

Vietnam Veterans of America Guide to



Veterans' Employment

“I’ve spent the last six years serving my country. But with three kids and a fourth on the way, I need to earn more money. I want to put my skills to use in the civilian world, only I’m not really sure where to start.”

“I’ll be leaving the service soon. I know I’ll need some college to get a better job than I had before. What benefits will I have as a veteran that I can take advantage of?”

“What was it they were telling us in those exit talks about resume preparation and government help for job seekers? Hey, all I wanted to do was get out and get home! But I’ve been home now for a while and I’m looking for work, for a position that can build on the skills I learned in the service. And I need all the help I can get in this job market.”

There’s plenty of help available both from the government and the private sector for veterans. The skills you’ve learned and the discipline you’ve developed while in the service make you very desirable to employers.

The *Vietnam Veterans of America Guide to Veterans’ Employment* is a resource to help you translate your military skills into meaningful civilian work, and to understand the resources available to help you find and secure work in either the private sector or government.

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

Do you know what civilian job you want? If you’re not sure what interests you, or if you don’t know how to translate what you did in the military into the civilian workforce, the **Transition Assistance Program (TAP)** offers aptitude testing and career counseling.

A joint venture of the Departments of Defense (DoD), Veterans Affairs (VA), Transportation (DOT) and the Veterans’ Employment Training Services (VETS) of the Department of Labor (DOL), TAP offers free workshops to military personnel within 180 days of their separation or retirement. These three-day workshops, held at military installations nationwide, provide an overview of the job market, teach job-search and interview skills, and help in career decision-making, resume preparation and cover letter writing. Disabled veterans can participate in the **Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP)** that enhances the three-day workshop with additional hours of individual instruction and assessment to determine your specific needs and job-readiness.

The VA also offers you and your qualified dependents free assistance in choosing a career path and setting the course needed to get there. Its **Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E)** program provides interest and aptitude testing, career exploration, goal setting, and assistance in finding educational, training and testing programs related to career goals. To enroll, you’ll need to submit **VA Form 28-1900**, “Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Application,” or apply online with VONAPP. See the

Vietnam Veterans of America Guide to Vocational Rehabilitation for further information on VR&E and educational benefits.

Your local military base may offer career counseling and job placement services, but if it doesn't, there's plenty of information and assistance on the Internet. The jobs portal www.military.com offers an online "**Military Skills Translator**." Just select your branch of service and enter your military occupational specialty or the first letter of your job. It will automatically provide you with the civilian job title for the work you did. The VA also offers an online skills translator on its website that describes military jobs and their related civilian occupations.

To get more information on specific careers; the type of training required; hours, benefits and pay they typically provide; and what future opportunity they hold, search the DOL's Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook online at:

<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocoiab.htm>

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

What can you do? DOL has identified military jobs that translate easily into the civilian workforce:

Accounting
Computers
Construction
Education
Electronics
Engineering
Financial Administration
Foreign Languages
Law Enforcement

WHAT TRAINING OR PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION DO I NEED?

Now, how do you make sure you're qualified for the position you want – and capable of earning the highest salary possible?

You can improve your chances through higher education, degree and certificate programs, flight training, correspondence programs and apprenticeship/on-the-job training programs paid for by your VA educational benefit programs, including the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB). Actually a series of educational benefits, MGIB includes:

- **Full-time study benefits** – At current rates you can receive \$985 a month for up to 36 months to pay for full-time study at colleges, trade or vocational schools. The money is direct-deposited into your personal account, providing that you verify your full-time student status for the VA by telephone or online via the Web Automated Verification of Enrollment (WAVE) every month. Because the payments are made to you monthly, they are considered income and not financial assistance; you may have to take out a student loan to pay the school in full each semester and then pay it down with your MGIB benefits.

(Note: Full-time study is considered 30 semester hours or 45 quarter hours in an academic year. This measure also qualifies as nine months of responsible experience time for civil service placement and can help you earn a higher grade/pay scale if you ultimately work for the government.)

- **Accelerated Payments** -- Vets enrolled in a high-tech program for eventual employment in a high tech industry as defined by the VA may receive a lump sum payment of 60 percent of tuition.
- **Licensing and Certification** -- If you pursue licensing or certification tests, MGIB can reimburse you for the test-taking fee, although not for any other costs associated with it. The MGIB will pay for Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) certification, FAA aircraft mechanics licensing, state licensing for nurses, and other professions and similar programs.
- **Top-Up Assistance** – Active-duty servicemembers may receive additional funds to cover the gap between what MGIB benefits pay and what tuition actually costs.
- **Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP)** – This is a savings plan that enables you to make pre-tax contributions from your salary directly to an educational fund. The government will deposit \$2 for every \$1 you save in the account.
- **Work-Study** -- Any veteran attending school three-quarter time or more may work at the school veterans' office, VA Regional Office (VARO), VA medical facilities, or at approved state employment offices. Jobs pay minimum wage.
- **Survivors and Dependents Education Assistance (DEA)** -- This program offers 45 months of education benefits for spouses or dependent children of veterans who are permanently and totally disabled due to a service-related condition, or who died while on active duty or as a result of a service-related condition.

To qualify, you must have served three continuous years of active duty, received a fully honorable discharge and either completed high school, secured a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), or earned 12 credits toward your college degree before applying for the benefit. You have 10 years from the date of your last separation to apply for up to \$35,460 in total benefits – depending on the educational program you choose, your length of service, your category (See “MGIB Categories,” below) and, of course, whether you completed the proper forms at the time of your enrollment. You can apply for MGIB benefits by completing **VA Form 22-1990**, “Education Application.” Further information is available at the GI Bill website, <http://www.gibill.va.gov>

WHAT ARE THE MGIB CATEGORIES?

In addition to the requirements above, you must meet requirements from one of the four categories below. If you entered active duty before July 1, 1985, you may only qualify under Categories 2, 3 or 4. (As posted on www.military.com)

CATEGORY I

- Entered active duty for the first time after June 30, 1985.
- Had military pay reduced by \$100 a month for first 12 months.

- Continuously served for 3 years, OR 2 years if that is what you first enlisted for, OR 2 years if you entered Selected Reserve within a year of leaving active duty and served 4 years ("2 by 4" Program).

CATEGORY II

- Entered active duty before January 1, 1977.
- Served at least 1 day between 10/19/84 and 6/30/85, and stayed on active duty through 6/30/88 (or 6/30/87 if you entered Selected Reserve within 1 year of leaving active duty and served 4 years).
- On 12/31/89, you had entitlement left from Vietnam Era GI Bill.

CATEGORY III

- Not eligible for MGIB under Category I or II.
- On active duty on 9/30/90 AND separated involuntarily after 2/2/91.
- OR involuntarily separated on or after 11/30/93.
- OR voluntarily separated under either the Voluntary Separation Incentive (VSI) or Special Separation Benefit (SSB) program.
- Before separation, you had military pay reduced by \$1,200.

CATEGORY IV

- On active duty on 10/9/96 AND you had money remaining in a VEAP account on that date AND you elected MGIB by 10/9/97.
- OR entered full-time National Guard duty under Title 32, USC, between 7/1/85, and 11/28/89 AND you elected MGIB during the period 10/9/96, through 7/8/97.
- Had military pay reduced by \$100 a month for 12 months or made a \$1,200 lump-sum contribution.

WHAT ABOUT PREPARING MY RESUME AND WHAT IS VETERANS PREFERENCE?

You'll need to present your skills, education, training and ability in a resume that explains what it is that you can offer a prospective employer – in language understandable to those who have never been in the military. Most won't understand your MOS AFSC, so you need to use the words they use themselves to describe their positions. And if you're seeking a position in government, understand that they have their own jargon and acronyms – which they prefer to the ones you use.

Your resume is your primary sales tool as well as your opportunity to claim Veterans' Preference – special considerations and advantages that veterans have over other groups in applying for federal, state and most civil service positions. The *Vietnam Veterans of America Resource Guide to Veterans' Preference* explains how to qualify for five-point or 10-point preference, and how to write your resumes to claim your preference and improve your ranking in keyword searches.

When applying for federal jobs (See "Applying for Federal Jobs", below), you can complete OPM form **OF-612**, "Optional Application for Federal Employment" in lieu of

a resume. You'll need to indicate on the form whether you are claiming a five-point or a 10-point Veterans' Preference. Be prepared with copies of your discharge papers (**DD-214** or a Statement of Service) and documentation of any medals or commendations you received.

WHAT ABOUT LANDING A JOB IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR?

In addition to such private-sector standbys as the Help Wanted section of your local newspaper's classified section and Internet services including HotJobs.com and Monster.com – which has a special section catering to veterans in partnership with www.military.com – outreach and assistance efforts tailored to the needs of veterans are available.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

DOL partnerships offer vets unique job training and work-study opportunities. Contact your state employment service center for these or other programs:

- The Communications Workers of America program, "Military-to-Work," trains and places veterans in networking careers in California;
- The PowerComm Foundation works with the electrician's union to help Boston-area vets get certified as electricians, telecommunications installers, and journeyman linemen.
- Airborne Express' work-study program employs vets as laborers in Ohio while they study for the FAA licensing in aircraft maintenance.

Many military organizations and private companies offer **Recruiting Assistance and Job Fairs** nationwide and year-round. These organizations sponsor career fairs that let you speak directly to employers. Many also offer resume writing assistance, Internet jobs databases targeted toward veterans and their spouses, and free job placement services (See "Recruiting Assistance," below).

Advocacy, training and placement programs are available through DOL's VETS program. Your state employment service center's **Local Veterans Employment Representatives Program (LVERs)** provide staff who advocate for, assist and refer veterans to local jobs and training opportunities. Similarly, the **Disabled Veterans Outreach**

Program (DVOP) provides staff to advocate for, assist and refer disabled veterans in finding local jobs, apprenticeships, training opportunities and on-the-job training. DOL advocates for you through the **Federal Contractor Program**, which requires businesses that hold a contract of \$25,000 or more with the federal government to take action to hire and promote veterans. Federal contractors must list open positions with the state job service, which then makes referrals from among the veterans it is serving.

In its **Promoting Re-employment Opportunities for Veterans (ProVet)** program, DOL focuses on specific areas in the job market with worker shortages and trains and places separating veterans in these areas. A pilot program is currently focusing on North Carolina's industrial equipment, electronic and transportation manufacturing industries, as well as Tennessee's electronic and computer equipment maintenance sectors.

DOL also offers services through **One-Stop Career Centers** in each state. While not geared specifically to veterans and not any more helpful to veterans than to the general population, the services they offer are free and include:

- Career counseling.
- Resume and cover letter writing.
- Free use of computers.
- Job search and interview skills.
- Job referrals.
- Limited free use of fax, long-distance phone and copies related to a job search.
- Links to volunteer positions to gain work experience.
- Apprenticeships.
- Classroom or on-the-job training opportunities.

State employment service centers have leads on some private-sector jobs, but government entities are required to list open jobs with the centers in their state. As such, they are a valuable source of public sector job listings.

HOW DO I GO ABOUT APPLYING FOR FEDERAL JOBS?

To help you find a federal job, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) maintains a searchable database – USAJOBS – that you can access via telephone or the Internet. Most, but not all, federal agencies are required to post any civil service positions that they are not filling in-house on USAJOBS. They may, but are not required to, post jobs that are not subject to civil service restrictions.

USAJOBS postings provide detailed information about the job vacancy including closing/deadline dates for applications, specific duties of the position, whether or not a written test is required, educational requirements, location, salary, etc. The job vacancy will also tell you specifically what you need to do to apply. As with any government filing, follow the precise instructions and provide everything requested. USAJOBS offers downloadable forms that you'll need to apply for positions, and has an on-line resume development and distribution tool that lets you write and save your resume and apply for jobs online.

DOL maintains a similar online jobs posting board, **America's Job Bank**, located online at <http://www.ajb.dni.us> This also contains a listing of jobs from both federal and state employers nationwide. If online searches aren't your thing, you can contact the personnel office of any federal agency and inquire about opportunities or speak to the veterans' representative at your state employment service center.

WHAT ARE SPECIAL HIRING AUTHORITIES?

Congress created special hiring authorities, which are types of civil service shortcuts that let agencies hire veterans directly with minimal red tape: **VRA, 30 Percent Disabled** and **VEOA**. All three require that you ask for the placement and provide the required documentation.

Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA), formerly the Veterans Readjustment Appointment, allows agencies to appoint veterans to certain positions in the civil service without competing. If you stay in that position and exhibit satisfactory performance for two years, you will be converted to receive all the protections given to a civil service employee.

Under another special hiring authority, veterans who are **30 percent or more disabled** can request a temporary placement in a civil service position, which can lead to a permanent civil service placement if you perform well.

The Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA) of 1998 enables you to compete as a non-federal employee against current federal employees in the civil service system. If selected, you will be given a career or a career-conditional appointment.

Further details about special hiring authorities and required documentation can be found in the *Vietnam Veterans of America Guide to Veterans' Preference*.

WHAT TYPES OF RECRUITING ASSISTANCE ARE AVAILABLE?

The following are among scores of organizations that match separated military families with private sector jobs. Their inclusion here is not an endorsement of their services, but is meant simply to provide you with an idea of the extent of resources available to you. Some services are free, some require payment – you'll need to contact the individual source for further information or conduct your own search online.

Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) – In addition to ACAP centers on most Army bases, this program offers career fairs, jobs listings and online resources at: <http://www.acap.army.mil>

Corporate Gray -- Competitive Edge Services features Corporate Gray Job Fairs as well as the transitioning books "From Army Green to Corporate Gray", "From Navy Blue to Corporate Gray", and "From Air Force Blue to Corporate Gray." For information, visit the website at: <http://www.bluetogray.com/>.

The Destiny Group – An online recruitment network with a jobs database, monthly "Ready, Aim, Hire" career fairs and online resources at: <http://www.destinygrp.com>

Lucas Group – An executive search firm with the nation's largest military placement division. In addition to offering jobs placement without charge to veterans, the group sponsors Military Hiring Conferences. Call 800-878-2013 Or visit their website: <http://www.lucascareers>.

Military Officers Association of America – Offers the TOPS Career Center with officers' placement services, career fairs, products, publications and links to other online resources at <http://www.moaa.org> or call 800-234-6622.

Military Recruiting Institute – The institute specializes strictly in the placement of junior officers, and never charges a fee to veterans. It sponsors eight career conferences a year that focus on operations, engineering, sales and marketing, information technology, etc. Call 800-935-1904 or visit their website at www.jrofficer.com

Orion International – Orion holds between 28 and 50 major hiring conferences each year, and more than 100 mini conferences. They also offer vets direct placement services. Call 877-276-7466 or visit their website at: <http://www.orioninternational.com>

TECHEXPO Top Secret – This organization sponsors career fairs for the security-cleared community. Monthly events in DC, VA, MD, CA, MA and CO attract defense contractors and government agencies nationwide. Active security clearance is required for most events. Visit their website at: <http://www.TechExpoUSA.com>

VetJobs.com – A private firm owned and operated by veterans for veterans that seeks to help companies, recruiting firms and hiring authorities to reach the veteran's market by offering jobs listings and other resources. Call 877-838-5627 or visit online at <http://www.vetjobs.com>

EMPLOYMENT RESOURCES

Transition Assistance Program – Call 866-4-USA-DOL (TTY: 877-889-5267) or on the web at <http://www.dol.gov/vets>

Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment benefits overview online: <http://www.vba.va.gov/vre>

Military Skills Translators are available at military.com: http://www.military.com/Careers/Content1?ESRC=mon_intg&file=skills_leader.htm&area=Content or at the Department of Veterans Affairs: <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/tsi/default.asp>

Occupational Outlooks provide details about hundreds of job types and opportunities: <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocoiab.htm>

Montgomery GI Bill and educational benefits call 888-GI-BILL-1 (888-442-4551) or visit: <http://www.gibill.va.gov> For application forms, visit <http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/educationforms.htm>

Vets Guide on Preference, published by the Office of Personnel Management, can be downloaded at: <http://www.opm.gov/veterans/html/vetguide.asp>

A Guide to Veterans Preference in State Government <http://www.vfwdc.org/NVEO/guide.htm>

Job Banks
Chapter 31 National on-line job bank: <http://dva.jobsearch.org>

America's Job Bank – a DOL database of jobs nationwide. <http://www.ajb.dni.us>

USAJOBS –The Office of Personnel Management maintains a database that you can access and search via the Internet at <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov> or call 703-724-1850 (TDD: 978- 461-8404).

VA Work-Study – Call 888-442-4551 for opportunities.

Department of Labor Resources
Find a Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (**VETS**) office in your state in the government pages of your local phone book or by searching: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/contacts/main.htm>

Office of Personnel Management Resources can be reviewed online at <http://www.opm.gov/> or call 202-606-1800 (TTY: 202-606-2532).

Veterans' information, including guides explaining federal government benefits for veterans and disabled veterans affirmative action program plans, is available online at: <http://www.opm.gov/veterans>

Department of Veterans Affairs Resources online at: <http://www.va.gov/> or call 800-827-1000.

To locate a **VA office** near you, visit the online locator at: http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/regional_offices.htm

Veterans Online Applications (VONAPP) lets you apply for compensation, pension, vocational rehabilitation, educational and health benefits via the Internet.
<http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp>

Board of Veterans Appeals adjudicates claims that could not be resolved at the VARO, VA medical center or other VA office level. The website also offers a guide called “[Understanding the Appeals Process](http://www.va.gov/vbs/bva/Understanding%20the%20Appeals%20Process)” at <http://www.va.gov/vbs/bva/>

Forms Library

OF-612, “Optional Application for Federal Employment,”
<http://www.opm.gov/forms/html/of.asp>

VA Form 28-1900, “Application for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment.”
<http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/vreforms.htm>

VA Form 22-1990: “Application for VA Education Benefits”
<http://www.vba.va.gov/pubs/educationforms.htm>

SF 15, “Application for a 10-Point Veterans Preference.”
<http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdfimage/sf0015.pdf>

DD-214 -- If you’ve lost your original DD-214 and you have received disability or education benefits, the VA may have a copy on file. At the very least, if you are currently receiving benefits, the VA should be able to provide a Statement of Service, which can be used instead of a DD-214.

“Never again shall one generation of veterans abandon another”

Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) is a not-for-profit Veterans Service Organization chartered by Congress whose mission is to improve the benefits, health, well-being, employment prospects and public support for US veterans from all branches of the military. VVA provides veterans with a voice in the corridors of Congress and among those government agencies that regulate and distribute veterans’ benefits and services. Further, VVA also provides individual veterans with the resources, services and support to maximize the opportunities made available to them by law.

VVA relies totally on private contributions and member dues, and does not receive funding from any federal, state or local government.

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