

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE**  
**INTERIM REPORT TO CONGRESS**

**Special Working Group on Transition to  
Civilian Employment of National Guard  
and Reserve Members Returning from  
Deployment in Operation Iraqi Freedom  
and Operation Enduring Freedom**



**OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
FOR PERSONNEL AND READINESS**

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## REPORTING REQUIREMENT

As required by section 676 of the John Warner National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2007 (2007 NDAA), (Public Law 109-364, Oct 17, 2006), the Secretary of Defense established a special, collaborative working group with a balanced membership of employees from the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and Department of Labor (DOL) to identify and assess the needs of members of the National Guard and Reserve returning from deployment in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in making the transition to civilian employment upon their return from such deployment. The following are key elements of the work to be undertaken.

- An assessment of the needs of self-employed, students, those who have experienced multiple recent deployments, and those wounded or injured during deployment
- Recommendations on means for improving assistance to such members in meeting the needs identified upon their return from deployment in OIF or OEF
- The extent to which those who have experienced multiple recent deployments and those wounded or injured during deployment receive civilian employment promotions on their return from deployment or experience constructive termination by their employers as a result of such deployment
- Consultation with the Small Business Administration (SBA), employers that employ and associations of employers whose members employ National Guard and Reserve members deployed in OIF or OEF, employee assistance organizations, organizations that assist wounded or injured National Guard and Reserve members in finding or sustaining employment, and other public or private organizations and entities consider as appropriate

In accordance with Section 676, the working group is required to provide a report to Congress one year after enactment. The report is to be made available to the public and is to include the results of the needs identified for self-employed, students, members with multiple deployments, and members wounded or injured during deployment and an assessment of those needs, and recommendations on improving assistance to include outreach and training, and collaboration between the public and private sectors to assist in the transition.

## INTRODUCTION

Our nation requires a great deal from the members of our Armed Forces. DoD, VA and DOL remain vigilant in their commitment to the needs of all our service members – Active, National Guard and Reserve – and their families. Returning to private life after serving on active duty is a very complex process and can be a very challenging undertaking. To assist members in undertaking the transition from active duty, they must be empowered with the information, tools and assistance from federal, state, local and private agencies that will aide them in fashioning individual solutions to the unique challenges each will face as they return to civilian life. DoD, along with DOL and the VA, are working to provide them with a variety of resources, which begins with the cornerstone for transition – the Transition Assistance Program (TAP). TAP is comprised of three elements: (1) pre-separation counseling (conducted by the Services), (2) TAP Employment Workshop (conducted by DOL), and (3) VA Benefits Briefing and Disabled Transition Assistance (DTAP) (conducted by VA).

In addition to TAP, returning National Guard and Reserve Members receive priority services at more than 3500 full service and affiliate One Stop Career Centers funded by DOL. Veteran employment specialists throughout the One-Stop Career system provide a full array of employment services to help veterans find good jobs and careers.

Returning Guard and Reserve service members have their public and private sector civilian job rights and benefits protected through the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA). DoD, DOL, the Department of Justice, and the Office of Special Counsel work hand-in-hand to enforce USERRA. DoD and DOL work together to ensure that service members are briefed on their USERRA rights before and after mobilization, and that their civilian employers are aware of their responsibilities under the law.

The dedication and willingness of the people within the DoD, VA, and DOL partnership “triad” to provide an assortment of highly desirable transition services is impressive. Interdepartmental cooperation and support is outstanding, and the triad continues to enthusiastically support men and women in uniform. The triad has been working together for well over a decade, but the need to support the men and women fighting the Global War on Terrorism has drawn the departments closer together to assist combat veterans. Examples of the collaborative efforts include the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Steering Committee, the Secretary of Labor's Advisory Committee on Veterans' Employment, Training, and Employer Outreach (ACVETEO), and the DoD and VA partnership through the Joint Executive Council (JEC), the Benefits Executive Council (BEC) and the Health Executive Council (HEC).

Whether being discharged from the military, retiring or being released from active duty after mobilization, the most immediate goal of transitioning service members is returning to their community, college or university, previous employment, or finding a job—all the while maintaining or improving their economic quality of life. The importance of creating an uninterrupted continuum of opportunities as service members transition from military service to civilian life cannot be overstated. This includes helping the transitioning members reach and achieve their employment potential or other aspirations they have set. Equally important is the impact on the family as the member makes this transition.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND RESEARCH

In order to identify and assess the needs of National Guard and Reserve members<sup>2</sup> transitioning to civilian employment, the working group sought to understand how Reserve Component members are employed in the civilian sector. According to an analysis of Selected Reserve members and their employers conducted by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) in March of 2007, about 68 percent of Selected Reserve members are employed full-time or part-time. About 10 percent of Selected Reserve members are full-time or part-time students (Figure 1).

### Civilian Employment Status of SelRes Members

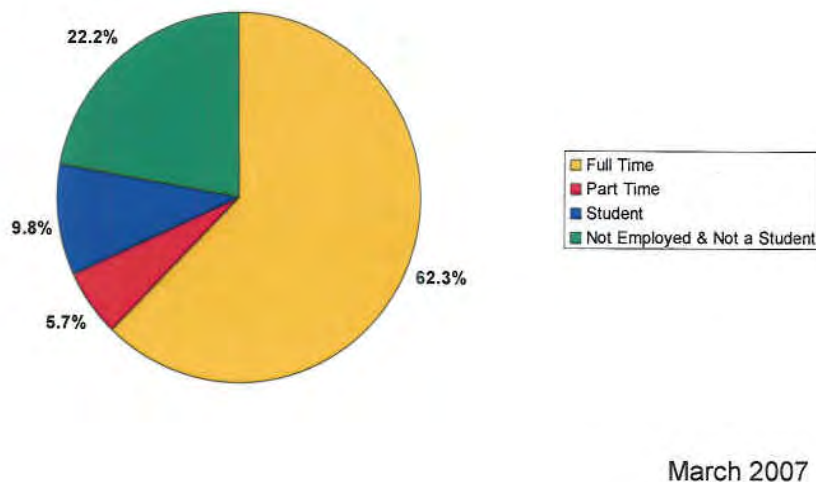
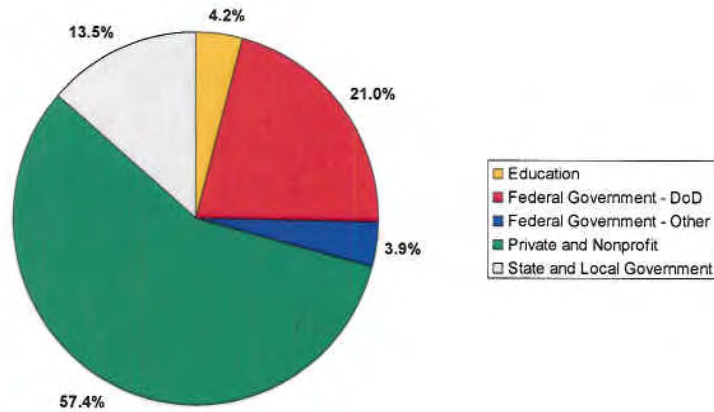


Figure 1

Of the Selected Reserve members employed full- or part-time, about 58 percent work in the private and nonprofit sectors (Figure 2). Ten civilian occupation groups account for 76 percent of all full-time employed Selected Reserve members (Figure 3).

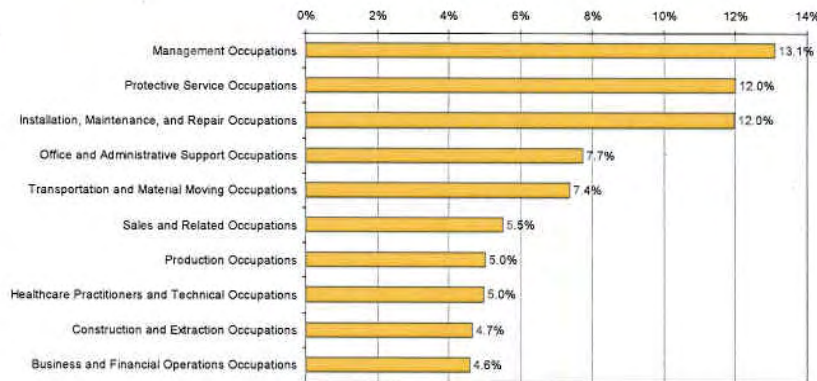
## About 58% of Employed SelRes Members Work in the Private and Nonprofit Sectors



March 2007

Figure 2

## The Top 10 Civilian Occupation Groups\* Account for 76% of All Full-time Employed SelRes Members



\*Based on Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) Major Groups.

March 2007

Figure 3



The typical private or non-profit full-time employer of a Selected Reserve member has 99 or fewer employees (nearly 70 percent). A few very large firms (more than 600 workers) employ an average of 973 of Selected Reserve members (Figure 4).

### A Few Very Large Firms Employ Hundreds of SelRes Members

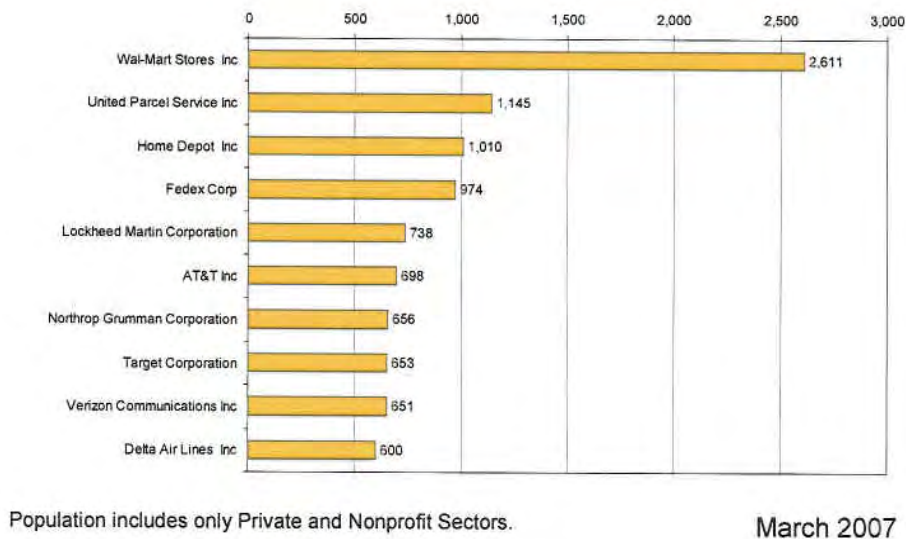


Figure 4

One very important fact drawn from the DMDC report is that most employers in the private and non-profit sectors employ only one Selected Reserve member (more than 80 percent of employers). Thus, the majority of employers would have the potential for no more than one employee to be absent for military duty. Of those, the impact would be greatest on the smaller businesses, i.e. those that have fewer employees, with the most significant impact on reservists who are self-employed, especially if they are a sole-proprietor business or practice.

Six percent of full-time employed Selected Reserve members reported themselves as self-employed. Of those self-employed, the top seven occupations based on Standard Occupation Code titles are shown in Table 1.

Occupations	Percent of All Occupations
Lawyers	4.8
Chief Executives	3.1
Carpenters	2.7
Managers, All Other	2.4
Construction and Related Workers, All Other	2.0
Construction Managers	2.0
Dentists, General	1.8
First-Line Supervisors/Managers of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	1.7

**Table 1: Top seven occupations for self-employed Selected Reserve members**

National Guard and Reserve members returning from deployment face a variety of challenges in adjusting to normal civilian life. Many who are self-employed or own a small business face special problems. While there is little doubt that some self-employed and reservists who are small business owners have indeed suffered adverse economic effects as a result of an extended deployment by the owner or self-employed reservist, the extent of the problems have been difficult to quantify.

Research conducted after Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm and surveys conducted in 1986 and 1991/1992 documented significant economic losses to both self-employed and reservists who own a small business returning from those operations. These findings were presented in a DoD report provided to the Armed Services Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives, entitled *Effects of Activation in Support of Operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM on Members of the National Guard and Reserve who Were Self Employed or Owners of Small Businesses*. The findings in this report were based, in part, on the surveys and related analyses conducted by the RAND Corporation. This report was also cited at length in the first Annual Report (2003) of the Small Business Administration's (SBA's) Advisory Committee on Veterans Business Affairs created by Public Law 106-50.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See: Grissmer, David W., Sheila Nataraj Kirby, Man-bing Sze and David Adamson; *Insuring Mobilized Reservists Against Economic Losses - An Overview*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, RAND MR-446-OSD, 1995; Kirby, Sheila Nataraj, David W. Grissmer, Stephanie Williamson and Scott Naftel; *Costs and Benefits of Reserve Participation*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, RAND MR-812-OSD, 1997; and Kirby, Sheila Nataraj, and Scott Naftel; *The Effect of Mobilization on Retention of Enlisted Reservists After Operation Desert Shield/Storm*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, RAND MR-943-OSD, 1998.

More recent work since Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom has focused on different aspects of National Guard and Reserve deployments and their effects on both firms and their employees. Most of these studies do allow that self-employed reservists and small business owners are more likely than large businesses to suffer adverse effects from extended deployments. However, it has been difficult to quantify these effects without more robust information.

The following studies have acknowledged this problem. They are presented in order of release, with the most recent reports first. The information provided here only highlights the findings in each report as they apply to the purpose of the working group.

**U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Additional Actions Needed to Improve Oversight of Reserve Employment Issues*, February 2007<sup>2</sup>**

This report focused on DoD efforts to capture reservists' civilian employer data and processes at the DoD, Labor and Justice, and the Office of Special Counsel, to track and address reservists' USERRA complaints, including complaints related to disabilities incurred while on active duty. Using data from DoD's civilian employment database as of August 2006, GAO presented in tabular form profiles on reservists' civilian employment in Appendix II of the report and on employers of reservists in Appendix III of the report.

In 2004, DoD changed employer reporting by reservists from voluntary to mandatory, and the percentage of Selected Reserve members reporting had reached 91 percent by August 2006, nearing the DoD's goal of 95 percent. Of 758,182 members of the Selected Reserve reporting employment status, 453,596 (or about 60 percent) reported full or part-time civilian employment.

Table 2 provides the details of the number of Selected Reservists reporting full or part-time private civilian employment by employer size for each Reserve component. The "Unknown" category includes cases where there was incomplete information on the company size.

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Additional Actions Needed to Improve Oversight of Reserve Employment Issues*, Report to the Committees on Armed Services, United States Senate and House of Representatives, Washington, DC: GAO-07-259, February 2007.

Private employer size	DOD Total	Army National Guard	Army Reserve	Coast Guard Reserve	Air National Guard	Air Force Reserve	Marine Corps Reserve	Navy Reserve
1-4	29,071	10,316	9,301	207	2,480	2,273	809	3,685
5-9	10,407	3,845	3,123	75	1,021	774	307	1,262
10-19	10,347	4,144	2,840	71	948	831	287	1,226
20-49	13,809	5,393	3,908	91	1,320	1,090	381	1,626
50-99	9,141	3,559	2,528	44	840	792	253	1,125
100-249	10,189	3,863	2,805	64	988	889	271	1,309
250-499	6,710	2,558	1,858	40	601	629	147	877
500-1,000	6,474	2,323	1,881	29	663	650	144	784
1000-9999	26,087	8,487	7,582	158	2,755	2,982	514	3,609
10,000-99,999	33,764	10,558	9,004	197	3,916	4,483	836	4,770
100,000+	19,917	6,665	5,275	108	2,284	2,336	630	2,619
Unknown	5,522	2,155	1,507	36	523	497	145	659
<b>Total</b>	<b>181,438</b>	<b>63,866</b>	<b>51,612</b>	<b>1,120</b>	<b>18,339</b>	<b>18,226</b>	<b>4,724</b>	<b>23,551</b>

Table 2

These GAO statistics indicate that about half of all Selected Reserve members with verified civilian employment in the private sector work for firms with fewer than 500 employees, and that about one-sixth work for very small businesses (four or fewer employees).

**RAND Corporation National Defense Research Institute, *Effect of Activation on Reservist Earnings, 2006*<sup>3</sup>**

This study presented new evidence on how activation affects the earnings of Selected Reserve members in all Reserve components except the Coast Guard Reserve. Using administrative data from the Defense Manpower Data Center and the Social Security Administration, the study compares the earnings of reservists with minimal (0-30) active duty days in the base year 2000 with earnings of reservists in 2002 and 2003 during which they served more than 30 days active duty.

RAND's estimates suggest that earning loss attributable to activation is less common than suggested by survey-based analyses. Their estimates show that, on average, activated reservists in this sample experienced a net gain in earnings over what they would have earned had they not been activated.

<sup>3</sup> Loughran, David S., Jacob Alex Klerman, and Craig W. Martin; *Activation and the Earnings of Reservists*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation National Defense Research Institute, RAND MG-474-OSD, 2006.

For the self-employed reservists, the RAND study points out that “Self-employed reservists are a population of particular concern to DoD and the public, because the businesses these individuals own could be particularly vulnerable to absences resulting from activation.”<sup>4</sup> RAND’s analysis shows that the gross effects of activation on self-employed reservists are on average similar to those not self-employed. Those self-employed reservists with 31 or more active duty days showed a mean increase in earnings (20.4 percent), somewhat less than that of those not self-employed (32.4 percent).<sup>5</sup>

However, RAND also points to evidence that shows that some reservists do suffer an earnings loss when activated. Twenty four percent of self-employed reservists with more than 30 active duty days had some earnings loss, compared with 15 percent of those not self-employed. Of those members who experienced an income loss of \$10,000 or greater due to an activation of more than 30 days, self-employed reservists outnumbered not self-employed reservists by over two to one. Results are similar among members with 10 percent or greater in income losses due to an activation of more than 30 days.<sup>6</sup>

The preceding analysis of self-employed reservist earnings losses was based on what the RAND study refers to as “gross losses,” that is the analysis does not include the loss of earnings the activated reservists would have experienced had they not been activated. Although the study does not present estimated “net loss” data for self-employed reservists, it does estimate that in most cases gross losses for activated reservists in general would be offset by those losses which would have happened had the reservist not been activated, and that “net losses” would actually be positive in most instances.<sup>7</sup> Again, this does not mean that no reservist suffered a loss of earnings due to activation.

Of particular relevance to the efforts of the working group is the analysis currently being conducted by RAND to determine the effect of activation on post-mobilization earnings.

**Congressional Budget Office, *The Effects of Reserve Call-Ups on Civilian Employers*, May 2005<sup>8</sup>**

This Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report examines the effects of reservists’ activations and federal job protections on civilian employers. It also addresses the question of financial losses among self-employed reservists. CBO’s analysis found that most employers are unaffected by the activation of reservists – only about 6 percent of

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., Table 3.4, p. 27.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., Table 5.4, p.47.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 48-54. There are many factors which enter into these calculations, including normal labor market fluctuations, the business cycle, the particular years under study, and statistical considerations.

<sup>8</sup> Congressional Budget Office, Congress of the United States, *The Effects of Reserve Call-Ups on Civilian Employers*, Washington, DC: May 2005.

business establishments employ reservists, and fewer than one-half percent of self-employed persons are in the reserves.<sup>9</sup>

CBO also reported that self-employed reservists are concentrated in fewer occupations than the reserves in general. They are more likely to be health care or legal professionals or to work in occupations related to construction, sales, or building and grounds maintenance than reservists who are not self-employed. Reservists who work for small businesses are less likely than other reservists to be managers or professionals, and more likely to be in occupations related to food service, construction or sales.<sup>10</sup>

Self-employed reservists are essential to their own businesses, and CBO found that “reservist-owned businesses are among the most likely to be harmed by involuntary call-ups.”<sup>11</sup> Such businesses have reported that they face substantial hardships during call-ups. CBO reported that DoD survey data found that:

...33 percent of self-employed reservists who had not been activated in the past two years responded that a three-month mobilization or deployment would pose a serious or very serious problem for their business or professional practice; 22 percent of reservists who had recently been activated said that the damage actually done to their business was a serious or very serious problem.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 19. The report also notes that “voluntary call-ups may benefit self-employed reservists” if they help smooth seasonal or other fluctuations in the owner’s income.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Data from Department of Defense, *May 2003 Status of Forces Survey of Reserve Component Members*.

## STUDENTS

Approximately ten percent of National Guard and Reserve members are students enrolled in institutions of higher learning. The DoD has worked extensively with the state governors and educational associations to support members of the Reserve force who are involuntarily called to active duty. These efforts have focused on ensuring student-reservists will: (1) receive refunds for tuition and fees they have paid for the semester, quarter, or term they cannot complete; or (2) be granted partial credit for completed course work or receive a grade of incomplete; and (3) be granted the right to return to their college or university upon completion of their active military service.

Further, national educational associations have communicated directly with many of the nation's universities, technical, and vocational colleges, including private colleges, to gain their cooperation and support for student-Reservists. The primary clearinghouse for assistance to student-Reservists is the Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC), which is a consortium of national higher education associations that function in cooperation with the military Services to help meet the voluntary higher education needs of service members. SOC has very successfully mediated with educational institutions on behalf of Reserve component members.

In 2001, to assist members of the military who had been activated in support of military operations, the U.S. Department of Education directed lenders and colleges and universities to provide military members with relief from their student loan obligations, specifically identifying members of the National Guard and Reserve who have been called to active duty. The department's guidance relates to student loans made under the Federal Family Education Loan, William D. Ford Loan, and Federal Perkins Loan programs.

The Department of Education also strongly encouraged schools to provide a full refund of required tuition, fees, and other institutional charges, or to provide credit in a comparable amount against future charges for students who are forced to withdraw from school as a result of the military mobilization. In addition, the Department of Education urged schools to consider providing easy and flexible re-enrollment options to affected students.

While there have been very few anecdotes about problems experienced by students that have not been resolved with the cooperation of institutes of higher education and SOC, further review and analysis is planned over the second year of this effort to determine if there are hidden problems that have simply gone unnoticed or areas where improvement is needed.

## MULTIPLE RECENT DEPLOYMENTS

From the beginning of the increase in operational tempo up to and during the execution of Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, it has been DoD's objective to keep involuntary multiple deployments of Guard and Reserve members to a minimum. This policy is based on the judicious and prudent use of Guard and Reserve personnel — being sensitive to the disruption that mobilization can cause for members, families and civilian employers. Only where operational requirements dictate were multiple deployments authorized, emphasizing the use of volunteers over involuntarily deploying a member more than once. In January 2007, DoD revised departmental policy regarding the utilization of the Total Force. The policy established a maximum of one year for involuntary mobilization. Service discretion was given to exclude individual skill training required for deployment and post-mobilization leave from this period. The policy also set a mobilization ratio planning objective for Guard and Reserve units of one year mobilized to five years not mobilized. Current records on multiple deployments for ground troops (Army Guard, Army Reserve and Marine Reserve) indicates that less than two percent have been deployed more than one time. This percentage decreases exponentially for Guard and Reserve members deployed more than two times (less than two tenths of one percent).

For the past seven years, the U. S. military has been prosecuting OIF/OEF and in that time, almost 42 percent of the RC members in the Army have deployed once. As the Global War on Terror persists and the operational demand for Army forces remains high, the percentage of RC members who will be called to active duty and deployed more than once is expected to increase. This will affect the stress some military members and their families will experience. Most are able to cope using various mechanisms for handling the challenges of multiple deployments. Little hard data exists on the specific challenges related to transitioning to civilian employment for National Guard and Reserve members experiencing multiple deployments. Until recently, most of those experiencing multiple deployments have chosen to do so voluntarily.

OSD and the Military Services facilitate numerous family and reintegration support programs. Programs like Military One Source, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, Installation Family Support Centers, Military Family Life Consultants are but a few. Partnerships on the National, State and Local levels are critical to ensuring that the necessary resources are available for Guard and Reserve families. OSD is in an especially advantageous position to continue to forge new partnerships and enhance existing ones.

### **Army's Deployment Cycle Support (DCS) Program**

Army's Deployment Cycle Support (DCS) Program is a comprehensive program that ensures Soldiers (Active and Reserve Component), Department of the Army (DA) civilians, and their Families are better prepared and sustained throughout deployments. It



provides a means to identify Soldiers, DA civilians, and Families who may need assistance with the challenges inherent to deployments. The goal of DCS is to facilitate Soldier, DA civilian and Family well-being throughout deployments. All Soldiers deployed away from home station for 90 days or more complete the DCS program. Services for DA civilians and Families are integrated in every stage of the program, and they are highly encouraged to take advantage of the resources provided.

Throughout the DCS process the Army identifies and emphasizes several critical requirements that help facilitate the reintegration process. Examples of these requirements are the Post-Deployment Health Assessment, Reunion/Reintegration Training, Communication with Spouses Training, and Suicide Awareness and Prevention Training. The original DCS program begins in theater (Redeployment phase) and continues at home station and demobilization sites (Post-Deployment and Reconstitution phases).

As of October 2007, 520,950 Soldiers have completed the redeployment phase of the DCS program.

The Army is currently integrating the DCS program into all phases of the deployment cycle (Train-up/Preparation, Mobilization, Deployment, Employment, Redeployment, Post-Deployment, and Reconstitution). In addition, performance metrics are being developed to analyze trends associated with deployments.

### **Soldier's Benefit Services (SBS)**

Another program the Army provides to Soldiers and Family Members is the Soldier's Benefit Services (SBS), which is a web-based tool that provides a complete overview of the myriad of benefits available on one website. The website contains general benefits information, as well as, access to specialized calculators and other tools for those Soldiers serving on active duty.

SBS is easy to use, current, accessible by Soldiers, Family Members and members of the Army Community, and provides personalized survivor, disability, and retirement benefits reports for all Soldiers. The current SBS website features fact sheets, customized by Army component and Soldiers' status and contain essential benefits information, in both English and Spanish, on over 100 topics. The SBS website also includes fact sheets for the 54 States and Territories to identify specific benefits and eligibilities for Soldiers residing in those locations.

The Army is committed to providing a holistic integrated process that clarifies and streamlines military benefits information. The SBS website, <http://myarmybenefits.us.army.mil>, is the Army's official one-stop resource for benefits information.

### **Army Integrated Family Support Network (AIFSN)**

The Army Integrated Family Support Network (AIFSN) was developed by the Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command (FMWRC), Army National Guard (ARNG), U.S. Army Reserve (USAR), and Installation Management Agency Family Programs staffs. The website is [www.myArmylifetoo.com](http://www.myArmylifetoo.com). It is intended to establish a comprehensive multi-agency approach for community support and services to meet the diverse needs of Active and mobilized Guard and Reserve Army families. The concept includes both Army Community Service/Family Programs and Child and Youth Services (FP/CYS). The AIFSN delivery concept is accomplished by training Active Army, ARNG, and USAR service providers on all authorized services and programs available to Soldiers and Families by each component; marketing services to Families through the "Purple Box" and the Ten Touch Personal Contact System; and unifying collaboration of military and civilian service providers through an Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee (ISFAC).

### **Army Reserve Employer Relations (ARER)**

In 2005, the Army Reserve established Army Reserve Employer Relations (ARER) to build positive relationships with civilian employers to enhance Soldier readiness and positively impact retention. The ARER Program compliments and augments the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) program at the State and local level. The ARER program focuses employer outreach efforts on Army Reserve-specific programs and initiatives. In FY 2006, the Army Reserve implemented, monitored and participated in the National Committee for ESGR's "Pinnacle Advance" campaign. ARER promotes and sponsors the "Patriot Partner", "Freedom Team Salute", and other ESGR recognition awards, and created the Welcome Home Warrior Citizen "Patriot Partner" Employer Award. The "Patriot Partner" program is the first official Army Reserve-specific recognition for employers – acknowledging employer sacrifices and support of Army Reserve Soldiers. The Chief of the Army Reserve has engaged employers in various forums to explore better ways for both the Army Reserve and businesses to work together to support Warrior Citizens. In Aug 2006, the Chief, Army Reserve established an Employer Outreach and Benefits General Officer Steering Committee (EOB GOSC) to study employer issues and make recommendations on improving partnership and relationship efforts with employers of Army Reserve Soldiers and Family members.

Identified examples of the effects of multiple deployments generally relate to the lack of time between deployments for individuals to fully recover before returning to a theater of operations. The Army is committed to ensuring all returning veterans receive the behavioral health care they need. They have a wide variety of new initiatives to provide education and training, including "Battlemind", updated Combat and Operational Stress Control and Provider Resiliency Training. A new program, Respect-mil, integrates behavioral health care and primary care. They are also dedicated to teaching the Soldier about PTSD and TBI through a new Leader Chain Teaching Program has been implemented. Absent of outwardly exhibiting symptoms of mental disorders such as

PTSD, many troops fail to report their problems due to fear of retribution or are not aware there is a problem until they start acting out in other ways such as through drug or alcohol abuse. To provide better mental health care for service members, DoD now requires a pre-deployment screening, a post-deployment screening, and a post-deployment reassessment three to six months after the member returns home from deployment. This follow-up assessment is important, because many individuals do not report problems right after a deployment, but these problems surface later. The Services are countering these challenges by embedding psychiatrists, counselors, and chaplains with deployed units and also providing training to leaders on coaching and mentoring to prevent post-traumatic stress.

Two months after redeployment and release from active duty, reunion and reintegration programs with several events scheduled give commanders, counselors, and chaplains the opportunity to interact with redeployed members and assess how well members are coping with the stress of redeployment and reintegration as they return to their civilian lives. The effectiveness of several pilot and demonstration reunion and reintegration programs is being evaluated, and will help refine many of the diverse programs that have recently been developed.

The impact of multiple recent deployments on Guard and Reserve members returning to civilian life, as a whole, has not been well documented. The working group is continuing to review existing programs and reach out to organizations that provide assistance to gain a clearer picture of the problems created by multiple deployments and develop recommendations.

## WOUNDED OR INJURED

*The Task Force on Returning Global War on Terror Heroes*<sup>13</sup> made significant recommendations that benefit National Guard and Reserve veterans. The recommendation to expand eligibility of the Small Business Administration Patriot Express Loan to provide the full range of lending, business counseling, and procurement programs to veterans, service-disabled veterans, reservists, and families will allow more options for returning Guard and Reserve members who desire to become self-employed or establish a small business. Collaboration between DoD and DOL to improve Civilian Workforce Credentialing and Certification will allow for greater alignment of a service member's military experience with civilian opportunities. The Wounded Veterans Intern Program will provide another option for valuable work experience to injured GWOT service members while they are in medical hold status and are transitioning from military Service. The emphasis by DOL, VA and DoD to provide expanded outreach in the following programs is especially noteworthy:

- Increased attendance at the Transition Assistance and Disabled Transition Assistance Programs (TAP and DTAP), respectively
- Active duty, Guard, and Reserve participation in the Workforce Investment System in every state and territory and partner with over 120 private and public sector job fairs to expand the number of employers involved in veteran recruitment
- Promote awareness of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)

The Department of Education's cooperation with the DOL to participate in DoD job fairs to provide returning service members and their families with an awareness of the post-secondary education benefits available is also a positive step in assisting wounded warriors.

Four years ago, recognizing the special employment challenges that returning Iraq/Afghanistan veterans face in the workplace, DOL initiated the Recovery Employment Assistance Lifelines, or REALifelines program. This program provides one-on-one job training, counseling, and re-employment services to seriously wounded and injured service members who cannot return to active duty. REALifelines' staff, both Federal and State, are forward-positioned at seven major military medical facilities, at the DoD Military Severely Injured Center, with the U.S. Marine Corps and with the U.S. Army at several installations. Through REALifelines, wounded or injured veterans and their spouses or caregivers build new and rewarding careers in the private sector.

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<sup>13</sup> Task Force Report to the President: Returning Global War on Terror Heroes; April 2007

Furthermore, the work of *The President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors*,<sup>14</sup> especially as it relates to challenges National Guard and Reserve veterans face upon transition to civilian employment, has provided a strong foundation from which to build — particularly the recommendations concerning increasing the flexibility of the Vocational Rehabilitation & Education Program (VRE) and for providing incentives to members who complete those programs.

The United States Army is currently implementing the Army Medical Action Plan (AMAP). This initiative represents the development of a Soldier-centric approach to managing a Soldier's medical recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration. As an integral part of the AMAP, Warrior Transition Units (WTUs), comprised of both Active and Reserve Component Soldiers, have been established at Army installations across the continental United States. These units are charged with managing the recovery, rehabilitation and reintegration of wounded, ill, and injured Soldiers (referred to as Warriors in Transition) assigned to them. Through the use of a care management team called a Triad (consisting of a physician primary care manager, nurse case manager, and the Soldier's assigned Squad Leader), the WTU manages Warriors in Transition through all phases of their recovery to include reintegration back to civilian life and employment, if they must be separated from military service. An organization that provides key assistance to the WTU in managing Warriors in Transition reintegration back to civilian life and employment is the recently established Soldier Family Assistance Center (SFAC). Each WTU has access to a SFAC which provides Warriors in Transition and their Family members counseling and overall assistance in all aspects of the separation process to smooth transition to civilian life.

Each of the Services has established programs for ensuring that all wounded and injured members and families receive the treatment and support they require to achieve the highest possible level of mental and physical functioning. More warriors survive battle today because of improved personal and vehicle armor and swift high-tech medical treatment in the field. Many consider National Guardsmen and Reservists most at risk of falling through the cracks because they are not seen nearly daily by their military supervisor. It is not unusual for members to develop problems weeks or months after they return from deployment. In the case of Guard or Reserve members, this often will occur when they are far from a military hub or under close observation by a military supervisor, who could easily and quickly ensure the member gets the help he or she needs. Recognizing this problem, the Reserve components are developing reunion and reintegration programs with several events scheduled during the first six months following demobilization.

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<sup>14</sup> Serve, Support, Simplify; Report of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors; July 2007

DoD's Military Severely Injured Center was created in February 2005 to augment the support provided by the individual Services wounded, ill and injured support programs: the Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2), the Navy Safe Harbor program, the Air Force Wounded Warrior (AFW2) program, and the Marines Wounded Warrior Regiment program. The Service support programs are the primary avenues of support for their wounded and families; the Center continues to connect members and families as requested to such resources as Military One Source and can provide liaison with other Federal agencies and non-profits.

The problems of injured reservists can last a long time, so the center established "Heroes to Hometown" programs nationwide. The recuperation time after hospitalization and rehabilitation is crucial to an individual's recovery. Knowing that they are welcome in their community and that there is a new life ahead can be the most significant part of this process. The program encourages communities to adopt these severely injured warriors by making their homecoming and life afterward as easy as possible.

The Department of the Army established its Disabled Soldier Support System in April 2004. In November 2005, the Secretary of the Army changed the name to Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2). The mission of AW2 is to assist and advocate for severely wounded, ill and injured soldiers and their families. The staff also provides support and advice during medical treatment, rehabilitation and transition back into the Army or a civilian community. AW2 cuts through red tape – assists soldiers and their families in navigating federal, state and private benefit systems – and links them with selected financial, educational, employment, legal and medical resources. They advocate and serve as a change agent for all Army Wounded Warriors and implement lessons learned to adjust policy, and increase the responsiveness and effectiveness of medical and benefit systems.

The Navy Safe Harbor's mission is to provide personalized support and assistance to severely injured Sailors and their family. Safe Harbor operates a proactive outreach/visitation service to address needs by identifying and providing access to existing support capabilities and resources for Navy and Navy Reserve members. They partner with Marine for Life (Injured Support) for Sailors assigned to Marine units. They also establish and maintain liaison with the Sailor's command and encourage retention. They provide continuing support for Sailors with 30 percent or more disability rating transitioning to civilian life.

The Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment was established in 2007 to track wounded Marines through the challenges of follow-up medical care and subsumed the Marine4Life Program that previously had this responsibility. It provides oversight to eliminate possible seams or cracks in the system that Marines may fall through. Specifically, the regiment will help wounded Marines through medical and physical evaluation boards, assist them in making insurance claims, and act as a clearing house for charitable donations and work to ensure accountability and non-medical case management during

the recovery of the Marine. The regiment provides one process, one set of standard operating procedures that supports active duty, reserve and separated personnel. The regiment also oversees transition from DoD care to VA care. The regiment's mission is to provide information, advocacy and assistance to injured Marines, Sailors injured while serving with Marines, and their families in order to minimize the difficulties and worries they face as they navigate the road to recovery. Support begins at the time of injury and continues through return to duty or transition to the Veterans Administration.

The Air Force Wounded Warrior (AFW2) program (previously called the Air Force Palace HART (Helping Airmen Recuperate Together)) provides extended five-year case management follow-up, advocacy and tracking of all eligible Air Force members and immediate family. Air Force wounded warriors receive enhanced transition services to include relocation, financial and employment counseling, and extended follow up for wounded warriors and their family members. If the member desires and has a 30 percent or higher disability rating, a team is set up to facilitate Air Force civilian employment. The staff members also serve as the VA Claims Process intervention advocate. The Air Force is developing a dedicated website for separated/retired AFW2 members and their families to obtain up-to-date information on benefits, entitlements and resources. Additional consultants will also be added to the AFW2 program to provide better continuity of care to the growing numbers of wounded Air Force warriors.

Although a great deal has been accomplished to assist severely disabled members, information on the effectiveness of these programs and possible gaps that exist is still emerging. The working group is continuing to identify unmet needs in order to develop possible recommendations.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

In order to effectively identify and assess the needs of mobilized Guard and Reserve members making the transition back to civilian life, a methodology is required that builds a framework from which recommendations may be made. The methodology begins by identifying outcomes, based on mission, strategy and goals, and then derives from programs that will achieve the desired outcomes. Once the actual state of the program(s) is captured, root cause analysis is executed by contrasting the actual and desired states and identifying gaps between the two are identified. Only when the root cause is properly identified can an appropriate system of interventions be designed and developed to fill the gap. Subsequent evaluation of the results will monitor the alignment between actual and desired end states to ensure the gap is closed and detect if any new gaps appear. This systems approach provides a basis for ongoing assessment of program alignment with member's needs. This is the framework the special working group finds most useful.

Since the working group was established, the majority of time and resources have been spent collecting existing background information, research and studies, and program information regarding Guard and Reserve members returning to civilian life. Research by the working group has identified significant information regarding existing transition programs for both Active and Reserve component members. However, there is no empirical data that accurately describes member's "needs." Some research using existing data on employers and occupations provides limited demographic insights but virtually all the information on "needs" is anecdotal. Anecdotal examples of the needs may be categorized as:

- returning to or finding a good job that enables Guard or Reserve members to support themselves and their families
- effective information exchange and technology tools that facilitate communications between supporting organizations and supported members and their families
- assistance related to health needs, especially when an injury affects a change in civilian employment
- assistance for small business owners/self-employed in rebuilding their business
- more time for the transition phase beginning before demobilization and including a period of time of transition at home



## SUMMARY – THE NEXT STEPS

The working group heard from many organizations and agencies, as well as the Services and their components, concerning Guard and Reserve members' transition to civilian employment after serving in OEF/OIF/ONE. The primary challenge of the working group is to further quantify the needs and challenges of these citizen warriors. Due to the very nature of the Reserve components as the community based force, the primary goal of the demobilizing Guard and Reserve members is to return to their community and re-establish a sense of normalcy in their lives, families, and social relationships as they return as a contributing member of their community. The working group found a wealth of agencies and organizations in the federal, state, and local government, as well as for-profit and non-profit organizations and faith based groups, that are ready, willing and able to support our service members and their families' in transitioning back to civilian life. Making information and resources available to transitioning service members is critical. Packaging and marketing information is an important first step in connecting those in need with those who can assist them in their transition.

As part of the readiness processing for mobilization and/or deployment or the Ready Reserve annual screening requirement, Services are required to confirm and record the civilian employment, student, or other status of each service member. This information is part of the Civilian Employment Information database that currently exists and is maintained by the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). This could be used as a source for monitoring challenges and trends in employment status upon demobilization and transition to civilian status or employment. Continuous emphasis is needed to maintain current employment information.

The recently established transition portal – TurboTAP – is a robust tool that National Guard and Reserve members can use as they transition on and off active duty. This is also a resource that can be used by all military personnel as their career in the Services and their components evolves. The transition portal may be accessed 24/7/365 and has the capability to store an individual transition plan that can be easily accessed and updated. The portal may also be used by family members of the military members. The Department of Defense, in close collaboration with the Departments of Labor and Veterans Affairs, should establish a formal evaluation of TurboTAP to include performance and outcome measures and continue to enhance and refine this resource. Turbo Tap, combined with the assistance of transition counselor enables Guard and Reserve members access all available services to tailor a transition plan that meets their specific needs.

There is also an effort to focus on assisting any veterans who may find themselves homeless or facing other barriers to employment. Specialized programs, such as DOL's Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program and Veterans Workforce Investment Program, and the VA programs listed in Appendix I, target these individuals. While these programs are not seeing

a large number of returning Iraq/Afghanistan veterans in these special programs, special outreach is underway to reach them.

The lack of a one-stop resource to address the needs of transitioning National Guard and Reserve members is problematic. There are, as have been identified in this interim report, numerous programs and resources that are available to veterans and other eligible military members. Cataloging those resources into a marketable directory would be a significant first step to establishing a single source of comprehensive information to marketing these programs and resources.

Some specific areas the working group will probe include:

- Possibly establishing mobile TAP Teams (DoD, VA, and DOL personnel) in forward deployed areas to conduct most of the major components of TAP
- Providing transition information and planning resources at multiple touch points in the mobilization/demobilization process
- Considering home station or community-based demobilization to include personal and one-on-one transition counseling to members and families
- Maximizing the use of technology in the transition process
- Considering technical and other procedural changes to ease the time constraints on when transition counseling must be provided, to include information on education benefits, health insurance, and separation counseling
- Integrating transition assistance briefings and counseling into inactive duty training, annual training, family days, and other opportunities not resulting from mobilization or deployment
- Developing a standardized package of transition information that can be provided to each Reserve component member in CD/DVD, website, streaming video, and paper formats
- Involving family readiness groups, family readiness officers, and ombudsmen in providing transition information and support to members and family members
- Increasing the use of existing media venues to conduct TAP outreach and marketing
- Identifying best practices among the various reunion/reintegration programs
- Considering alternatives that minimize possible costs to employers who employ Guard and Reserve members

- An assessment of incentives employers presently provide and what incentives have worked previously
- Further assessment of issues affecting employers, such as critical employees, replacement costs, loss of business or market share, costs imposed under USERRA, etc.

As noted in each focus area, there is still a significant amount of work yet to be done. The working group will continue to probe each area, more clearly quantifying needs, and develop recommendations.

# APPENDIX I

## VA OUTREACH & TRAINING

### Overview

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is dedicated to improving the lives of veterans and their eligible family members through the provision of benefits and services. VA staff throughout the country are committed to achieving the VA mission of fulfilling President Lincoln's promise "to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's veterans. Inherent in the mission is the need to familiarize veterans, family members, and survivors with the benefits and services that they may be eligible for and to assist them in using these benefits. VA recognizes that outreach and awareness activities have a direct effect on the achievement of our mission.

Outreach is generally defined as the act or process of reaching out in a systematic manner to proactively provide information, services, and benefits to stakeholders or the public. It may include any activity that is used to inform veterans about VA's health care programs and services. VA uses all available methods to ensure that the greatest number of service members and veterans are reached. Outreach in VA includes direct mailing, news media, community based activities, partnerships with other federal agencies, internet, phone centers, and personal briefings to service members, veterans, veterans service organizations and other interested stakeholders.

VA's goal is to provide veterans with the world-class benefits and services they have earned and to do so by adhering to the highest standards of compassion, commitment, excellence, professionalism, integrity, accountability, and stewardship. VA management is committed to increasing knowledge and awareness among veterans and their families about benefits and services.

VA programs enhance the armed forces' recruitment and retention efforts by providing assistance to veterans in their readjustment to civilian life. VA outreach efforts begin at recruitment to military service and continue throughout the life cycle of the veteran.

VA has facilities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and some U.S. territories. VA delivers health care and benefits through a network which includes 156 medical centers, 875 community-based outpatient clinics, 207 Veterans Centers, 57 Regional Offices, and 140 Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) sites. VA also operates 124 national cemeteries.

Outreach activities in VA are as varied as the programs administered and the beneficiaries served. Targeted outreach to special groups helps ensure that programs, benefits, and services meet their intended recipients at the right time. Some level or style of outreach is conducted at every point of service and benefit delivery. VA programs

have discovered that hard to reach veterans must be addressed in ways that best meet their particular circumstances – community programs, targeted mailings, events, educating community resources, culturally appealing materials. For example, populations that are dispersed and difficult to reach may best be reached over the internet.

## **Outreach**

This report will provide highlights on the varied outreach that VA provides to service members, veterans, and families to assure that they are made aware of the VA benefits and services available.

Outreach is not limited to veterans and family members but also includes educating other agencies and/or organizations involved in helping veterans and family members such as community service providers, school officials, lenders, service organizations, and other federal and local agencies who work with veterans and their families.

VA has always been committed to outreach. This commitment is heightened during periods of war. Since September 11, 2001, approximately 525,000 men and women from the National Guard and Reserve have been activated to serve in support of Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (ONE/OEF/OIF). As of August 2006, approximately 327,000 of these troops have separated from active duty and transitioned to civilian life, joining the newest generation of veterans. The increased role of the National Guard and Reserve has focused VA's attention on expanding outreach efforts to ensure that they educate this segment of the veteran population and address their critical needs.

VA has continued to build its outreach efforts. In 2004, Secretary Nicholson began sending a personal letter to each returning OEF/OIF veteran based on lists routinely provided by the Department of Defense. In August 2005, Secretary Nicholson established the Office of National Outreach Programs. This office is charged with working with VA's administrations and staff offices to coordinate and monitor major Departmental outreach efforts to ensure veterans and their families have timely access to information regarding VA benefits and services. The Office is also responsible for developing and implementing administrative and operational policies related to outreach.

The Office of National Outreach Programs coordinates with VA's senior leaders and the communications offices in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), and National Cemetery Administration (NCA) to develop national, regional, and local outreach plans to inform specific veteran populations, their families, and service providers of VA benefits and services. The Office also serves as a liaison with the White House, Congress, and other federal, state, and local officials on the development of coordinated outreach efforts.

In 2004, the Secretary established a Seamless Transition task force to intensify and continue efforts to ensure the best and most timely services are provided to service

members and veterans. The task force is composed of VA senior leadership from key program offices as well as the VA/DoD Joint Executive Council (JEC) structure. Initially efforts of the task force focused on coordination and collaboration across administrations and agencies to ensure this mission is approached in a comprehensive manner. The partnership with DoD extends to all levels including military Services, personnel and readiness, health affairs, and reserve affairs. Based on recommendations from the task force, the Secretary established the Office of Seamless Transition in 2005.

The Office of Seamless Transition functions to ensure that the provision of benefits and health services information is coordinated and provided at the earliest possible time. VA and DoD partner to ensure that the transition from active duty to veteran status is seamless for all military personnel including Guard and Reserve members transitioning from active duty.

VA and DoD developed a number of training materials for staff including a script and video for the front line staff to ensure that they can identify veterans who have served in a theater of combat operations and take the steps necessary to ensure they receive appropriate care. Each VHA facility and each VA Regional Office have designated a point of contact to coordinate activities locally and to ensure the needs of these service members or veterans are met and contact is made should the veteran relocate.

Seamless transition is improving collaboration with DoD to enhance outreach to returning members of the Reserves and National Guard. A new brochure has been developed and distributed summarizing the benefits available to this special population of veterans upon their return to civilian life. One million copies of this brochure have been printed. It is also available in electronic form on the VA internet site. The outreach component of the Office of Seamless Transition was established in 2005. The Office of Seamless Transition (OST) outreach program educates service members and veterans returning from theaters of combat operations about VA services and benefits. The OST focuses on combat injured veterans and OEF/OIF National Guard and Reserve members returning from deployment and their families. The unique partnership OST established with the National Guard provides access to returning troops and family members during family day events, national conferences, and reunion events at the units of the returning troops.

National interdepartmental outreach efforts include assistance in the training of Transition Assistance Advisors (TAA) about VHA, VBA, NCA, and TRICARE to provide outreach in each state and referral to VA services and benefits experts to assist these new veterans in VA enrollment and eligibility. OST forms state coalitions to extend the outreach to local level partners in community and faith-based organizations. At last count, formal agreements had been established with 26 states, an additional 16 states are working on formal agreements, and 12 states have established informal agreements.

In joint efforts with DoD, OST participates in Post-Deployment Health Reassessment programs to reassess returning veterans for potential service-related health problems at three and six months post deployment. VA leverages this opportunity to provide additional outreach on benefits and services. OST collaborates with DoD to provide outreach to injured service members at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda Naval Medical Center by facilitating amputee peer visits by combat disabled VA employees.

OST provides case management by coordinating outreach efforts across the administrations and agencies to facilitate the transition of veterans from DoD facilities to VA and to the community medical facility located closest to their homes. VA/DoD Social Work Liaisons and VBA Benefit Counselors are now located at nine Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) to assist injured and ill service members. VA began placing VA social workers and benefits counselors at key military treatment facilities (MTFs) where severely wounded service members from OEF/OIF are generally transferred from theater. Full time VA staff is assigned to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., and the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. Similar teams work with patients and family members at other MTFs serving as key medical centers for seriously wounded returning troops: Eisenhower (Ft. Gordon, GA), Brooke (Ft. Sam Houston, TX), Darnall (Ft. Hood, TX) and Madigan (Tacoma, WA) Army Medical Centers; Evans (Ft. Carson, CO) Army Community Hospital; and Camp Pendleton and Balboa Naval Hospitals (CA). Through these resources, each claim from a seriously disabled OEF/OIF veteran is case managed for seamless and expeditious processing. VA social workers facilitate the transfer of veterans from major MTFs to the VA Medical Center closest to their home of record or most appropriate for specialized services required as a result of their medical condition.

### **Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Outreach**

Outreach activities within VBA are generally targeted at three categories of beneficiaries. The first is active duty military service members and activated National Guard and Reservists. The second is veterans including those National Guard and Reservists who have been demobilized. The third category of beneficiaries is the family members and

survivors of service members who died while on active duty or veterans who die from a service-connected disability.

Outreach is a cooperative effort among the five VBA business lines (Compensation and Pension, Education, Loan Guaranty, Insurance, and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment) and among VA elements including field organizations, VHA, NCA, and the Office of Public Affairs (OPA). In addition, VA works in partnership with other federal, state, and local agencies and veterans service organizations to increase outreach opportunities.

VBA's outreach program includes a wide array of activities designed to assist veterans in understanding and applying for VA benefits, including transitional briefings for service members and reservists; direct mailings of information letters and brochures; staff presentations and speaking engagements with veteran groups, community organizations, educational institutions, etc.; conference exhibitions; and internet websites targeted to specific groups. These efforts focus on making information available and accessible, and creating benefits information that is "user friendly."

The outreach mission is carried out using various media such as toll-free telephone service, the internet, kiosks, special mailings, news releases, public service announcements, pamphlets, fact sheets, award letters, town hall meetings, benefits seminars and other forums in which information about VA benefits and claims assistance is furnished to attendees.

Outreach efforts begin long before the service member becomes a veteran. VA outreach efforts acknowledge that providing veteran benefit information to service members very early in their military careers will increase the likelihood of awareness.

(1) **Accession.** Since November 2004, each person inducted into one of the five military branches receives VA Pamphlet 21-00-1, *A Summary of VA Benefits*, through Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS). This cooperative effort between VA and DoD ensures that inductees receive basic information on VA benefits and services to which they may become eligible. The MEPS process reaches virtually all personnel at induction. Since June 2006, VA Pamphlet 21-00-1 was distributed to graduates of the military Service academies. The BEC is working to further expand on efforts to disseminate information on benefits and services available to uniformed service members and VA and DoD beneficiaries throughout the military personnel lifecycle. This includes efforts planned to engage each Service branch to identify other key accession (e.g. ROTC) and Service transition points (e.g. Senior SNO school) for distribution of *A Summary of VA Benefits* pamphlets.

**Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and Other Military Services Briefings.** Over the past four years, VBA representatives conducted over 29,000 VA benefits briefings for over a million Service members. VA also conducted retirement briefings, separation



briefings, pre- and post-deployment briefings for the Reserves and National Guard and overseas briefings. In FY 2006, nearly 7,300 briefings were provided to more than 284,000 attendees. In addition, the DOL provided a formal 2 1/2 –day Transition Assistance Workshop, as well as Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights (USERRA) briefings at some 213 military installations world-wide. DoD and the Military Services provided “Preseparation Counseling” sessions to approximately 200,000 Regular Component and 75,000 Reserve Component personnel annually.

**Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP).** DTAP provides service members with information about VA’s Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) program. The DTAP program is the first step to ensuring professional and personal success outside of the military for eligible veterans with service-connected disabilities. Generally DTAP is conducted in conjunction with TAP briefings.

**Benefits Delivery at Discharge.** This initiative was established to provide transition assistance and continuity of care to service members who are separating from active duty. Under the Benefits Delivery at Discharge Program (BDD), service members may begin the disability claims process with VA up to 180-60 days prior to separation. There are currently 130 BDD sites that actively take claims from separating service members. VA and DoD signed a memorandum of agreement (MOA) in November 2004 which established a Cooperative Separation Process/Examination under the BDD program. The MOA stipulates that only one examination is to be conducted, using VA protocols, which meet the needs of VA and DoD.

**Coming Home to Work (CHTW).** CHTW is an early outreach effort with special emphasis on OEF/OIF service members at military treatment facilities who are pending medical separation from active duty. Participants work with a VA Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to obtain un-paid work experiences at government facilities. Such work experiences allow veterans to learn valuable skills which they may use to ease transition to civilian employment.

**Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) Mailings.** MGIB benefit information is mailed to service members upon enlistment and again to those who enrolled in MGIB after 12 and 24 months of active duty. These mailings also include information on VA's Home Loan Guaranty Program. Both of these benefits administered by VA are available to active duty service members.

**Outreach to Guard/Reserve.** With the activation and deployment of large numbers of Reserve/National Guard members to Iraq and Afghanistan, VA expanded its outreach to this cohort. In partnership with DoD, VA conducts retirement briefings and healthcare services and benefits briefings at town hall meetings, family readiness groups, and during unit drills near the home of returning Guard/Reservists.

VA and the National Guard Bureau teamed up in 2005 to train 54 National Guard State Benefits Advisors (SBAs), now referred to as TAAs – one for each of the 50 states and four territories. The primary function of the TAAs is to serve as the statewide point of contact and coordinator to provide information and advise Guard members and their families regarding VA benefits and services. They also assist in resolving problems with VA healthcare, benefits, and TRICARE. A VA sponsored training conference held in February 2006, enhanced the TAAs knowledge of VA services and benefits as well as defined their role as VA advocates.

VA encourages state National Guard coalitions to improve local communication and coordination of benefits briefings to ensure that Reserve and National Guard members are fully aware of benefits. To support better communication between the National Guard and VA, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was developed between VA and National Guard to institutionalize this partnership.

The national MOA between VA and the National Guard Bureau was signed in May 2005 outlining how the two organizations would work together to identify and solve problems and collaborate to improve communication and information about VA benefits for Guard and Reserve members. Each VBA office was instructed to begin to work locally with the National Guard to develop a similar local MOA with related state and local services. The purpose of this effort was to develop regional and local partnerships between VA leadership, National Guard Adjutant Generals, and State Directors of Veterans Affairs to enhance access and services to veterans and to share information about VA benefits and services through coalition meetings.

**Veterans Assistance at Discharge System (VADS).** In an outreach effort that began in 1968, VADS generates the mailing of a "Welcome Home Package" that includes a letter from the Secretary, VA Pamphlet 21-00-1, *A Summary of VA Benefits*, and VA Form 21-0501, *Veterans Benefits Timetable*, to all veterans recently separated or retired from active duty (including Reserve/Guard members).

In addition, a VADS generated letter provides similar information to those same veterans with a 6-month follow-up letter, the summary of benefits information and the timetable

for applying for benefits. VADS sends specific information on education benefits to separating and retiring service members as well as activated Reserve/Guard members soon after release from active duty. VADS sends automated mailings to inform recently discharged veterans of their eligibility to convert Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) to Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI). At one week, three weeks, and 55 weeks after discharge, applications are mailed to those service members who have not yet applied for VGLI. The computer-generated VGLI applications are also mailed to all reservists who have separated.

**Unemployable Veterans with Service-Disabled Veterans' Insurance (S-DVI)**

**Outreach.** This planned outreach effort will invite S-DVI policyholders who have also been rated to be Individually Unemployable (IU) to apply for a waiver of premiums on their S-DVI policies. In an effort to provide high-level service to policyholders who paid or are paying on a policy that potentially qualifies for a waiver, Insurance Service will invite all of the identified policyholders to file for waiver of their premiums.

**First Time Applicants.** All veterans who first apply for any VA benefit are informed about other potential benefits. Regional Offices include VA Form 21-0760, *VA Benefits in Brief*, with all acknowledgment letters for Compensation, Pension, and Education claims. Special instructions have also been established for Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment applicants.

**Women Veterans.** Women Veterans Coordinators (WVCs) at regional offices continue to work closely with VHA Women Veteran Program Managers and with local service organization representatives. Through such partnering, local outreach events were expanded to regional activities such as the annual Women Veterans Appreciation Day in Branson, Missouri. VBA representatives at the national and local levels work closely with the Center for Women Veterans, the VHA Women Veterans Health Program, and the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Women Veterans to improve outreach to women veterans. VBA representatives also participate in the annual conference of the National Association of State Women Veterans Coordinators. VBA was a co-sponsor of the June 2004 National Summit for Women Veterans which was attended by almost 300 women veterans, women veterans coordinators, and other interested individuals.

**Homeless Veterans.** In response to P.L. 107-95, VBA established fulltime Homeless Veterans Outreach Coordinators (HVOCs) at 20 regional offices in early FY 2003. Part-time coordinators are assigned at all other regional offices. In October 2003, the directors of 10 regional offices joined the executive committee of their regional Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH). They were selected based on their proximity to each of the ICH Regional Council's base city. The HVOC for each of those offices participates in the ICH regional working group. VA representatives have key roles in implementing the national plan to end chronic homelessness in 10 years. HVOCs actively participate in stand downs for homeless veterans. Stand downs are typically one to three day events providing services to homeless veterans such as food, shelter, clothing, health screenings,

VA and Social Security benefits counseling, and referrals to a variety of other necessary services, such as housing, employment and substance abuse treatment. They are collaborative events, coordinated between local VA facilities, other government agencies, and community agencies that serve the homeless. Stand downs have been used as an effective tool in reaching out to and assisting homeless veterans. Stand Downs for Homeless Veterans are driven by local community efforts in partnership with VA Office of Homeless Veterans Programs. Through the collaborative efforts of VSOs, federal Benefits Offices, community based outpatient clinics (CBOC), and service providers, an estimated 20,000 to 40,000 homeless veterans have been provided outreach services thorough the conduct of local stand downs. HVOCs work closely with their VHA counterparts and participate in various homeless programs available at local VA medical centers such as the Homeless Chronically Mentally Ill (HCMI) Program, Veterans Industries, Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans, and Comprehensive Homeless Centers. VBA representatives also work with the Social Security Administration and the DOL in implementing grant and per diem programs for the homeless.

### **Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Outreach**

Outreach activities within VHA are generally focused on three categories of veterans. First are those veterans who may be eligible but are unaware of VA health care services. The second are veterans who are aware of the benefits but do not use them to the full extent of their eligibility. The final group is composed of service members who will become eligible for veterans benefits.

A variety of direct outreach and educational activities are employed to inform service members about their eligibility and services available and to improve the health outcomes of veterans. Outreach is used to provide information on health care issues in general, both to veterans and VHA health care providers.

VHA's primary outreach audience includes veterans eligible for medical treatment in categories 1-8, returning veterans, Members of Congress, and veteran service organizations (VSOs).

Secondary audiences include military-oriented groups (both active duty and reserve members), affiliations, unions, and other governmental and private health care organizations. This covers other health care providers and community stakeholders at large. Activities may include the involvement of veterans and/or others with the ability to reach out to veterans directly (e.g., other medical providers and providers of community-based services).

VHA targets specific groups of veterans including: the homeless and indigent; elderly veterans and their family members; at-risk women; Native Americans; those with specific

medical issues, such as AIDS/HIV, Hepatitis C, Parkinson's disease, and Multiple Sclerosis; and those involved with Project SHAD, Agent Orange, or the Gulf War. Most importantly, VA is actively outreaching to and enrolling veterans returning from OEF/OIF, especially members of the National Guard and Reserve.

VHA engages in numerous outreach activities, both at a national and a local level, using various outreach methodologies such as benefits fairs and exhibits which include VHA displays at conferences and conventions.

Activities and partnerships such as Veterans Service Organization (VSO) meetings, federal boards, town halls, educational patient support groups, DoD related activities such as the Transition Assistance Program, National Guard and Reserve conferences and reunion events, and the Post Deployment Health Reassessment Program activities all assist VHA in reaching its varied and dispersed target audiences.

Publications (including VHA newsletters, posters, direct mail correspondence, brochures, fact sheets and other publications prepared at the local, VISN, and national level) provide veterans and eligible beneficiaries with concise and targeted updates to existing benefits and services. Many of the publications are targeted to specific medical conditions impacting veterans or towards a specific group of veterans and include summary information regarding benefits and eligibility.

Web sites such as the primary VHA internet-based Web site, [www.va.gov/health](http://www.va.gov/health), for use by veterans support high technology communication favored by more recent veteran populations. In addition to providing concise information on VHA benefits and eligibility, this main site serves as the starting point for a multitude of other sites that link to additional information and application forms. Working together, VHA and VBA have included a new site that is geared specifically to returning OEF/OIF veterans. VHA and the Indian Health Service have developed a combined website to provide information tailored specifically to American Indian and Alaska Native veterans. Other websites have been developed by local VHA facilities and VISNs primarily for veterans already using the health care system who seek specific information (e.g., operating hours, telephone numbers, clinic schedules, and procedures for reordering medicines).

VHA also conducts outreach through Clinical Education Programs which include instruction as part of formal education program such as diabetes and heart health programs, Parkinson's Patient, Family, and Community Forums, flu vaccine fairs, and facility tours for veterans who, in most cases, already utilize VHA for some health care services but may be unaware of other services.

VHA employs social workers at nine Military Treatment Facilities nation wide to educate and assist injured and ill service members transitioning from military health care to health care provided by VA. These employees are instrumental in instructing veterans and family members about potential benefits and service and facilitating access to these benefits and services.

National and local news releases generated by VHA inform veterans about veteran events and changes in policies. Local news releases are particularly effective in informing veterans about local facility programs and activities and providing points of contact.

Ceremonies are held for dedication or expansion of VA facilities as well as major special events such as Memorial Day or Veterans Day. VHA takes advantage of these events to communicate with community and stakeholder groups through presentations or informational briefings.

A critical outreach activity to veterans and families concerns the potential health effects of hazardous military deployments. VHA has produced a brochure that addresses the main health concerns for military service in Afghanistan, another brochure for the current conflict in the Gulf region, and one recently distributed on health care for women veterans returning from the Gulf region. These brochures answer health-related questions that veterans, their families, and health care providers have about these hazardous military deployments. They also describe relevant medical care programs that VA has developed in anticipation of health care needs of veterans returning from combat and peacekeeping missions abroad.

Brochures addressing health concerns for military service for the current conflict in the gulf region, including Afghanistan and other regions include:

*VA Special Health Registry Examination Programs -- Questions and Answers* (IB 10-57, June 2006)

*Tell Your Military Story* (IB 10-93 P96156, November 2005)

*Women Veterans' Health Program: A Promise Kept* (IB-10-180 2004)

*Iraqi Freedom Veterans: Information For Veterans Who Served In Iraq In 2003-04 And Beyond And Their Families* (IB 10-166 December 2004)

*Enduring Freedom Veterans: Information For Veterans Who Served In Afghanistan And For Their Families* (IB 10-71 December 2004)

*VA Health Care and Benefits Information for Veterans Wallet Card* (IB 10-181 July 2004)

*Summary VA Benefits for National Guard and Reserve Personnel* (IB-10-164 March 2004)

*Special VA Health Care Eligibility For Veterans Who Served In Combat Theaters Fact Sheet* (IB10-162 December 2003)

*2 Years Free VA Medical Care for New Combat Veterans* (VA POSTER 10-125 May 2006)

*VA Cares about Vietnam Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange* (VA Poster 10-71 Revised May 2004 P95250)

*Operations Iraq Freedom/Enduring Freedom Review* (Newsletter, direct mailed and available on line at [www.va.gov/EnvironAgents](http://www.va.gov/EnvironAgents))

*VA Cares For Veterans Who Served In Southwest Asia* (VA Poster 10-83 Revised May 2004)

*War-Related Illness and Injury Study Centers (WRIISCs): Specialized Health Care, Research, Education and Outreach for Combat Veterans with Difficult to Diagnose Conditions* (IB-10-165 April 2003)

*VIDEO: War And Health: Treating War-Related Illnesses At VA's WRIISCs*  
([www.va.gov/Environagents/page.cfm?pg=17](http://www.va.gov/Environagents/page.cfm?pg=17))

Toll-free call centers provide veterans with information on health benefits, eligibility and enrollment, Gulf War, special medical programs such as Spina Bifida, Shipboard Hazard and Defense (SHAD), and Agent Orange.

Two hundred and seven Vet Centers include professional readjustment counseling, community education, and outreach to special populations. Veterans participating in counseling at Vet Centers are also provided information about and access to available VA and community support services. Vet Center staff members encounter and educate veterans about VA service and benefits at numerous outreach-related events such as meetings, forums, fairs, and post deployment health reassessment programs. In 2003, VA Vet Centers began serving veterans returning from conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. As a community outreach arm of VHA, the Vet Centers have initiated Outreach efforts at to area military installations and closely coordinated their efforts with military family support services on the various military bases.

In addition to community outreach to new veterans, the Vet Centers provide trauma counseling, family counseling, employment services, and a range of social services to assist veterans in readjusting from war-time military service to civilian life. The Vet Centers also function as community points of access for many returning veterans, providing them with information and referrals to VA medical facilities for health care and VA regional offices for benefits issues.

Since 2003, the Under Secretary for Health authorized the Vet Center program to hire 100 OEF/OIF veterans to conduct outreach to their fellow Global War on Terror veterans. All 100 were hired. These positions are located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. They provide information about VA and Vet Center services at military demobilization and National Guard and Reserve sites, as well as at local community events.

VHA uses numerous methods to provide veterans with the latest information on medical research being conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs. These methods include brochures and reports available on the Office of Research and Development website at <http://www1.va.gov/resdev/resources/pubs/arch.cfm>, CDs, Frequently Asked Questions, VA Researcher's Speaker's Programs, and conference and meeting presentations. The goal of the research outreach program is to educate veterans on the scope of the program and to encourage veterans to participate in VA research.

**Office of Human Resources Management and Labor Relations Outreach National Veterans Employment Program, Office of Marketing and Veterans Employment Outreach Service.** Since 2001, the purpose of the National Veterans Employment Program (NVEP) has been to lead the Department's effort in promoting VA career opportunities to veterans. The program supports the Department's commitment to a diverse workforce by targeting qualified veterans to fill VA vacancies. Strategic goals of the program are to assist veterans in making a smooth transition to the civilian workforce; help restore the independence, capabilities, and quality of life of disabled veterans; and deliver world class service to veterans and their families. NVEP participates in outreach and recruiting events for veterans and promotes VA career opportunities at military transition centers, VSOs, professional military organizations, and other veteran stakeholders as well as VA facilities nationwide. The program conducts campaigns to educate veterans, Human Resource (HR) professionals, employers, and selecting officials on how veterans' preference and special hiring authorities for veterans can be used effectively to assist veterans obtain employment in the federal sector and, in particular, in VA.

The most recent expansion of the program is the development of Veterans Employment Coordinators (VEC) at HR offices throughout VA. VECs lead local efforts to recruit and retain veterans in VA's workforce. NVEP hosts a website, [www.va.gov/nvep](http://www.va.gov/nvep), and has launched new marketing materials highlighting the tag line "Serving those who served," as displayed on posters, brochures, and promotional materials distributed to veterans nationwide.

**The Center for Minority Veterans Outreach.** The Center for Minority Veterans (CMV) strives to develop and foster relationships with community organizations, VSOs, special emphasis groups, and other stakeholders to assist in creating understanding of the unique needs of minority veterans. CMV provides briefings and panel presentations to minority veterans and family members. CMV educates staff and local communities, conducts town hall meetings, and attends national and local conventions.

CMV identifies and assesses the needs of the minority veterans and conducts appropriate outreach. The goal of the outreach is to increase local awareness of minority related issues and develop strategies for increasing participation in existing VA benefit programs. Minority Veteran Program Coordinators (MVPCs) are located at all VA facilities. CMV provides guidance and direction to field staff to maximize the



effectiveness of local outreach efforts. For example, CMV provides e-mails to field staff which may include samples on how to greet your supervisors that help your supervisor understand minority outreach needs in your local area so there is specific information on how to target outreach.

CMV provides liaisons to targeted populations including African American veterans, Asian American and Pacific Island veterans, Native American, Native Hawaiian, and Alaskan Native veterans and Japanese American veterans.

**The Center for Women Veterans Outreach.** The Center for Women Veterans (CWV) conducts specific outreach to female veterans to ensure female veterans have access to VA benefits and services on a par with male veterans. Outreach is designed to improve female veterans' awareness of services, benefits, and eligibility criteria. CWV informs female veterans through briefings, town hall meeting, panels, workshops, and other government and community based activities. CWV participates in a National Summit on Women Veterans' Issues.

CWV supported an information exhibit at the Joint Services Symposium for Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard women service members at Ft. McNair. CWV staff members participate on a variety of panels and task forces established to design future benefits and services. CWV staff members ensure that the special needs of the female veteran population are represented.

**Office of Public Affairs Outreach.** *Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependent, 2006* is a 134 -page comprehensive guide on federal benefits programs for veterans. The guide is distributed widely to employees, VSO representatives, Congressional offices, and veterans. Orders for the booklet have increased steadily, totaling 2 million this year. Approximately 60,000 copies of the Spanish edition were printed in 2006. This booklet is also available on the VA internet site at [http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/current\\_benefits.asp](http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/current_benefits.asp).

Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives Outreach Program was created to reach out to faith-based and other non-profit organizations to remove barriers that prevented participation in existing VA programs and to develop new and innovative initiatives to assist our nation's veterans. The program focuses on maximizing community partnerships to deliver benefits and services to the community.

News Releases and Public Service Announcements are prepared and distributed by local and national public affairs offices. These releases reach a wide audience in the general public who might not otherwise be familiar with the benefits and services provided by the VA.

Native American Tribal Policy, in the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, develops policy to be used by VA staff to meet and consult with Native American Tribes. Meetings between the DAS for Intergovernmental Affairs and Native American tribal

leadership, letters, notices, and conventions ensure improved understanding of veterans programs. These meetings facilitate the development and use of programs targeted to this population, for example the Native American Loan Guaranty program.

**Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization Outreach.** The Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) administers the small business programs through advocacy, education, and oversight. The Center for Veterans Enterprise promotes business ownership and expansion for veterans and service-connected disabled veterans through the use of veteran targeted posters, briefings, newsletters, videos, and websites such as <http://www.vetbiz.gov/> and <http://www.vetbiz.gov/StartBusiness/edu.htm> . OSDBU encourages agency contractors to subcontract with service-disabled veteran-owned businesses by attending local outreach events sponsored by other organizations and participating with prime contractors in prime outreach events as described in <http://www.vetbiz.gov/fpp/VAstrategy.pdf>. The program provides veteran entrepreneurial training at the Chief Logistics Officers conferences and other meetings.

## **Secretary of Veterans Affairs - Outreach Strategies and Initiatives FY2006 - 2011**

**Strategic Outlook for Communication.** Enhanced outreach and communication will ensure that veterans and their families, stakeholders, and employees are well-informed about VA benefits and services as well as VA's vision, mission, goals, and objectives. To ensure that service members and veterans receive information that is critical to their understanding of benefits and services, VA will systematically pursue an array of communication and outreach strategies. Enhanced communication and outreach will be especially important in the areas of seamless transition and VA/DoD collaboration. Outreach and awareness strategies and initiatives can be found throughout VA's Strategic Plan. The following is an outline of outreach and awareness activities contained in VA's Strategic Plan

*Goal 1: Restore the capability of veterans with disabilities to the greatest extent possible and improve the quality of their lives and that of their families.*

### **Strategy and Initiatives:**

Improve outreach, collaboration, and data sharing to assist veterans in identifying and receiving appropriate benefits.

VA will improve the methods, content, and distribution of our outreach efforts.

- VA will collaborate with DoD to ensure that outreach materials and briefings – provided by VA, DoD, or both – contain consistent information on health care and benefits.
- VA will increase the number of sites where VA staff are stationed at military treatment facilities (MTFs).

- VA will seek additional opportunities at the state and local level to partner with military Services, veterans organizations, and social service networks to expand awareness and understanding of VA benefits and services.

Create, foster, and maintain relationships with partners.

- VA will expand outreach efforts through joint training initiatives, information exchanges, and aggressive oversight focused on improved cooperation, coordination, and measurable interaction on behalf of disabled veterans in the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program.
- VA will continue to foster partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies, such as the DOL and state employment services.

Provide comprehensive employment assistance.

- VA will continue to use Employment Coordinators as an integral resource in the delivery of employment exploration, job readiness, and job placement services.
- To ensure that VA provides these services in a comprehensive, timely, and individualized manner, Employment Coordinators will partner with state-employed Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists and Local Veterans Employment Representative staff.

Identify and remove obstacles to participation in survivor benefits programs by eliminating redundancies and improving outreach.

- VA will continue to conduct outreach efforts to family members and employ a streamlined application process for Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) benefits.

*Goal 2: Ensure a smooth transition for veterans from active military service to civilian life.*

Improve understanding of services through clear and consistent communication with future veterans and their families.

- VA will partner with DoD to conduct outreach activities and transition assistance to separating service members. For example, increased interagency collaboration in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP)/Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) will improve service members' understanding of VA benefits.
- Through readjustment counseling and other services, VA will assist veterans in fully reintegrating into their communities with minimal disruption to their lives.

*Goal 3: Honor and serve veterans in life and memorialize them in death for their sacrifice on behalf of the Nation.*

Develop and implement outreach efforts designed specifically to reach elderly and low-income veterans and survivors.

- By coordinating outreach activities with those who serve the elderly and low-income veterans, such as the Social Security Administration, VA will continue to establish vital links for outreach to veterans and their family members.
- These outreach partnerships are designed to inform veterans and survivors about the benefits to which they may be entitled.

*Enabling Goal: Deliver world-class service to veterans and their families through effective communication and management of people, technology, business processes, and financial resources.*

Improve communication with veterans and increase awareness about VA benefits and services by developing and widely disseminating comprehensive and accurate information.

- VA will implement a communications strategy to create a network within which VA personnel at all levels can effectively convey information about what they do as a veteran-centric organization. This strategy will increase public awareness and continued support for the Department's mission and programs.
- VA's Office of Public Affairs will develop and implement a Communications Plan, focusing on strategic communications that help achieve VA's strategic goals. This plan will provide a coordinated approach to ensure that clear and consistent information about VA issues and concerns are provided to both employees and the public.
- VA will disseminate a variety of information, reader-friendly publications -- focusing on VA benefits, eligibility criteria, services, and other activities -- to the widest possible audience.
- VA will conduct outreach and education activities for the veteran community and the general public through news releases, articles appearing in veterans service organization publications, public service announcements, and presentations to schools and community organizations.
- VA will continue to be a leader in plain language letter writing. VA sends out approximately 30 million pieces of correspondence annually.

Enhance communication with service members to ensure a smooth transition through the Office of Seamless Transition, Transition Assistance Programs, and the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program.

- VA's Office of DoD Coordination will partner with DoD to conduct outreach activities and transition assistance to service members separating from active duty, National Guard, and Reserve. The office is developing a VA Seamless Transition Awareness Campaign to increase awareness of the process as service members transition from the military to VA and civilian life, particularly those who were seriously injured in Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom.

- The Office of DoD Coordination will promote continuity of health care and benefits for those returning from combat with service-related conditions. Through increased interagency collaboration in TAP/DTAP, VA will improve awareness of VA benefits for service members.
- VA's BDD Program is an ongoing effort to improve service. VA and DoD have implemented this program to help transitional military personnel apply for and receive decisions on VA disability benefits prior to separation from active military service.
- VA has produced education materials for employees and returning service members who may need VA support services. A Veterans Benefits Learning Map will be made available to veterans service organizations and state VA offices to help veterans better understand the benefits and services they are eligible to receive.

Source: Department of Veterans Affairs (December 2006). Report on Servicemembers' and Veterans' Awareness of Benefits and Services Available Under laws Administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs: Interim Report on Outreach Activities.

Washington, D.C. available at

[http://vaww1.va.gov/op3/docs/Interim\\_outreach\\_report.pdf](http://vaww1.va.gov/op3/docs/Interim_outreach_report.pdf)

**APPENDIX II**  
**SPECIAL WORKING GROUP MEMBERSHIP**  
**OCTOBER 2007**

Members of this Special working group on Transition to Civilian Employment of National Guard and Reserve Members Returning from Deployment in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, include:

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR RESERVE AFFAIRS

Mr. James "Scotty" Scott  
CAPT Stephen Nye

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

COL Elizabeth Johnson  
Ms. Susan Johnson  
Army National Guard: LTC Geraldine Shutt  
Army Reserve: Mr. James Northcutt

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

CDR John McCracken

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE  
AFFAIRS

Col Anne Hamilton  
Col Ron Gionta  
Ms. Loraine Neuser

CHIEF, SUSTAINMENT POLICY, OFFICE OF AIR FORCE RESERVE

CMSgt Beatriz Swann

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR MILITARY AND COMMUNITY  
FAMILY POLICY

Mr. Brarry Cox  
Mr. Gary Woods  
Mr. Ron Horne

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EMPLOYER SUPPORT OF THE  
GUARD AND RESERVE

COL John Ellsworth

CAPT Ron White  
Mr. Dave Patel

CHIEF, NATIONAL GUARD BUREAU

Ms. Janet Salotti

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

The Honorable Charles S. "Chick" Ciccolella, Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment  
and Training Service

Ms. Ruth Samardick

Mr. George M. "Mike" Parker

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

The Honorable Patrick W. Dunne, Assistant Secretary for Policy and Planning

Ms. Christine Elnitsky

Mr. Ron Thomas

Major General (Ret.) Marianne Mathewson-Chapman

U. S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (CONSULTATION)

The Honorable Jovita Carranza, Deputy Administrator

Veteran's Business Development:

Mr. Bill Elmore

Ms. Ramona Peyton

The Honorable Thomas M. Sullivan, Chief Counsel for Advocacy

Advocacy:

Mr. Joe Sobota

Mr. Major Clark