

Cornell University
ILR School
Employment and Disability Institute

Heroes at Work: Effective strategies for employing veterans with disabilities

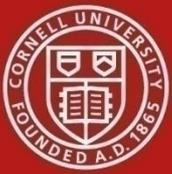
**Oct 4, 2012
EARN Webinar**



Hannah Rudstam, Ph.D. Northeast ADA Center, Cornell University

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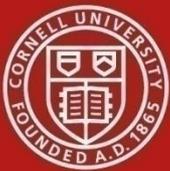
Employer Assistance and Resource Network



Goals of Session

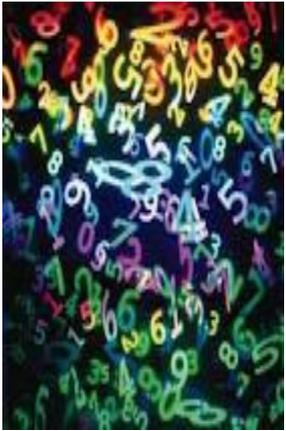


- Veterans with disabilities and employment: A look at some numbers
- About veterans' disabilities
- Strategies and practices

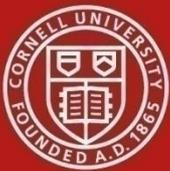


Highlights: Some numbers...

- 21.8 million veterans in U.S. population
- 4.8 million U.S. troops deployed since 1990
- 9.6 million veterans in the workforce
- 26% have college degree (28% of the total population)
- 12.1% unemployment rate 2011 Gulf War Era veterans (8.7% overall)
- 29.1% unemployment rate of Gulf War Era young male veterans (17.9%)

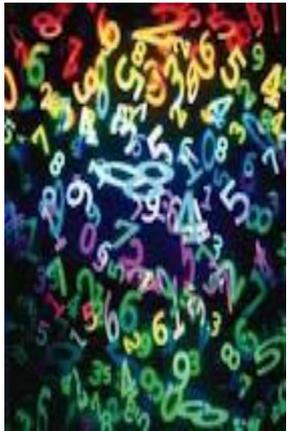


- U.S. Census Bureau (2011). *Profile America: Facts for Features Veterans Day 2011*. Accessed at www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb11-ff23.html
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011). *Employment Situation of Veterans 2011*. Accessed at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.nr0.htm>



About Service-Connected Disability*

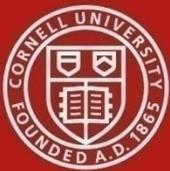
- At least ¼ of Gulf War Era II vets: Diagnosed service-connected disability
- 26% of all veterans living in poverty have a disability
- Increase in the number of veterans reporting a service-connected disability (National Center for Veterans Analysis & Statistics, 2012):
 - 1996: About 2.2 million veterans reported a service-connected disability
 - 2011: About 3.4 million veterans



*“Signature disabilities”--PTSD, TBI and depression

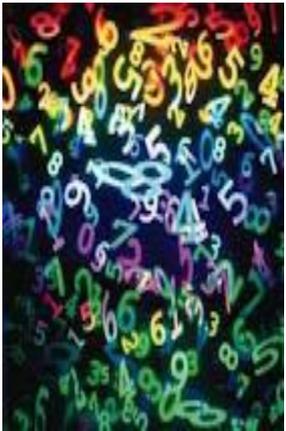
- U.S. Census Bureau (2011). *Profile America: Facts for Features Veterans Day 2011*. Accessed at www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/facts_for_features_special_editions/cb11-ff23.html
- U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011). *Employment Situation of Veterans 2011*. Accessed at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.nr0.htm>
- National Center for Veterans Analysis & Statistics. (2012). *Trends in Veterans with a Service-Connected Disability: FY1985 to FY2011*. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Accessed at http://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/QuickFacts/SCD_quickfacts_FY2011_FINAL.pdf.

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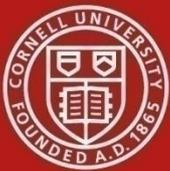


About PTSD: A hot button issue

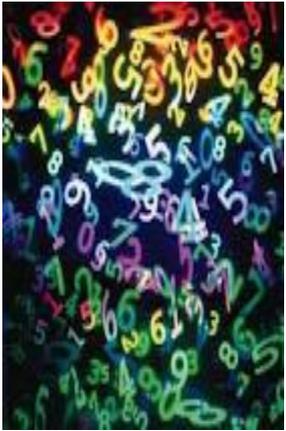
- A critical review of the literature by Richardson, Frueh & Acierno (2010) places the rate of PTSD at **4% - 17%**
- Tanielan & Jaycox, though, place the rate of PTSD among returning veterans at **about 19%**



- Richardson, L., Frueh, C, Acierno, R. (2010). Prevalence Estimates of Combat-Related PTSD: A Critical Review. *National Institutes of Health Public Access Manuscript*. Accessed at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2891773>.
- Tanielan T, Jaycox, L, (Eds.) (2008). *Invisible wounds of war: Psychological and cognitive injuries, their consequences, and services to assist recovery*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Center for Military Health Policy. Accessed at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG720.html>.

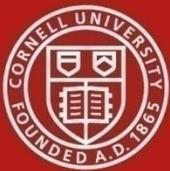


About TBI



- Tanielan & Jaycox (2008) found that **about one-in-five** returning veterans had TBI, the most common being a “pressure wave” close-head TBI
- Type of weaponry & combat result in increase in close-head TBI (US DoD, 2011)
 - Total casualties: **54,509**
 - Largest reason code--WEAPONRY, EXPLOSIVE DEVICE: **34,647**

- Tanielan T, Jaycox, L, (Eds.) (2008). *Invisible wounds of war: Psychological and cognitive injuries, their consequences, and services to assist recovery*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Center for Military Health Policy. Accessed at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG720.html>.
- US Department of Defense (DoD). (2011). Personnel and Procurement Statistics at http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/gwot_reason.pdf.

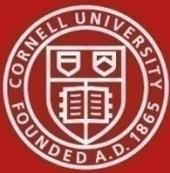


The Nature of Veterans' Disabilities

Iraq and Afghanistan vets have higher rates of signature disabilities (Williams & Mulhall, 2009)



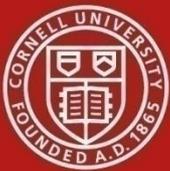
- Nature of weaponry—TBI closed-head blast injuries from roadside bombs and mortar attacks
- More vulnerable to PTSD because of street, hand-to-hand fighting and snipers
- More likely to have repeated deployments
- Not as likely to have recommended rest period between deployments
- Recruited from National Guard and Reservists—may lack the sense of shared community of enlistees



The special dynamic of these “signature” veterans’ disabilities...



- Veteran is likely still on a journey to understand the impact and meaning of the disability AFTER the return to civilian work life
- Under-diagnosed & under-reported—Inadequate screening mechanisms
- Many will not be fully diagnosed & treated until long after return to civilian life
- Change a lot over time
- Can have a wide range of symptoms and subtle manifestations
- Tend to be highly stigmatized



Consider Joe's Situation...

Two months ago, Joe, a 32 year old National Guardsman, returned from a deployment in Afghanistan. Trained as a paramedic, Joe served on a first- response medical team during his deployment. Joe was a paramedic for five years prior to his service and returned to his civilian job six weeks ago. When leaving Afghanistan, Joe was not diagnosed with any medical condition. Back on this job, however, Joe's supervisor has noticed some sudden changes in his work performance that started about three weeks ago. Normally up-beat and positive, Joe has been increasingly withdrawn from his co-workers. He seems to lack concentration and has made three mistakes while stocking the ambulance and on record-keeping. Also, Joe has called in sick three days during the last two weeks.

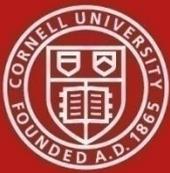


Joe has not come forward with an accommodation need. What might be the reasons?

What needs to happen now?

What kind of workplace policies and strategies would enable Joe to remain productive in his job?

What kinds of accommodations might be effective in this situation?



Consider Jane's Situation...

A member of the National Guard, Jane returned two weeks ago from a deployment in Afghanistan. Before being deployed, Jane worked as a customer support representative. During service, Jane worked with coordinating supply logistics. About two months ago, Jane was driving one of several trucks moving troops and supplies. The truck ahead of her was blown up in a roadside bomb, with significant casualties. Jane believed she was not injured in this event and went on with life as usual. But she has secretly noticed that she now faces challenges at work she didn't face before. She makes more mistakes at work, cannot remember details and suffers from headaches and dizziness throughout most of her work day. Going to her doctor, Jane was diagnosed with a mild TBI.



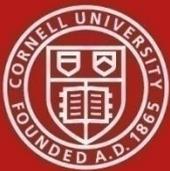
Jane has not come forward with an accommodation need. What might be the reasons?

What needs to happen now?

What kind of workplace policies and strategies would enable Jane to remain productive in her job?

What kinds of accommodations might be effective in this situation?

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Symptoms and accommodation options for PTSD and TBI often overlap:

Memory & interaction issues:

- EAP with veterans' expertise
- Reminder systems
- Alternative communication systems
- Work at home option (can be part time)
- Clarity expectations and give positive coaching/feedback
- Assign feedback partner
- Identify and work-around stressors and triggers

Sleep disturbances:

- Provide consistent schedule
- Combine short breaks into a long break for a nap
- Reduced schedule
- Temporarily exchange marginal job functions

Fine motor skills issues:

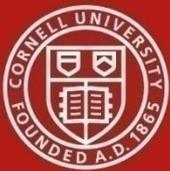
- Alternative input devices for computer
- Speech to text software
- Ergonomic phones, desks and office equipment

Large motor skills issues:

- Universal design
- Basics of accessibility



**The Job
Accommodation
Network (JAN)**
www.askjan.org



And what does this mean in the workplace?

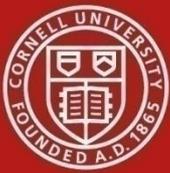
Many veterans may still be on a journey to understand the meaning of working with a disability long after they return to civilian work life

Their conditions & treatment plans may still be in the process of adjustment well into their civilian work lives



No “one size fits all.” Course of recovery and employment needs is different for each individual

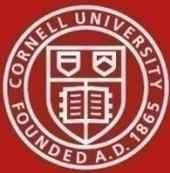
If workplaces are not disability inclusive, they are not welcoming to returning vets--Disability inclusiveness is the knot that holds together the yellow ribbon



Extend your best disability inclusiveness practices to veterans:

Ten strategies & practices for employers...

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Assess your workplace: 10 points for employers...

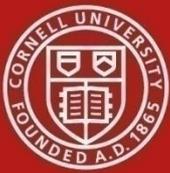
1.

Designate competence in your organization in the areas of veterans' disability benefits & policies



- Designate a source within your workplace who learns veterans' resources, benefits and programs
- Understand USERRA obligations; prepare for re-entry
- Be able to translate skills & competencies learned in the military to your organization
- Understands accommodation processes and can reach out

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Assess your workplace: 10 points for employers...

2.

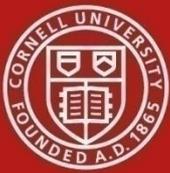
Assess the responsiveness and effectiveness of your accommodation practices



Consider a centralized accommodation function

- Better compliance with ADA AA
- Disclosure issues
- Streamline tracking system
- Relieves managers of the responsibility of judging whether the veteran has a “disability”
- More specialized understanding of accommodation options

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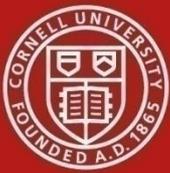
3.

Build awareness of the special workplace dynamics of the veterans' signature disabilities of PTSD and TBI



- The unfolding nature of these disabilities
- The changing nature of these disabilities
- Diagnosis alone will not be enough
- The highly-stigmatized nature of these disabilities ; unfounded, automatic assumptions
- Will people with these disabilities trust to come forward?

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Assess your workplace: 10 points for employers...

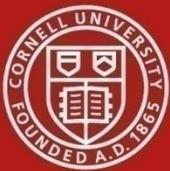
4.

Become familiar with partners, resources, and incentives



- Work Opportunity Tax Credit (WOTC), IRS Form 5884 (Contact your state's WOTC Coordinator)
- EARN resources
- CAPP
- Special hiring authorities & initiatives

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Assess your workplace: 10 points for employers...

5.

Prepare managers and supervisors...

- People with disabilities and veterans perform as well as (or better than) others in the workplace (DePaul University 2007)
- Veterans with disabilities are not more likely than others to be violent in the workplace
- Often, lowered expectations from others are more debilitating than the disability itself
- React quickly, respectfully and effectively to a sudden change in job performance or behavior of a recently returned veteran
- Separate fact from fiction; reserve judgment



DePaul University (2007). *Exploring the Bottom Line: A Study of the Costs and Benefits of Workers with Disabilities*. Accessed at <http://www.disabilityworks.org/downloads/disabilityworksDePaulStudyComprehensiveResults.pdf>.

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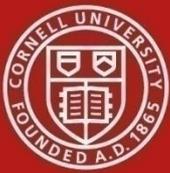


Assess your workplace: 10 points for employers...

6. Understand and implement the law around disability disclosure



- Survey findings indicated that many employers were confused about both legal and human issues around disability disclosure
- For job application process: Understand that the veteran can use discharge papers that do not contain whether a disability was related to the discharge

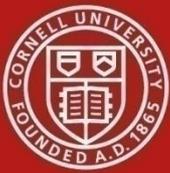


Assess your workplace: 10 points for employers...

7. De-mystify non-obvious disabilities



- Most employers “get it” when it comes to accommodating employees with obvious disabilities, such as those who use wheelchairs
- But they struggle with accommodating employees with non-obvious disabilities
- De-mystify non-obvious disabilities such as PTSD and TBI
- Enhance your accommodation repertoire



Assess your workplace: 10 points for employers...

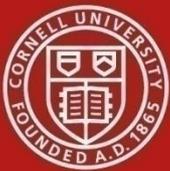
8.

Create policies around including veterans and people with disabilities in your talent acquisition process



- Survey findings showed that many HR professionals are not aware of and do not use recruitment resources that would reach veterans with disabilities.
- Find 1 – 2 staffing recruitment partners (See EARN resources)
- Do you understand the special hiring initiatives for veterans with disabilities?
 - For federal agencies, contractors or subcontractors
 - For private employers

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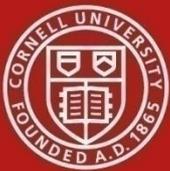


Assess your workplace: 10 points for employers...

9. Consider new types of workplace supports



- Peer supports or affinity groups for veterans or people with disabilities
- Mentoring with other veterans
- Does your EAP program have expertise in veterans' issues?



Assess your workplace: 10 points for employers...

10. Have in place a climate of trust, openness, and appreciation



- Create an environment where workers with disabilities feel comfortable coming forward with an accommodation need
- When workers come forward with a disability and accommodation need, what actually happens to them in your workplace?
- Ultimately, what happens to employees with disabilities in your organization will happen to veterans with disabilities



In a nutshell: Why is this important?

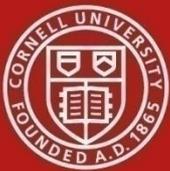


To veterans themselves: Work is part of the healing process

To businesses: Accessing a talented workforce

To the rest of us: Not repeating the mistakes of the Vietnam era

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Resources:

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1-855-ASK-EARN (1-855-275-3276)

earn@askearn.org

Support for employers in recruiting, hiring, retaining and advancing employees with disabilities.



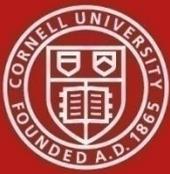
The Northeast ADA Center

1 800 949 4232:

Offering training, consulting, and technical assistance



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Thank You

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