



MAY 7 - 2012

VETERANS' PROGRAM LETTER NO. 07-12

TO: ALL REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS AND DIRECTORS FOR
VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
ALL STATE AGENCY ADMINISTRATORS
ALL REGIONAL ADMINISTRATORS, EMPLOYMENT AND
TRAINING ADMINISTRATION (INFO)

FROM: ISMAEL ORTIZ, JR.
Deputy Assistant Secretary

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JANE OATES
Assistant Secretary
Employment and Training Administration

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SUBJECT: Overview of the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP),
section 211 of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011

- 1. Purpose.** To provide the public workforce system with an overview of VRAP, the role of the system in implementing the program, and inform the system that additional information will be made available as procedures and protocols for implementing the program are finalized.
- 2. References.** VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, (Public Law (Pub. L.) 112-56) Section 211; Training and Employment Notice (TEN) 43-11 Overview of the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP), section 211 of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011.
- 3. Background.** On November 21, 2011, President Obama signed the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 into law which established the VRAP in title II of Pub. L. 112-56. The VRAP directs the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), in cooperation with the Department of Labor (DOL), to pay for up to 12 months of a retraining assistance in a "high demand" occupation for unemployed eligible veterans between the ages of 35 and 60 as determined by DOL and VA.

The program may enroll up to 45,000 veterans in Fiscal Year 2012, beginning July 1, 2012, and up to 54,000 veterans from October 1, 2012 through October 1, 2013, with training concluding by March 31, 2014.

4. Eligibility Criteria. In order to qualify for the retraining assistance, a veteran must satisfy the following eligibility criteria:

- be at least 35 but no more than 60 years old, at the time of application;
- be unemployed on the date of application;
- not enrolled in any Federal or state job training program at any time during the previous 180-day period as of the application date;
- in receipt of an other than dishonorable discharge from the last period of service in the armed forces;
- not eligible for any other VA education benefit program;
- not in receipt of VA compensation due to Individual Unemployability; and
- submit an application no later than October 1, 2013.

5. Application Process. Interested veterans will be able to apply for the program through a joint VA/DOL electronic application that will be accessed from multiple web sites (including DOL's web site) that are linked to the VOW to Hire Heroes Act web site (<http://benefits.va.gov/vow>), which will be available beginning on May 15, 2012, to accept applications. DOL and VA are responsible for determining different sections of the eligibility criteria. DOL is responsible for determining age, whether the applicant is unemployed on the date of application, enrollment status in a Federal or state job training program within the previous 180-days, and that the application was submitted no later than October 1, 2013. VA is responsible for determining each applicant's discharge status, eligibility for other VA education benefits, and if the applicant is in receipt of VA compensation due to Individual Unemployability (for more information on Individual Unemployability, <http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA/benefits/factsheets/serviceconnected/IU.asp>).

In order to apply for VRAP, the veteran will take the following steps in the application process:

- a) The veteran may be referred to the on-line VRAP application from any of the following sources: a referral from One-Stop Career Center or other program office staff, a visit to the DOL website, a visit to the VA website or through other outreach communications;
- b) The veteran signs-in to his or her VA Veterans Online Application (VONAPP) or registers for a new account;
- c) The veteran will begin the application process on a screen with the following content, where he or she will provide responses, and attest to their accuracy, that DOL will use to determine each applicant's VRAP eligibility: (OMB Control Number 1205-0491):

- Last Name: _____
- First Name: _____

- Middle Initial _____
- Date of Birth: MM/DD/YYYY
- Are you unemployed? _____ y/n;
People who are (1) jobless, (2) looking for jobs, and (3) available for work are unemployed (all three criteria must be met in order to be unemployed).
- Have you been enrolled in a Federal or state job-training program in the past 180 days? _____ y/n;
Examples include any training funded by: a local career center, a One-Stop Career Center, or any state or local employment office.

The information provided on this application will be used for the purposes of determining your eligibility to receive retraining assistance benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The information may be audited for accuracy. By checking the box below, you agree to the following statement:

“I swear or affirm that the statements on this application, to the best of my knowledge, are true and correct. I understand that by submitting this application, I am making a statement to the government for the purposes of obtaining federal benefits. Section 1001 of Title 18 of the U.S. Code makes it a criminal offense for any person to knowingly and willfully make false or fraudulent statements to any department or agency of the United States Government. Additionally, I understand that if the information I have provided on this application is found to be false or incorrect, I will be immediately unable to receive benefits under this program, and I may be required to reimburse the Government for any benefits I have already received.”

- d) After completing this initial step in the application process, the applicant will be notified of their partial eligibility based on DOL’s determination. If determined partially eligible, the applicant will continue the VA’s portion of the application. If determined ineligible, the applicant will receive a system generated notification (on the screen) which will indicate why the veteran is ineligible, how to appeal the decision, and the availability of employment services offered through the workforce system; and
- e) The VA will determine the applicant’s further eligibility by ensuring the applicant: received an other than dishonorable discharge from the last period of service in the armed forces; is not eligible for any other VA education benefit program; and, is not in receipt of VA compensation due to an Individual Unemployability rating. The veteran will also indicate the “high demand” occupation they are applying to the program to pursue. A list of the “high demand” occupations, as determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, will be available in a drop down list in the application. If the veteran is determined eligible based on the information submitted, she/he will receive a system

generated letter informing them of the next steps to utilize the benefit. If determined ineligible the applicant will receive a system generated notification letter in the mail, which provides information on how to appeal the decision.

After being determined eligible by DOL and VA, the veteran will be able to receive a VRAP stipend from VA for enrolling full time in the community college or technical school offering the training in a “high demand” occupation. Once approved, the training can begin on or after July 1, 2012. The VA and DOL are currently working in close coordination on the application process, outreach efforts, and a process for reporting program outcomes.

6. Implementation Role. The training benefit is being administered by the VA. DOL and the public workforce system will be responsible for providing outreach to potentially eligible veterans who seek services at a One-Stop Career Center or other program office. One-Stop Career Center staff, Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists, and Local Veterans’ Employment Representatives (LVERs) should be assisting in this effort by identifying potentially eligible applicants who may meet the criteria and be interested in retraining in a new “high demand” occupation. The VA will be able to approve up to 45,000 applications for VRAP training from July 1 through September 30, 2012, and up to 54,000 additional veterans can be enrolled beginning in FY 2013.

As the program start date approaches, DOL will host a webinar and provide additional guidance on how to recruit and assist veterans interested in applying for the program, including a toolkit for use by One-Stop Career Center staff and other technical assistance to ensure the effective and efficient implementation of the program.

The VRAP requires the public workforce system to contact veterans within thirty (30) days following completion or termination of the program in order to provide employment services. A process is being discussed with VA on how DOL will be informed about veterans’ completion or termination status. DOL will then develop a system to disseminate the information, as well as contact information for each enrolled veteran, to the state and local level. DVOP specialists, LVER and other One-Stop staff will be responsible for offering employment services to each veteran. DOL will be providing additional guidance to the public workforce system on how to receive the information, contact each of the veterans, and report outcomes exclusively for this group of veterans.

7. Action Requested. State Workforce Agency, Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS) field staff, DVOP and LVER staff, local One-Stop Career Center staff, and other program office staff should familiarize themselves with the guidance provided and the attached VOW Fact Sheet. Additional information about the VRAP will be issued as the VA and DOL complete implementation processes.

8. Inquiries. Questions should be directed to your Employment and Training Administration (ETA) Regional Office or VETS Regional Offices through VETS' Director for Veterans' Employment and Training in the State.

9. Attachment. VOW Factsheet