



USBLN

Workforce/Veterans – “What Can I do to Welcome Our Veterans Back into the Workforce?”

Billy Wright

Warriors That Have Been Wounded

- You accept that employment of our returning injured veterans is a good idea for your company.
- What's next? Move from acceptance to action.

Action-Oriented Recruitment Strategies for Hiring Returning Injured Veterans

- Get your bearings
- Reach out to other employers
- Join employer networking groups
- Visit veteran services organizations
- Use your own employees as headhunters
- Education/Disability Awareness Training

Action-Oriented Recruitment Strategies for Hiring Returning Injured Veterans

- Use other sites and job boards to access veteran jobseekers with disabilities.
- Partner with educational institutions.
- Tracking/Reporting System

Hiring Resources

- Veterans Employment Specialist Locator
Visit: networker.nvti.cudenver.edu/ or call (800) 451-5759.
- Dept. of Veterans Affairs, VRE Program
Brian Radford, VRE Supervisor (P) (202) 461-9630. Email: brian.radford2@va.gov
- Employer Assistance and Resource Network
Visit: www.earnworks.com or call (866) 327-6669.

Tips on Managing Returning Injured Veterans

- Use Strategic thinking
- Understand Behavior
- Be sure that lower-level needs are met
- Appraise to motivate
- Encourage contact



Office of Disability Employment Policy U.S. Department of Labor



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Questions





Welcome!

Welcoming Our Veterans Back into the Workforce: What Can Employers Do

Hannah Rudstam, Ph.D.
Cornell University



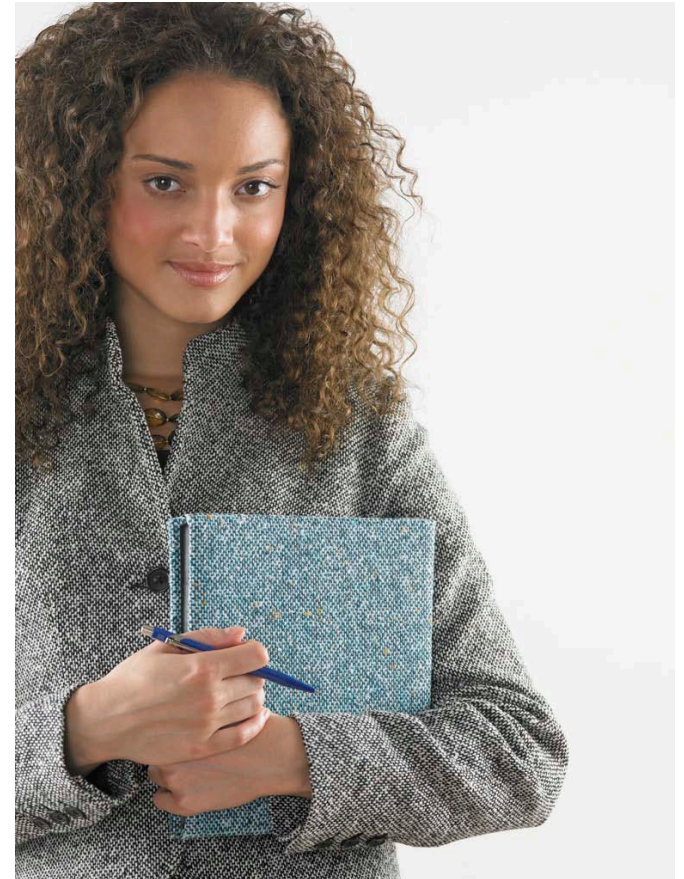
A resource...

The Disability &
Business Technical
Assistance Center
1 800 949 4232

DBTAC

National Network of ADA Centers

Offering training, consulting, and technical assistance



In a nutshell, let's consider...



Obvious and non-obvious disabilities in the
returning veteran population

Accommodating veterans with obvious and
non-obvious disabilities



By the numbers* ...

- There are 23.2 million veterans in the U.S. as of 2008
- 5.5 million have some level of a diagnosed disability
- 10.4 million veterans are in the workforce as of 2008

*US Census Bureau . Veteran Facts and Statistics, Oct., 2009. At www.disabled-world.com/disability/statistics/veteran-statistics.php



By the numbers* ...

Obvious disabilities:

- Limb injuries

- Burn injuries

- Spinal cord injuries

- Some traumatic brain injuries

Non-obvious disabilities:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder

- Some traumatic brain injuries



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Returning veterans...

Arguably, the number of veterans with non-obvious disabilities far exceeds those with obvious disabilities

The two signature disabilities for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are:

1. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
2. Traumatic brain injury (TBI)



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Consider these statistics...

Rate of fully blown PTSD among Iraq and Afghanistan vets was 6% diagnosed with an additional 27% probable, but undiagnosed*

Rate of TBI among Iraq and Afghanistan vets ranges from about 20 – 30%**

- *Erbes, C., Westermeyer, J., Engdahl, B. & Johnsen, E. (2007). Post-traumatic stress disorder and service utilization in a sample of service members from Iraq and Afghanistan. *Military Medicine*, 172, 359-363.
- **Approximately 20% of all combat-related military casualties have sustained a brain injury (ARNEWS (Army News Service), Spc. Chuck Wagner, Nov. 24, 2003, "Brain Injuries High Among Iraq Casualties").
- **Nearly 30% of all combat-related injuries seen at Walter Reed Army Medical Center from 2003 to 2005 included brain injury. (Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center)



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

- Under-diagnosed—Inadequate screening mechanisms
- Under-reported
- 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





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And what does this mean to employers?

Many soldiers may still be in the process of admitting and adjusting to their disability long after they have returned 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



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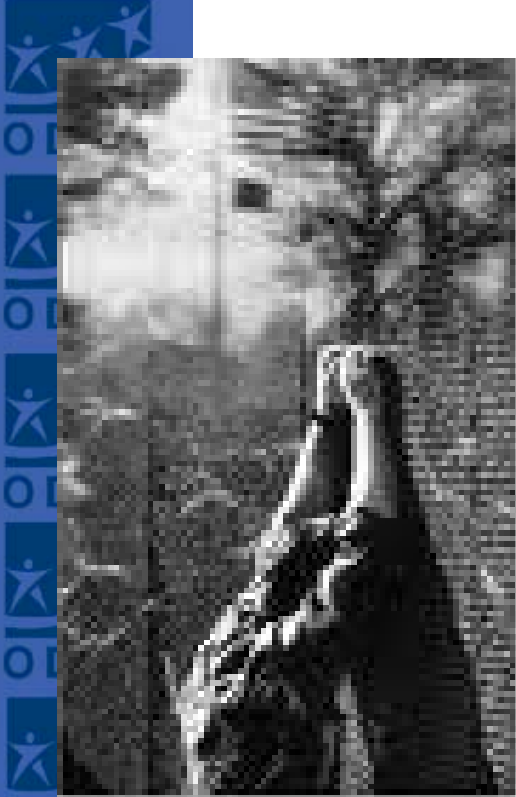
About PTSD...

Three major categories of diagnostic criteria*

1. Re-experiencing Symptoms
 - Uncontrollable flashbacks
 - Nightmares
2. Avoidance Symptoms
 - Withdrawing from others
 - Loss of interest in life activities
3. Hyper-arousal
 - Sleep problems
 - Unexplained anger
 - Difficulty concentrating

Symptoms can “creep up” –not necessarily present immediately after the event

*4th edition of the [*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders \(or DSM-IV\)*](#).



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About TBI...

A leading cause is blast injuries, ranging from life threatening to mild/undetected

Our screening systems for TBI are probably inadequate

A very complex injury, with subtle symptoms:

- Sleep problems
- Impaired memory
- Poor concentration/attention
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Irritability/mood changes
- Headache/dizziness
- Fatigue
- Noise/light intolerance
- Ringing in the ears (tinnitus)
- Vision change: blurred or vision



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Symptoms and accommodation options for PTSD and TBI often overlap:

Memory problems:

- Written instructions; task reminders
- Electronic organizers; calendars
- Systematic check-ins/tracking systems

Concentration problems:

- Break down tasks of large assignments
- Work environment/privacy
- Headphones
- White noise

Coping with Stress:

- Schedule modifications
- Allow for walks or other relaxing activity during break
- Provide more time to learn new responsibilities
- Allow time off for therapy
- Work with a compatible mentor

Symptoms and accommodation options for PTSD and TBI often overlap:

Interacting with co-workers or supervisor:

- Alternative communication systems
- Work at home option (can be part time)
- Clarity expectations and give positive coaching/feedback
- Assign feedback partner

Sleep disturbances:

- Provide consistent schedule
- Combine short breaks into a long break for a nap

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





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And, finally, some “don’ts” for employers:

Don’t

Try to diagnose conditions or speculate about a disability issue

Assume that all employees with PTSD or TBI are alike—each case is different

(As with anyone else) Excuse or ignore performance issues until they become too big to manage

Assume they are “faking it”

Assume that once an accommodation is in place, nothing more needs to happen—these conditions change significantly over time



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And, finally, some overall best practices for employers:

Do:

Spread the word to mid-level managers/supervisors

Coach—as you would anyone else

Have resources and options ready

Have an EAP program for everyone

Consider an affinity/resource group

Use accommodations that, as much as possible, keep veteran engaged in the job

Be flexible and creative with accommodation approaches

A final note...

It takes more than good will to
welcome and support veterans
in their return to the workforce

Developing an organizational culture and climate
around inclusion, diversity and disability
inclusiveness is the key

Ask yourself: What happens to employees in my
workplace when they come forward with their
disability and ask for an accommodation?

Ultimately, this is what will happen to veterans



Some key resources

Job Accommodation Network (JAN)

www.askjan.org

Veterans with Service-Connected Disabilities and the Americans with Disabilities Act: A Guide for Employers

www.eeoc.gov/facts/veterans-disabilities-employers.html

Computer/Electronic Accommodation Program (CAP)

www.tricare.mil/cap/initiatives/WSM.cfm

Disability & Business Technical Assistance Centers

www.adata.org





A New Day for the Civil Service

Special Hiring Authorities Briefing for Veterans and Applicants with Disabilities

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Special Hiring Authorities for Veterans

A word about special hiring authorities for veterans:

Veterans must have been discharged or released from active duty in the armed forces under honorable conditions to be considered for any of these special hiring authorities

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Special Hiring Authorities for Veterans

- Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA)
- Appointment of 30% or More Disabled Veterans
- Veterans Employment Opportunities Act of 1998 (VEOA)

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Veterans' Recruitment Appointment (VRA)

Under this authority:


- Agencies may hire veterans without competition up to General Schedule (GS)-11 or equivalent
- Veterans serve a trial period lasting two years
- Agencies will provide a training or education program for veterans with less than 15 years of education
- Veterans are converted into the permanent workforce after two years of satisfactory service

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VRA Eligibility

To be eligible for this authority, veterans must have served on active duty and meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Be a disabled veteran
- Received a medal for service in a campaign or expedition (including Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal)
- Received an Armed Forces Service Medal (including Global War on Terrorism Service Medal)
- Separated or discharged from active duty within the past three years

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30 Percent or More Disabled Veterans Appointment

- May be hired without competition to any job for which qualified
- No grade level limitation
- Appointed initially to a temporary appointment lasting more than 60 days
- May be converted to the permanent workforce at any time

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30 Percent or More Disabled Veterans Appointment

To be eligible for this hiring authority, a veteran must be:

- Rated with 30% or more service-connected disability by the Department of Veterans Affairs or a Military Department

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Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) Appointment

- Gives eligible veterans access to jobs otherwise limited to current or former Federal employees
- Allows eligible veterans to apply and compete for jobs when an agency is recruiting other Federal employees from outside its own workforce
- Veterans' do not receive preference when applying for Federal positions under this authority

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VEOA Eligibility

To be hired under VEOA, veterans must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Most recent separation or discharge must be under honorable conditions, and
- Substantially completed at least 3 years continuous active service (Active service includes full-time training, annual training, and full-time National Guard duty); or
- Be eligible for veterans' preference

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Special Hiring Authority for People with Disabilities

- Schedule A appointing authority
- Applies to appointment of persons with severe physical disabilities, mental retardation, or psychiatric disabilities
- Improves the Federal Government's ability to hire persons with these disabilities
- Designed to remove barriers and increase employment opportunities for these individuals

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Proof of Disability and Certification of Job Readiness

Eligibility for appointment consists of two parts:

1. Proof of Disability:

- An individual wishing to be hired under this Schedule A authority must provide proof that he or she is indeed an individual with mental retardation, severe physical disability, or psychiatric disability. This proof must be provided to the hiring agency before an individual can be hired.

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Special Hiring Authority for People with Disabilities

- This proof may be in the form of documentation obtained from licensed medical professionals, state or private vocational rehabilitation specialists, or any Government agency that issues or provides disability benefits.

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Special Hiring Authority for People with Disabilities

2. Certification of Job Readiness:

- An individual hired under this authority must be ready to perform the job for which they are being considered. This certification is a statement that the individual is likely to succeed in the performance of the duties of the position for which he or she is applying. For instance, the certification of job readiness for an individual applying for a position as an Administrative Assistant or an Accountant may state that the “individual is likely to succeed performing work in an office environment.”

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Special Hiring Authority for People with Disabilities

- Applicants with documentation may apply directly to agencies' Selective Placement Program Coordinators or equivalent to be considered for jobs. Applicants should send a resume plus the pertinent documentation to the Selective Placement Coordinator or equivalent.

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Special Hiring Authority for People with Disabilities

Certifying Entities: (For required documentation)

- A licensed medical professional (e.g., a physician or other medical professional certified by a State, the District of Columbia, or a U.S. territory to practice medicine)
- A licensed vocational rehabilitation specialist (i.e., State or private)
- Any Federal agency, State agency, or agency of the District of Columbia or a U.S. territory that issues or provides disability benefits

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Special Hiring Authority for People with Disabilities

Employment options:

- Temporary appointments
- Time limited appointments
- Permanent appointment
- Noncompetitive conversion to competitive service upon two years service



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QUESTIONS?

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