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**Highlights**

Highlights of GAO-05-844T, a testimony to the Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives

**Why GAO Did This Study**

The increased role of the armed forces in military operations around the world, and the greater reliance on the Reserves and National Guard, has focused national attention on what is done to help service members transition to civilian life. GAO was asked to testify on its May 2005 report *Military and Veterans' Benefits: Enhanced Services Could Improve Transition Assistance for Reserves and National Guard* (GAO-05-544) and to highlight its concerns about TAP for the Reserves and National Guard. That report (1) assessed TAP administration, including program participation, and (2) identified actions agencies are taking and challenges they face in improving TAP.

**What GAO Recommends**

To ensure that members of the Reserves and National Guard have the opportunity to benefit from transition assistance, we recommended in our report that DOD, in conjunction with the DOL and VA, determine what demobilizing Reserve and National Guard members need to make a smooth transition and explore options for providing that assistance. We also recommended that VA keep track of service members who attend the Disabled TAP component to ensure that adequate follow-up is possible with this population, which may be in particular need of the services. All three agencies concurred with our findings and recommendations.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-844T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-844T).

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Cynthia A. Bascetta at (202) 512-7101 or [bascettac@gao.gov](mailto:bascettac@gao.gov).

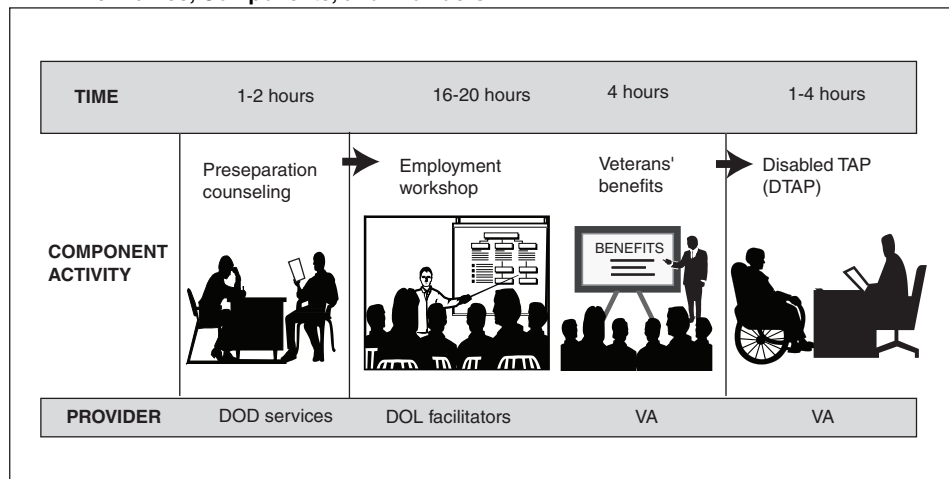
**MILITARY AND VETERANS' BENEFITS**

**Improvements Needed in Transition Assistance Services for Reserves and National Guard**

**What GAO Found**

Jointly administered by the Departments of Defense (DOD), Labor (DOL), and Veterans Affairs (VA), the transition assistance program (TAP) is intended to help service men and women successfully adjust to civilian life after serving in the military. Originally created in 1990, TAP is composed of four components that are coordinated through meetings of TAP managers and interagency agreements. In fiscal year 2004, about 309,000 service members were released from active duty after serving at least 180 days and were eligible for TAP, including about 38 percent who were members of the Reserves and National Guard.

**TAP Time Frames, Components, and Providers**



Source: GAO analysis.

Both the method of delivery and level of participation in the program components vary. Notably, few members of the Reserves and National Guard have time to attend most of TAP. Because they demobilize within days after returning from overseas, members of the Reserves and National Guard participate in an abbreviated version of some components and generally do not have time for any employment preparation. Participation of service members in the Disabled TAP component is unknown because VA does not track this information.

DOD, DOL, and VA have taken actions to improve TAP's content and increase participation among full-time active duty service members. However, they continue to face challenges serving Reserve and National Guard members because of their rapid demobilization. To improve program content, the agencies have updated, or plan to update, their manuals, forms, and briefing materials. To increase participation, DOL and VA provide some employment workshops and veterans' benefits briefings overseas, and DOD is considering a policy change that would mandate participation in all components. While the agencies have not assessed when and where to offer TAP for members of the Reserves and National Guard, DOL has pilot programs in three states that will offer employment workshops after members return home.