

MISSION-READY

Strategies and Best Practices for
Recruiting, Retaining and Advancing
Military-Connected Talent

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Foundation




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IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

 **Syracuse University**

**D'Aniello Institute for
Veterans & Military Families**

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A MESSAGE FROM COMCAST

Dear Readers,

As a military spouse and the proud mother of a U.S. Army Soldier, I am honored to introduce the second edition of this invaluable guidebook, a comprehensive resource tailored for human resources and talent acquisition professionals. Expertly crafted by the SHRM Foundation in partnership with IVMF and Comcast NBCUniversal, this guide serves as a testament to our shared commitment to recognizing, understanding, and harnessing the unique talents of the military community.



At Comcast NBCUniversal, our dedication to the military community is deeply rooted in our culture, going back to our founder, World War II U.S. Navy veteran Ralph Roberts. Since 2015, we have proudly welcomed over 21,000 veterans, military spouses, and members of the National Guard and reserve into our family. Their leadership, technical prowess, entrepreneurial spirit, and unwavering dedication are instrumental in driving our success. We recognize and deeply value the diverse skill sets and perspectives they bring to teams across our enterprise, and we are steadfast in our commitment to building a workplace that not only welcomes but celebrates them.

The military community represents a reservoir of talent that, when tapped effectively, can propel organizations to new heights. Recognizing the immense potential of this community, we are proud to have expanded the scope of this guidebook beyond its initial focus on military veterans. In this second edition, you will find resources and tools specifically designed to support all military-connected talent, from military spouses who showcase adaptability and resilience to members of the National Guard and reserve who balance dual responsibilities.

It's worth noting that many of the best practices highlighted in this guide are not new. In fact, many employers already offer benefits that align with the needs of the military community. The challenge often lies in aggregating and tailoring these existing resources to engage with military-connected individuals more efficiently.

I encourage you to immerse yourself in the insights and recommendations this guide offers. Let it inspire you, guide your strategies, and reinforce your commitment to creating an empowering workplace. Together, we can pave the way for a brighter, more inclusive future for military families.

Warmest regards,

Mona Dexter

Mona Dexter
Vice President of Military and Veteran Affairs
Comcast NBCUniversal



A MESSAGE FROM SHRM FOUNDATION

Dear Readers,

On behalf of the SHRM Foundation, we are very excited to share **MISSION-READY: Strategies and Best Practices for Recruiting, Retaining and Advancing Military-Connected Talent** with you. This second edition of our guidebook has been expanded beyond veterans to include all military-connected talent.

We have focused intently on providing an accessible document that HR professionals, talent managers and other organizational leaders can leverage to find and employ top-notch talent from the military community. This is a users' guide, first and foremost. With its actionable checklists and quick reference points tied to each stage of the employment cycle, it advances the larger effort to promote a skills-based mindset across the employer community.

As an organization, the SHRM Foundation is committed to developing tools that deliver on our commitment to advancing inclusive employment practices. Diversity, equity and inclusion has a very deep and broad meaning to us. It involves reaching out to those who have been traditionally neglected in the employment process, no matter the reason, and that includes veterans and military family members.

We firmly believe that approaches that lead to successful employment of military-connected talent can serve as a blueprint for a broad range of underemployed communities and inclusive excellence across the board.



On a personal level, it is an honor to make any contribution that helps employers recruit, employ and advance those who served our nation in uniform and their family members. As the daughter of a veteran and military spouse, and as a granddaughter and cousin of veterans, I understand the tremendous value military-connected talent brings to help employers achieve their missions, so that businesses, people and communities thrive.

We wish you all the best in your efforts to employ those who have served our nation

Sincerely,



Wendi Safstrom
President, SHRM Foundation





ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide provides human resource (HR) professionals, people managers and others invested in successful talent strategies with quick access to the information needed to understand, create, develop and improve organizational processes for successfully employing military-connected talent.

Focused on the Broader Military Community

While the first edition of this guide primarily addressed military veterans, the resources could be applied to the broader military community. Beyond new resources and tools, the second edition explicitly integrates military spouses, student veterans, caregivers, and members of the National Guard and Reserves.

Organized Around the Employment Life Cycle

The information in this guide is organized around each stage of the employment life cycle — from making the business case and preparing organizational resources; to recruiting, hiring and onboarding; to engaging and retaining employees; to promoting employees and further developing talent. At the end of each section, we have provided an easy-to-use checklist you can print out to support your efforts.

STARTING STRONG

Building Your Military-Connected Talent Program

In general, planning an employment initiative for military-connected talent starts with familiarizing yourself with the business case for hiring military-connected employees. The next steps are to customize it to your specific organization and to assess available resources, including time, staff, money and the investment needed to succeed.¹

This guide is designed to help prepare you and your organization for success. It begins with resources and concepts necessary to develop military cultural competence, as one of the first steps in building a successful program is learning about the military-connected community of veterans, military spouses, caregivers, and members of the National Guard and Reserves — including the realities (and common myths) about these groups.

This guide also offers research and resources on making the internal business case for hiring more military-connected employees. The military-connected community represents one of the greatest recruitment opportunities for accessing untapped talent and unique skills. Hiring members of this community can contribute to diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) goals and can demonstrate your organization's commitment to social responsibility and community. This section includes numerous SHRM resources to assist you in articulating the goals and benefits of and the strategy for your military-connected employment initiative.



¹ Haynie, J.M. (2016). [Revisiting the Business Case for Hiring a Veteran: A Strategy for Cultivating Competitive Advantage](#). D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.

Together, these resources walk you through a step-by-step process of understanding your “why” and assessing your organization’s existing and needed resources so you can make military-connected employment practices an integral part of your mission.

Advancing Your DE&I Goals

Employing military-connected talent is a smart move for any organization seeking to advance DE&I initiatives. Having served in the military or being a family member of someone who has served provides diverse experiences and perspectives with a lot to offer your workforce.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) estimates there are roughly 19 million veterans (around 6% of the U.S. population). According to the Department of Defense (DoD), there are an estimated 944,329 spouses of active duty and Reserve and National Guard members, and there are millions more spouses of former military service members.²

Military-connected talent is among the most valuable groups from which to recruit untapped talent. According to the SHRM Foundation and Walmart report [Beneath the Surface: A Unified Approach to Realizing the Value of Untapped Talent](#), these employees demonstrate higher-than-average job performance, and companies with a diverse workforce outperform their less diverse competitors.

Beyond the unique experiences of military service — itself a valuable source of diverse perspectives — veterans and those within the military-connected community are highly diverse in other ways, including when it comes to:³

- ★ **Racial and ethnic diversity.** More than 30% of veterans serving after 1975 are racial or ethnic minorities.
- ★ **Persons with disabilities.** Around 43% of post-9/11 veterans and 27% of Gulf War veterans are estimated to have a service-connected disability.



² <https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2021-demographics-report.pdf>

³ <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/acs-43.pdf>

- ★ **Intersectional identities.** Almost 25% of post-9/11 female veterans are Black, and 12% are Hispanic.
- ★ **Age and experience.** Veterans span all age ranges, and more diversity is reflected in recent generations. For example, three-quarters of post-9/11 female veterans are under 50 years old.

MORE ON DE&I

The Department of Defense recognizes diversity as a key to innovation and is committed to equality across its workforce. To learn more about how diversity in the military is related to the military-connected workforce, check out [Embracing the Value of Veterans in the Workforce](#) and consider attending events like the [SHRM INCLUSION](#) conference to network and develop your military-connected employment strategies.

The Importance of Military Cultural Competence

Put simply, having military cultural competence refers to a person’s ability to bring the right attitudes, knowledge and behaviors to their interactions with military-connected individuals.⁴ While there is no need to be an “expert,” understanding people with military backgrounds does require a basic understanding of military culture.



⁴ Atuel, H. R., & Castro, C. A. (2018). Military cultural competence. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 46(2), 74-82. doi:10.1007/s10615-018-0651-z

UNDERSTANDING MILITARY CULTURE	
CHARACTERISTIC	IMPLICATION
Hierarchical chain-of-command structure	Individuals in the military understand their own roles and responsibilities and know how to use discretionary judgment in those roles, defer and communicate to those with higher ranks, and responsibly lead those below them. The military offers a defined career progression, ongoing workforce development and continuous learning opportunities.
Military-specific norms and values	Language, behaviors, traditions and day-to-day activities of military life are highly specific and are reinforced through training and daily use. Core values include a commitment to the mission, honor, integrity, selflessness, loyalty and respect.
The military identity	Military service is a 24/7 vocation, where service members and their families maintain constant readiness for the unexpected. Military members represent the service even when off duty. Military life offers far fewer opportunities to “turn it off” than civilian life.
Branches and traditions	Although there are common elements, each branch of the service has its own history, traditions and culture. Within each branch, there are a wide range of specialties and unit cultures. There can also be a difference between combat or non-combat roles.

Helping civilians develop military cultural competence requires individuals to examine their:

- ★ **Attitudes.** Fewer people today have military experience than previous generations, and many individuals are informed more by stereotypes than facts. For example, civilians may hold positive or negative biases or assumptions about who joins the military, their political views and/or stereotyping all veterans as either “broken” or “heroes.”
- ★ **Knowledge.** The best way to overcome stereotypes is to make and show an effort to learn. There are many resources to help civilians in your organization (including HR professionals as well as employees who may work with military-connected talent) demystify military life and better understand both the sacrifices and strengths of being military-connected. When in doubt, it is always better to ask than to assume.

★ **Behaviors.** The last step is to translate an open attitude and specific knowledge into the right behaviors. This means learning the “do’s” and “don’ts” of talking about military service and learning to let military-connected individuals lead the way on how they want to be treated and viewed in their post-service lives.

Understanding the Military-Connected Community

Learning about the military-connected community begins with understanding the different groups within the military community. The experiences of military veterans are as diverse as the experiences of those in the country they serve. Important distinctions among military veterans are usually based on the nature of their service. Veterans may have enlisted (requiring a high school diploma or GED) or may have been an officer (usually requiring a bachelor’s degree or additional training). They usually serve in one but sometimes more than one service branch, which includes the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard or Space Force. The military has a complex variety of specialties, including combat, logistics, maintenance, training and education, administration, and health care — to name just a few.



GET SMART ON DIVERSITY

Military veterans of any type add diverse perspectives to your workforce, and significant racial and ethnic diversity exists within the military community. Learn more about the experiences of military families of color transitioning from active duty to post-service employment and education by exploring the [Blue Star Families Campaign for Inclusion](#). This collaboration with the D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families provides data-supported recommendations for employers to break down silos between veteran and diversity initiatives in your company.

Some veterans have served just a few years, while others may be retiring from a military career of 20 or more years. The roughly 10 million veterans of working age (under 65) in the U.S. today served during the post-Vietnam period (1975-1990), the Gulf War period (1990-2001) and/or the post-9/11 period (2001-2021). Recent changes in military service during these periods include increasing proportions of women as well as racial and ethnic minorities. Due to a variety of factors, including advances in equipment, medical care and the nature of the conflict, there are more post-9/11 veterans with service-connected disabilities than from earlier periods.⁵

MILITARY SPOUSES

Military spouses, overwhelmingly women, support their service members and are critical contributors to national security goals because they provide vital support for the military's mission. Military spouses tend to be well educated, are frequently civically engaged and often have employment experience in a variety of workplace settings. However, military life can negatively impact their career paths. Frequent relocations, unexpected deployments of household members and other challenges, such as living overseas or in remote locations, can present spouses with unique employment barriers. This leads to much higher unemployment rates, non-linear career progressions, positions that are discontinuous or unrelated to one another, and resumes that may include employment gaps. Employers that recognize these challenges and take the time to tap into this underrecognized talent pool are regularly rewarded with highly skilled, motivated and capable employees.



GET TO KNOW MILITARY SPOUSES

The challenges faced by military spouses, as well as the many recent opportunities and initiatives that have emerged to support military spouse employment, can be better understood by reading [Should Military Spouses Have to Sacrifice Their Careers?](#)

⁵ <https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2020/demo/acs-43.pdf>

CAREGIVERS

Military caregivers are those who care for a wounded, injured or ill veteran or service member, as well as people in military families who care for others like a special-needs child or an aging parent. Their connection to the military creates unique circumstances, whether it is caring for a service member with injuries or trauma, caring for others while a service member partner is deployed and/or having to frequently rebuild personal support networks after relocating. Since many military caregivers are also military spouses, they have many of the same strengths that other military spouses have as potential employees. They simply require increased flexibility, understanding and support to be able to balance their personal and professional activities.



GET TO KNOW CAREGIVERS

Military caregivers represent a unique community, and organizations like the [Elizabeth Dole Foundation](#) and the [Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers](#) work specifically with military caregivers and advocate for their support in communities across the country. You can also learn more about the experiences and challenges of military-connected caregivers by reading [Caregiving in Military Families](#), a report by Blue Star Families and the D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families, or by reading the personal stories of military caregivers across the country collected by the Elizabeth Dole Foundation’s [Hidden Heroes](#) program.

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVES

Members of the National Guard and Reserves remain essential to supporting an all-volunteer military capability, including humanitarian missions and emergency relief. These duties can sometimes be disruptive to work and can require planning ahead on the part of the employee and employer. They live throughout the United States and typically participate in military training that is usually one weekend per month plus a scheduled two-week annual training. Many, but not all, are former active-duty veterans

who continue to serve. National Guard members and Reservists highly value service to their country and communities, and they bring a high level of professionalism and responsibility to their civilian work — not to mention advanced skills or education resulting from their military service.

MORE ON THE GUARD AND RESERVES

Employing members of the National Guard or Reserves is not as complicated as many assume, and there are federal resources available to support employers in navigating the process. Visit the [Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve \(ESGR\)](#) program from the DoD for more information.

Diversity Within the Military-Connected Community

The military's emphasis is often on the values of teamwork, selflessness and focus on the mission, rather than on the individual identities of military members. However, the military is in many ways more internally diverse than the U.S. non-military population. The diversity of the military is increasing each year; therefore, the veteran population will naturally create opportunities for employers to add diversity to their workforces. Almost 30% of the 2021 active-duty military force were racial minorities and around 19% were women; among the National Guard and Reserves, almost 27% were racial minorities and 21% were women.⁶



Blue Star Families and the D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University explore racial diversity within the military-connected community in the report [The Diverse Experiences of Military and Veteran Families of Color](#) as part of

⁶ <https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2021-demographics-report.pdf>

Blue Star Families' 2021 Social Impact Research. Some key findings related to veteran and military spouse employment include the following:

- ★ Military and veteran families of color report being more financially stable than civilians of the same racial/ethnic background.
- ★ Veterans of color are better able to find employment and are far more likely to earn a four-year degree than civilians of color.
- ★ Military spouses of color struggle more than other military spouses in terms of employment outcomes and earnings.

The report also suggests ways in which companies can better support military-connected families of color, including:

- ★ Supporting veteran organizations and nonprofits that support and serve military-connected families of color, especially those with strong staff and board representation of military-connected people of color.
- ★ Increasing supplier diversity by engaging veteran and military-connected business owners of color.
- ★ Exploring ways to break down barriers between initiatives within organizations, such as conducting joint events for diversity-focused initiatives and military- or veteran-supporting initiatives.



Beyond the Myths

Few people today know firsthand about veterans or military-connected communities, and this lack of knowledge can lead to the perpetuation of common myths, stereotypes and biases within organizations or among civilian employees. On the next page are a few of the more common myths about military-connected talent and some facts to combat them based on [From WE WILL to AT WILL: A Handbook for Veteran Hiring, Transitioning, and Thriving in the Workplace](#) and [The Force Behind the Force: Training, Leveraging, and Communicating about Military Spouses as Employees](#).

VETERAN MYTHS AND FACTS	
MYTHS	FACTS
<p>MYTH 1: Military skills don't translate to the civilian workforce.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ There are more than 7,000 military job codes, many of which are identical to civilian jobs. ★ Veterans have strong soft skills like leadership, teamwork and initiative. ★ Many transitioning service members qualify for or have existing valid security clearances needed for government contracting, which can save employers time and costs.
<p>MYTH 2: All veterans have served in combat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ The DoD reports that about 85% of jobs in the military do not involve direct combat and include occupations like finance, logistics, administration, broadcasting, human resources, health care and engineering. ★ There are many more veterans who left service prior to 9/11 and did not deploy into active combat zones than those who did, and many post-9/11 veterans also did not deploy.
<p>MYTH 3: All veterans have PTSD, and it makes them unemployable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ While studies have found that around 10% to 20% of post-9/11 combat veterans have PTSD, this rate is much lower across all veterans. ★ Many of those individuals with PTSD or other mental illnesses (veteran or not) have sought treatment and are capable members of the workforce.
<p>MYTH 4: Veterans can only follow orders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ The American military culture stresses individual decision-making, accountability and responsible leadership at all levels. ★ Service members do follow orders, and they also have experience leading others. ★ As service members achieve higher ranks, they learn to lead with initiative and problem-solving skills. ★ Even at lower ranks, completing the mission requires service members to make independent decisions — often in complex, high-pressure situations.

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTHS	FACTS
<p>MYTH: National Guard and Reserve employees have unpredictable schedules.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Typical Guard/Reserve training includes one weekend per month and two weeks in the summer, planned well in advance. ★ Most deployments are also planned in advance, with the exception of natural disasters or emergency deployments — and your support for Guard/Reserve employees during these times can show your organization’s commitment to your community.

MILITARY SPOUSE MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTHS	FACTS
<p>MYTH 1: Military spouses do not want or need to work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Research from Hiring Our Heroes and the D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families found that 84% of military spouses surveyed are working or looking for work. Around 32% are unemployed but seeking work, up from around 22% before the COVID-19 pandemic began.
<p>MYTH 2: Military spouses are not educated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Military spouses tend to be well educated. Hiring Our Heroes and the D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families found that 75% of military spouses surveyed have a bachelor’s degree or higher, 9% have an associate degree, and another 13% have at least some college.
<p>MYTH 3: Military spouses don’t have job experiences, and they have employment gaps because they lack commitment and skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Military spouses often have extensive job experiences, but they may not be consecutive or linear and some experiences may be related to work done in a volunteer capacity. ★ Resume gaps for military spouses might not represent a skills gap; highly qualified spouses may not be able to work for a time due to state certification or licensure requirements and/or international restrictions on employment. ★ Many spouses are actively seeking training, credentialing, certification and/or volunteer work that enhances their skills.
<p>MYTH 4: Military spouses can’t be good employees because they move too frequently.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ While military families do move more often than non-military families, they tend to stay in each place an average of 3-4 years. ★ A company that allows job transfers and/or remote work in the event of a move could engender loyalty from and long-term retention of military spouse employees.

The Business Case for Military-Connected Talent

Gaining executive support for your military-connected talent hiring initiative is a best practice, and this guidebook provides you the support for this important step. Creating buy-in for any hiring initiative depends on aligning the business case to the needs and goals of your organization and stakeholders. Military-connected employees bring a range of specific, research-validated skills developed through their experiences, and employing veterans can also qualify your organization for certain benefits like the Work Opportunity Tax Credit. (See page 26 for more.)



As noted on page 11, recent research from the SHRM Foundation and Walmart found that not only were veteran and military spouses overwhelmingly rated as equal to or outperforming other employees, they also received the highest rating of positive experience from employers. Research on veterans and military spouses has validated several value propositions related to what military-connected employees have to offer. (See “More on the Business Case” below and “Research on Military-Connected Talent” on page 23.) Their skills align well with common business needs.

MORE ON THE BUSINESS CASE

The value propositions of what military-connected employees have to offer employers are outlined in the table on the following page. Detailed descriptions of these value propositions, along with supporting research, can be found in the D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families publications [Revisiting the Business Case for Hiring a Veteran](#) and [The Force Behind the Force: A Business Case for Leveraging Military Spouse Talent](#), as well as in the SHRM Foundation’s [Beneath the Surface](#) report.

BUSINESS NEEDS AND RELATED CHARACTERISTICS OF MILITARY-CONNECTED TALENT

Self-Directed Work — Autonomous Decision-Making — Work Ethic/Discipline

Veterans and service members are entrepreneurial.	Military spouses are oriented toward high achievement.	Military spouses adapt well to changing environments.
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Trust-Related Skills — Oversight Responsibilities — Hierarchical Leadership — Professionalism

Veterans and service members assume high levels of trust.	Veterans and service members exhibit strong organizational commitment.
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Varied Work Activities — Transferrable Skills — Adaptability — Problem-Solving

Veterans and service members are adept at transferring skills across contexts and tasks.	Veterans and service members are comfortable and adept in discontinuous environments.
Military spouses are well-educated and interdisciplinary.	Military spouses are excellent problem-solvers.

Teamwork Skills — Soft Skills

Veterans and service members exhibit advanced team-building skills.	Veterans and service members have experience and skills in diverse work settings.	Veterans and service members have (and leverage) cross-cultural experiences.	Military spouses work well within a collaborative team structure and can help navigate different perspectives.
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Learning Skills — Experience with Complex Systems

Veterans and service members have (and leverage) advanced technical training.

Early-Stage Ventures — Sales and Customer Relations Skills — Mental Toughness

Veterans, service members and military spouses are resilient and can bounce back from setbacks.

Research on Military-Connected Talent

Organizations gain employees with wide-ranging experience and competencies when they hire military-connected talent, as demonstrated by a 2017 SHRM Foundation and National Association of Veteran-Serving Organizations (NAVSO) meeting and studies by the RAND Corporation, the D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families, and other research institutions. Veterans, for instance, deliver subject matter expertise, years of on-the-job training, and advanced skills in such fields as information technology, transportation logistics, supply-chain management and public relations. Military-connected talent can help raise a company’s workforce to the next level in many areas, including:



- ★ **Leadership and teamwork.** Military service prepares individuals to earn the respect of their peers and understand how to bring people together to pursue strategic, common goals.
- ★ **Problem-solving and decision-making.** Service members are required to react quickly and precisely, adapting to new information in dynamic, high-pressure situations.
- ★ **Honesty and attention to detail.** Many veterans have high-level security clearances, and all are trained to meet the highest standards when it comes to ethics, safety and other organizational imperatives.
- ★ **Global perspectives.** Service members and military spouses usually have years of on-the-ground experience working with international teams of diverse individuals — a distinct advantage in the modern global economy.

Source: <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/militaryreadyemployer.aspx>

Stakeholders participating in the SHRM Foundation and NAVSO meeting described both short-term and long-term positive impacts of military-connected employment programs.

IMPACTS OF IMPLEMENTING A MILITARY-CONNECTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM	
Positive short-term impacts	Positive long-term impacts
Identifying and filling talent needs.	Contributing to improved performance and the bottom line.
Creating a stronger and more diverse workforce.	Creating a diverse and talent-driven organizational culture.
	Improving leadership.
Generating goodwill internally and outside the organization.	Helping to address a larger national issue.

Source: https://www.shrm.org/foundation/ourwork/initiatives/engaging-and-integrating-military-veterans/Documents/13056-G-01_SHRMF_WhyHireVet.pdf

ACTION STEP

Prepare yourself with more tools and in-depth training on recruiting, hiring and retaining military-connected talent by signing up for the [SHRM Veterans at Work Certificate](#). It is free and open to all.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Employing military-connected individuals can serve as a central element of corporate social responsibility goals. [Business Roundtable](#) describes CSR as a company’s attempt to provide “value for all its stakeholders — not just shareholders but also employees, communities, local governments and more.”⁷ For many companies, fulfilling corporate social responsibility imperatives is a valuable part of the business case for hiring military-connected talent.

⁷ <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/all-things-work/pages/corporate-responsibility-revisited.aspx>

POST-9/11 VETERANS MOST COMMONLY VOLUNTEERED BY:

Serving veterans, active-duty service members and their families

59%

Working with youth

41%

Helping older people

26%

Addressing poverty and homelessness

21%

Employing military-connected individuals communicates a corporation's commitment to those who serve or have served this country, and also recognizes that the public service of military-connected individuals does not end with their discharge from the military. Supporting employment for those connected to the military brings them into your community and organization, and these employees are highly likely to continue serving the community in other ways.

For example, veterans are highly involved in volunteerism. According to the [2022 IAVA Membership Survey](#) of post-9/11 veterans:

- ★ 46% of post-9/11 veterans report volunteering on a regular basis (including getting involved with community associations like the PTA or performing community service through an organization or religious group).
- ★ Among post-9/11 veterans who volunteer, 82% do so more than 3 hours per week.
- ★ Post-9/11 veterans most commonly volunteered by:
 - ★ Serving veterans, active-duty service members and their families (59%).
 - ★ Working with youth (41%).
 - ★ Helping older people (26%).
 - ★ Addressing poverty and homelessness (21%).

SUPPORTING MILITARY SPOUSES

Employing military spouses taps into a highly skilled pool of motivated and capable individuals. It can also make a tangible financial difference for military families. Learn more about how employers can support military spouses with job portability, retirement saving support and financial planning in [The Hidden Financial Costs of Military Spouse Unemployment](#) report from Hiring Our Heroes and the D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families.

THE CASE FOR SMALL AND MIDSIZE EMPLOYERS

Although high-profile programs at large organizations tend to make headlines, small and midsize employers are playing key roles in placing military-connected talent in good positions across the country. There is a strong business case to be made for smaller businesses to employ these individuals. In Texas, Renters Warehouse Houston is veteran-owned and regularly hires veterans. CEO Rich Drake credits his employees who served in the military with “constantly exceeding our clients’ expectations” and driving the company’s success. The same is true of VetCor, a small home and business repair firm in Florida, and Tilson, a midsize engineering and IT company in Oregon. Tilson CEO Josh Broder explains that the military ethic of placing “service above self” is what keeps him determined to employ more veterans.

Work Opportunity Tax Credit for Hiring Veterans

In addition to the numerous and diverse skills that veterans bring to the civilian workforce, there is an additional benefit to employing them: the Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC). The WOTC is a federal tax credit available to employers that hire individuals from certain groups who have consistently faced significant barriers to employment.

HOW IT WORKS

Because veterans are one of the groups covered by this credit, businesses (as well as some tax-exempt organizations) may qualify for a federal tax exemption for hiring a qualified veteran during their first year of employment. This credit typically ranges from \$2,400 to \$9,600 depending on the veteran’s service-connected disability status and unemployment history, hours worked (at least 400+ during the first year), and qualified wages.



WOTC-QUALIFIED VETERANS

According to the Internal Revenue Service, the following tax credits are available for these “qualified veterans”:

40% CREDIT FOR	QUALIFYING CHARACTERISTIC
Up to \$6,000 in qualified wages (\$2,400 credit)	A veteran who is a member of a family that received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (food stamps) for at least a 3-month period during the 15-month period ending on the hiring date.
	A veteran who has been unemployed for a total of at least four weeks in the year ending on the hiring date.
Up to \$6,000 in qualified wages (\$2,400 credit)	A veteran who has been unemployed for a total of at least six months in the year ending on the hiring date.
Up to \$12,000 in qualified wages (\$4,800 credit)	A disabled veteran who is entitled to compensation for a service-connected disability and has been hired within one year of discharge or release from active duty.
Up to \$24,000 in qualified wages (\$9,600 credit)	A disabled veteran who is entitled to compensation for a service-connected disability and has been unemployed for at least six months total during the year ending on the hiring date.

ACTION STEP

Visit the WOTC websites from the [Department of Labor](#) (DOL) and the [Internal Revenue Service](#) to access the most complete, up-to-date information about the full eligibility requirements for this credit. These sites contain a quick reference guide for employers, rules for pre-screening and certification prior to making the job offer, and forms that must be completed upon hire to enable your organization to claim the credit.

Understanding Your ‘Why’

Building your own business case for employing military-connected talent depends on your business needs, industry and available resources. Military-connected talent have exceptional skills, so creating a business advantage through employing individuals connected to the military warrants a deliberate program to ensure their success at every step in the employment life cycle. While it starts with articulating your business case, that is just the beginning.

As you get started or refine why you want to employ military-connected talent, consider the following:

Leveraging Military-Connected Talent

START BY LOOKING INSIDE THE BUSINESS

Leveraging military-connected talent is inherently a two-way street.⁸ It is not just about what they can do for your organization; it is also about how prepared you are to help them learn about your organization and expectations. First, it is important that employers identify, seek out and subsequently leverage the skills unique to military-connected candidates as they apply to specific work environments. Second, employers must look internally at their own company culture and examine how they are prepared to understand, support and benefit from military-connected talent. Making a clear business case and sharing it with stakeholders helps you get the time, people and resources necessary to develop and build a strong employment program.



IDENTIFY MARKETPLACE-CONNECTED SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES

What skills are central to current and future competitive advantage for your organization or industry? Employers can more effectively recruit military-connected candidates once they determine where veterans, transitioning service members, military spouses or caregivers with specific desirable skills and competencies are located (e.g., currently

⁸ Adapted from Haynie, J.M. (2016). [Revisiting the Business Case for Hiring a Veteran: A Strategy for Cultivating Competitive Advantage](#). D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.

serving, currently employed, in higher education, available for remote work). Identify where in your organization these skills are needed — perhaps there is a strong business case for hiring military-connected talent in a certain part of your organization. It is imperative that you craft and publicly communicate a clear statement about your interest in employing specific military-connected groups.

AUDIT YOUR COMPANY CULTURE

Does your organization have a culture where military-connected individuals feel at home and have opportunities that match the skills and employment needs of these job seekers? Growing your military-connected talent requires thoughtful efforts to ensure that assumptions and stereotypes about individuals connected to the military are challenged at all levels of the organization — both before and after they are hired. An audit also ensures that you have all the necessary resources in place, from preparing hiring managers and/or other relevant employees, to creating a specific onboarding program, to ensuring that mentorship and/or employee resource groups are available.



ACTION STEPS

- ★ Design your value proposition for why creating or enhancing your military-connected talent program is worth it.
- ★ Identify which business needs and matching characteristics (see the chart on page 22) are most relevant to your organization, and highlight these key propositions in detail from the linked references.
- ★ Connect your employment initiative to other key programs, such as corporate social responsibility or DE&I goals.
- ★ Estimate the financial gain from employing military-connected talent — not only through programs like targeted tax incentives but also through critical skills, leadership, work ethic and loyalty that can translate to more efficient teams or improved retention rates.

Assessing Your Resources

Whether you are just getting started or planning to make changes to your employment initiative for military-connected talent, it is important to periodically review your organization's readiness. Often, the success or failure of an initiative depends on having everything you need in place (or at least on the radar) prior to launching the effort. Developing a model for continuous improvement will include short-, medium- and long-term goals and checkpoints that address emerging problems and celebrate wins.

STEPS TO PREPARE YOUR COMPANY

1. Review your military-related policies and applicable laws.
2. Build a military-connected culture to become an informed employer.
3. Support military spouses, caregivers, and members of the National Guard and Reserves.
4. Know where to find additional resources, training and toolkits.

Review Your Military-Related Policies and Applicable Laws

Your company may be subject to federal and state laws that make veterans a protected class for employment. Key laws with specific rules for veterans include:

- ★ **USERRA.** The [Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act \(1994\)](#) aims to support and minimize disruptions to civilian employment for individuals engaged in military service, including through protections for reemployment and benefits for those called up for active-duty service. These protections also prohibit employment discrimination, including in hiring processes and due to past, present or potential-for-future military service.



★ **VEVRAA.** The [Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act \(1974\)](#) requires businesses that engage in government contracts or subcontracts over a certain size to affirmatively hire, promote and retain disabled veterans, recently separated veterans, those with active-duty combat experience or campaign badges, and veterans with the Armed Forces Service Medal. It does not just apply to Vietnam veterans, but in fact continues to prioritize and protect against employment discrimination of these classes of veterans since that time.

★ **ADA.** The [Americans with Disabilities Act \(1990\)](#) applies to veteran employees who have disabilities — regardless of whether or not those disabilities are service-connected. The ADA includes considerations for preferential hiring, special accommodations and prohibitions on using a disability rating from the VA to make assumptions about a veteran's ability to do a job.



★ **FMLA.** There are qualifying exigency provisions in the [Family and Medical Leave Act \(1993\) for military-related leave](#) that may apply to your military-connected employees in the event of a deployment or call to active duty. These provisions can apply to military spouses, parents or children of service members and/or members of the National Guard or Reserves. Additional FMLA provisions apply to individuals who are [caregivers to seriously injured or ill service members](#).

MORE ON FEDERAL POLICIES

The [DOL Veterans' Employment and Training Service \(VETS\)](#) is your go-to source for complete, detailed and up-to-date specific guidance on veteran-related federal policies and compliance, and it includes other helpful resources for employers looking to recruit veterans.

Build a Military-Informed Culture to Become an Informed Employer

To deliver the best results, preparing to hire military-connected talent requires a comprehensive organizational conversation. Making the most of the unique skills and abilities of individuals connected to the military means preparing everyone in your organization to better understand those assets and demystifying the cultural norms related to the military service that fostered those skills. (See “The Importance of Military Cultural Competence” on page 12.)



RESOURCES

[Onboarding Veterans: Helping Bridge the Cultural Gap](#)

[Building and Sustaining a Veteran-Informed Culture: A Guide for HR Professionals](#)

COMMUNICATE BEING A MILITARY-READY EMPLOYER

Welcoming military-connected talent requires a consistent and informed messaging strategy throughout all communications — and often the first point of contact for potential applicants is your website. Even the name of your initiative can communicate your values. For instance, does your initiative include veterans only, or does it include anyone who is part of the military community? To convey that military-connected talent is welcome at and encouraged to work for your company, your branding and website should communicate:

- ★ The strengths of your organization from the perspective of military-connected applicants.
- ★ Details about working at your organization and information about any special programs or benefits unique to military-connected employees.
- ★ The value your organization places on military inclusiveness through visuals or other content.
- ★ Deliberate support for military-connected job seekers, such as special landing pages or job listings that connect to specific Military Occupation Codes (MOCs), or opportunities to connect with designated recruiters or hiring managers trained to work with military-connected applicants.

ACTION STEPS

- ★ Use the [SHRM HireVets Dashboard](#) to match MOCs to your job descriptions, making finding the right role at your organization easier for potential applicants.
- ★ Review the SHRM toolkit [Employing Military Veterans](#) for a big-picture view of important considerations and components for becoming a military-ready employer.
- ★ Visit the DoD [Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve \(ESGR\) Statement of Support](#) program for an example of how to communicate a commitment to hiring military-connected talent.

Support Military Spouses, Caregivers, and Members of the National Guard and Reserves

Review the resources your organization has in place not only for veterans but also for the many other military-connected individuals who represent untapped pools of potential talent. Here are a few resources to help you get prepared and sustain support for the following groups:

★ **Military Spouses.** The [Military Spouse Employment Partnership \(MSEP\)](#) is a DoD program that provides HR support and solutions for employers and helps connect military spouses to job opportunities with partner companies.

★ **Caregivers.** Supporting military caregivers may require expanding support or additional unique considerations and flexibility beyond your typical employee assistance program (EAP). (See pages 52 and 54 for more.)

Review the recommendations in the [Caregiving in Military Families](#) report from Blue Star Families and the D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families for specific recommendations, and provide resources from the [Elizabeth Dole Foundation](#) and the [Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers](#).

★ **National Guard Members and Reservists.** The DoD offers specific guidance to support civilian employers of National Guard members and Reservists through their [Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve](#) program.



Know Where to Find Additional Resources, Training and Toolkits

The information and resources you need to support a strong military-connected talent initiative will depend on your company's size, industry, location and specific business needs. In addition to the resources already mentioned in this guide, here are some additional sites you can visit to find more information and resources for taking the next step to employ military-connected talent:



[SHRM Veterans at Work Certificate Program](#)

[SHRM Employing Military Veterans Toolkit](#)

[SHRM Building and Sustaining a Veteran-Informed Culture: A Guide for HR Professionals](#)

[D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families Employing Veteran and Military Family Talent Collection](#)

[George W. Bush Institute Veterans and Military Families Policy Research](#)

[Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Employment Toolkit](#)

[Department of Labor Veterans, Employment and Training Service \(VETS\)](#)

[Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Employer Resource Guide](#)

EMPLOYER READINESS CHECKLIST		
GOAL	ACTION	COMPLETED
Review military-related laws to ensure they are incorporated into organizational policies and confirm responsible staff are aware of updates.	Review USERRA; ensure compliance and preparation among staff responsible for hiring and benefits, including direct report managers, for potentially affected employees.	
	Review VEVRAA; assess your organization’s role in government contracting or subcontracting to ensure compliance.	
	Review the ADA as it applies to veterans; ensure staff responsible for hiring and compliance are informed of veteran-specific provisions, including preferential hiring rules and prohibitions on discrimination based on VA rating.	
	Review the FMLA as it applies to military-connected employees; ensure HR staff understand provisions for caregivers, military spouses, and members of the National Guard and Reserves.	
Build a military-connected culture to become an informed employer.	Develop a formal strategy, along with goals, activities and metrics, for creating a veteran-informed culture; include goals linked to your business case and each stage in the employee life cycle.	
	Prepare staff who are engaged in hiring and onboarding, as well as direct report managers, to bridge the cultural gap by training on effective ways to communicate with recently separated veterans.	
	Communicate that you are military-ready on your website and throughout your recruitment communications strategy; at a minimum, prepare special landing pages, FAQs and statements of your commitment to hiring military-connected talent.	
	Develop a strategy within HR talent acquisition to translate skills from Military Occupation Codes (MOCs) or other alternative qualifications clearly in your job listings.	

EMPLOYER READINESS CHECKLIST		
GOAL	ACTION	COMPLETED
Audit support infrastructure for military spouses, caregivers, and National Guard and Reserve members.	Review resources for individuals connected to veterans and identify opportunities to revise company policies and procedures to accommodate them.	
	Connect with organizations that support spouse employment, caregivers, and members of the National Guard and Reserves to access resources and expand recruitment opportunities.	
Identify and leverage leading resources for military-connected employment support.	Review and implement SHRM resources, toolkits and certificates; identify valuable organizations or resources relevant to your organization’s needs, assign monitoring responsibility to HR staff and provide time for staff to complete necessary training.	
	Plan to engage with organizations that serve military communities, and collaborate with other employer networks to connect with talent and thought leaders and understand emerging best practices to find solutions to problems encountered.	

WE WANT YOU!

Recruiting, Hiring and Onboarding

Attracting military-connected talent requires a strategy. Targeted outreach should consider the specific competencies and skills you are trying to recruit for, as well as the unique needs of the military-connected communities you wish to engage.

Recruiting and Military Community Engagement Strategies

- ★ Offer customized hiring events for military-connected individuals.
- ★ Launch strategic outreach efforts, such as using targeted marketing through social media like LinkedIn and/or partnering with military-related service organizations.
- ★ Create recruiting program(s) in which your current military-connected employees assist in recruiting other prospective military-connected employees.
- ★ Regularly publicize open positions to colleges and organizations serving military-connected talent.
- ★ Leverage and cultivate relationships with higher education, certification programs and community colleges to recruit for specific skill sets.
- ★ Provide specialized training and incentive programs, and/or design a recruiting resource guide for company recruiters focused on military-connected talent.



- ★ Leverage employee development programs for military-connected talent as a way to communicate to prospective employees that you will continue to value them over the long term.
- ★ Consider a cohort program to engage specialized job seekers and offer a tailored approach. Hiring groups of similar individuals and training them at the same time can provide peer support, reduce onboarding costs and make efficient use of resources.
- ★ Be clear when you are targeting specific subgroups such as service members, veterans or military spouses.

KNOW THE LAW

Employers have state and federal legal responsibilities to track applicants and ensure non-discrimination in hiring. The [Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act \(VEVRAA\)](#), for instance, applies if your business engages in government contracting or subcontracting. Not only should you become familiar with laws that apply specifically to veterans and other military-connected talent, but you should also review your applicant tracking system or processes to make sure military-connected talent is not being unfairly screened out of your applicant pool, such as by automated systems that cannot translate military experience to civilian roles. Read [Is Your Applicant Tracking System Hurting Your Recruiting Efforts?](#) to learn more.

Recruiting Specific Groups of Military-Connected Talent

DIVERSITY WITHIN THE MILITARY COMMUNITY

All military-connected individuals add diversity to your workforce by virtue of their unique service experiences, but they can also be part of a larger DE&I strategy to recruit diverse talent in terms of age, race, ethnicity and/or disability status. The military is already more diverse than the civilian population when it comes to race and ethnicity, with around 1 in 4 veterans falling into non-white racial categories



compared with 1 in 5 civilians. [Research from Pew Research Center](#) projects this trend to continue in the coming decades.

- ★ Consider building a military-connected talent strategy into your larger DE&I efforts, supported by resources like [SHRM INCLUSION or other annual conferences](#).
- ★ Recognize that many — if not most — military-connected individuals will not consider their military status to be a form of diversity, so be strategic about how your organization communicates about and categorizes programs for military-connected individuals.
- ★ Engage with efforts like the [Blue Star Families Campaign for Inclusion](#) to connect with the many forms of diversity within military and military-connected communities.
- ★ Identify the talent opportunities, support and incentive programs for hiring disabled veterans by reviewing [The Veteran Advantage: DAV \(Disabled American Veterans\) Guide to Hiring & Retaining Veterans with Disabilities](#).

MILITARY SPOUSES AND CAREGIVERS

Opportunities to recruit military spouses and caregivers are numerous, especially if recruiters consider the need for these individuals to have flexibility. Unique ways to recruit and engage with these populations also include things like paid fellowships or development programs. Recruitment opportunities and partnerships specifically focused on military spouses and caregivers include:

- ★ [Military Spouse Employment Partnership \(MSEP\)](#)
- ★ [Blue Star Families Military Spouse Employment Initiative](#)
- ★ [#DiscoverTheTalent initiative from Hiring Our Heroes](#)
- ★ [Elizabeth Dole Foundation Programs for Caregivers](#)



MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVES

The [Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve \(ESGR\)](#) is a long-standing DoD program that supports employers and employees in balancing workforce needs, legal issues, and Guard or Reserve military responsibilities. The program also connects employers with opportunities to participate in job fairs, trade shows and/or other events to get your organization on the radar of this talent pool.

STUDENT VETERANS

Many veterans utilize educational benefits to receive post-secondary degrees and earn work certifications through the GI Bill. Other educational benefits may be used during and after separation from service. Engaging with higher education is a reliable way to connect with student veteran talent. Consider engaging with:



- ★ **University career centers.** Reach out to, partner with and recruit from the best programs for student veterans in your area by connecting with the career and veteran supporting team at one or more of the [Best Colleges for Veterans](#), as ranked annually by U.S. News & World Report.
- ★ **Student Veterans of America (SVA).** Join the [growing list of partners](#) that support SVA, the largest organization for recruiting top student veteran talent from across the United States, and access opportunities to recruit in person at national and regional gatherings.
- ★ **Higher education.** Learn about student veterans and best practices for employers to engage with higher education by reading the D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families report [“Hire” Education: Strengthening Connections Between Employers and Student Veterans](#).

CONNECTING WITH MILITARY-CONNECTED JOB SEEKERS	
RESOURCE	ABOUT
SHRM HireVets	SHRM HireVets provides a nationwide database of over 200,000 veterans that grows by the thousands every month. Upload your job openings and get immediate results highlighting the top qualified candidates. Use the Military Jobs Translator to translate the military lingo of veteran service jobs into terminology you can understand.
Hiring Our Heroes	Hiring Our Heroes hosts a variety of programs and events for transitioning service members, veterans and military spouses. Employers can connect with veteran and military spouse candidates at in-person hiring events on military installations across the globe and in cities throughout the United States.
U.S. DOL HireVets	U.S. DOL HireVets offers two choices. The first is to have the National Labor Exchange acquire your jobs directly from your corporate website and provide a daily feed to veterans.gov at no cost. The second is to register and post jobs with your State Job Bank, which will automatically post the jobs with veterans.gov.
Onward to Opportunity	The D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families Onward to Opportunity program provides career support and training to military-connected individuals. As employer partners, organizations can access this pool of talent and use the program to create a pipeline for highly skilled military-connected employees.
Hire Heroes USA	Hire Heroes USA offers a job board, virtual career fairs, employer trainings and talent sourcing to connect corporate partners to veteran and military spouse talent.
VetJobs-CASY	VetJobs powered by CASY (Corporate America Supports You) provides employment assistance to military-connected job seekers and facilitates connections with corporate employer partners to support employment and transition needs.
Military.com	Military.com allows employers to post job openings to reach the right veteran audience and access resources to hire and support veteran employees.
Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP)	This program provides career guidance, education and professional development for military spouses to create better career paths and opportunities. For employers, it is a great place to connect with high-quality, highly motivated military spouses.

CONNECTING WITH MILITARY-CONNECTED JOB SEEKERS	
RESOURCE	ABOUT
Instant Teams	Drawing on a pool of military-connected talent, Instant Teams provides employer support for hiring, training and optimizing a remote workforce.
LinkedIn	LinkedIn offers a suite of tools with which to search, segment and connect with millions of veterans. In addition, military talent branding experts offer advice for employers to make the most of LinkedIn's talent acquisition and outreach tools.
Veterans Job Mission	Veterans Job Mission offers resources for employers, including best practices for hiring veterans as well as a list of sourcing tools.
Wounded Warriors Project	The Warriors to Work program engages in collaboration, job placement and onboarding support for employers working with injured veterans.
Getting Hired	Getting Hired is dedicated to helping veterans with disabilities connect with employers. The benefits of becoming an employer partner with Getting Hired include job board access, sourcing tools, employer branding, marketing campaigns and disability etiquette training.
State Veterans Affairs Offices	The VA's collection of state/territory VA offices allows you to connect with resources and organizations that support veterans in your own community.

RESOURCES FOR SMALL AND MIDSIZE EMPLOYERS

If a national labor market does not align with your business needs or capabilities, you can recruit military-connected talent within specific geographic areas or communities. Reach out to the [VA Office](#) in your state to connect with state, county and local veteran services and organizations. Chances are good that these organizations can help you identify opportunities to connect with military-connected job seekers within your area(s) of operation.

Identifying and Hiring for Military-Connected Skills

A key aspect of workforce alignment is ensuring that employees have the necessary skills to do the job. When hiring military-connected talent, identifying the skills and experiences of an applicant can differ from the way you might evaluate civilian applicants. Here are some ways you can ensure that you are properly identifying what skills military-connected applicants have to offer.

Skills-Based Hiring

Civilians might not readily recognize what skills are involved in a specific MOC. Similarly, military-connected talent may not realize how their skills and experiences align with a civilian job description. Consider the following:



- ★ Be specific about the skills and competencies you are looking for. They may not be obvious from military and Guard and Reserve job titles, and military spouses also often develop additional skills through non-employment channels such as community involvement and volunteering or through roles that appear out of sync with their education or experience.
- ★ Identify, advertise and hire for the specific skills that make military-connected individuals so desirable, such as flexibility, problem-solving, commitment, integrity and teamwork.
- ★ Incorporate inclusive language in your job descriptions to communicate to military-connected talent that you are looking to hire them. Examples include specifying “bachelor’s degree or equivalent military experience” or explicitly indicating that military spouse status is desirable.
- ★ Use tools like [O*Net OnLine](#) or the [SHRM HireVets Dashboard](#) to translate between military occupation codes and civilian job titles as you build job descriptions. Understanding which military jobs have the skills you are looking for can help you target recruitment efforts to the right individuals in a way that is immediately clear to potential applicants.
- ★ Consider posting your job ads to well-known sites like [Military.com](#), where veterans can use tools like the [Military Skills Translator](#) to make connections between their military specialty and your position in their own job searches.

MORE ON TRANSLATING SKILLS

Translating military skills to civilian roles is an art. Read more about [efforts to help connect veterans to relevant work](#) that will help your team think beyond simply translating skills and recognize the deeper values, work ethic, and willingness to step up and learn that often underlie military roles.

Interviewing Military-Connected Talent

Behavioral and situational interview styles are particularly effective with candidates who have a military background because they allow individuals the opportunity to showcase skill sets that aren't obvious from a resume. These styles also provide the best opportunities for the interviewer to engage applicants in robust conversations that invite them to shift out of the military's polite and respectful mode, which may involve applicants giving short responses.

To ensure they are using the most effective interviews with military-connected job seekers, hiring managers should be trained on interviewing techniques that include the following key points:

- ★ Be familiar with the MOCs that correlate with the job. ([O*NET](#) or the [SHRM HireVets Dashboard](#) are sources for hiring managers and HR.)
- ★ Take the candidate's lead; consider thanking an applicant for their service if their interview warrants it, but use judgment and understand some will not want to emphasize their military identity during an interview.
- ★ Clearly describe the job role and its responsibilities, defining expectations upfront and avoiding generalizations.
- ★ Draw out applicants and uncover their strengths by asking them to share their stories.
- ★ Avoid asking questions that can be answered with a "yes" or "no" response and instead ask probing, job-related questions about an individual's service experience.



- ★ Focus on actively listening for skill sets and correlate them with job functions within the organization.
- ★ Avoid judgment around job changes for spouses. Some may have been required to relocate, and others may not have. Their moving is no different from non-military spouses who relocate because of their spouse’s job. Interviews should probe for accomplishments, correlative skills, and details revealing their adaptability and ability to manage stressful roles with efficiency and diligence.
- ★ Do not ask about discharge status, details of combat experiences, specific disabilities or the possibility of upcoming deployments. Instead, focus on how military experiences align with the job and the ability to perform job duties with reasonable accommodation.

MORE ON VETERAN STATUS

Before interviewing veterans, make sure to familiarize your hiring managers with laws related to veteran status, i.e., asking if they were honorably or dishonorably discharged, which can vary from state to state. Consider the SHRM compliance recommendations in [Think Before Asking About a Veteran’s Discharge Status](#).



Onboarding Military-Connected Talent

Onboarding is critical to any successful hire, but it is especially important for military-connected talent who may be adjusting not only to a new workplace but also to other changes related to their transition from military service to civilian life.

Effective Practices for Onboarding Military-Connected Talent

- ★ Review and share organizational charts and your leadership communication philosophy.
- ★ Utilize “buddy” programs, veteran mentors and/or military-specific support programs or groups.
- ★ Formally educate military-connected employees on administrative tasks that may be unfamiliar to them, like benefits selection, timekeeping, payroll, scheduling and accessing the employee assistance program.
- ★ Encourage leaders to partner with military-connected employees on setting goals, and clearly communicate your performance management process and tools for assessing and documenting performance toward goal accomplishment.
- ★ Encourage team building and employee integration exercises to help military-connected employees and civilians learn to work together.
- ★ Consider how your workstations are configured to support workplace accommodations — and be prepared to adjust them.
- ★ Stay informed on resources for military-connected individuals and make this information available to both military-connected and other employees.
- ★ Avoid a “one and done” onboarding process by scheduling follow-ups at regular intervals to make adjustments, provide resources and address concerns.



Learn more from the SHRM resource [Building and Sustaining a Veteran-Informed Culture: A Guide for HR Professionals](#).

Aligning Onboarding Strategies for Veterans, Spouses, Caregivers, and Guard and Reserve Members

For military-connected talent, successful onboarding requires employers to anticipate the unique challenges commonly associated with new employees' military affiliations. Most often, these challenges involve successfully integrating military-connected talent into a workplace that may not understand their unique situations.

Educating your employees and managers on the basics about military communities and connecting military-connected talent to employee resource groups will help create a welcoming workplace.

Below are resources for supporting military-connected talent who have specific needs:

- ★ **Transitioning veterans.** [The JPMorgan Chase Pathfinder Playbook](#) is a comprehensive guide for employers focused on helping new veteran employees acclimate to corporate culture with a veteran peer mentoring program.
- ★ **Disabled veterans.** Best practices for employing people with disabilities, such as those covered in the [SHRM Foundation Employing Abilities at Work Certificate Program](#), can help support onboarding needs for disabled veterans, along with veteran-specific resources like the [DAV Guide to Hiring and Retaining Veterans with Disabilities](#).
- ★ **Military spouses.** [The Hidden Financial Costs of Military Spouse Unemployment](#) from Hiring Our Heroes can help ensure that your onboarding addresses important needs for military spouse employees, such as flexible or remote work and retirement planning guidance. If it is a possibility at your organization, make sure to discuss job portability options like those recommended in [Helping Military Spouses Find Careers that Move with Them](#).
- ★ **Caregivers.** Aid caregivers by discussing options like flexible working hours, company caregiver resources and leave policies, and connections to community support such as [Hidden Heroes](#) from the Elizabeth Dole Foundation or military caregiver resources from the [Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers](#).
- ★ **Members of the Guard and Reserves.** Be proactive when onboarding Guard and Reserve employees by asking about their schedule and training obligations in advance. Utilize [Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve \(ESGR\) resources](#) such as their [Employer Resource Guide](#) to know what to expect, and have a conversation to align expectations.

RECRUITING, HIRING AND ONBOARDING CHECKLIST		
GOAL	ACTION	COMPLETED
Develop a recruitment and military community engagement strategy.	Plan a strategic outreach program that includes customized hiring events for military-connected talent groups, targeted marketing and/or partnerships with military community organizations.	
	Engage or incentivize military-connected employees already at your organization to assist in recruitment efforts.	
	Connect military-connected talent recruitment goals with your existing DE&I efforts and identify opportunities to collaborate.	
	Identify specific groups of military-connected talent, such as veterans, spouses, caregivers, and Guard and Reserve members, and develop specific recruitment strategies for each group.	
Connect with military-connected job seekers.	Review and identify major job boards or hiring programs for military-connected talent that meet your specific talent needs.	
	Consider the value of joining organizational collectives and support programs that aid in military transition, training and job placement.	
	Improve your ability to recruit military-connected talent by incorporating specific language in your job ads, considering skills-based hiring practices and training managers on how to interview these job seekers.	
Adjust your onboarding practices and strategies to accommodate military-connected talent.	Review your onboarding practices and incorporate the most effective practices for onboarding military-connected talent, such as organizational transparency, “buddy” programs, personal goal setting and/or team building and integration activities.	
	Build unique onboarding strategies for military-connected talent with specific needs, such as transitioning veterans, disabled veterans, military spouses, caregivers, and members of the National Guard and Reserves.	

BUILDING THE TEAM

Employee Engagement and Retention

Best Practices for Deploying Military-Connected Talent

Organizations that are successful in engaging and retaining military-connected talent recognize the importance of building organizational capacity beyond the recruitment and onboarding phases. Creating ongoing engagement with military-connected talent is critical for the retention of members of this community and the attributes they bring to a workplace. Creating a successful retention program will deliver strong results for all your employees and your organization.



MORE ON THE VETERAN WORKFORCE

Along with action steps for cultivating a veteran-informed workplace, the SHRM Foundation and USAA report [Unlocking the Potential of the Veteran Workforce](#) offers engagement strategies from HR professionals, including having someone in the HR office who is a veteran, recognizing veterans' familiarity with highly structured career paths and/or making use of veterans' leadership skills — even in entry-level positions.

Below are four takeaways from the SHRM Foundation and Walmart report [Beneath the Surface: A Unified Approach to Realizing the Value of Untapped Talent](#) on what organizations can and should be doing:

1) **Communication.** An organization that is prepared for employing military-connected talent must communicate its military-specific policies, perspectives and practices throughout the organization. While managers should emphasize this value, the majority of organizations do not.

PERCENTAGE OF ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE COMMUNICATED POLICIES/PRACTICES ON:	
Veterans	48%
Individuals with Disabilities	41%
Military Spouses and Caregivers	41%

Source: [Beneath the Surface](#).

2) **Providing resources and training for managers.** Employing military-connected talent requires your organization to prepare managers and other members of your workforce to better understand military-connected communities. Organizations should plan to train managers on inclusive strategies to work with military-connected talent and other untapped talent groups more effectively.

3) **Partner with advocacy and community-based programs.** Partnerships with veteran-serving organizations can create a talent pipeline and be a critical resource for supporting military-connected employees in general. Developing formal relationships with organizations that have employer or workplace missions provides an opportunity to build deeper connections between your organization and these communities. It also gives you another opportunity to distinguish your organization from competitors and unlock pathways to military-connected talent.

PERCENTAGE OF ORGANIZATIONS WITH A PROGRAM FOR THIS GROUP:	
Veterans	55%
Individuals with Disabilities	42%
Military Spouses and Caregivers	34%

Source: [Beneath the Surface](#).

4) **Measuring for success.** The ability to track employee engagement and retention of military-connected talent provides the data needed for leadership support and long-term programmatic viability.

Specific Retention Strategies and Considerations

This section contains resources to help employers navigate engagement and retention challenges that are unique to specific military-connected groups. After this section, there are additional resources on topics that cut across these categories of military-connected talent.

Veterans

More intentional bi-directional communication is often needed between employers and veterans on topics like cultural competence, proper skills alignment, stereotypes and expectation management. This should include a deliberate effort to engage, connect and educate veterans and civilians in the workplace.

Employer resources for engaging with veterans include:



[Employers Share Veteran Hiring, Retention Strategies](#) (SHRM)

[VMSTEP — Training & Resources for HR Professionals and Supervisors](#) (VA)

[Affinity Groups for Veterans and Military Service Members](#) (VA)

[Strengthening Partnerships and Initiatives](#) (D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families)

SMALL OR MIDSIZE EMPLOYERS

Any company, regardless of size, can begin to implement best practices for employing veterans. The [Veteran Employment Startup Guide](#) from Veteran Jobs Mission provides an overview of ways smaller employers can take the first steps to employing and engaging veterans, with suggestions such as leveraging current veteran employees as collaborators and connecting with local veteran-serving organizations.

Military Spouses

One key to retaining military spouse employees is to understand and leverage their strengths, qualifications, motivations and constraints. Military spouses tend to be highly qualified (e.g., most have at least some college) but have a history of being underemployed due to family service moves or deployments. Effective approaches to retaining military spouse talent center around removing barriers with practices like remote and flexible work, job portability and/or workplace flexibility to support unique child care needs related to relocation or the deployment of a family member.

Employer resources for improving military spouse retention include:

[The Force Behind the Force: Training, Leveraging, and Communicating about Military Spouses as Employees](#) (D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families)

[Military/DoD Childcare Fee Assistance and Respite](#) (Child Care Aware of America)

[Should Military Spouses Have to Sacrifice Their Careers?](#) (SHRM)

[Helping Military Spouses Find Careers that Move with Them](#) (D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families)

Caregivers

Military caregivers can best be supported by developing supervisors' and co-workers' understanding of their unique needs, and by providing flexibility and accommodations for their caregiving activities. Inside your organization, providing connections to other military families, employee resource groups (ERGs) (see page 56 for more) or similar networking connections is a good start. Best practices for caregivers in general are applicable, but employers should be aware that additional sources of support specifically designed for military caregivers can also be offered as meaningful resources.

Employer resources for supporting caregivers include:

[Supporting Employee Caregivers](#) (SHRM)

[Employer Best Practices for Workers with Caregiving Responsibilities](#) (EEOC)

[The Military and Veteran Caregiver Map — the Caregiver Journey](#)
(Elizabeth Dole Foundation)

[Free Help for Military and Veteran Caregivers](#) (Elizabeth Dole Foundation)

National Guard and Reserves

The most common retention consideration for members of the National Guard and Reserves is ensuring their rights under [USERRA](#), which entitles them to return to work after periods of active military service, reserve duty, disaster relief and/or training. USERRA lays out the rights and responsibilities of both the employee and the employer. (See “Assessing Your Resources” on page 30 for more about USERRA.)

Employer resources on USERRA include:

[How to Administer Military Leave Benefits Under USERRA](#) (SHRM)

[USERRA Compliance Assistance](#) (DOL)

[Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve — Employer FAQ](#) (DoD)

Additional Considerations for Military-Connected Talent

Some topics addressed in this section, such as mental health and wellness programs, are relevant to all employees, but paying attention to military-specific concerns that might arise in these domains will improve your ability to accommodate and support military-connected talent with these needs.

Disabled Veterans

Many Americans live and work with disabilities. The [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) found that around 44% of post-9/11 veterans reported a service-connected disability and around 73% of veterans with a service-connected disability participate in the workforce. These disabilities could be visible (e.g., amputation) or invisible (e.g., traumatic brain injury, PTSD, tinnitus) combat injuries that are associated with prior military service; however, many veterans will have disabilities like those of their civilian peers, such as diabetes, injuries or hearing loss. Regardless, employers should foster understanding within the workplace and be aware of veteran-specific provisions in regulations such as the ADA.



LEARN MORE ABOUT EMPLOYING VETERANS WITH DISABILITIES	
RESOURCE	ABOUT
Veterans and the Americans with Disabilities Act: A Guide for Employers	This guide from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) provides an overview and FAQs for disability protections specific to veterans.
How Managers Can Move Employees with Disabilities into Leadership	This SHRM article highlights how individuals with disabilities can benefit from a safe environment where their disability can be recognized. Veterans often have leadership experience, so using specific strategies to have candid discussions with disabled employees could help better identify veterans for leadership roles in your organization — or at the very least could help support engagement and retention.
The Veteran Advantage: DAV Guide to Hiring & Retaining Veterans with Disabilities	This guide from DAV, beginning from Chapter 4, details strategies for retaining veterans with disabilities, including providing military culture awareness training for all employees and having conversations that engage veteran employees in developing appropriate disability accommodations.
Supporting Employee Caregivers	This SHRM article discusses research on the challenges faced by employees who are caregivers and highlights important actions employers can take to support them, such as providing flexibility in day-to-day and PTO scheduling.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for Military-Connected Talent

[EAPs](#) are cost-effective ways for organizations to support a range of needs or problems that may occur in an employee’s personal life and that may affect that employee’s ability to perform their job. The SHRM toolkit [Managing Employee Assistance Programs](#) provides an overview of EAPs, including general guidance on how to design or select an EAP vendor.

When thinking about military-connected employees, consider whether your EAP plan effectively addresses the types of needs most likely to be encountered by these individuals.

For example, the [DAV Guide to Hiring and Retaining Veterans with Disabilities](#) recommends reviewing and utilizing veteran-friendly EAP resources including:

[VA Toolkit for Veteran-Friendly EAP Practices](#)

[VA Toolkit for Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\) Providers](#)

[D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families Leading Practices: Assimilation and Employee Assistance](#)

Evaluate your approach to EAPs for other military-connected talent such as military spouses, caregivers, or members of the National Guard and Reserves by ensuring that the needs and considerations of these specific groups are addressed in EAP programming. Determine if there are enough targeted resources to support common challenges these unique military-connected groups encounter.

Mental Health and Wellness

In general, there are many good resources to support employee mental health and wellness initiatives within your organization. Some SHRM resources include:

[How to Accommodate Employees with Mental Illness](#)

[Creating a Mental-Health-Friendly Workplace](#)

[Mental Illness and the Workplace](#)



For military-connected individuals, the comprehensive guidebook from Hiring Our Heroes called [Wellbeing in the Workplace: A Practical Guide for Businesses](#) is one of the best resources for ensuring that mental health and wellness programs meet their unique needs. This up-to-date guidebook includes:

- ★ Practical actions all organizations can take to overcome and reduce the stigma that can inhibit help-seeking in their organization.
- ★ Guidance on creating a proactive approach to health, wellness and inclusion.

- ★ Examples of wellness programs from real-world organizations such as the VA and Deloitte (see resources linked above).
- ★ An appendix with links to dozens of resources that support mental health in general and for the military-connected community specifically.



Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

In contrast to EAPs that focus on addressing personal problems in an employee’s life, ERGs encourage employees to build deeper connections with others in the organization. ERGs can create a sense of belonging and buy-in from employees and help individuals with diverse backgrounds to connect with mentors, build a social community and contribute their best ideas in a welcoming, professional environment.

SHRM resources for designing and supporting ERGs include:

[Employee Resource Groups Create a Sense of Belonging, Foster Engagement](#)

[Use ERGs to Effect Change, Spark Innovation](#)

MORE ON HR GUIDANCE

You can find more information for HR professionals on topics like [ERGs](#) by using SHRM’s Express Requests resource. [Express Requests Trending Topics](#) provides up-to-date guidance on a variety of employment issues, many of which are discussed throughout this guide. This resource provides general information on the HR topics that underlie your strategies for incorporating military-connected employees.

ERGs for military-connected talent can bridge the cultural gap between civilian and military employees by helping military-connected individuals find others in their organization who understand their circumstances and can help them navigate the company culture.

[Leading Practices: Business Resource Groups — Your Force Multiplier](#), a report from Veteran Jobs Mission, outlines the many different types of ERGs organizations have for military-connected groups, such as:

- ★ Veterans.
- ★ National Guard and Reserve members.
- ★ Family members and military spouses (including of National Guard/Reservists).
- ★ Veterans and National Guard/Reserve members with mental health needs.
- ★ Veterans and National Guard/Reserve members with physical disabilities.

The report indicates that these groups should aim to provide participants with mentoring, subject matter expertise, networking and/or volunteering opportunities. It also makes the business case for how ERGs can help support an organization’s overall efforts around military-connected talent, including recruitment, retention, talent development and consumer relations.

The [Blackstone Veterans Initiative](#) is an excellent example of a comprehensive program for military-connected talent spanning hiring, internships and affinity groups across a firm’s portfolio of companies.



Mentoring Strategies

Creating a peer-to-peer mentoring or “buddy” program is often recommended as a best practice for military-connected employees. Service members are used to working in teams, so pairing a military-connected individual with a mentor who has similar life experiences can help them better integrate into your organization.

Resources on mentoring programs include:

[SHRM: Why Mentorship Will Help Veterans Transitioning to Civilians](#)

[Veteran Jobs Mission JPMorgan Chase Pathfinder Playbook](#)

[eMentor Program for Military Personnel, Veterans and Military Spouses](#)

[American Corporate Partners Veteran and Spouse Mentorship](#)

Education and Training Opportunities

Military-connected talent — including veterans, military spouses, members of the National Guard and Reserves, and dependent family members — may all have opportunities to take advantage of education benefits such as the GI Bill. If done well, supporting employees' and their families' learning or education opportunities can be an effective retention strategy. To be successful with military-connected talent, employers should be aware of the unique educational support available to military-connected individuals.

Resources for supporting education and training for military-connected talent include:



[SHRM How Learning and Development Can Attract — and Retain — Talent](#)

[VA Education and Training Benefits](#)

[D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families Onward to Opportunity — Free Career Training](#)

[Hiring Our Heroes Career Services, Fellowships and Education](#)

[Student Veterans of America](#)

[Microsoft Software and Systems Academy \(MSSA\)](#)

[LinkedIn Premium Access and LinkedIn Learning for Veterans](#)

[Salesforce Military — Training Program](#)

[Cisco Networking Academy — Linux and Cybersecurity Courses for Military-Connected Talent](#)

Deployment and Relocation Support

For National Guard members, Reservists, newly transitioned veterans and military spouses, there is a possibility that a military service member in the household will be asked to deploy for a mission, provide disaster relief, serve on active duty, and/or relocate to another place or duty station (called a “permanent change of station,” or PCS). Employers should be familiar with legal requirements to accommodate military deployments and be prepared to offer flexibility and support for employees and their families during these temporary events.

The SHRM toolkit [Managing Military Leave and Military Family Leave](#) provides detailed, step-by-step directions on how to identify and comply with federal and/or state laws related to leave for individuals called up or volunteering for military service, their spouses or family members, and those returning from such service. The toolkit covers the military leave process from start to finish, including resources for reinstatement and managing compensation and benefits during and after absences.

Specific additional guidance for deployment of National Guard and Reserve members include:

[FAQs for FEMA \(Federal Emergency Management Agency\) Deployments](#)

[VA Employment Toolkit for Supporting Your Employees in the Reserve and National Guard](#)

Specific additional guidance and resources for supporting military spouses and caregivers include:

[DOL Fact Sheet #28M: Using FMLA Leave Because of a Family Member’s Military Service](#)

[DOL Fact Sheet #28M\(b\): Military Caregiver Leave for a Veteran under the Family and Medical Leave Act](#)

[Child Care Aware of America Fee Assistance for Military Families](#)

MORE ON USERRA

The Civilian Reservist Emergency Workforce Act of 2021 extended the protections of USERRA to include National Guard members and Reservists who deploy in support of major disaster sites. Compliance, resources and other up-to-date information related to USERRA can be found on the [DOL USERRA website](#). (See “Assessing Your Resources” on page 30.)

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION CHECKLIST		
GOAL	ACTION	COMPLETED
Implement best practices for military-connected talent.	Create a plan to regularly communicate military-connected talent policies and opportunities to develop military cultural competence throughout your organization.	
	Focus on resources and training for managers who will be working with military-connected talent.	
	Seek out formal relationships with veteran-serving organizations or other military-related community organizations that can support your military-connected talent and their families.	
	Track your progress through recruitment and retention metrics to improve your military-connected talent engagement over the long term.	
Develop engagement and retention strategies for different types of military-connected talent.	Review resources for VETERANS. Investigate how to support veterans and how to train HR staff and supervisors to work with them.	
	Review resources for MILITARY SPOUSES. Understand the nature of military service and ensure proper flexibility and support resources.	
	Review resources for CAREGIVERS. Provide meaningful support, compassion and acknowledgment of caregiver needs.	
	Review resources for NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MEMBERS. Understand and support USERRA rights and responsibilities.	

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND RETENTION CHECKLIST		
GOAL	ACTION	COMPLETED
Review other employer resources and adapt for military-connected talent as necessary.	Review DISABILITY policies. Coordinate military cultural competence training with disability support and follow veteran-specific components of the ADA.	
	Review EMPLOYEE PROGRAMS to ensure military talent needs are addressed within your EAP, ERGs, mentoring and/or mental health and wellness programs.	
	Review TRAINING AND EDUCATION SUPPORT policies. Communicate and leverage the fact that military-connected individuals may have access to many professional development opportunities and resources.	
	Review LEAVE policies. Ensure that groups like military spouses, active-duty service members, and/or members of the National Guard and Reserves have appropriate support for deployment or relocation.	

MOVING UP

Promotion and Development

A well-planned employee development program is a good investment for most employers, but especially for those that hire military-connected talent. The key to fully leveraging these employees' potential is to identify what each employee brings to the workplace and fully utilize their skills to create a competitive advantage.



ASSESS YOUR ORGANIZATION

Employee development is a two-way street: employers must also assess what they can offer to and what they have to gain from hiring military-connected talent. Employer self-assessment is essential, because research finds that the likelihood veterans will leave their first job increases when they are not able to fully use their skills and abilities. Further, veterans report their next role is often a promotion with better opportunities, more responsibilities and a higher salary. Understandably, they learn about the civilian workplace through early post-transition employment, including how they fit in, how to apply their skills, and how those skills are communicated and valued.

Adapting Employee Development Best Practices to Military-Connected Talent

Many of the same approaches used to promote employee development in general are successful for military-connected talent. The table below demonstrates how to adapt employee development best practices found in the SHRM toolkit [Developing Employees](#) to military-connected employees.



ADAPTING YOUR EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM	
BEST PRACTICES	QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT MILITARY-CONNECTED TALENT
<p>Seek executive support. Ensure executives understand and agree to the role of development in the workforce plan, succession process and/or retention program.</p>	<p>Do military-connected talent initiatives require dedicated resources (e.g., training programs, awards, special recognition)? Is leadership support communicated internally (e.g., to hiring managers, program managers and HR staff) and externally (e.g., via website)?</p>
<p>Involve management. If there is executive support, chances are high that management will pay attention to employee development. Managers play a vital role, ensuring a connection between development strategy and real-world implementation.</p> <p>See Unlocking the Potential of the Veteran Workforce.</p>	<p>Do managers understand the business case and “why” for developing military-connected employees? Is the development strategy clear? Is cultural competence training needed or being used well?</p> <p>Cement the importance of company buy-in across leadership, recruiters and hiring managers. This may include sharing anecdotes and success stories and/or identifying hiring managers who are successfully engaging with military-connected employees. Help stakeholders understand how skills used by military-connected individuals might be applied to open positions, especially when it is not apparent or obvious.</p>

ADAPTING YOUR EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

BEST PRACTICES	QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT MILITARY-CONNECTED TALENT
<p>Tie employee development to performance management. The employer must be clear about how development fits into the performance management process. Managers should differentiate between short-term plans for projects, long-term plans for the organization, career development plans for the employee and skill-building for immediate performance deficiencies. Each should be handled at the appropriate phase of the performance management process.</p>	<p>Do military-connected employees understand how their performance is evaluated and what is considered “job success”?</p> <p>Is there a plan in place to develop skill deficits, work toward promotion goals and/or advance to new opportunities?</p> <p>Are there opportunities for upskilling, education support, mentoring and informed decision-making?</p>
<p>Assess and adjust workloads. Be realistic about what an employee’s workload will be while in training and make adjustments as needed.</p> <p>See No Time for Training? Consider Role-Specific Learning, Reassessing Workload.</p>	<p>Are workloads accounting for time to build skills and develop in the organization according to organizational and individual needs?</p> <p>Are you taking the time to develop and mentor high-performing individuals “where they’re at” to ensure they have the right mix of experience, skills and personal qualities to assume additional organizational responsibilities and leadership roles?</p>
<p>Understand what the employee values. Knowing what each employee values and how that relates to development needs should shape the development activities provided for the employee and, ultimately, the success of such activities.</p>	<p>Have development activities been customized to meet the individual’s needs? Have supervisors received training to help them understand how military culture may shape individual motivation?</p>
<p>Know the desired outcome. Have a clear understanding of exactly which skills will be enhanced by employee development initiatives.</p>	<p>Are the development activities appropriate and tailored to the employee’s unique areas of desired growth and development? Are the skill needs that are unique to military-connected talent, such as adapting to the civilian workplace, being addressed?</p>

Employee Development Tools to Consider for Military-Connected Employees

Affinity groups are considered a best practice for employers that wish to hire military-connected talent. Affinity groups can provide informal opportunities for military-connected employees to find colleagues, mentors and teammates with whom they have a common background and can receive informal mentoring, as well as a sense of camaraderie and belonging.

Mentoring or “buddy” programs are effective for engaging and onboarding, and a formal mentoring program can also be an excellent tool for developing and advancing military-connected talent. Service members are especially used to structured teamwork, and military experiences often develop leadership abilities at all levels that can be further developed at your organization through formal mentoring programs.

Recognition programs for military-connected talent are a great way to improve retention. Partnering with veterans and military service organizations to offer awards, recognition and/or service opportunities can create a culture that demonstrates a recognition of their contributions to the organization. Recognizing veterans and other military-connected employees on specific military-related holidays, service branch birthdays and specific, meaningful days (e.g., 9/11), and providing military coins, lanyards or T-shirts that recognize their status as military-connected, can help them feel included and recognized. Foster a military-informed culture within the organization through programs and ceremonies that recognize the contributions of military-connected individuals to the organization.

Existing training and certification programs offered to the military community can be leveraged to provide continuous learning opportunities to military-connected individuals. Military families have access to valuable educational benefits such as the [Post-9/11 GI Bill](#) or [MyCAA](#) for military spouses. Military-connected talent often has access to free or low-cost professional development that leads to industry-recognized certifications.



For example:

- ★ [Onward to Opportunity \(O2O\)](#) provides several pathways to certifications that can help veterans develop valuable skills such as those needed for project management, information technology and human resources.
- ★ [The Hiring Our Heroes Fellowship Program](#) facilitates an internship program where host companies can train, evaluate and hire the best military talent.
- ★ [The DoD SkillBridge](#) program connects employers and service members with opportunities to provide on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs where “employers craft SkillBridge programs to meet their specific workforce needs, matching those needs to the skills and abilities of highly motivated service members, all at no cost.”⁹

Talent Development for Veterans

Employers should be proactive in developing veteran employees. Promoting purpose, providing feedback, identifying upskilling opportunities, sharing examples of success and/or connecting them with mentors to better understand how to succeed in their roles are some concrete ways employers can help.

The sections on the following pages detail ways to engage and develop veterans, including by:

- ★ Promoting purpose.
- ★ Providing a road map.
- ★ Identifying exemplars and institutionalizing opportunities.
- ★ Looking for skill adjacencies.



⁹ <https://skillbridge.osd.mil/industry-employers.htm>

Promoting Purpose

Many veterans have an intrinsic need to find meaning and purpose in their work. In fact, the mission-driven nature of military service may have drawn them to serve in the first place. Employers can help veterans find purpose in their new role by reinforcing the “how” and “why” of the veteran’s assigned work role, conveying how the veteran contributes to the performance objectives of their team and the overall organization, and communicating the vision of the organization.



Partnering with local and regional military support organizations is another way employers can provide purpose for their employees. Through these partnerships, employers can offer meaningful opportunities for employees to engage and serve within the community as well as build a culture of camaraderie. In fact, camaraderie is often cited by veterans as a missing component after their military transition. Providing these service opportunities may help to ease the transition into the civilian world.¹⁰ An added benefit of community-based partnerships for employers is that, if these relationships are developed strategically, community partners can help identify future military-connected employees while positively promoting your organization.¹¹

Some select national service organizations that provide regional and local volunteer opportunities for employers include the following:

[Blue Star Families \(BSF\)](#) empowers families, helping them thrive as they serve. BSF is committed to strengthening military families by connecting them with their neighbors and creating communities where they feel supported.

[Team Rubicon](#) unites the skills and experiences of military veterans with first responders to rapidly deploy emergency response teams to communities affected by natural disaster.

¹⁰ <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/building-a-veteran-informed-culture.aspx>

¹¹ <https://www.hiringourheroes.org/reasons-for-recruiting-veterans-for-your-company/>

The Mission Continues empowers veterans who are adjusting to life at home to find purpose through community impact. The organization “deploys” veterans on new missions in their communities so their actions will inspire future generations to serve.

Team Red, White and Blue focuses on enriching the lives of America’s veterans by connecting them to their community through physical and social activity.

Military Family Advisory Network (MFAN) works to understand the needs of military-connected families, amplify them and inspire data-informed change.

Pat Tillman Foundation seeks to unite and empower remarkable military veterans and spouses as the next generation of public- and private-sector leaders committed to service beyond the self.

Student Veterans of America (SVA) ensures that student veterans and military-connected students achieve their greatest potential through a network of more than 1,500 on-campus chapters.

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS) is a national nonprofit organization providing compassionate care and comprehensive resources for all those grieving the death of a military or veteran loved one.

Travis Manion Foundation empowers veterans and families of fallen heroes to develop character in future generations.

VETERATI partners with the nation’s leading veteran service organizations and military employers to deliver free, on-demand mentoring to our entire military community.



Providing a Road Map

Structure, consistent feedback and a clearly defined career progression with definitive requirements are defining characteristics of most military careers. In contrast, the civilian career path is not nearly as clear cut. Ambiguity, lack of transparency and/or confusion about how to achieve success and a positive career progression are often cited as reasons why veterans leave their civilian roles.

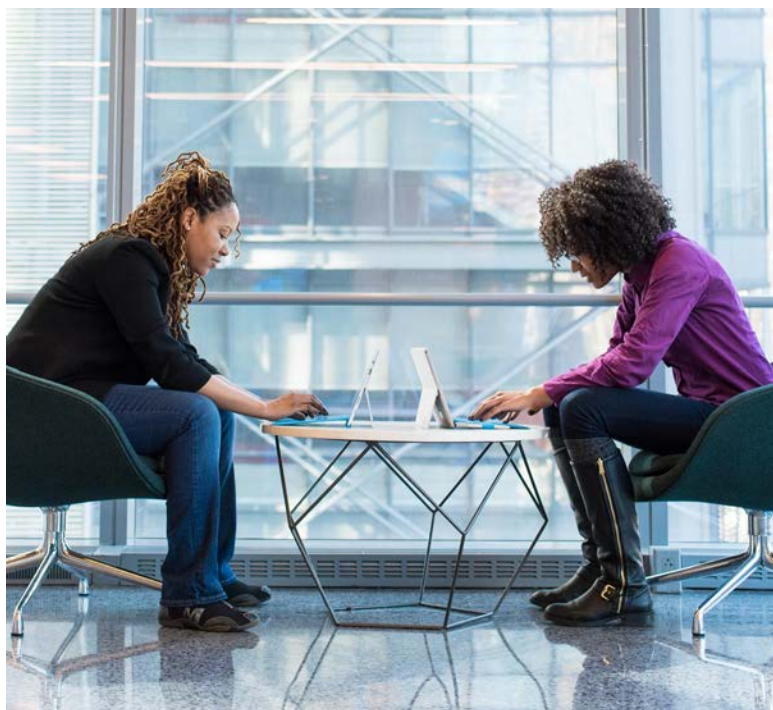
The good news is that employers can help reduce ambiguity for veteran employees by:

- ★ Having clear, written policies that help veteran employees understand the promotion and evaluation process.
- ★ Sharing existing resources that are available to help them, answering questions they may have and assessing their goals early in their tenure.
- ★ Regularly revisiting and sharing the resources, learning opportunities and assessment processes often shared only during onboarding.

Specifically, employers can share opportunities for further development, training and certification, as well as opportunities to expand, move, repurpose and/or refocus as needed. Organizations that want to retain veteran talent need to be clear about promotion pathways, opportunities for new challenges and customized employee development to help each employee reach their goals, upskill and utilize the very attributes that made them a sought-after job candidate.¹²

Identifying Exemplars and Institutionalizing Opportunities

It is common within military culture to learn through the guidance of more senior or experienced individuals. For this reason, veterans will naturally seek out and act on opportunities to emulate organizational exemplars or mentors. Supervisors can help develop veteran employees by identifying appropriate mentors and being transparent about which peers and colleagues are high performers and why. Similarly, military spouses may benefit from having the support of others facing similar challenges such as deployments, caregiving and/or challenges related to relocation.



¹² <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/building-a-veteran-informed-culture.aspx>

Mentoring, sponsorship and regular opportunities to connect through ERGs are examples of how employers can institutionalize these opportunities. This can be facilitated by:

- ★ Offering online tools for veteran employees to locate available company resources.
- ★ Providing a secure forum for veteran employees to receive advice on transitioning into the workplace.
- ★ Offering recently hired veteran employees mentoring and coaching.
- ★ Creating ERGs that are employee-led and encouraging veteran participation and engagement.



MORE ON ERGS

Veteran-focused employee resource groups represent one of the best ways to empower veteran employees to find resources, mentoring and/or support that fits their unique needs in ways that are familiar and effective. Learn more about building veteran-specific groups from the Veteran Jobs Mission report [Veteran Resource Groups: Your Force Multiplier](#).

Looking for Skill Adjacencies

The precise skills veterans bring to the workplace are not always obvious to a civilian employer. Sometimes there is no direct civilian equivalent for the work a veteran did while in the military. This makes it hard for some veterans to translate their experience to a new civilian role.¹³ At the same time, some prefer to do something new and different from what they did previously in the military. Regardless, many veterans can apply the soft skills learned in the military (e.g., leadership, teamwork, responsibility) even when they may prefer work in a new career field.¹⁴ Understanding an individual's personal goals can help employers identify skill development opportunities that will benefit both the employee and the employer.

¹³ https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/tools/TL100/TL160-1/RAND_TL160-1.pdf

¹⁴ C. Zoli, R. Maury, & D. Fay (2015). [Missing Perspectives: Servicemembers' Transition from Service to Civilian Life — Data-Driven Research to Enact the Promise of the Post-9/11 GI Bill](#). D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.

Veteran employees often have specific competencies that are related to their new role,¹⁵ but these competencies may not be immediately evident to their employer or manager. Skills assessments and efforts to understand the nature of veterans' prior experiences can help managers recognize where those skills can be applied, utilized and/or further developed. Likewise, this can help veterans identify where they could augment their skills, promotion opportunities they had not considered and/or areas of interest that allow them to pursue a meaningful career goal.

MORE ON SKILLS ASSESSMENTS

To learn more about strategies to assess skills and identify opportunities for better development and alignment, read the SHRM article [Address Skills Gap by Identifying 'Skill Adjacencies'](#).

Talent Development for Military Spouses and Caregivers

As employees, military spouses and caregivers often have different needs from veterans. Although they are directly impacted by a family member's service, the way these military experiences affect their work often depends on that family's unique circumstances. The key to understanding and developing military spouse and caregiver talent is to recognize and embrace this diversity of experience.

The sections on the following pages outline four approaches to developing employees who are military spouses or caregivers:

- ★ Using a focused talent development strategy.
- ★ Being mindful of job portability.
- ★ Considering flexibility.
- ★ Offering benefits support.



¹⁵ Bradbard, D.A., N.A. Armstrong, & Maury, R. (2016). [Work After Service: Developing Workforce Readiness and Veteran Talent for the Future](#). D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.

Using a Focused Talent Development Strategy

Military spouses and caregivers are diverse; they differ in terms of race, ethnicity, age and cultural background. Some military spouses have military service themselves and prefer to identify themselves as a veteran rather than a military spouse, whereas other spouses may not wish to identify themselves as military-affiliated at all.

They also differ in other ways, including in their education, work histories and workforce needs relative to their military status.¹⁶ For instance, a spouse with a deployed service member may need different types of support from their employer than one without a deployed service member. It is always best to talk to spouses individually, rather than making assumptions, to determine exactly how employers can help. A “one size fits all” talent development strategy is not advisable.

Rather, employers can allow opportunities for military spouse employees to self-identify. This, coupled with an approach that incorporates cultural competence training, will enable your HR team to assess the individual needs of each employee to determine how to customize the development approach. Keep in mind, some military spouses will not wish to self-identify and would rather keep their military affiliation private.¹⁷

Special considerations for military spouses and caregivers can include the following:

- ★ For those who prefer the support of other military spouses, ERGs specifically for military spouses can provide peer support, targeted training and learning opportunities.



¹⁶ <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/data-research-and-statistics/military-community-demographics/2021-demographics-profile/>

¹⁷ Bradbard, D.A., Linsner, R, Maury, R., & Pitoniak, A. (2019). [Job Portability Research Brief: Helping Military Spouses Find Careers that Move with Them](#). D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.

- ★ Some employers find that customized hiring portals can enable targeted development opportunities once an employee is hired. Additionally, employers can identify advancement and upskilling opportunities.¹⁸
- ★ Some spouses may choose not to self-identify when they are recruited because they worry they will not be hired due to certain stigmas often associated with having a spouse in the military (e.g., an expectation that they will quickly relocate), but they may self-identify once they've established a relationship with their employer.

Regardless, employers can offer these customized opportunities because they create a culture of respect, recognition and concern around military spouse employees.

MORE ON EMPLOYING MILITARY SPOUSES

For a comprehensive guide developed for HR professionals to improve their ability to hire, engage, develop and succeed with military spouse employees, check out [The Force Behind the Force: Training, Leveraging, and Communicating About Military Spouses as Employees](#) from the D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families.

Being Mindful of Job Portability

Military spouses miss opportunities for sustained employment when they relocate without the benefit of job portability. This reduces their employment longevity advancement opportunities, and sometimes leads to unemployment or underemployment. The consequences of serial unemployment can have a ripple effect that influences their long-term career and financial trajectories. Due to repeated relocations, military spouses often sacrifice employment benefits such as seniority, promotion and long-term retirement savings.

Employers can mitigate these issues and ensure the continued development of military spouse employees by working to retain high-performing employee



¹⁸ [Employing Military Spouses — The Force Behind the Force Series](#) (2021). Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University.

spouses through portable job opportunities whenever possible. The D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families guide [Helping Military Spouses Find Careers that Move with Them](#) provides additional insights into how job portability can impact and support military spouse employees.

When employers do have the flexibility and capability to offer portable careers, they can simultaneously minimize some of the employment challenges faced by military spouses, create a viable pathway to retain top performers, maximize their investment and achieve a competitive advantage. They also gain incredibly talented and loyal employees.

Considering Flexibility

Military spouses and caregivers may need more work flexibility due to their having to balance the competing demands of work and family, having a deployed partner, caregiving, being a de-facto single parent, and/or manage sequential relocations. Some flexible policies that can help military spouses include leave policies that allow spouses to spend time with their service member who has returned from a deployment or is about to leave, work-from-home opportunities to care for sick children, remote or hybrid work arrangements, and/or flexible work hours to attend medical appointments.



Flexibility is especially important for caregivers. There are approximately 5.5 million people — most of them family members — who assume the role of caregiver, providing unpaid care for service members and veterans.¹⁹ The Elizabeth Dole Foundation developed [Supporting Military and Veteran Caregivers in the Workplace: A Practical Guide for Employers](#) to help employers support working caregivers through increased flexibility. The recommendations include:

- ★ Virtual, remote or flexible scheduling opportunities to accommodate caregivers’ schedules.
- ★ Case managers to recommend legal, financial and health care resources.
- ★ Flexibility to use respite care for emergencies.

¹⁹ <https://hiddenheroes.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Military-Caregiving-Employer-Toolkit.pdf>

- ★ Connection to military service organizations and associations.
- ★ Benefits to assist with tuition assistance so these individuals can upskill, be promoted and/or increase earnings.



Offering Benefits Support

Military spouses and caregivers typically need the same benefits support as other employees; however, certain aspects of military life can create unique situations that they must navigate. Military spouses may need benefits that work in different states or countries, for example, or they may face challenges with vesting policies for employer-sponsored retirement plans.

[The Hidden Financial Costs of Military Spouse Unemployment](#), a report from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation Hiring Our Heroes initiative and the D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families, contains some powerful findings about how military spouses navigate benefits, including the following:

- ★ When military spouses can access employer-sponsored retirement plans, their confidence in their post-retirement standard of living increases.
- ★ More than half of active-duty survey participants reported they were “never” or “rarely” able to fully vest in their employer-sponsored retirement benefits because they were not with an employer long enough to qualify.
- ★ Those who frequently took full advantage of employer-sponsored retirement benefits were more likely to feel very or extremely confident in their ability to maintain their standard of living in retirement.

Military spouses will most likely have access to the military-specific health care plan known as Tricare. However, some spouses may prefer to opt in to their employer-sponsored plan, use it as a supplemental insurance option, or access partial benefits such as vision or dental insurance. Military spouses should be provided all the information that would help them make the best decision for themselves, and no assumptions should be made about what they are likely to choose.

MORE ON CAREGIVERS

Caregivers are more likely to experience mental, physical and financial strain than their non-caregiving counterparts. SHRM has identified [resources to help caregivers in the workplace](#), as they are more likely to need specific benefits such as paid time off, flexible work schedules and/or support in finding resources, like through an employee assistance program.

Talent Development for National Guard and Reserve Members

Members of the National Guard and Reserves do not generally differ from other employees in terms of their development needs in the workplace.

However, because they may be required to enter and exit their civilian jobs due to training, mobilization and/or deployment, it is essential that employers and employees work together using proactive communication to ensure the smoothest transitions possible. It is recommended that employers develop written employee leave policies that provide guidelines for the employee prior to, during and after their military leave.



MORE ON NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVES

The VA provides a sample military leave policy in the [Planning for Military Leave for Employees in the Reserve and National Guard](#) section of its Veterans Employment Toolkit.

PROMOTION AND DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST		
GOAL	ACTION	COMPLETED
Adapt employee development best practices for military-connected talent.	Identify and update employee development best practices.	
	Review the table in this guide (see page 63) to identify questions you should be asking of your existing employee development practices that are unique to military-connected talent.	
	Identify and implement best practices for military-connected talent, including affinity groups, mentoring programs, recognition programs, and/or opportunities to leverage external training and development resources uniquely available to military-connected individuals.	
Create talent development opportunities for each type of military-connected talent.	For VETERANS, develop talent by promoting purpose, providing a road map, identifying exemplars and institutionalizing opportunities, and looking for skill adjacencies.	
	For MILITARY SPOUSES AND CAREGIVERS, use a focused talent development strategy, be mindful of job portability, consider flexibility and offer benefits support.	
	For NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE MEMBERS, implement similar strategies as with veterans, but recognize and plan for mobilization and/or deployment contingencies.	



For questions, contact us at SHRMFoundation@shrm.org.
For more information and resources, please visit SHRMFoundation.org. Thank you!