOD, the VA, the DOL and other federal agencies.
- Facilitates and promotes collaboration between veterans service organizations and community-based organizations to leverage local resources and supports and to ensure a swift and successful transition from military service to civilian life.

For more than a century, Goodwill has worked to help people who face employment challenges to earn jobs and pursue careers. Local Goodwill agencies from coast to coast should commit to investing their resources and expertise in partnerships with stakeholders to develop a collaborative network that 1) prepares members of the military to successfully transition to civilian life, 2) supports veterans and their families who face challenges during that transition, and 3) improves access to benefits and supports administered by numerous federal agencies, community-based organizations and veteran service organizations.

Goodwill as a Resource

Many institutions, associations and community-based organizations have long histories of providing supports and services for military service members, veterans and their families. Despite the range of resources available for this population, some still have difficulty navigating or accessing the current delivery system. Goodwill is committed to collaborating with other stakeholders and focusing more of its resources and expertise in employment and workforce development to maximize the number of military service members, veterans and families served.

The Goodwill enterprise includes a network of 158 local and autonomous Goodwill agencies in the United States that help people with employment challenges attain the skills they need to succeed in the workforce. One of Goodwill's greatest strengths continues to be its entrepreneurial approach to sustaining its mission. In 2010, Goodwill raised more than \$4 billion in its retail stores and other social enterprises, and invested 84 percent (more than \$3.2 billion) of its privately-raised revenues to supplement federal investments in programs that give people the skills they need to re-enter the workforce.

Because Goodwill is a business enterprise, the organization is often able to employ many of the people who turn to it for help. In fact, of the 98,000 people employed at Goodwill in 2010, more than 23,000 were people who came to Goodwill for help and were placed in a job within Goodwill. An

My Story: Ashley Call



I joined the Army National Guard in June 2006 while attending high school. After graduation, I worked various low-paying jobs until I was called to active duty in 2008. I was deployed to Iraq from 2009-2010, working as an emergency medic at a camp 20 miles south of Bagdad. After completing my tour of duty in Iraq, I returned to Virginia, where I began looking for suitable employment while maintaining my status in the Army National Guard.

Unable to find employment, I signed up for unemployment with the VA Employment Commission. I found myself in a position of being a live-in house-keeper. This position only provided a place to live and meals. It was not a good living arrangement.

At this point in my life, I felt I had not accomplished much, even though I had served in a war zone and provided vital medical assistance to my fellow service members. Even though I had experience as an emergency medic, no one would offer me employment because I didn't have a civilian certificate.

During a visit to the VA Employment Commission, I discussed my situation with my counselor. She informed me about the dislocated workers program, operated by [Goodwill Industries of the Valleys](#).

My dislocated worker case manager helped me enroll in medical assisting training through Washington County Skill Center, with classes held at Virginia Highlands Community College. The program taught me to work in a doctors' office, provide assistance during patient examinations, keep patient and related electronic health records information, and perform clinical, administrative and laboratory duties.

The opportunity provided to me by Goodwill will enable me to work in a field I find exciting and rewarding.

additional 140,669 individuals were placed in jobs in their communities.⁷¹ Goodwill has made a national commitment to provide face-to-face career and family strengthening services to more than 15,000 military spouses, veterans and their families this year. In addition, it will expand virtual career services — linked to military websites — to tens of thousands more people. In 2010, Goodwill provided job training, employment services and supportive services to more than 2.4 million people.⁷² This included:⁷³

- 25,766 veterans, of whom 4,449 had documented disabilities (1,363 being service connected).
- 241,234 people with disabilities (11,423 reported neurological disability, 46,463 reported psychiatric and/or emotional disability, and 26,832 reported a history of substance abuse).
- 35,773 people who reported being homeless.
- 128,918 people who reported having a criminal background.

Many of those who approach Goodwill for employment help need additional supportive services — such as child care, reliable transportation, stable housing, counseling, workplace adjustments and assistive technology — to ensure their success. In recent years, local Goodwill agencies have reported serving an increased number of veterans. According to Goodwill's Annual Statistical Report (2010), Goodwill collectively served more than 25,000 veterans in 2010.⁷⁴ However, Goodwill's workforce development professionals report that some veterans will not affirmatively answer the question, "Are you a veteran?" Yet, they will positively answer the question, "Have you served in the armed forces?" Therefore, the number of veterans served by Goodwill is likely to be higher than indicated in Goodwill's Annual Statistical Reports.

	Agencies Reporting	Veterans Served
2007 ⁷⁵	72	7,825
2008 ⁷⁶	119	12,524
2009 ⁷⁷	117	21,873
2010 ⁷⁸	116	25,766

⁷¹ Annual Statistical Report, 2010 (Table 12). Goodwill Industries International, Inc. Rockville, MD. June 2011.

⁷² Annual Statistical Report, 2010. Goodwill Industries International, Inc. Rockville, MD. June 2011.

⁷³ Annual Statistical Report, 2010 Tables. Goodwill Industries International, Inc. Rockville, MD. June 2011.

⁷⁴ Annual Statistical Report, 2009 Tables. Goodwill Industries International, Inc. Rockville, MD. June 2010.

⁷⁵ Annual Statistical Report, 2007 Tables. Goodwill Industries International, Inc. Rockville, MD. June 2008.

⁷⁶ Annual Statistical Report, 2008 Tables. Goodwill Industries International, Inc. Rockville, MD. June 2009.

⁷⁷ Annual Statistical Report, 2009 Tables. Goodwill Industries International, Inc. Rockville, MD. June 2010.

⁷⁸ Annual Statistical Report, 2010 Tables. Goodwill Industries International, Inc. Rockville, MD. June 2011.

Goodwill agencies serve diverse populations of varying education and income levels in both urban and rural areas. Many agencies have military installations in their service areas, while others serve communities with high concentrations of military families or veterans. The majority of veterans who come to Goodwill served during the Vietnam era and most are homeless.⁷⁹ While the number of OEF/OIF veterans requesting Goodwill services is relatively low, Goodwill expects that many more will turn to the organization in the coming years when commonly accessed veteran services and resources are stretched thin.

Goodwill helps veterans in a range of ways. Some agencies provide veteran-specific services, while others provide services available to the general public, and still others provide a combination of the two. A large portion of Goodwill agencies also provide assessment to all veterans while emphasizing employment services and outcomes. Goodwill also provides services to veterans through one-stop career centers or community-based employment services.

In September 2007, Goodwill Industries International received the first VetSuccess.gov Employer Award for Outstanding Veterans Employment. This award

acknowledged Goodwill's success in working with the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service to help veterans find jobs.⁸⁰ While some challenges faced by veterans are unique to their experiences, many disadvantaging conditions — from homelessness and poverty to severe physical disabilities — are obstacles that Goodwill has helped millions of individuals overcome for nearly 110 years.

On April 12, 2011, in response to a call to action from First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, Goodwill Industries International launched a new initiative — Goodwill for America's Heroes and Their Families. The initiative aims to expand Goodwill's job training, placement and employment services to thousands of American veterans, as well as their spouses and families. Goodwill is proud to be one of the first responders to the First Lady's call.

Snapshot: Goodwill Industries of Lower South Carolina (Charleston)

Goodwill Industries of Lower South Carolina provides services to both homeless and non-homeless veterans in nine counties in coastal South Carolina. The Operation Independence program provides homeless veterans access to employment, medical and vocational services. These services are provided in partnership with the Ralph H. Johnson Veterans Hospital and the South Carolina Department of Vocational Rehabilitation. Over the last three years, they agency has assessed 440 homeless veterans, enrolled 162, placed 64 into employment and placed 104 in occupational or on-the-job training programs. During this same period, 96 of those enrolled were placed in either transitional or permanent housing. In addition, over the last two years, the Goodwill assisted 1,007 non-homeless veterans with general employment services at it Job Link Centers and placed 21 in employment through Good People Staffing. The Goodwill has also worked with 70 veterans in various departments throughout the agency. For more information about these programs, please contact Tina Marshall at (843) 377-2811.

⁷⁹ Annual Statistical Report, 2008 Tables. Goodwill Industries International, Inc. Rockville, MD. June 2009.

⁸⁰ Goodwill Industries International, Inc. Goodwill Industries Recognized with First Government Award for Outstanding Veterans' Employment Services. News Release. August 29, 2007.

Opportunities for Goodwill to Increase Support to Service Members, Veterans and Their Families

Goodwill has the opportunity to improve existing supports by actively partnering with stakeholders and making its programs more accessible for service members, veterans and their family members. Goodwill Industries International and local Goodwill agencies must work more closely with each other and stakeholders to develop a national plan, including proactive and collaborative strategies that:

- Approach the needs of military service members, veterans and their families holistically.
- Reach out to military service members, veterans and their families to identify sources for supports they may need in the communities to which they will reside or return;
- Seamlessly transition services to military families and veterans from stakeholders and providers in communities that they leave to those in communities to which they are relocating or returning.

While federal funding sources may be available to support these efforts, local Goodwill agencies should demonstrate their commitment by investing more of their own privately raised funds to help existing stakeholders, including the VA, achieve goals they may be struggling to achieve. Although local investments could lead to federal grant opportunities, local Goodwill agencies should not expect their investments to result in federal funds or other financial resources in the short and long term.

With a long history of serving people who are “harder to serve,” Goodwill’s network of workforce development agencies is in a position to provide additional resources and supports for service members, veterans and their family members. In particular, Goodwill believes that the focus of its outreach and supports should target people who are having the most difficulty accessing services that already exist for members of the armed forces, veterans and their families.

Individual Goodwill agencies must prepare to serve military service members, veterans and their families by becoming a more informed provider. This starts with learning more about the specific needs of those transitioning from military service and the challenges faced by stakeholders such as the VA, DOL and HUD. Furthermore, local agencies should identify the actual number of military service members, veterans and families that live in or expect to return to their communities and reach out to any federal, state and local stakeholders that already serve this population to increase collaboration and minimize duplication of services.

Goodwill agencies should expect stakeholders to request supportive services that are not central to Goodwill’s employment mission, yet are within the scope of its self-sustaining model. For example, some Goodwill workforce development professionals indicate that they have been perplexed when their agencies have offered to help veterans’ service stakeholders by providing employment services, only to be asked to provide donated goods

instead. Local Goodwill agencies should be prepared to use these instances as opportunities to educate stakeholders about Goodwill's self-sustaining enterprise and its mission, thus establishing relationships that can be developed and strengthened.

In addition, local Goodwill agencies should establish themselves as an information and referral source for military service members, veterans and families that seek assistance. With targeted marketing and strategic networking, agencies can educate their communities and share their expertise in training, job coaching, employment, case management and disability awareness, encouraging other providers to make referrals to Goodwill. In turn, Goodwill should act as a liaison, making outward referrals and connections by networking with community partners. Goodwill for America's Heroes and Their Families seeks to foster these types of connections.

One resource readily accessible to all Goodwill agencies is the [Goodwill Veterans Services Toolkit](#), produced by Goodwill Industries International. The toolkit provides resources and information to help the Goodwill enterprise efficiently assess local needs, understand funding options and quickly assemble a service strategy. The toolkit is a continually updated with contributions from local Goodwill agencies, as well as new information from Goodwill Industries International.

The toolkit contains resources on the following topics:

- Crash Course in Veterans' Systems
- Assessing the Local Market
- Service Options — Program Design and Funding
- Partnerships
- Career Planning and Working with Employers
- Measuring and Managing Program Outcomes
- Hallmark Disabilities and Challenges to Reintegration
- Marketing and Outreach Strategies

Existing Legal Protections and Supports for Transitioning Service Members and Veterans

Legal protections and supports have long existed to help transitioning and recently separated service members and veterans who may struggle to make the transition from the military to civilian life, including the workforce. These protections and supports make up a complex support system that involves a wide range of public and private stakeholders that clearly demonstrate our national commitment to supporting military service members, veterans, and their families.

The following snapshot of existing protections and supports, while extensive, is by no means complete. It is intended to inform readers about the protections and supports that exist as well as to demonstrate the complexity of the system.

Legal Protections

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA)

The USERRA prohibits employers from discriminating against people who serve in or have served in the uniformed services and protects veterans with disabilities by requiring employers to make reasonable efforts to accommodate those disabilities.⁸¹ The law also provides rights to people who have had to be absent from their civilian jobs to perform military service for their country. The re-employment rights under USERRA require employers to restore people who have been absent from their jobs due to military service into the same or similar positions that they had when they left to perform military service.⁸² USERRA also protects service members' seniority and entitlement to participate in health care plans and pension plans.

The law applies to all private- and public-sector employers, including the federal government. USERRA does not apply to individuals who have been dishonorably discharged or discharged for bad conduct. The law is administered by the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL's) Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), which provides assistance to people who are experiencing service-connected problems with their civilian employment, provides information about the Act to employers, and assists veterans who have questions regarding Veterans' Preference.⁸³

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Titles I and II of the ADA support veterans with disabilities by prohibiting covered employers (private employers with 15 or more employees and state and local government employers) from discriminating against individuals on the basis of disability. Title I of the ADA also generally requires covered employers to make reasonable workplace accommodations that allow people with disabilities to compete for employment opportunities. Title I is enforced by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) while the DOL Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) has coordinating authority. The DOL's Civil Rights Center is responsible for enforcing Title II with regard to the programs, services and regulatory activities of such entities relating to labor and the workforce.⁸⁴

⁸¹ U.S. Department of Labor. Office of Assistant Secretary for Policy/Office of Compliance Assistance Policy. Overview of USERRA. Accessed May 2, 2011, from www.dol.gov/elaws/vets/userra/userra.asp.

⁸² USC Title 38, Chapter 43. Accessed May 2, 2011, from www.dol.gov/vets/usc/vpl/usc38.htm.

⁸³ U.S. Department of Labor. Office of Assistant Secretary for Policy/Office of Compliance Assistance Policy. Overview of USERRA. Accessed May 2, 2011, from www.dol.gov/elaws/vets/userra/userra.asp.

⁸⁴ U.S. Department of Labor. Disability Resources: Laws and Regulations. Accessed May 2, 2011, from www.dol.gov/dol/topic/disability/laws.htm.

The Rehabilitation Act

Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act applies the same standards of non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation as the ADA to Federal Executive Branch agencies and the U.S. Postal Service.⁸⁵ In addition, the Rehabilitation Act authorizes the Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to make grants available to states to support the provision of a wide range of services for people with significant disabilities, including some veterans, to help prepare them for and engage in gainful employment that fits in with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and informed choice. (For more, see *Vocational Rehabilitation*.)

The Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 (VEVRA)

Enforced by the DOL, VEVRA requires employers with federal contracts in excess of \$25,000 to "take affirmative action to employ and advance in employment qualified special disabled veterans, veterans of the Vietnam era and any other veterans who served on active duty during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized."⁸⁶

Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002 (JVA)

JVA requires state workforce delivery systems to give veterans and eligible spouses priority for employment, training and placement services over non-covered persons.⁸⁷ Oddly, "according to figures compiled from the DOL participant reporting system, the numbers of veterans served under priority of service has actually declined since JVA passed. Statistics for individual states indicate low rates of exit from Workforce Investment Act (WIA) intensive training services for veterans with service-connected disabilities."⁸⁸

Supports

Numerous private and public supports exist for military service members, veterans and their families. While other supports are available in addition to those discussed throughout this section, stakeholders are likely to heavily utilize those listed here.

⁸⁵ The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Veterans with service-connected disabilities and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): A guide for employers. Accessed April 21, 2011, from www.eeoc.gov/facts/veterans-disabilities-employers.html.

⁸⁶ Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 (38 USC §4212). Accessed May 5, 2011, from www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/statutes/4212.htm.

⁸⁷ U.S. Department of Labor. Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002. Accessed September 22, 2011, from www.dol.gov/vets/programs/empserv/employment_services_fs.htm.

⁸⁸ Ansley, Heather L. Esq. MSW, Co-chair, Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Veterans Task Force. Testimony before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives. May 24, 2011.

The Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

TAP is jointly administered by the U.S. Departments of Defense (DOD), DOL and Veterans Affairs (VA). Transitional assistance programs are made available to separating service members from all branches of the military who have been on active duty for at least 180 days or are separating due to an injury to help prepare them for civilian employment. Under the law, TAP must be made available 1) within two years of an anticipated retirement, 2) within one year of an anticipated separation, or 3) as soon as possible in cases when separation occurs sooner than expected.⁸⁹ According to the DOL's Veterans and Employment Training Services Office, more than a million separating and retiring military members and their spouses have participated in the program since its inception in 1990.⁹⁰

TAP consists of three basic components: 1) mandatory pre-separation counseling provided by DOD, 2) employment workshops provided by DOL and 3) veterans benefit activities provided by VA. An additional component called DTAP is also available for service members with disabilities; however, only pre-separation counseling is mandatory. TAP consists of comprehensive three-day workshops at selected military installations nationwide. Workshop attendees learn about job searches, career decision-making, current occupational and labor market conditions, résumé and cover letter preparation, and interviewing techniques. Participants also are provided with evaluations of their employability relative to the job market and receive information on the most current veterans' benefits.⁹¹

According to a 2005 U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, both the method of delivery and the level of participation may vary, with participation rates highest for the mandatory pre-separation counseling. Participation also varies depending in part on the circumstances of the service members involved. In response, the DOD, DOL and VA are working to address concerns about varying TAP participation, including differing participation rates between members of the National Guard and Reserves compared to members of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines.⁹²

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)

Although recently separated service members may continue to use TAP services up to 180 days after they have been discharged, the VA is the primary federal source of benefits and supports for veterans. Those who have

⁸⁹ Military and Veterans' Benefits: Enhanced Services Could Improve Transition Assistance for Reserves and National Guard. U.S. Government Accountability Office. May 2005. Accessed October 8, 2009, from www.gao.gov/new.items/d05544.pdf.

⁹⁰ Transition Assistance Program Manual. Introduction Letter from the U.S. Department of Labor. Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training. Accessed October 8, 2009, from www.dol.gov/vets/programs/tap/tap1_2.pdf

⁹¹ Transition Assistance Program. Accessed October 8, 2008, from www.taonline.com/TapOffice.

⁹² U.S. Government Accountability Office. Military and Veterans' Benefits: Enhanced Services Could Improve Transition Assistance for Reserves and National Guard. May 2005. Accessed October 8, 2009, from www.gao.gov/new.items/d05544.pdf.

disabilities that allow them to receive health care and service-connected disability benefits through the VA retain these benefits even if they return to work because eligibility is not income dependent.⁹³

The VA, which provides benefits to nearly 8.5 million veterans, consists of three **administrations**.⁹⁴

1. The **National Cemetery Administration (NCA)** honors veterans with a final resting place and lasting memorials that commemorate their service.
2. The **Veterans Health Administration (VHA)** operates the largest direct health care delivery system in the United States. VHA provides a broad range of primary care, specialized care and related medical and social support services⁹⁵ and consists of 21 regional health system networks called "Veterans Integrated Services Networks." Combined, these 21 regional networks include more than 171 medical centers; more than 350 outpatient, community and outreach clinics; 126 nursing home care units; and 35 domiciliaries.⁹⁶
 - **Readjustment Counseling Service/Vet Centers:** Readjustment counseling consists of a wide range of services provided to combat veterans transitioning from military to civilian life. Services include individual counseling, group counseling, marital and family counseling, bereavement counseling, medical referrals, assistance in applying for VA benefits, employment counseling, alcohol/drug assessments, military sexual trauma counseling and referral, and guidance and referrals to community resources. Family members of combat veterans are also eligible. Counseling is provided at community-based veterans' centers.
 - **Veterans Justice Outreach Initiative (VJO):** The purpose of VJO, implemented in June 2008, is to avoid the unnecessary criminalization of mental illness and extended incarceration among veterans by ensuring that they have timely access to VHA mental health and substance abuse services and other VA services and benefits as appropriate.⁹⁷ On May 27, 2009, the deputy under secretary for Health for Operations and Management issued a memorandum requiring VA medical centers to provide outreach to justice-involved veterans in the communities they serve.⁹⁸ As a result, each VA medical center has designated a facility-based VJO specialist who is responsible for direct outreach, assessment and case

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Policy and Planning. Analysis of Unique Veterans Utilization of VA Benefits and Services. April 29, 2009. Accessed October 8, 2009, from www1.va.gov/VETDATA/docs/SpecialReports/uniqueveteransMay.pdf

⁹⁵ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Fiscal Year 2009 Performance and Accountability Report. November 17, 2008. Accessed October 8, 2009, from www4.va.gov/budget/docs/report/Highlights/FY2009-VAPARhighlights_Part1.pdf

⁹⁶ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. VA History. Accessed October 8, 2009, from www.va.gov/about_va/vahistory.asp.

⁹⁷ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Veterans Justice Initiative. Accessed May 17, 2011, from www.va.gov/homeless/vjo.asp.

⁹⁸ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. National Drug Control Strategy: FY 2012 Budget and Performance Summary. Accessed May 17, 2011, from www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/policy/12budget/va.pdf.

management for justice-involved veterans in local courts and jails, and who liaisons with local justice system partners.⁹⁹

3. **The Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA)** offers veterans, their dependents and their survivors a number of financial, educational and other supportive services. Financial benefits include the Loan Guarantee Program and several insurance programs and other forms of assistance.¹⁰⁰ Grants are also available to veterans who have service-connected disabilities to help them purchase or build an adapted dwelling, or modify an existing home that meets the veteran's needs.¹⁰¹ Education programs include the Montgomery GI Bill and the Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP) for Reserve and National Guard troops activated during OEF/OIF¹⁰²
 - VBA's **Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) VetSuccess** program provides vocational and education opportunities to eligible veterans, service members, reservists, survivors and dependents to help them achieve their educational or vocational goals. It also offers services to help veterans who have service-connected disabilities that are too significant to immediately enter the workforce to live as independently as possible. The basic period of eligibility in which VR&E VetSuccess services may be used is up to 12 years after a veteran's date of separation from the military or the date upon which the veteran was first notified of a service-connected disability rating — whichever is later.

Active-duty service members are eligible for services if they expect to receive an honorable discharge upon separation from active duty, obtain a memorandum rating of at least 20 percent from the VA and apply for VR&E services. Veterans, except those who have been dishonorably discharged, are eligible if they have a service-connected disability rating of at least 10 percent, or a VA memorandum rating of at least 20 percent or more.

Veterans who have less than a 10 percent service-connected disability rating or those who have exceeded the 12-year basic eligibility period may establish an "Entitlement Determination" to receive services. To do so, a vocational rehabilitation counselor (VRC) must determine that the veteran has a "serious employment handicap" — an impairment that is substantially the result of a service-connected disability and affects the veteran's ability to prepare for, obtain or retain employment that matches his

⁹⁹ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Fact Sheet: VA services for veterans involved in the justice system: The Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Initiative. November 2009. Accessed May 17, 2011, from www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/VJO/vjofactsheet.doc.

¹⁰⁰ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. 2010 Organizational Briefing Book. Accessed May 3, 2011, from www.va.gov/ofcadmin/docs/vaorgbb.pdf.

¹⁰¹ Department of Veterans Affairs. Fiscal Year 2009 Performance and Accountability Report. November 17, 2008. Accessed October 8, 2009.

¹⁰² Ibid.

or her abilities, aptitudes and interests. Once entitlement determination has been established, the veteran and VRC work together to determine transferable skills, aptitudes and interests; identify viable employment and/or independent living services options; consider suitable employment goals and training resources needed; and develop and implement a rehabilitation plan that outlines short- and long-term goals, identifies available resources and supports (from VA or elsewhere) and a strategy for achieving the veteran's employment or independent living goals.

- Spouses and children of killed service members or veterans with service-connected disabilities may also be eligible for the ***Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA)***, which is administered by the Health Administration Center.

In May 2011, the VA implemented the Family Caregiver Program of the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010. The 111th Congress passed the act to provide additional support to eligible veterans who served after September 11, 2001, and who elected to receive their care in a home setting from a primary family caregiver.¹⁰³ These services are part of a package of new services that also include a monthly stipend, mental health support and access to medical care under CHAMPVA, if the primary family caregiver is not entitled to care or services under a health plan contract.¹⁰⁴ Veterans may designate a primary caregiver and a secondary caregiver by downloading the program's application at www.caregiver.va.gov.¹⁰⁵

Under the act, caregivers for veterans of all eras are eligible for respite care, caregiver education and training, in-home and community-based care, caregiver support groups and services. Family caregivers may seek assistance from caregiver support coordinators who are located at all VA medical centers. These professionals help with identifying benefits and services for which family caregivers may be eligible, including information about the availability of other support services from local public, private and nonprofit agencies.¹⁰⁶

VA's Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program is offered annually (as funding permits) by the VA's Health Care for Homeless Veterans (HCHV) Programs to fund community agencies providing

¹⁰³ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. VA to Take Applications for New Family Caregiver Program: VA Implementing Enhancements to Existing Services for Veterans and Their Caregivers. News Release. May 3, 2011. Accessed May 16, 2011, from www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2088.

¹⁰⁴ Easter Seals. Easter Seals Announces Partnership with VA For Family Caregiver Training. News Release. May 9, 2011. Accessed May 16, 2011, from http://gwbr.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=DCMD_partneringwithVA.

¹⁰⁵ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. VA to Take Applications for New Family Caregiver Program: VA Implementing Enhancements to Existing Services for Veterans and Their Caregivers. News Release. May 3, 2011. Accessed May 16, 2011, from www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2088.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

services to homeless veterans. The purpose is to promote the development and provision of supportive housing and/or supportive services with the goal of helping homeless veterans achieve residential stability, increase their skill levels and/or income and obtain greater self-determination.¹⁰⁷

Only programs with supportive housing (up to 24 months) or service centers offering services such as case management, education, crisis intervention, counseling, services targeted towards specialized populations including homeless women veterans are eligible for these funds. The program has two levels of funding: the Grant Component and the Per Diem Component.¹⁰⁸

The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD)

The DOD's resources that are available to help military service members vary depending upon the military branch in which individuals serve. Resources include the DOD's Official Transition Assistance Program website (TurboTAP), the Army and Navy Credentialing Opportunities Online (COOL) websites, the United Services Military Apprenticeship Program, the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), and the DOD Verification of Military Experience and Training (VMET) document.

1. **TurboTAP:** Among the many features of the TurboTAP website is a Pre-Separation Guide for Active Component Service Members, a Transition Guide for the Guard and Reserves, and an Employer Hub. Both guides provide a wealth of information on employment assistance and credentialing programs. They also link directly to Army and Navy COOL, the O*NET, the Occupational Outlook Handbook and other resources relating to licensure and certification.¹⁰⁹
2. **Licensure and Certification Assistance:** Recognizing that civilian employers are more likely to hire people who have recognizable credentials and licenses, the DOD and various military branches have developed licensure and certification resources to assist military service members who are preparing to separate from the military.
 - The Army and Navy Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL) websites (<https://www.cool.army.mil> and <https://www.cool.navy.mil>) help military service members translate their military training and work experience to the civilian workforce. The sites provide information about how Army and Navy service members can relate their military occupational specialties (MOS) and ratings to civilian certification and

¹⁰⁷ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Grant and Per Diem Program. Accessed May 27, 2011, from www.va.gov/homeless/GPD.asp.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Campbell, John R., Deputy Undersecretary of Defense (Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy), U.S. Department of Defense. Statement presented to the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. July 29, 2010. Accessed May 18, 2011, from <http://democrats.veterans.house.gov/hearings/Testimony.aspx?TID=72358&Newsid=609&Name=%20John%20R.%20Campbell>.

licensure requirements. The site also provides information about obtaining civilian credentials and resources that will help to pay licensure and certification fees.¹¹⁰

- The Air Force's licensure and certification efforts focus on career-related degrees and certification from civilian schools. Airmen (enlisted only) may seek to obtain a degree from the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF). CCAF confers associate degrees in each enlisted member's career field. These degrees are equivalent to the civilian terminal associate degrees for trade certification.¹¹¹
 - The Marine Corps uses a variety of resources, including DOL's America's Career InfoNet website, Army and Navy COOL websites, the United Services Military Apprenticeship Program, the Occupational Information Network O*NET, DANTES and TurboTAP. In addition, Marine Corps Transition Assistance Management Program (TAMP) personnel are certified workforce development professionals who help Marines identify skills obtained in the military and determine how they may be applied in civilian jobs.¹¹²
3. **Operation Warfighter (OWF):** OWF is a DOD-sponsored internship program that places recuperating wounded, ill and injured service members in supportive work settings that benefit the recuperation process while facilitating their transition back to duty or into the civilian workforce. In addition, OWF provides an opportunity for transitioning service members to expand their résumés, explore employment interests, develop job skills, benefit from both formal and on-the-job training opportunities, and gain valuable federal government work experience that will help prepare them for the future.¹¹³
 4. **The Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI):** VEI, created by Executive Order 13518, aims to increase the number of veterans in the federal government. The order established an interagency Council on Veterans Employment that advises the President and the Director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management on the initiative. The Council serves as a national forum for promoting veterans' employment opportunities in the executive branch and develops performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the VEI. Agencies covered by the VEI have established Veterans Employment Program Offices or designated a full-time staff person dedicated to providing employment services to veterans.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

5. **Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES):** The DANTES mission is to support the off-duty, voluntary education programs of the DOD and to conduct special projects and development activities in support of education-related functions of the DOD. It supports the education management functions of the secretary of defense and the military services, and provides traditional and non-traditional education programs.¹¹⁵
6. **Military Spouse Employment Partnership:** The Military Spouse Employment Partnership is designed to help military spouses access career resources and connect with corporations who are ready to help spouses explore career options for their mobile lifestyles.

The partnership helps spouses to access services such as career and education counseling, career coaching, job search assistance, support for drafting and formatting resumes, and financial assistance referrals. In addition, the partnership has already partnered with numerous Fortune 500 PLUS companies ("Plus" refers to smaller community-based, local companies), working to aid military spouses in finding and identifying portable jobs at great businesses, as well as reduce the wage gap between military and civilian spouses. Spouses should go to www.msepjobs.com to get started.¹¹⁶

7. **TRICARE:** Formerly the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS), TRICARE offers civilian health care benefits to military personnel, retired military personnel and their dependents.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL)

Veterans and families who do not qualify for VA benefits are among those who often turn to federal workforce programs, authorized by WIA and administered by the DOL, for employment services and job training. The DOL's Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) also operates several programs authorized by the Jobs for Veterans Act and aims to support veterans, including veterans who have disabilities or injuries, who seek employment. Job-ready veterans with disabilities who have completed a VA Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program are also referred to VETS.¹¹⁷

1. **Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program** — In addition to giving veterans and eligible spouses priority for services from the workforce delivery system, the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002 authorizes VETS to make

¹¹⁵ Illinois National Guard Education Office. Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support. Accessed May 19, 2011, from www.il.ngb.army.mil/departments/milpo/education/dantes.html.

¹¹⁶ OurMilitary.Mil: Connecting you with your military. "Employment Resources for Our Military Community." Accessed September 28 from <http://www.ourmilitary.mil/hot-topic/employment-resources-for-our-military-community/>

¹¹⁷ 34th Institute on Rehabilitation Issues. When Johnny (or Jeannie) Comes Marching Home . . . and Back to Work: Linking Veterans Affairs and State Vocational Rehabilitation Services for Service Men and Women. 2009. Accessed September 22, 2011, from <http://iriforum.org/download/34IRI.pdf>.

grants available to state workforce agencies based on their state's direct proportion of veterans seeking employment.

VETS offers employment and training services through non-competitive Jobs for Veterans State Grants Programs.¹¹⁸ Resources are allocated to states to support **Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP)** specialists and **Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVERs)** to maximize employment and training opportunities for veterans.

DVOP specialists provide a range of services to meet the employment needs of eligible veterans, including those who have disabilities, or economic or educational disadvantages. DVOP specialists also promote the hiring of veterans through direct marketing and outreach activities with employers. They may be located within the one-stop career centers or co-located with other service providers such as the VA.¹¹⁹

LVER staff have been providing employment services to veterans since the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (the GI Bill) was passed in 1944. LVER staff are located in service delivery points, including one-stop career centers. They are responsible for developing relationships with local employers to increase employment opportunities for veterans; providing employment, training and placement services to veterans under the applicable state employment service delivery system; providing seminars for employers; and conducting job search workshops and establishing job search groups for job-seeking veterans.¹²⁰

- 2. The Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP)** — Administered by VETS, HVRP is the nation's only homeless veteran program that focuses on employment rather than more immediate needs. HVRP provides veterans with the services necessary to re-enter the labor force.¹²¹ Competitive grants are awarded to eligible applicants — which include state and local workforce investment boards, public agencies, for-profit or commercial entities, and faith-based or community-based nonprofit organizations — to provide a range of services, including job placement, training, job development, career counseling and résumé preparation, that directly help veterans who are homeless. The program also promotes partnerships with local organizations that provide supportive services such as the provision of clothing,

¹¹⁸ U.S. Department of Labor. VETS Employment Services Fact Sheet. September 22, 2011, from www.dol.gov/vets/programs/empserv/employment_services_fs.htm

¹¹⁹ U.S. Department of Labor. Veterans Employment and Training Service. *Annual Report to Congress: Fiscal Year 2008*. Accessed October 9, 2009, from www.dol.gov/VETS/media/FY2008_Annual_Report_To_Congress.pdf.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. HVRP Background. Accessed October 9, 2009, from www.nchv.org/hvrp_background.cfm.

housing referrals (temporary, transitional and permanent), referral to medical and substance abuse treatment, and transportation assistance.¹²²

HVRP also helps veterans who are homeless get and retain jobs. This is achieved by leveraging many linkages and coordinating with various veterans' services programs and organizations such as the DVOP and LVER stationed in the local employment service offices of state workforce agencies, workforce investment boards, one-stop career centers, the Veterans' Workforce Investment Program, the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and VA, HUD and Health and Human Services.¹²³

In the past, the DOL awarded grants to organizations serving homeless female veterans and veterans with families.^{124 125} On October 13, 2010, the Veterans Benefit Act of 2010 was enacted and authorized new funds, up to \$1 million per year in FY 2011 through FY 2015, to support the Homeless Women Veterans and Homeless Veterans with Children Reintegration Grant Program to be administered by the DOL. While authorized, Congress has not yet appropriated funding for this new program. When funded, the act will provide women veterans and veterans with children with job training, counseling, placement services (including job readiness, and literacy and skills training) and child care services.¹²⁶

- 3. The Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP)** — Authorized under WIA and administered by the DOL's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training, VWIP funding is derived as a percentage of the total annual WIA authorization. Most of the appropriated funds are used to support two-year grants awarded to eligible entities including state and local governments and private, nonprofit organizations including community-based and faith-based organizations.

These programs can provide formal classroom or on-the-job training, retraining, job placement assistance and a number of support services. Grantees may choose to supplement the core training by offering other services that also enhance the employability of participants. These programs complement services

¹²² U.S. Department of Labor. Veterans Employment and Training Service. VETS HVRP Fact Sheet 4. Accessed October 9, 2009. from www.dol.gov/vets/programs/hvrp/homeless_veterans_fs.htm.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ U.S. Department of Labor. U.S. Labor Department announces more than \$5 million in grants to organizations serving homeless female veterans and veterans with families. News Release. June 30, 2010. Accessed June 9, 2011, from www.dol.gov/opa/media/press/vets/VETS20100917.htm.

¹²⁵ U.S. Department of Labor. Veterans' Employment and Training Service Solicitation for Grant Applications (SGA #10-03/PY 2010). Urban and Non-Urban Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP) Homeless Female Veterans and Homeless Veterans with Families Grants For Program Year (PY) 2010, July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011. April 22, 2010. Accessed June 11, 2011, from www.dol.gov/vets/grants/2010/HVRP%20Homeless%20Female%20Vets%20SGA.pdf.

¹²⁶ U.S. Government Printing Office. Veterans Benefit Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-275). Accessed May 16, 2011, from www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ275/pdf/PLAW-111publ275.pdf.

generally provided by states through mainstream workforce program operators under WIA's Title I and the Wagner-Peyser Act.

Veterans may also be eligible for services under other WIA programs, which assist economically disadvantaged or dislocated workers with employment, training and other workforce development services. VWIP allows for specialized employment, training and educational resources to be tailored to meet the needs of the specific target populations of veterans served. In many programs, minority, female, economically disadvantaged, homeless and/or veterans with disabilities can be targeted to receive these specialized resources.¹²⁷

4. **The Recovery and Employment Assistance Lifelines (REALifelines)** — This program provides services to help injured service members and veterans who served in OEF/OIF to transition into employment. REALifelines is a new program sponsored by the DOL, military medical transition centers and career workforce agencies located in hometowns across the country. The program seeks to link service members with local professionals in their hometown communities to support their economic recovery and re-employment through a range of services. As part of the program, wounded and injured service members and their spouses are eligible for services offered at more than 3,500 one-stop career centers across the country.¹²⁸

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

The HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program combines Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental assistance for homeless veterans with case management and VA clinical services. These services are provided at VA medical centers (VAMCs) and community-based outreach clinics. There is at least one site in each of the 50 states and in the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. HUD has awarded funding for approximately 10,000 HUD-VASH vouchers each year in 2008, 2009 and 2010.¹²⁹

The U.S. Department of Education

Data from the Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) indicate that state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies served more than 63,000 veterans between 2006 and 2010 with overall successful employment rates of approximately 50 percent.¹³⁰ VR, administered by the Department of Education's

¹²⁷ U.S. Department of Labor. Vets Fact Sheet No. 5: Veterans Workforce Investment Program (VWIP). November 29, 2002. Accessed August 26, 2010, from www.dol.gov/vets/programs/fact/vwip_fs05.htm.

¹²⁸ U.S. Department of Labor. REALifelines Overview. Accessed January 15, 2010, from www.dol.gov/vets/REALifelines/RLL_OverviewBrochure.pdf

¹²⁹ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. HUD VASH Vouchers: Overview. Accessed May 27, 2011, from http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/vash.

¹³⁰ U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration. RSA-911 Data: Veterans Compared to All Individuals FY 2006 through FY 2010.

Vocational Rehabilitation Agency, is available to all people with disabilities, including veterans. Many, but not all, veterans are eligible to receive VR services through the Veterans Administrations' Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service. For example, veterans who have service-connected disabilities that are less than 20 percent are not eligible to receive VR through the VA; however, these veterans may be eligible to receive VR services through their state vocational rehabilitation agency.

People who have physical or mental impairments that result in a substantial impediment to holding a job and who can benefit from VR services for employment are eligible. In recent years, inadequate funding for vocational rehabilitation has forced many states to operate under "Orders of Selection," a provision which requires state VR agencies to prioritize the provision of services to eligible people based on the significance of people's disabilities. In 2009, 40 of the 80 state and territorial VR agencies operated under an order of selection.¹³¹ In these areas, veterans with disabilities, regardless of whether those disabilities are service-connected or not, may be denied services despite their eligibility.

VR agencies provide a wide range of services. Following assessment, VR staff work with clients to develop Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs), which identify employment goals and the VR services to help clients achieve their goals. Many VR agencies have memoranda of understanding with their state department of veterans affairs to coordinate services to veterans with disabilities. Some state agencies have identified counselors with military backgrounds to serve as liaisons with the VA and veterans groups. In addition, the VA is increasingly engaged with state VR agencies in outreach to the business community to promote veterans with disabilities as a valuable talent pool.

Clients are given the autonomy to determine their goals and the VR services they believe necessary. Clients' IPEs are reviewed by staff and clients annually and updated as needed. In general, clients continue working with their VR agencies until their cases are closed. Cases are not closed until all of the following occurs: 1) employment outcomes outlined in the IPE have been achieved; 2) employment has been maintained for at least 90 days, and the VR counselor and client agree that the outcome is satisfactory; and 3) clients are informed by the VR agency that post-employment services are available.¹³²

The United Services Military Apprenticeship Program

The United Service Military Apprenticeship Program is an apprenticeship program registered with the DOL's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training and managed by the Chief of Naval Education and Training (CNET).¹³³

¹³¹ Moulta-Ali, Umar. Vocational Rehabilitation Grants to States and Territories: Overview and Analysis of the Allotment Formula. Congressional Research Service. January 13, 2011.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Lifelong Learning Program. Accessed May 18, 2011, from www.ala.usmc.mil/mccs/edu/voluntary.asp.

People serving in the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard may earn national certification as journey workers in specific trade-related jobs — such as mechanics, electricians and carpenters — by logging their work and training hours to create a record of experience. With enough work and training hours, they can earn certificates of completion for the apprenticeship program from the DOL.¹³⁴ The program's major purpose is to document service members' training and skills learned while performing their military jobs. Completion of the program can qualify members for employment in a recognized civilian trade once they complete their military service.

The AbilityOne Program

AbilityOne is a federal initiative that leverages the U.S. government's purchasing power to increase employment opportunities for people who are blind or have significant disabilities. Administered by the Committee for Purchase from People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, the program's network of 600 nonprofit agencies who produce products and provide services for the federal government represents the largest single source of employment for people who are blind or have other significant disabilities throughout the country.

Out of 48,000 employees, the program currently employs more than 3,300 veterans, including 1,700 veterans with disabilities. The program offers career transition support, exploration and development for veterans in transition along with grants to prepare these veterans for management opportunities.

In 2003, VA's Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) Program signed a memorandum of understanding with the AbilityOne Program. The MOU makes the AbilityOne Program the referral conduit between VA CWT and the AbilityOne nonprofit agencies. Approximately 2,100 veterans with disabilities have been employed since the partnership's inception. The partnership agreement promotes local relationships between the nonprofit agencies and VA CWT offices, and allows the VA to pre-screen veterans to match AbilityOne job requirements and refer qualified significantly disabled veterans to participate in AbilityOne job coaching programs.

Social Security Work Incentives Programs

According to the U.S. Social Security Administration (SSA), roughly one-fifth of the adults receiving Social Security benefits are military veterans. Of the 9.3 million veterans who receive Social Security benefits, 771,000 are under the age of 66 and receive disability benefits.¹³⁵ Of the disabled veteran Social Security beneficiaries, 2.9 percent are younger than age 40 and 15.4 percent are younger than age 50. Almost 61 percent of disabled veterans younger than age 66 served in Vietnam and another 27.7 percent served during the period of May 1975 through July 1990. SSA created the Disability Benefits for Wounded Warriors after September 11, 2001 — which expedites the processing of Social Security disability claims or appeals of denied claims for military service members who

134 Bertoch, S., & Ruff, E. (n.d.). War: The Impact and Implications of Public Policy and Advocacy for the Career Development of Veterans. Accessed March 29, 2009, from www.career.fsu.edu/documents/NCDA_2008/1-11.doc

133 Olsen, Anya, and O'Leary, Samantha. Social Security Administration. Office of Retirement Policy. Social Security Bulletin Vol. 71. No. 2. Military Benefits and Social Security. Accessed May 24, 2011, from www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/ssb/v71n2/v71n2p1.html.

acquired their disabilities while on active duty on or after October 1, 2001.¹³⁶ Yet, veterans with disabilities who served in September 2001 or later account for just 3 percent of the Social Security disabled veteran population.¹³⁷

Veterans who receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits are eligible to participate in SSA's Ticket to Work program. SSDI recipients receive "tickets" to work with service providers, called employment networks, to help them reach their employment goals. Social Security compensates employment networks for up to 60 months for every month that a ticket-holder is employed at a certain wage level.

Despite SSA's work incentives, veterans who attempt to return to work while receiving SSDI face a "cash cliff" — a great source of stress because benefits may be reduced as the worker earns wages. Veterans receiving SSDI benefits may work for a nine-month trial period without risking a reduction of SSDI benefits. For the 36 months following the nine-month trial period, monthly SSDI benefits are withheld for any months in which SSDI beneficiaries' earnings exceed SSA's "substantial gainful activity" level. Medicare benefits are retained for 93 months. Once the 36-month extended period of eligibility ends, individuals must reapply for SSDI if they become unemployed. If they become unemployed within 60 months after their SSDI benefits have terminated, they may return to SSDI by using SSA's expedited re-entry process and avoid reapplying for benefits. Those who become unemployed 60 months or longer since receiving their last SSDI benefit must reapply for benefits.¹³⁸ Veterans who receive benefits from both SSDI and VA pensions face an additional disincentive to work since their VA pension benefits are offset, dollar for dollar, by any earnings.¹³⁹

The Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC)

The WOTC provides eligible employers up to \$4,800 for each hire of a qualified person who represents one of WOTC's target populations, including veterans with disabilities, depending on the number of hours worked by the employee in the designated period.

Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs)

Numerous VSOs have been established to represent the interests of their members, including veterans and their family members, and to help them access benefits and services. Examples include AMVETS, the American Legion, Military Order of the Purple Heart of the USA, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW) and United Service Organizations (USO). (See Appendix 1 for a list of VSOs.)

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Daley, Richard. Associate Legislation Director for Paralyzed Veterans of America. Statement Before the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. April 15, 2010. Accessed May 24, 2011, from http://democrats.veterans.house.gov/hearings/Testimony_Print.aspx?newsid=563&Name=_Richard__Daley.

¹³⁹ Ansley, Heather L. Esq. MSW, Co-chair, Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Veterans Task Force. Testimony before the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives. May 24, 2011.

Hiring Preferences for Federal Employment

There are a number of programs that give hiring preference to veterans, military spouses and family members when they apply for federal jobs. For example, in 2008, the VA established the Veterans Employment Coordination Service in the Office of Human Resources Management to attract, recruit and assist in the hiring of veterans into VA, particularly the most severely injured service members returning from OEF/OIF. It provides a host of hands-on services to assist those seeking employment in the VA; helps them avoid many of the common mistakes applicants make when applying for federal employment; helps veterans to measure existing competencies by assessing military occupational qualifications, skills and experience; and provides coaching, case management and one-on-one peer counseling to assist them in adjusting to their new work environment.¹⁴⁰

Veterans Preference and Veterans Recruitment Appointments are other employment programs emphasizing civil service or government jobs for veterans. As the name suggests, Veterans Preference gives qualified, honorably discharged veterans preferred consideration for federal jobs over non-veterans. Veterans Recruitment Appointments allow federal agencies to appoint a qualified, eligible veteran without competition.¹⁴¹

On September 11, 2009, a final rule went into effect that implemented Executive Order 13473, which authorized and established a noncompetitive hiring authority for spouses of certain members of the armed services to positions in the civil service. The intended effect of this rule is to facilitate the entry of military spouses into the federal civil service as part of an effort to recruit and retain skilled and experienced members of the armed forces, and to recognize and honor the service of members injured, disabled or killed in connection with their service.¹⁴²

The National Resource Directory (NRD)

This partnership among DOD, DOL and VA provides information about services and resources at the national, state and local levels that support recovery, rehabilitation and community reintegration.¹⁴³ The NRD is a tool for transitioning service members who seek information about education training and employment opportunities. The directory features hundreds of resources on job training, scholarships, tuition assistance programs, internships, apprenticeships, licensing and certification, the GI Bill and the Yellow Ribbon Program.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Brown, Robin. "Regional recruiters help disabled veterans find Veteran Affairs jobs." *The Signal*. May 13, 2009. Accessed October 7, 2009, from www.army.mil/-news/2009/05/13/21046-regional-recruiters-help-disabled-veterans-find-veteran-affairs-jobs/.

¹⁴¹ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Hiring Programs and Incentives. Accessed May 5, 2011, from www.va.gov/jobs/hiring_programs.asp#7.

¹⁴² U.S. Federal Register. Vol. 74, No. 154. August 12, 2009. Accessed May 5, 2011, from <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2009/pdf/E9-19340.pdf>.

¹⁴³ National Resource Directory. Accessed May 19, 2011, from www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov.

¹⁴⁴ Campbell, John R., Deputy Undersecretary of Defense (Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy), U.S. Department of Defense. Statement presented to the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity. July 29, 2010. Accessed May 18, 2011, from <http://democrats.veterans.house.gov/hearings/Testimony.aspx?TID=72358&Newsid=609&Name=%20John%20R.%20Campbell>

Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program

The Yellow Ribbon GI Education Enhancement Program is a provision of the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008. This program allows degree-granting institutions of higher learning in the United States to voluntarily enter into an agreement with the VA to fund tuition expenses that exceed the highest public in-state undergraduate tuition rates. The institution can contribute up to 50 percent of those expenses, and the VA will match the same amount as the institution.¹⁴⁵

Credit for Life Experience Programs

Many colleges and universities offer programs that allow participants to demonstrate, through assessment, what they have learned from relevant real-life experiences in order to apply their life experiences, including military experience, toward earning college credits and even degrees in some cases.¹⁴⁶

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC)

Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) was created in 1972 to provide educational opportunities to service members who experience trouble completing college degrees because they relocated frequently. SOC functions in cooperation with 15 higher education associations, the DOD and Active and Reserve Components of the Military Services to expand and improve voluntary postsecondary education opportunities for service members worldwide. SOC is funded by the DOD through a contract with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. The contract is managed for DOD by DANTES.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Yellow Ribbon Program. Accessed May 19, 2011, from www.gibill.va.gov/gi_bill_info/ch33/yellow_ribbon.htm.

¹⁴⁶ Hoover, Eric. "Where Life Earns Credit: 'Prior Learning' Gets a Fresh Assessment." *The Chronicle for Higher Education*. March 14, 2010. Accessed May 19, 2011, from <http://chronicle.com/article/Where-Life-Earns-Credit-/64618>.

¹⁴⁷ Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges. Accessed May 19, 2011, from www.soc.aascu.org.

My Story: Brian Addison

I spent over 10 years in the U.S. Army as a military policeman. Several deployments made me face difficult situations, but didn't prepare me for the civilian world and the challenges I would face there.

When I left the military in 2001, I had several jobs in the restaurant field but was unable to maintain any of those jobs for a significant period of time. I began using drugs and alcohol to deal with my mental issues and to cover up feelings of doubt, displacement and anger.

I began college and graduated from Columbus State University in August 2007. Upon graduating, I immediately entered law school. I left there in April 2008 with two babies and a new wife. Things began to spiral downward. I was unemployable, defeated and unable to do pretty much anything.

When I came to Goodwill Industries of the Southern Rivers, the counselors related to me on a personal level. They began to show me how to do new things like dealing with people and learning new work skills.

Upon graduating from the Goodwill program, I began working on my résumé and was referred to a job at an independent living facility. I aced the interview and began a part-time job in an accounts payable position. After being there one month, my boss called me into the office and offered me a full-time position as an occupancy specialist. The job was extremely difficult — I had to learn a new job and skills set — but Goodwill had given me the basic tools to succeed and be open to different ideas and ways of learning things.



My Story: Cheryl Godwin

I received my bachelor's degree in business management in 1991 from North Carolina State University. Since I had already been working part time for a company, I was given a full-time position after receiving my degree. I continued to work there for 18 years and I was promoted multiple times.

My husband, Major Dale Godwin, was activated for duty in 2006 with the U.S. Army National Guard. We then made the decision that I would resign from my corporate position to spend that time nurturing our two teenage children.

Our son just recently graduated from college, and he'll be starting his new career. Our daughter has just completed her first year of college. Now that we had crossed those major hurdles in our lives, it was time for me to get back into the workforce, contribute to our family and my individual financial goals. There was one obstacle, though — I've never had to search for a job.

One day at work, my husband was given information about Goodwill's Operation Independence program, and he told me about it. I have truly been in awe of the services they provide for free to assist job seekers with résumé writing, computer training, skill training and support. I have prepared my résumé, I've been given job leads to research and apply for, and I am currently taking the Microsoft computer training package.

When I come to the Goodwill Industries of the Southern Piedmont training center, I see so many people who once had a dim outlook on their jobless situation. Now, they have hope and confidence that they will be empowered with skills and resources that will lead to employment and financial independence. The military and their families make such great sacrifices to maintain freedom and liberty for all, and it is so good to see that this program embraces us and provides us assistance.



Visit www.goodwill.org to read more personal stories from other veterans and their families.

Recommendations

Recommendations for Goodwill Member Agencies

- Learn more about the challenges that military service members, veterans and their families face.
- Be prepared to help veterans translate military terms into language that civilian employers value and understand.
- Consider designing programs that meet the specific needs of military service members, veterans and families in the communities local agencies serve.
- Make hiring veterans and military spouses a priority.
- Hire veterans to staff programs that serve veterans.
- Prepare to self-fund services for military service members, veterans and family members.
- Reach out to local military personnel, veterans service organizations and other community stakeholders to inquire about how they think Goodwill could help them overcome difficult challenges, and be open to unexpected responses.
- Be prepared to leverage partnerships with stakeholders that provide supportive services beyond employment.
- Educate stakeholders about legal employment protections for veterans and military family members.
- Whenever possible, provide services to female veterans in settings that aren't in close proximity to facilities where male veterans are served.
- Develop the capacity to reach out to service members who will soon leave the military and may return to the local community.
- Proactively target outreach efforts to OEF/OIF veterans.
- Provide mentoring opportunities and other supports for children of military service members.
- Offer to pick up unwanted items from military families who are being transferred.

Recommendations for Policymakers

- Enact policies that create a more seamless service delivery system for military service members, veterans and their families.
- Give priority to federal grant applications that demonstrate partnership and coordination among local providers and stakeholders, and a commitment to continuous improvement.
- Enact policies that increase involvement of and collaboration with community-based organizations that have demonstrated expertise in providing services, such as mentoring and job training, that can help many military service members, veterans and their families succeed in the workforce.
- Make the workforce system more accessible and convenient for veterans by including provisions in the WIA that would promote the feasible co-location of one-stop career centers in VA medical centers and other facilities that serve veterans.
- Require the DOL and DOD to jointly develop “crosswalks” for transferable skills from military occupational specialties to civilian jobs, and create certifications for skills acquired in the military that can be transferred for college credit or certification.
- Mandate that separating service members participate in the Transitional Assistance Program and that each separating service member receives an individualized assessment of civilian jobs for which they may qualify.
- Allow military spouses who have lost attachment to the labor market due to military transfer to be eligible for services for dislocated workers.
- Require the DOD to provide official discharge certificates (Form DD-214) to homeless veterans within three weeks of request.
- Prohibit jails and prisons from releasing inmates without identification, including discharge certificates (Form DD-214), driver's licenses, government ID cards and social security cards.
- Build and maintain a comprehensive national and state directory of employment programs for veterans and identify their purpose, the services they offer and how to find them.
- Require the VA, DOD and DOL to establish a secure and centralized database that contains information about all services for which veterans are eligible and all services that they have already received.
- For any veteran requesting services, require the VA to assign a case manager who is aware of all services for which the veteran is eligible and all services that the veteran has already received.
- Require the VA and DOL to collaboratively reach out to veterans to confirm their employment and/or offer services that may help them find jobs or advance in their careers.
- Provide an additional 24 months of vocational rehabilitation and employment services to veterans who have exhausted both these benefits and state-provided unemployment benefits.
- Create additional incentives for the workforce system to deliver services to and achieve positive employment outcomes for populations with disproportionately high unemployment, such as veterans who are younger than 24.

Conclusion

Although most of the 20.1 million veterans in the United States successfully reintegrated into the civilian workforce, too many have become homeless and too many have experienced challenges that make it difficult to experience the dignity and power of work. There are currently 2.2 million veterans who served in the U.S. armed forces since September 11, 2001, with another 1.4 million service members still on active duty. These members are returning home to a stubbornly bleak job market. Although the national unemployment rate has declined slightly from the peak it reached during the recession, unemployment for the nation's youngest veterans (20.9 percent) is more than twice the national average.

Those who serve in the armed forces and their families make enormous personal sacrifices during and after their service to this nation. OEF/OIF veterans and their families endured long and multiple deployments, and many now live with physical and psychological wounds that will affect them for a lifetime. However, the challenges outlined in this paper are but a few of those that military service members, veterans and their families face.

Existing supports and infrastructure are ill-equipped to provide all resources that many returning service members may need and have earned. Concern over the national debt and deficit will likely deter policymakers from allocating additional federal dollars for veteran support. Although additional investments are needed, they are not a panacea nor can they be expected when federal spending is being scrutinized.

Goodwill seeks to expand its capacity to collaborate with stakeholders and contribute its resources and expertise to support efforts to help military service members, veterans and their families overcome the challenges they may face as a result of their service.



Appendix 1 — List of Veterans Service Organizations ¹⁴⁸

[AMVETS](#): Services include help filing VA claims, a career center and [scholarships](#) for veterans and active military and their children.

[African-American Post Traumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\) Association](#): Provides information on PTSD and assistance with homelessness, self-education, training programs and claims preparation for all veterans with PTSD and/or other military service-related concerns.

[Air Force Sergeants Association](#): Represents the interests of current and former enlisted personnel in the Air Force, Air National Guard, Reserve and their families. It co-sponsors [scholarships](#) for dependents.

[American Defenders of Bataan & Corregidor](#): Brings together WWII veterans who were Japanese prisoners of war and assists the families of those men killed in action or who died in captivity trying to learn more about their loved ones.

[American Ex-Prisoners of War Organization \(AXPOW\)](#): Provides assistance to former prisoners of war and their families with VA benefits claims and finding lost buddies. Also provides information on prison camp descriptions and medical issues.

[American GI Forum of the United States](#): Addresses issues of discrimination and inequalities endured by Hispanic veterans. It serves as an opportunity for civic involvement for the returning veterans with leadership, volunteer opportunities and advocacy.

¹⁴⁸ Except where otherwise cited, this list was obtained from the National Resource Directories list of chartered Veterans Service Organizations. Accessed May 24, 2011, from www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/other_services_and_resources/veterans_service_organizations/chartered_veterans_service_organizations.

[American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.](#): Provides support to surviving mothers and their families and works with veterans and other veteran organizations.

[American Legion](#): Offers a variety of programs that provide financial assistance, career resources and other supports for veterans and their families.

[American Red Cross - Services for Military Members & Families](#): Provides emergency communications that link service members with their families back home, access to financial assistance, counseling, referrals to community resources and assistance to veterans.

[American War Mothers](#): Organization whose members are mothers of children who have served or are serving in the Armed Services during a time of conflict.

[Armed Forces Services Corporation \(AFSC\)](#): Offers service members, veterans and their families personalized service in handling their government benefits, including beneficiary changes on insurance policies, claims representation and more.

[Blinded Veterans Association \(BVA\)](#): Provides resources and service programs, such as [Operation Peer Support](#) and [Field Service Program](#), linking veterans to services, rehabilitation training, job search assistance and other benefits.

[Blue Star Mothers of America, Inc.](#): Provides support for mothers who now have, or have had, children honorably serving in the military.

[Catholic War Veterans of the United States of America](#): Serves the nation's Catholic veterans and those who support them. It works to increase awareness of the needs of the nation's veterans, their widows and children.

[Congressional Medal of Honor Society of the United States](#): Fosters friendship and camaraderie among all holders, protects the name of the medal and individual recipients from exploitation and provides appropriate aid to all persons to whom the medal has been awarded and their families.

[Disabled American Veterans \(DAV\)](#): Provides services and assistance to veterans, including DOD and VA benefits claims, [transportation](#) to and from VA medical facilities, help for homeless veterans and transition back into civilian life.

[Fleet Reserve Association](#): The leading voice of enlisted Sea Service personnel on Capitol Hill, preserves and enhances benefits and quality-of-life programs for members of the Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

[Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.](#): Provides service, support and friendship to the widows and widowers of military personnel who died during active duty or as the result of a service connected cause. Also assists members in understanding and obtaining VA, DOD and other benefits.

[Italian-American War Veterans of the USA](#): Provides support and assistance to veterans and their families. Services include VA benefits claims representation, aid, peer support and more.

[Jewish War Veterans Association \(JWV\)](#): Offers support to current Jewish service members and new veterans. Provides scholarships for descendants of JWV members, veterans' service officers, member life and health insurance coverage, the JWV disaster relief fund, care packages and more.

[Korean War Veterans Association](#): Provides a means of contact and communication among members, promotes the establishment of memorials, and aids needy members and their wives and children and the widows and children of persons who were members at the time of their death.

[Legion of Valor of the United States of America, Inc.](#): Organization of members who are recipients of the Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, Navy Cross and Air Force Cross.

[Marine Corps League](#): Offers programs to current and veteran Marines and their family members, including programs for wounded Marines and scholarship opportunities.

[Military Chaplains Association of the USA](#): A support and advocacy organization dedicated to the religious freedom and spiritual welfare of service members, veterans, their families and their survivors. Also provides financial assistance to seminary students who are currently serving as chaplain candidates in the Air Force, Army or Navy.

[Military Order of the Purple Heart of the USA](#): Provides services and programs for Purple Heart recipients, including assistance with VA benefits claims through 70 offices nationwide, scholarships, automobile donations and more.

[Military Order of the World Wars](#): Provides an opportunity for officers of all of the federal Uniformed Services to unite in a strong program to promote national security, patriotism, good citizenship and service to country. The order is made up of more than 133 chapters across the nation and supports programs including youth leadership and the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC).

[National Amputation Foundation](#): Provides programs and services to help veterans who lost limbs in service to their country. Programs include peer counseling, medical equipment donation and recreational activities.

[National Association for Black Veterans](#): Provides benefits and services covering claims, health care, compensation and pension, education and training and more for minority veterans.

[National Association of County Veterans Service Officers \(NACVSO\)](#): Works with the VA and other veterans organizations to ensure that veterans and their dependents receive the entitlements they deserve. [Find](#) a county service officer in your state.

[National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs](#): Works to secure uniformity, equality, efficiency and effectiveness in providing services to veterans and their families, especially with claims representation.

[National Veterans Legal Services Program \(NVLSP\)](#): Trains, coordinates and mentors volunteer attorneys nationwide to assist veterans with obtaining VA benefits.

[Navy Club of the United States of America \(NCUSA\)](#): Service organization made up of U.S. citizens who have served, or are now serving, in the Navy, Marine Corps, Seabees or Coast Guard. Advocates on military personnel policy, compensations and retirement formulas.

[Navy Mutual Aid Association](#): Provides life insurance and annuity products, assists service members and survivors in securing federal benefits, and provides education on financial security matters.

[Non-Commissioned Officers Association \(NCOA\)](#): Advocates on behalf of current and former enlisted service members and their families. Legislative efforts cover compensation, benefits and quality of life issues. Also offers financial assistance for health care, education and disaster relief and employment assistance.

[Paralyzed Veterans of America \(PVA\)](#): Supports those with spinal cord injuries and disease by advocating for health care, research, education, veterans benefits and rights, accessibility, sports programs and disability rights.

[Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, Inc.](#): Organization of veterans who survived Pearl Harbor. A symbol of America's commitment to preparedness against unprovoked acts of aggression, dedicated to ensuring that this and future generations remember the events of December 7, 1941.

[Polish Legion of American Veterans](#): Dedicates time and effort to ensure that no benefits are denied to those who served their country and advocates for legislation on their behalf.

[Swords to Plowshares](#): Provides national advocacy as well as local emergency shelter, mental health services, residential rehabilitation programs, job referrals, and legal representation to veterans and their families.

[The Retired Enlisted Association \(TREA\)](#): Supports uniformed services enlisted personnel, their families and survivors, including active components, Reserves and National Guard and all retirees, and works to stop the erosion of earned benefits through legislative efforts.

[The United Services Organization \(USO\)](#): Since Franklin Delano Roosevelt established the USO in 1941, it has worked to lift the spirits of America's troops and their families.¹⁴⁹ USO volunteers are able to show their support for and gratitude to military service members by providing them a home away from home while keeping them connected to the families they leave behind.¹⁵⁰ A nonprofit, non-political organization, the USO provides a number of programs to ensure that help is given to those who need it the most: troops serving in combat and wounded warriors and their families, and families of the fallen. For example, the USO's Wounded Warrior Programs provide direct service as well as partnerships with best-in-class organizations. As a result, the USO builds and strengthens its partnerships with existing programs and organizations to maximize the nation's private-sector support for wounded warriors and their families — from the hospital back to their home communities.¹⁵¹

[United Spinal Association](#): Offers the [VetsFirst](#) program, which directly serves the needs of the veteran community through a network of national service officers who provide assistance and representation in claims for VA benefits and services, and legal representation before the U.S. Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims.

[Veterans Assistance Foundation \(VAF\)](#): Operates transitional housing programs for veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Find out about the [Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program](#).

[Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States \(VFW\)](#): Assists veterans with benefits including compensation, pension, health care, vocational rehabilitation and employment, education and training, home loans, life insurance, and dependency and indemnity compensation.

[Veterans of World War I of the USA, Inc.](#): Supports those who served honorably in the Armed Forces of the United States during World War I by providing aid to their surviving families and dependents, and by advocating for legislation and laws benefiting World War I soldiers.

[Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc. \(VVnW\)/Veterans Coalition](#): Serves all veterans and their families with support programs, including a transitional homeless veterans housing and reintegration program, support packages for military serving overseas and for veterans' families, assistance for veterans in trouble with the law, counseling resources and a 24-hour 1-800-VIETNAM phone line.

[Vets4Vets](#): Provides peer support and free retreats for veterans of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

¹⁴⁹ USO. History of USO. Accessed May 24, 2011, from www.uso.org/history.aspx.

¹⁵⁰ USO. About Us: USO. Accessed May 24, 2011, from www.uso.org/about-us.aspx.

¹⁵¹ USO. Programs: The USO Wounded Warrior Programs. Accessed May 24, 2011, from www.uso.org/Programs/Wounded-Warrior/Wounded-Warriors-Programs/Programs.aspx.

[Vietnam Veterans of America](#): Represents Vietnam-era veterans and their families and advocates on veterans' issues, provides VA benefits claims representation and supports the next generation of war veterans. Local service officers are available throughout the country for assistance with VA benefits and other related claims.

[Women's Army Corps \(WAC\) Veterans Association](#): Membership organization for those who have served in the Women's Army Corps, the Auxiliary Corps of the Army, Army Reserves or the Army National Guard. Provides volunteer services to VA and civilian hospitals and nursing homes.

Veterans may use [VA Form 21-22](#) to request a representative from a [veterans service organization](#) to represent them when they apply for VA benefits.

Appendix 2 — Goodwill Veterans' Programs in Action

Goodwill Southern California (Los Angeles)

Goodwill Southern California was selected by the Los Angeles County Workforce Investment Board to implement a veterans pilot program to address the job training needs of the veteran community in Los Angeles County. This new program helps veterans and their families find employment and/or overcome challenges to gaining employment.

Five veterans with service-connected disabilities run the program. They represent all branches of service: Army, Navy, Marines Corps, Air Force, National Guard and Coast Guard.

Each veteran's eligibility for the program is verified through a veteran's certificate of release or a discharge from active duty, Federal Form (DD-214). The objective of the 15-month pilot program is to enroll 140 veterans and place 83 veterans in unsubsidized employment by June 30, 2012. Additionally, more than 5,000 veterans will be served through self-directed programs. As of June 30, 2011, the program had enrolled a total of 36 veterans and had placed 11 veterans in unsubsidized employment.

Ohio Valley Goodwill Industries (Cincinnati, OH)

Ohio Valley Goodwill Industries has administered the Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Project (HVRP) since 1998. Through an HVRP grant, the agency has provided job training and housing assistance to homeless veterans. Since the start of 2008, the HVRP program in Cincinnati has served 861 veterans and has a 90 percent job placement rate. Over the past 10 years, the Goodwill has had an HVRP grant in Northern Kentucky that has provided services to 581 veterans. It also facilitates other programs for homeless veterans, including a Grant Per Diem program that provides on-site transitional housing for vets, a HUD training program, a HUD long-term housing program, and a transitional program for scattered site housing. The latter has served 86 veterans over the past three years. Recently, an Ohio Valley staff member received the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans' "Unsung Hero" award.

Goodwill Industries of the Silicon Valley (San Jose, CA)

Goodwill Industries of the Silicon Valley has received an HVRP grant to serve veterans who are homeless. Services are mostly specialized. Two case managers, an instructor, a peer mentor and the program manager are on staff to address veterans' needs. A focus is on the psychology of getting veterans ready for reintegration and to connect the veteran with partnering agencies to ensure basic needs are met. A clinical psychologist supervises seven interns to provide assessment and counseling. Working relationships are in place with several partners including the VA, which serves as a primary referral source. Some partner services (transportation and housing) are attached to program participation. Approximately 25 percent of placements are within Goodwill in transitional employment/on-the-job training, where they can remain for up to six months. Housing is provided as long as the veteran remains enrolled in the Goodwill program. In 2010, the agency served 270 veterans, a significant increase over the 61 served in 2007.

Goodwill Industries of the Southern Rivers (Columbus, GA)

Goodwill Industries of the Southern Rivers serves veterans through its five career centers and two training centers for individuals with disabilities. In 2010, the career centers served 438 veterans and assisted 60 individuals with employment placement. Through the career centers, veterans and their family members have access to a free computer lab for job searches, a daily updated job board, and a roster of classes for employment preparation and financial education. The Goodwill has served a small number of veterans in the training centers; however, discussions are under way with the VA and the Wounded Warriors Unit at Fort Benning.

MERS/Missouri Goodwill Industries (St. Louis)

Since the 1960s, MERS/Missouri Goodwill Industries has provided vocational services to veterans through its longstanding contract with the Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and has accepted referrals from the St. Louis Veteran Affairs Regional Office (VARO) for vocational rehabilitation and employment services to veterans with disabilities. In addition, the Goodwill provides occupational skills training to veterans in a variety of fields, including office skills and computer use, building maintenance, information technology and culinary arts. MERS/Missouri Goodwill currently contracts with the St. Louis VARO to provide vocational rehabilitation and employment services to Missouri veterans with disabilities.

Goodwill Industries of Houston (TX)

As of early 2011, Goodwill Industries of Houston operated five employment programs for veterans: the Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP), the Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program, the Female Homeless Veterans and Homeless Veterans with Families Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program, the Veterans Workforce Investment Program (funded through DOL VETS), and the Gulf War Veterans Employment and Training Services (funded by the Texas Workforce Commission). Many of the veterans served through these programs face challenges such as homelessness, criminal histories, physical and mental injuries/disabilities, and lack of civilian work history and experience. Partnerships are in place to provide referrals to housing, medical care, substance abuse treatment and other needed services. They have noticed that many of the veterans returning from service have an increased incidence of mental health problems, including PTSD and diagnosed bi-polar disorder. In 2010, Houston served 1,105 veterans.