



REALifelines Program

- The Recovery & Employment Assistance Lifelines (REALifelines) initiative is a DOL project conducted in collaboration with DoD and the military service branches. It was envisioned to create a seamless, personalized assistance network to ensure that seriously wounded and injured service members from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and their spouses are trained for and employed in rewarding new careers in the civilian sector.
- The original intent was to ensure that dedicated REALifelines professionals meet personally with wounded or injured service members at Military Treatment Facilities (MTF) around the country who will be transitioning into the civilian workforce after their rehabilitation.
- Since the program does not have a Congressional mandate, or a related budget, it is funded through the JVSG program. Consequently, the RLL funding source is fully dependent on VETS direction and the methodology for determining or assessing its performance is not mandated.

History

- RLL started at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and Bethesda National Naval Medical Center in FY 2004 by then Secretary Chao signing a joint agreement with the Commanding General of Walter Reed and the Commanding Officer of the National Naval Medical Center.
- A national “call center” also was launched by ODEP’s Job Accommodation Network to centralize case management and referral on a national level.
- The project expanded to Madigan Army Medical Center in Washington in FY 2005, and in FY 2006, VETS established a presence at Brook Army Medical Center, Texas; Naval Medical Center, California; Tripler Army Medical Center, Hawaii; and Fort Carson, Colorado. In April 2006, VETS opens a career transition center for the wounded and injured at Navy Medical Center San Diego (NMCSD), providing full continuity of care and program integration.
- Since FY 2006, REALifelines personnel have assisted over 8,000* participants from over 20 Military Treatment Facilities and designated community care centers throughout the country.
** According to the REALifelines National Performance Summary Report.*
- REALifelines staff located both part- and full-time at these facilities and in “One-Stops” across the country, assists each person to discover his or her special interests and unique talents to help guide their right career path. They also answer questions and provide insight into the processes for exploring and selecting new job and vocational training opportunities.



- An invaluable component of the REALifelines program is the connection made to the local Career One-Stop Career Center in the home region to which the service member will return. This connection ensures that those who cannot return to active duty are trained for or re-enter rewarding new careers. Each state has an assigned state VETS director (DVET) who is ultimately responsible for ensuring that no returning veteran who desires services “falls through the cracks”.
- RLL represented and still represents a departure from typical VETS service delivery in that it focused on those service men and women who had not yet been designated as a “veteran”.
- By the Summer of 2005, the RLL program assigned five full-time staff:
 - Regional IPA (Region III) program manager;
 - Regional IPA (Region III) technical support leader;
 - Regional IPA (Region I) “case manager”;
 - A detailed (NO) VETS “case manager”; and
 - A full-time support contractor “case manager” (MSTI).
 - DOL/VETS placed their full-time staff at DoD’s Military Severely Injured Center or MSIC (later renamed the Military One-Stop) in Arlington, VA, to assure full program integration and coordination. The MSIC was intended to be a “one-stop” shop for any service member who needed assistance to ensure that they would have seamless assistance from the appropriate service delivery program that they needed.

As a part of that co-location, VETS used databases and tracking systems with DoD to improve case management and information sharing. Staff was originally given wide access to implement employment and training services to service members contacting the center for support.