

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT,
TRAINING, AND EMPLOYER OUTREACH (ACVETEO)
2019 Final Report

December 16, 2019

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
Veterans' Employment and Training Service
Washington, DC 20210

December 16, 2019

The Honorable Eugene Scalia, Secretary
U.S Department of Labor
Frances Perkins Building
200 Constitution Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20210

Secretary Scalia:

On behalf of the Department of Labor Advisory Committee on Veterans Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO), it is my honor to present you with the committee's report for 2019.

The members of ACVETEO worked thoughtfully and diligently throughout the year to assess the employment and training needs of our transitioning service members, veterans, and certain eligible dependents and provide guidance on the best way to meet those needs going forward. This report contains proposed recommendations to that end, informed by the collective expertise of the committee's membership, the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), and the many private and public partners who participated in this year's committee meetings.

Over the last several years, the private and public sectors have made tremendous progress in how our country meets the economic needs of our nation's veterans and provides them with economic opportunities they deserve. There are, however, certain populations of veterans and military family members who continue to struggle as they search for and secure meaningful employment opportunities. This year's report focuses on underserved populations and works to identify those who continue to struggle and provides recommendations on the best way to meet their needs—both nationally and at the community level.

On behalf of the committee and its membership, please accept our gratitude for the opportunity to serve our nation's veterans and their families through ACVETEO. We are honored to work with you and the VETS team on our collective mission and look forward to our continued work together.

Sincerely,



M. Eric Eversole
Chair, Advisory Committee on Veterans Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach
Vice President, U.S. Chamber of Commerce (Mandated Organization)
President, Hiring Our Heroes Program

PART I

Executive Summary

Congress established the Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO) in 2007 under the authority of Section 4110 of Title 38, U.S. Code. ACVETEO is a non-discretionary federal advisory committee and is subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), 5 U.S.C. App.2.

ACVETEO consists of 15 members—a diverse group of veterans from each military branch, as well as the value-added experiences from civilian subject matter experts with extensive experience in employment policy, veterans' services, and workforce development. The committee receives extensive expert support not only from DOL, but also from a number of additional ex-officio members from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Defense (DOD), Small Business Administration (SBA), and Office of Personnel Management.

ACVETEO assesses the employment and training needs of our veterans. Such needs may include transition assistance, protection of employment and reemployment rights, education, skills training, and integration into the workforce, among others, as well as assisting the DOL Assistant Secretary of Veterans' Employment & Training Service (VETS) in outreach activities to employers. ACVETEO is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness with which existing DOL programs deliver required services to America's veterans and, where deficiencies are detected, to recommend appropriate remedial action.

The 2019 report of ACVETEO provides nine recommendations and supporting rationales to the Secretary of Labor and Congress to address concerns and issues relevant to federal employment and transition assistance for the military and veteran communities. This year's report focused on three specific areas under the purview of the Department of Labor (DOL):

- Underserved Populations,
- Innovative Veteran Training and Employment, and
- Service Delivery.

While great progress has been made on overall veteran unemployment, there are still segments of the military population, including military spouses, who continue to struggle as they search for meaningful employment opportunities. This year's report focuses on those underserved populations as well as innovative programs designed to serve them and the larger transitioning military and veteran populations. This year's report also examines how services are being delivered and makes recommendations on how to improve the delivery of service through collaboration with local community partners and organizations.

Our report has three main parts including: (1) this executive summary; (2) a summary of our 2019 recommendations; and (3) a review of the 2019 recommendations and our supporting rationale for those recommendations. We look forward to continuing our important work together on behalf of our veterans and their families.

PART II

Summary of 2019 Recommendations

Underserved Populations

1. The Secretary of Labor should expand eligibility for Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) intensive services to spouses of veterans for a maximum of five years post transition and any subgroup of veterans with an unemployment rate more than 20% higher than the overall veteran unemployment rate who are not otherwise eligible for DVOP services.
2. DOL should provide consistent training to all non-JVSG staff who serve veterans without Significant Barriers to Employment (SBEs) in an American Job Center (AJC), utilizing existing available resources of the National Veterans Training Institute (NVTI).
3. DOL should release an annual report assessing unemployment, labor force participation, and other key measures for veterans by various demographic characteristics (race, gender, disability, etc).

Innovative Veteran Training and Employment

4. DOL should fund a study group comprised of large businesses, small businesses, DOL, SBA, and key veterans service organizations (VSOs) to explore how to create a better path from military from service to small business and entrepreneurialism.
5. DOL should collaborate with DOD, business, and industry partners to issue clear guidance on unpaid fellowships and internships for transitioning service members who are continuing to be paid by their service branch.
6. In coordination with VA, DOL should highlight the value of recruiting student veterans in employer outreach efforts. AJCs should include connections for employers to career services offices on campus and they should also connect with career services offices and with veteran centers or student veteran organizations to make them aware of career search and placement opportunities.

Service Delivery

7. VETS should seek to integrate all DOL programs [example: AJCs, Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program (HVRP), and Transition Assistance Program, etc.] at the community level.
8. DOL should seek to integrate their community-based programs with other veteran and family-focused government programs serving veterans.
9. DOL should consider collaborating with other government agencies (VA, Health and Human Services, etc.) to establish an Ambassador Program that can work within communities with established veterans' service non-government programs to help recruit clients, spread the word, and promote DOL services for veterans.

PART III

Recommendations and Rationales by Specific Areas: Underserved Populations, Innovative Veteran Training and Employment, and Service Delivery

Underserved Populations

As referenced in the 2018 ACVETEO report, different subpopulations in the broader veteran community experience a variety of barriers and challenges that hinder their abilities to fully participate in the civilian workforce. This has been acknowledged in the past by a variety of organizations. For example, Congress established Centers and Advisory Committees on women veterans and minority veterans in the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Labor established a women veterans program. This Committee holds the opinion that broad and sweeping efforts to address economic and employment concerns among veterans should be supplemented by strategies and programs that specifically target various subpopulations, particularly those that have been traditionally underserved, including but not limited to spouses and minority veterans. Accordingly, the Committee makes the following recommendations to advance impactful service delivery to traditionally underserved subpopulations that are experiencing additional barriers to employment.

Recommendation 1. The Secretary of Labor should expand eligibility for DVOP intensive services to:

- a. Spouses of veterans, for a maximum of five years post transition. Veteran spouses should be considered “covered persons,” and eligible for priority of service, after all other eligible veterans are served but before all other non-veterans.
- b. Any subgroup of veterans with an unemployment rate more than 20% higher than the overall veteran unemployment rate who are not otherwise eligible for DVOP services (lacking one of the SBEs or in an eligible population already identified). As veterans, these subgroups are already eligible for priority of service for all DOL-funded employment and training programs.

Recommendation Rationale:

The Secretary has already identified spouses serving as caretakers of wounded, ill or injured service members as eligible for DVOP services. Making all Veteran spouses eligible for individualized career and support services for five years post transition would build on the recognition that spouses play an important role in a Veteran’s military service, and are both assets to our national defense and their communities across the nation.

The DOD estimates unemployment among active duty military spouses at 24 percent in 2017,¹ more than six times higher than the national unemployment rate. This is despite the fact that 40 percent of military spouses have college degrees, compared to only 29.7 percent of the general population.² The challenges that drive higher unemployment rates among Active Duty military spouses are likely to persist in the first few years after the servicemember has transitioned to veteran status, impacting the financial stability of the entire family. Providing career services to this population would help reduce unemployment, promote career opportunities and family-sustaining wages, and positively affect the economy.

¹ Malukah Dorvil, Office of People Analytics. “2017 Survey of Active Duty Spouses,” <https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Surveys/2017-Survey-of-Active-Duty-Spouses-Overview-Briefing.pdf>

² The Council of Economic Advisers, “Military Spouses in the Labor Market,” May 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Military-Spouses-in-the-Labor-Market.pdf>.

The VOW Act requires DVOP specialists to place maximum emphasis on assisting veterans who are economically or educationally challenged. Veterans who are included in groups of high unemployment would meet the economic standard, but may not have an SBE. Many state workforce agencies report they currently have capacity to serve additional eligible persons because of low veteran unemployment. These states conduct relationship building, outreach and recruitment activities with other service providers to seek out new SBEs and priority category veterans, and have had varying degrees of success. Adding both veteran spouses, and veteran subgroups experiencing high unemployment, would not detract from their ability to serve SBE veterans and other eligible populations. Since these groups may already be accessing the services of their local AJC, DVOP specialists would be able to focus on providing services at the center to individuals who want and need assistance, and do so in a cost-effective manner.

Finally, adding these new groups could have a positive effect on the Uniform National Threshold Entered Employment Rate (UNTEER). Nine states and territories failed to meet the threshold of 52.7% in 2018, and were subject to review and a potential corrective action plan. In several low-population areas, the number of individuals who have left the program was very low, and the impact of adding more eligible persons to the formula could mean the difference between success and failure.

Recommendation 2. DOL should provide consistent training to all non-JVSG staff who serve veterans without SBEs in an AJC, utilizing existing available resources of the NVTI.

Recommendation Rationale: DVOP specialists and Local Veteran Employment Representatives (LVERs) are required to complete a prescribed series of trainings offered through the NVTI within 18 months of hire. There is no similar training requirement for non-JVSG staff who serve non-SBE veterans, although they may attend NVTI training funded by VETS on a space available basis, and at no cost to the state. States can also arrange to have NVTI come to their state to deliver on-site training. Not all states have taken advantage of these opportunities. States that do not send non-JVSG staff to NVTI have reported they expect the DVOP specialists and LVERs to train their coworkers. They also report using VETS personnel (state-based DVETs, ADVETs and VPAs), on-the-job training, self-directed reading, e-learning, assigned mentors and ESGR.³ NVTI is mandated by law (Title 38, Section 4109 USC) to provide specific training to certain groups, including employment service personnel, VETS, and state staff. There is no equivalent mandate that the states provide training to non-JVSG staff who serve veterans and other eligible persons.

Training should be consistent and uniform for all staff who serve veterans. The current model does not provide that, and has people working outside of their designated roles and responsibilities at both the state and federal level. Non-JVSG staff would better serve their customers—the non-SBE veterans—with consistent training and uniform content. Many non-JVSG staff are not veterans, and are unfamiliar with the military. AJC staff who serve veterans with disabilities would be better prepared to serve them if they had additional disability-specific training.

NVTI has already developed applicable training, so no additional expense would be incurred with curriculum development. Several courses are available on-line, making it even more cost-effective and efficient for states to train non-JVSG staff.

In addition, as with recommendation 1, enacting this recommendation could also have a positive effect on UNTEER.

³ 2016 NASWA Professional Staff Skills Training Assessment for the Workforce System

Recommendation 3. DOL should release an annual report assessing unemployment, labor force participation, and other key measures for veterans by various demographic characteristics (race, gender, disability, etc).

Recommendation Rationale: After focused efforts by partners in the public, private, and nonprofit sector, unemployment rates for veterans as a whole are equal to or lower than unemployment rates among non-veterans. However, this positive news obscures variations in veteran unemployment among various subpopulations. For instance, unemployment among male African American veterans averaged 4.6 percent in 2018, higher than the 3.4 percent unemployment rate among their white counterparts. In addition, unemployment is significantly higher among Native Americans, who serve in the military at higher rates; specific reporting on the rate of unemployment among Native American veterans will help DOL determine whether specific, targeted programming would benefit this population. However, while VETS releases detailed annual reports on women veterans' rates of unemployment, labor force participation, employment by sector, and more, similarly detailed analyses are not conducted and published for other minority veterans.

Targeted and effective interventions to improve employment outcomes rely upon having access to accurate, detailed information. With access to detailed demographic breakdowns of key metrics, the Department of Labor itself, as well as its partners in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, can improve outreach and programmatic strategies toward specific segments of the veteran population whose outcomes are lagging behind others. Fulfilling this recommendation will also support Recommendation 1, which relies on having an awareness of which subpopulations are experiencing higher levels of unemployment. The factsheets and webinars produced by the VETS Women Veteran Program provide an excellent example of the sort of timely, in-depth, and relevant analyses and presentation upon which to model this expanded reporting.

Innovative Veteran Training and Employment

Over the last several years much has been done to reshape the way in which transitioning service members secure careers after military service. From Skillbridge to technical training programs to professional development programs the private and public sectors have created and executed a host of programs to deliver greater opportunities to service members and their families. This subcommittee examined these programs to better understand how these programs could be improved and expanded to other groups of veterans, including student veterans, and made recommendations to that end. It also analyzed the important role of entrepreneurialism for veterans to determine how the DOL, in partnership with the Small Business Administration and other federal agencies, could create better pathways into small business ownership opportunities.

Recommendation 4. DOL should fund a study group comprised of large businesses, small businesses, DOL, SBA and key VSOs to explore how to create a better path from military service to small business and entrepreneurialism.

Recommendation Rationale: Creating a stronger partnership between DOL and SBA on small business employment and entrepreneurialism will significantly enhance and expand economic pathways for service members and their families post-military service. Increased efforts to steer veterans and spouses, including disabled veterans (including through linkages to ODEP for apprenticeships for people with severe disabilities), to small companies and starting their own companies will improve employment outcomes. Small companies are a huge source of employment for the country and veterans/spouses yet they are not participating in the veteran hiring initiatives due to lack of awareness, resources, cost and capability. There needs to be greater coordination between

the AJCs and SBA to ensure that transitioning service members, military spouses and veterans are aware of small business opportunities and resources that may be available to help them start a small business. More also must be done to encourage greater collaboration between large corporations and smaller businesses and where possible, add small companies into supply chains, especially veteran/spouse owned businesses.

We need to raise awareness further of the benefits and challenges of starting a small business, easier access to capital and support resources of which there are many at SBA and DOL.

Recommendation 5. DOL should collaborate with DOD, business, and industry partners to issue clear guidance on unpaid fellowships and internships for transitioning service members who are continuing to be paid by their service branch.

Recommendation Rationale: While there is guidance on unpaid internships and fellowships, the guidance does not specifically address those who are being paid by other sources, specifically by DOD. Some companies have interpreted the guidance to be insufficient to put their companies at risk of violating the Fair Labor Standards Act and risking reputation or even regulatory enforcement. Some companies have interpreted the guidance to allow the internships but only if they only benefit the intern with no benefit to the company. And others have interpreted the guidance to allow them to hire interns and fellows and place them in roles where they gain business and industry experience that prepares them for employment. It is critical to have consistency in guidance that a wider range of companies, including small and medium enterprises without access to sophisticated legal guidance or connections to a network of companies that has already experimented with these opportunities. This would benefit transitioning service members by giving them wider access to employment experience and opportunities for full-time employment.

Recommendation 6. In coordination with VA, DOL should highlight the value of recruiting student veterans in employer outreach efforts. AJCs should include connections for employers to career services offices on campus and they should also connect with career services offices and with veteran centers or student veteran organizations to make them aware of career search and placement opportunities.

Recommendation Rationale: Employers that participate in veteran recruitment should make connections to career services offices at colleges and universities where they currently recruit entry level employees and interns and they should have resources available to them to understand that student veterans have a mix of characteristics of mid-level and entry-level hires. When appropriately resourced, employers will be able to interpret the skills, experience, and education of current students and graduating students and evaluate them for appropriate roles in their companies.

Nearly 900,000 student veterans are currently in college. Over half work full time. The vast majority do not work in their sector of interest for which they are studying, nor do most take an internship. Lack of awareness of this possibility is the principal reason for not doing either, and a secondary reason is that many student veterans (over half) are married and have children (nearly half) and take roles convenient to their schedule, including classes, children's school commitments, and spouse career commitment. Additionally, 63% of student veterans are first-generation college students and may not have information and advice related to employment and internship in college and the relationship to career opportunities this experience has for their future employment opportunities. Advising employers, workforce centers, and clients of the workforce centers to consider opportunities and how student veterans may access them may provide opportunities.

Student veterans with disabilities include 21.5% of all student with a 30% VA disability rating and 25% of all student veterans have at least a 70% VA disability rating. Coordinating with the DVOP

specialists in the AJCs is also an important component for this recommendation.

Service Delivery

This subcommittee see opportunities to better serve veterans and military spouses through an integrated community approach.

Recommendation 7. VETS should seek to integrate all DOL programs [example: AJCs, HVRP, and Transition Assistance Program, etc.] at the community level.

Recommendation Rationale: There should be a deliberate effort to increase integration of current and emerging programs at the local level in order to maximize the effectiveness of service, assess for opportunities the veteran may not be aware of, and create efficiencies. These programs are currently fragmented in service and location at the community level.

Recommendation 8. DOL should seek to integrate their community-based programs with other veteran and family-focused government programs serving veterans.

Recommendation Rationale: Integrating the efforts of DOL, with DOD, Health and Human Services, VA provides veteran clients the greatest opportunity to succeed. Integrating HVRP, VA Supported Services for Veteran Families, HUD-VA Supported Housing, AJCs, Transition Assistance Program, SNAP, and veteran's disability services can provide an incredible boost to veterans and their families most in need. These programs are not integrated at the customer level, however each of these programs are complimentary and should be integrated.

Recommendation 9. DOL should consider collaborating with other government agencies (VA, Health and Human Services, etc.) to establish an Ambassador Program that can work within communities with established veterans' service non-government programs to help recruit clients, spread the word, and promote DOL services for veterans.

Recommendation Rationale: A formal ambassador program would establish MOUs and quasi-formal relationships, possibly even authorize funding to grant to ambassador organizations to ensure proliferation of resources in the community. This extends DOL's message and reach to veterans at the community level. This relationship could assist with integrating government and non-government services to veterans.

PART IV

Appendix

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP:

Appointed members:

Kayla Williams
Center for a New American Security
Recognized Authority (Training)

Jim Lorraine
America's Warrior Partnership
Recognized Authority (Training)

Gary Harter
Utah Department of Veteran Affairs
Recognized Authority (Employment)

Pamela Johnson
Goodwill Industries
Recognized Authority (Rehabilitation)

Keith Natrass
General Motors
Recognized Authority (Business)

Anthony Lowe
Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW)
Veteran Service Organization Representative

Jeff Hall
Disabled American Veterans (DAV)
Veteran Service Organization Representative

James Schmeling
Student Veterans of America
Veteran Service Organization Representative

Louis Celli
American Legion
Veteran Service Organization Representative

Wendi Safstrom
Society for Human Resource Management Representative (Mandated Organization)

M. Eric Eversole (Chair)
U.S. Chamber of Commerce Representative (Mandated Organization)

Lori Adams
National Association of State Workforce Agencies (NASWA) (Mandated Organization)

Stephen Parker
National Governors Association (NGA) (Mandated Organization)

Darrell L. Roberts
Labor Union or Organization Representative (Mandated Organization)

Michael McDermott
Business Roundtable Representative (Mandated Organization)

Mary Blasinsky
National Federation of Independent Business Representative (Mandated Organization)

Ex-officio, Nonvoting Members:

- Secretary of Veterans Affairs
- Secretary of Defense
- Director, Office of Personnel Management
- Assistant Secretary of Labor (VETS)
- Assistant Secretary of Labor (ETA)
- Administrator, U.S. Small Business Administration