

Hiring America's Best

Preparing Your Workplace to Welcome Returning Veterans and Service Members



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Introduction to *Hiring America's Best*

If you're an employer planning to hire a returning veteran or a member of the Guard or Reserves, you're about to help yourself, your employees, your business, your community, and your country. Through this action, you have the opportunity to:

- Bring some rare and valuable strengths and skills into your organization
- Evaluate and enhance your organizational culture
- Take advantage of tax credits and other financial incentives
- Set an example for your community and earn its gratitude and respect
- Make a meaningful place for a man or woman who has made great sacrifices for our country
- Do the right thing

The men and women who have volunteered for today's Armed Forces are a well qualified, well disciplined, and highly motivated group. They often have a strong sense of mission and purpose. The values of the military culture, the skills they practice in military service, and the lessons they learn in military teamwork bring great benefit to the companies that hire them.

If deployment has left some service members and veterans with injuries, it has also left them with considerable ingenuity, resilience, and adaptability. From the "citizen soldiers" who serve in the reserve components (the National Guard and Reserves) to retired active duty veterans returning to civilian life, this is a pool of potentially stellar employees.

This brief booklet provides some introductory information to help you make your hiring decisions and integrate service members and veterans into your organization. It has three chapters:

1. Benefits of hiring service members and veterans
2. The welcoming workplace
3. Management responses to war-zone stress injuries

"Hiring America's Best" will also address some of the concerns that employers sometimes express. It will describe approaches that will help you bring out the best in your company as a whole, and in the service members and veterans you hire.

The experience of war can change people in many ways, some positive and some painful. Many service members and veterans come home feeling different and separate from the civilian world, just when they most need to rejoin and connect with their communities. Many bring home injuries, ranging from mild to serious and disabling. One of the greatest challenges in reintegration can be civilians' lack of information about the military, the experience of war, and the effects of war and war-related injuries.

Civilians can feel awkward and frustrated, too, unable to enter or understand the military world that service members and veterans have occupied. They may have some misconceptions about the military, about the men and women returning from wartime service, or about war-related injuries. They might try to connect in many ways, some of them a little misguided. Some of the questions that well meaning civilians ask can be jarring and intrusive, and can drive service members and veterans farther into their sense of isolation and separation from the society they have served.

By gathering and spreading the most accurate and least sensationalized information about service members and veterans and the effects of war, you can make your workplace—and your community—a safe, respectful, welcoming home for these men and women who have given so much, and have so much to offer.

Resources in the “America’s Best” Series

Hiring America’s Best is part of a series of materials written to address the growing need for information and ideas that can help our nation’s schools, training organizations, and workplaces make a welcoming, productive, and satisfying place for returning veterans and transitioning service members.

The series starts with four core booklets:

- *Teaching America’s Best: Preparing Your Classrooms to Welcome Returning Veterans and Service Members* offers educators and trainers information and ideas for attracting, retaining, involving, and giving the best education and training to service members and veterans.
- *Hiring America’s Best: Preparing Your Workplace to Welcome Returning Veterans and Service Members* offers employers insight into this pool of potential employees, suggestions for lowering stress and enhancing productivity for all employees, and information on effective responses to war-zone stress injuries.
- *Preparing America’s Best: Twelve Leaders Offer Suggestions for Educating, Training, and Employing Service Members and Veterans* presents interviews with leaders involved in a variety of aspects of education and employment of service members and veterans.
- *Learning about America’s Best: Resources on Educating, Training, and Hiring Returning Veterans and Service Members* provides a quick list of some of the many books, articles, and web sites that offer information for educators, trainers, employers, service members, veterans, and family members.

Also included in the “America’s Best” series are several fact sheets and worksheets. These tools are collected in a document called *Tools for America’s Best*, so they can be duplicated and used for faculty, staff, student, and employee training and education.

Tools for Educators, Trainers, and Employers:

- **“Welcoming Service Members and Veterans Home”** offers suggestions for appropriate responses to service members and veterans.
- **“The United States Armed Forces”** provides information for civilians about the military and its culture, which have shaped much of the thoughts and actions of returning veterans and service members.
- **“Resilience, Stress, and Trauma”** will help people understand the effects of heavy psychological and physical stress and threat and the options for getting help—whether it is a veteran, another staff member, or a friend or family member who is experiencing these effects.

- **“Myths and Realities about Service Members, Veterans, and PTSD”** will help people acknowledge and answer some of the common myths that can sustain stigma and get in the way of clear understanding and communication

Additional Tools for Educators and Trainers:

- Two tools—**“Strategies for Improving Attention”** and **“Strategies for Improving Memory”**—will give counselors and advisors ideas and home practice tasks that they can provide to students who approach them regarding the effects of injuries or disabilities.
- **“Accommodations for Learning Challenges”** will provide a comprehensive list of strategies that counselors and advisors can use in helping students overcome educational challenges commonly associated with many types of injuries and disabilities.

Additional Tools for Employers:

- **“Organizational Assessment: Welcome and Respect for Service Members and Veterans”** will help employers determine where their organizations are in their progress toward more effective responses toward service members and veterans.
- The **“Organizational Stress Survey”** will help employers assess and address any sources of unnecessary stress in the workplace, for the good of all employees, for productivity, and for organizational health and viability.
- The **“Job Accommodation and Productivity Support Checklist”** offers managers, supervisors, and employees a number of suggestions for managing specific effects of PTSD, depression, anxiety, TBI, etc. in the workplace and increasing employee productivity and effectiveness.
- The **“Job Accommodation and Productivity Support Worksheet”** offers a framework in which employees can work with their supervisors to identify the difficulties they are experiencing and their effects on performance, and explore possible accommodations. This can be used together with, or separate from, the “Job Accommodation and Productivity Support Checklist.”

All materials in the “America’s Best” series have been co-published by the National Organization on Disability (NOD) and Give an Hour™ (GAH) and are available for free download from their web sites. For the use of any excerpts from this series, we request that appropriate credit be given to NOD and GAH, and to the authors and contributors.

Chapter One:

Hiring Service Members and Veterans

“The people here respect me for wanting to learn how to do this job well. It’s not much different than the military, you know. You train up, then you go out and fulfill your mission.”

— Veteran with a disability

If you know many of the men and women who have served in today’s all-volunteer Armed Forces, you already know that the scale of “pros and cons” is weighted heavily toward the “pro” side. The dedication, skills, character, and discipline of these men and women make them excellent employees, assets to the organizations that hire them. The section below called “Benefits of Hiring Service Members and Veterans” gives a little more detail on common characteristics of this employee pool, along with a brief overview of some of the financial incentives for hiring service members and veterans.

But if much of what you know has come from television, the movies, or alarming accounts in the newspaper, you may have some questions and concerns about post-combat effects that this booklet can help you address.

- The section in this chapter called “Post-Deployment Effects: Myths and Realities” will help you sort through the media hype.
- The Tools in the companion document, *Tools for America’s Best* will help both management and employees understand post-deployment effects and put the more dramatic portrayals into perspective.
- The final chapter (“Management Responses to War-Zone Stress Injuries”) gives more information on appropriate responses to any difficulties or disabilities that might require productivity support or accommodations.
- Throughout this booklet there will be guidelines for employers on a number of topics.

Benefits of Hiring Service Members and Veterans

To employers who don’t know many service members or veterans, the most obvious benefits of hiring them are the altruistic ones, including the satisfaction of doing the right thing and hiring men and women who have put their lives and careers on the line in service to our nation. Employment is vitally important to all of us, and especially important to people whose lives have been so sharply focused on mission and duty. It can be gratifying to offer them a chance to succeed in civilian life.

But what about other benefits that can affect your bottom line and the quality of the products and services you provide? It’s important to recognize that every service member, every veteran is a unique individual, and that general information about these candidate pools doesn’t tell you about an individual candidate. However, there are some characteristics that are common among service members and veterans.

Qualities and Skills

The first thing you notice when you meet a returning service member or veteran might be a strong sense of discipline, dignity, courtesy, and respect. These are just a few of the qualities that today's military culture, training, and service tend to instill in service members.

As the service member or veteran becomes part of your organization, you'll begin to notice many more valuable qualities. People who have worked with returning service members and veterans have identified a number of characteristics that are important in the workplace, including:

- Inner qualities like loyalty, maturity, leadership, and integrity
- Focus on mission and purpose
- Solution-oriented approaches to problems
- Ability to focus on clearly defined expectations
- Motivation
- Willingness to lend a hand
- Willingness to take initiative
- Respect for procedures
- Team attitude
- Punctuality, arriving early and ready for work
- Consciousness of health and safety standards
- Excellent performance under pressure and extreme stress

“I came back from the war a different person. With this job I've got my self-confidence back. I'm proud to be contributing my skills and experience to a company that appreciates who I am now.”

— Veteran with a disability

In the military, these men and women have learned to operate in complex work environments, in diverse teams, often on accelerated learning curves. They tend to function well in results-oriented organizational cultures. They've often been driven by a strong sense of mission and purpose and are looking for opportunities to make a meaningful contribution in civilian life. They've also built up quite a bit of resilience, learning to triumph over adversity again and again. Service members and veterans with disabilities have often developed exceptional strengths to compensate for those disabilities, and great ingenuity in coping with challenge. They also make exceptionally loyal employees, with great potential as mentors for other employees.

During their military service, many service members and veterans have expanded their networks of social and professional contacts, including potential business relationships. If your company's success depends on effective networks, it makes sense to hire people who have been part of a large and cohesive network.

Military service also offers training and experience in a wide variety of skills and technologies, many of them valuable in preparation for the civilian workplace. These include skills in:

- Leadership
- Team building
- Project management
- Crisis management
- Computer and information technology
- Operations efficiency
- Community building

- Clarifying and communicating the mission and tasks at hand

Not all employers are aware of the value that service members and veterans would bring to their organizations. This may be particularly true in the case of not-for-profits. These organizations don't have a long tradition of reaching out to service members and veterans, and so may be losing some wonderful potential employees and volunteers. These are mission driven individuals who in many cases have participated in extensive team-building and community-building efforts. The desire to contribute to community and society runs high in service members and veterans. They can be excellent collaborators in human and civic service efforts, and excellent participants in volunteerism campaigns, within the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors.

The "Downloadable Resources" section beginning on Page ___ includes the links to some web sites that can help you and your job candidates/employees explore ways of translating military skills into skills that will benefit the workplace. It's well worth the time it takes to learn about the jobs that service members and veterans have held in the military, and to find out how the skills developed in those jobs can translate to the civilian workplace.

Financial Incentives

Apart from the financial benefits of hiring effective employees, there are tax credits and other incentives for hiring veterans who have been on unemployment or Social Security Disability, or who require accommodations for disabilities.

- Until August 31, 2011, you can receive a Work Opportunity Tax Credit of up to \$2,400¹ for any veteran who:
 - was discharged from military service between September 1, 2001 and August 31, 2011;
 - received unemployment compensation for at least four weeks within the year before you hired him or her; AND
 - began working for you after December 31, 2008.
- If the veteran has a disability:
 - Under IRS Code 44, eligible small businesses can receive a (\$5,000 maximum) tax credit for making their businesses accessible to people with disabilities.
 - IRS Code 190 allows a tax credit of \$15,000 per year for the removal of architectural or transportation barriers.
 - If the veteran has been on Social Security Disability, your company can earn money under the Ticket to Work program (more information at <http://www.yourtickettowork.com/>).

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

PTSD is classified as an anxiety disorder, a set of psychological and physical responses to exposure to an extreme traumatic event or process.

- Many kinds of events and processes can leave people vulnerable to the development of PTSD.
- Not all post-trauma effects are signs of PTSD.
- There are many effective forms of help for PTSD, and people's natural resilience can be a powerful tool in overcoming its effects.

¹ Deadline and amount are current as of this writing. Check the Department of Labor web site for updates.

Many States also offer tax credits to businesses for hiring veterans, with or without disabilities. The amount per year varies by State.

Depressive Disorders

Depressive disorders are included among the mood disorders, conditions related to the way we process information about stress, fatigue, fear, happiness, sadness, and reward. People with PTSD and/or TBI often have depressive disorders, too.

- Depression isn't constant; it can come in "waves."
- There are highly effective forms of help for depressive disorders.
- Therapy and medication can help people overcome depression and its effects.

The movies and television have often painted dramatic and exaggerated pictures of PTSD and its effects—and the news media have focused on isolated extreme cases—leaving a number of mistaken beliefs about the character and characteristics of service members and veterans.

As a result, it's common for people who aren't familiar with service members and veterans to worry about upsetting them, for fear it will trigger unpredictable and even volatile responses. Potential employers in management or supervisory roles often ask what they should do to monitor service members' or veterans' psychological stability, so they can see the "warning signs" and intervene "before something bad happens." These concerns are honest and well meant, but they don't take into account the sense of responsibility that is common in service members and veterans.

Post-Deployment Effects: Myths and Realities

For employers who don't know many service members or veterans, a common concern often centers on the effects of combat stress—which at the extreme end include posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety disorders—and traumatic brain injuries (TBI).

PTSD and other post-trauma effects are the direct results of exposure to psychological stress and threat, so they're most accurately understood as injuries. A TBI might be a mild, moderate, or severe injury to the brain. Concussion and the effects of concussion are the most common TBIs. Depression and anxiety disorders are common among the conditions caused or triggered by experiences of extreme stress and trauma, though these disorders are not always related to trauma.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

Many of the TBIs seen in OIF/OEF veterans come from direct or indirect exposure to blasts. These injuries range from mild and temporary concussions (the most common type of TBI in returning service members and veterans) to severe head injuries (those with long periods of unconsciousness or amnesia). A TBI may be the result of a jolt to the head, air pressure or sound waves from a blast, or a penetrating blow.

- People can get TBIs from many types of situations.
- People with impairment from TBI can still have many intellectual strengths that enable them to be highly successful in their work.
- People with TBI can and do make progress, often recovering most or all of their abilities.
- Effects that might linger include difficulty handling emotions, impulsiveness, and difficulty filtering out distractions.

The good news comes in three parts:

1. Common responses to war-zone stress live on a long continuum. At the low end are very mild, manageable, and temporary responses, and at the high end are diagnosable disorders like PTSD and depression. Most people have only mild and temporary effects, and most brain injuries (80%) sustained in these wars are mild concussions, rather than severe and debilitating injuries.
2. Within the small percentage of service members and veterans who do come back with diagnosable disorders or disabilities, in many cases their effects are not even noticeable, and in most cases these effects don't interfere with their work. People with PTSD might experience effects such as memory problems, difficulty concentrating, difficulty managing stress, time-management issues, disorganization, anxiety, sleep problems, anger or irritability, or flashbacks (experiencing a traumatic event or circumstance as if it were happening right now). However, many people with PTSD have developed strategies for managing their effects. For those who need productivity support or accommodations for their challenges, these measures are usually inexpensive, and often they cost nothing. And people can and do regain their psychological and physical resilience and learn to overcome or work around the effects of all these conditions.
3. Supervisory staff's responsibility with service members and veterans is the same as their responsibility with other employees: to hire people according to their job qualifications, evaluate their performance of work functions, and coordinate with Human Resources Department or Employee Assistance Programs if employees show signs of instability or problems that are interfering with performance or working relationships (e.g., changes in performance, outbursts, withdrawal, arriving late or leaving early). You can and should create a healthy work atmosphere in which all employees feel free to approach the appropriate people if they need help, support, productivity support, or accommodations. You can and should remove unnecessary sources of on-the-job stress for all employees, to improve morale and productivity. Behaviors that are affecting people's work or safety must be addressed through the proper channels, and it's important for management and supervisory staff to understand the transition and reintegration challenges that many service members and veterans face. But it's equally important to recognize service members and veterans as competent adults who can be expected to participate equally in the organizational mission and culture.

Do some service members and veterans experience challenges coming into the workplace? Absolutely, like anyone else:

- Transition is often difficult, particularly transition between two very different worlds.
- Each workplace is like a culture, and any entry into a new culture has its challenges.
- With our all-volunteer Armed Forces, there's often very little exchange between the military and civilian cultures. It's common for supervisors and co-workers to misunderstand qualities they see in service members and veterans, or to "walk on eggshells" for fear of saying or doing the wrong thing.
- Some service members and veterans bring back injuries that can make transition into the workplace more challenging. While most of these injuries and their effects are mild or moderate, some people do return with serious and debilitating injuries. Job accommodations and productivity support measures can be very effective in bringing their performance up to standards.

Employee education, training, and mentoring can take care of many of these challenges.

- The next chapter has some suggestions for improving your organization’s capacity to welcome and reintegrate service members and veterans.
- See the tools at the end of this booklet for management and employee education.
- The “Downloadable Resources” section has links to many more sources of information.

Stress is another common concern for employers: How will service members and veterans react to on-the-job stress? Work can be stressful—though not as stressful as unemployment and job hunting, and nowhere near as stressful as the war zone. Two things to remember:

1. Many people who have been deployed at war have handled far more stress than they’ll ever encounter in their civilian jobs. Though their sources of workplace stress may be different from any they’ve experienced before, and might require some adjustment, just remember the kinds of challenges they’ve already learned to handle.
2. Most people work more effectively and efficiently under more appropriate and manageable stress loads. Although you don’t need to take special measures for people just because they’re service members or veterans, it’s always a good idea to do a company-wide stress analysis and work together to find ways of eliminating unnecessary stress. Your whole organization will benefit. (The next chapter has some ideas for assessing and reducing stress in the workplace, and *Tools for America’s Best* includes an organizational stress survey.)

Strength and Courage

None of the injuries or disorders that sometimes follow exposure to trauma are matters of choice or signs of weakness. They’re rooted in the way the human body, mind, and spirit naturally handle stress and threat. Strength and courage can’t keep people from developing these conditions. But the ability to keep functioning and facing each day in spite of challenging effects and impairment is a sign of strength and courage.

Although the sources of stress in the war zone are often very different from the sources that civilians experience, basic human reactions to war-zone stress are no different from reactions to stress in the workplace, the family, and the community. Experiences may be different, but people are people. The stress-reduction measures that might be helpful for service members and veterans might be equally helpful for the rest of the company.

By now you may have begun to notice that “people are people” is a common theme in this booklet. As with any other candidate for employment, the central question is: “Is this the right person for the job?” And as it is with any other employee, your main concern is to provide the most productive workplace.

Making your workplace more effective in general, and more hospitable to returning service members and veterans, is the subject of the next chapter.

A Hiring Success Story

This story begins with the Head Engineer of a Division of the Federal Highway Administration (FHA) Lands Bureau. For a year he has been working with the National Organization on Disability's (NOD) Army Wounded Warrior (Wounded Warriors) Careers program. He hires veterans with disabilities to work in his 40-person organization in Denver, Colorado. The Head Engineer has worked with an NOD Career Specialist and a Wounded Warriors Advocate to develop a hiring program for the wounded warriors who work for him.

The Head Engineer is an Army veteran himself. When the NOD Career Specialist first approached him with the idea, he didn't try to oversell it, "Look," said the Career Specialist, "I'm not sure this is going to work out. If you do hire these soldiers, they may not fit in, but would you give it a try?" "Disabled veterans?" asked the Head Engineer. "We could use some inspiration around here. I'll help you." From his perspective, "Our organization will benefit from having veterans with disabilities as part of our team. We owe these guys a chance after what they sacrificed for us."

Although there were no available positions that fit the first two veterans' skills sets, the Head Engineer and the Career Specialist were able to customize positions that used their skills and met important needs within the organization. One of the first to be hired was a 32-year-old retired Army accounting major who had been shot in the head by a sniper in Iraq. He has a traumatic brain injury, partial paralysis on the right side of his face, and mild posttraumatic stress disorder. When he came back from Iraq and recovered from his injuries, the veteran wasn't sure what he wanted to do. "I was lost," he recalls. "I wasn't the same man who had joined the Army. I didn't feel comfortable in my own skin,"

During the next few years the veteran went to several different universities in Arizona, trying to figure out what he wanted to do. For a while he dropped out of school entirely and took a job as a bricklayer. He struggled with depression and short-term memory loss. Eventually he moved his family, his wife and two young children, to Fort Collins, Colorado and pursued a degree in accounting at Colorado State University. He had recently graduated when the NOD Career Specialist told him about the FHA job. The Head Engineer customized a bookkeeper's slot (Payroll Administrator) that would eventually develop into an accountant's position. "He was right there with me, thinking outside the box," says the Career Specialist. "He saw this as a long-term investment."

Before the veteran started his employment, the Head Engineer brought together his entire staff to hear an hour-long briefing on posttraumatic stress and traumatic brain injury. He and the NOD Career Specialist set up a workplace mentoring program for each soldier he would hire. There would be a one-to-one mentor, as well as a mentor from Human Resources.

The veteran interviewed with several staff members at the Federal Highway Administration. "I guess I did okay," he says, "because they offered me a job." He started work in March, 2009. His mentor is a Senior Management/Budget Analyst, who says that from the beginning the veteran was an "amazingly talented man, and I learn from working with him as much as I help him learn." The Head Engineer has made it his business to check in with the veteran every week. The veteran quickly became a valued member of the organization and was invited to join the company baseball team.

In September of 2009, after only six months on the job, the veteran was promoted to the position previously held by his supervisor, Program Financial Specialist. His success continues to grow.

—Story contributed by Celia Straus

Chapter Two:

The Welcoming Workplace

If service members and veterans have survived the stress of the war, why worry about how they fare in the workplace? Why take the time and effort to look at and improve your company's preparation and appropriateness for the successful reintegration of service members and veterans? Three reasons:

- It really is an issue of cultural competence, and any improvement in cultural competence skills is good for teamwork and productivity.
- The changes you might decide to implement will be good for other employees, too, and for your organization as a whole.
- It's the right thing to do, and it makes you a good example for your industry and your community.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, transition between very different cultures is difficult, both for the person making the transition and for the people in the new culture. We all have different ways of communicating, different expectations of one another, and different perceptions of the same events and circumstances—but we aren't always aware of the impact of those differences.

For the returning service member or veteran, this transition can be even more difficult, given the civilian community's lack of knowledge of the military culture, sometimes combined with an intense curiosity about the experiences and effects of war. Already feeling different and isolated, the service member or veteran can begin to feel like a zoo animal, scrutinized from afar and occasionally poked and prodded. Even well meaning co-workers can ask inappropriately personal questions like "Were you shot?" or "Did you kill anyone?" or use the service member or veteran as a sounding board for their feelings or opinions about current or past wars. And the myths and stereotypes that often surround service members and veterans can be damaging in any situation, but particularly so in a professional setting.

All this can have significant impact on a body, mind, and spirit that are still trying to regain balance after the jarring experience of war, in a human being who has recently lost close friends, powerful team bonds, and an overarching sense of mission and purpose. Depending on the levels of stress within the organization, the effectiveness of teamwork and communication, and the common stress responses of co-workers and supervisors, adjustment to the workplace can be a difficult process.

"I was a Vietnam veteran. The country didn't recognize PTSD when I got out. Society didn't support us. Today the veterans who do best have a support system, and when one of my veteran employees talks about the war, everyone on his team learns something about him and about themselves."

—Employer of veterans with disabilities

This chapter offers a few suggestions for employers who want to examine and enhance their organizations' effectiveness in welcoming and integrating service members and veterans—and in using the service members' and veterans' strengths and values to strengthen their organizations. The chapter is divided into four sections:

- Assessing and moving toward reintegration capacity
- Supervision and management
- Reducing workplace stress
- Support and reintegration of Guardsmen and Reservists

Assessing and Moving Toward Reintegration Capacity

An effective organizational assessment and change process starts with something that's sometimes difficult to win: buy-in at all levels, from top leadership to the most basic support positions. If you're a change agent—someone who wants to see this happen and is willing to serve as a catalyst for change—here are some things you can do to promote buy-in and keep it, in this or any other change process:

- **Start anywhere you can:** Buy-in from the top will be necessary, but if that's hard to get, build up your base of support so you can show people at all levels that this really matters. Human Resources and Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) are good places to find “early adopters” and potential change agents.
- **Remember the WIIFMs!** WIIFM stands for “what’s in it for me?” Many of us may have altruistic instincts, but people tend to respond most positively to the arguments that point out ways in which the change process will bring us what we want.
- **Promote everyone’s well being:** This isn’t just a way of preparing the organization to welcome service members and veterans. It’s a basic examination and promotion of organizational effectiveness, with a little employee education on a variety of issues, including service members and veterans. You can even expand the effort to include measures that will also address other challenges that employees and management have identified.
- **Make it inclusive and collaborative:** Involve people at all organizational levels in the planning, assessment, and carrying out of this initiative, perhaps starting with a committee of change agents representing all levels. Use anonymous surveys to collect suggestions for the process. You might be surprised at the knowledge and creativity that exist in the least likely places.
- **Enlist service members, veterans, and family members in planning:** Veterans of current and past wars, and family members of service members and veterans, are among your most valuable sources of information and guidance. Make sure they’re involved in meaningful ways—if they choose to be—and respected in this process. The committee or task force leading the planning and implementation process should include service members, veterans, and close friends and family members. However, if some service members, veterans, or family members don’t want to be involved, don’t force it. Respect their privacy and their reasons for declining, even if you don’t know or understand those reasons.
- **Fold employee education into the process:** If some employees aren’t aware of the need for these efforts, the planning and assessment processes might include some basic information to help them understand and prepare. You can create a learning environment with guest speakers and brown-bag luncheon discussions.
- **Understand “resistance” and “resistors”:** You don’t want to simply ignore the people who don’t want change to happen. If you do, they can have some very creative ways of sabotaging your

efforts. Find out what their concerns are and address them positively in your efforts. Get these employees involved in refining and improving the process.

- **Understand that resistance sometimes masks fear and resentment**—fear that we’ll have to do things that are difficult, fear of making mistakes, and resentment over the implication that the way we’ve been doing things isn’t good enough. Address those fears and resentments by creating an atmosphere in which it’s understood that we’re all learning, we all make mistakes, and everybody’s past and future contributions are valuable.

Your effort may start with education of the change agents—including Human Resources and EAP staff—through this booklet and many other sources. You can do an information exchange, with each change agent pulling in different resources. The tool called “Organizational Assessment: Welcome and Respect for Service Members and Veterans” might help your team assess your company’s progress level.

Anonymous employee surveys can also help you find out where you are in your progress toward an organizational culture that is ready to welcome service members and veterans in respectful ways. Depending on the size of your company, you might decide to use the “Organizational Assessment: Welcome and Respect for Service Members and Veterans” as an anonymous survey, for a candid look at how employees see your company. This survey may even reveal other challenges in cultural competence and respect that you can address in the same process. An organization-wide movement toward greater openness, understanding, and mutual respect will have far-reaching benefits.

Also informing these efforts will be the identification and use of a variety of effective change-management strategies and best business practices for managing all employees. Like cultural competence in general, competence concerning the military culture and experience is, after all, an understanding of similarities and differences among people and effective ways of honoring both. And the best place to start is often with recognition of the limits of our own knowledge and experience—and willingness to learn.

Supervision and Management

A number of characteristics of the military culture are different from those of many civilian organizational cultures. In the military:

- Chains of command are clear and indisputable.
- Communication is generally straightforward and unembellished.
- Explanations are kept to a minimum.
- People make mistakes, but they’re taught not to make excuses for those mistakes.
- Orders are direct and must be followed unless they are illegal or immoral.
- Military decisions may be difficult, but the consequences are often clear-cut, the difference between life and death.
- Teams often have an intense bond of trust and commitment, based on mutual responsibility for saving one another’s lives.

- Interpersonal “drama” is kept to a minimum, with the focus instead directed to the mission at hand and the precautions that must be taken

In the civilian world, and in many civilian organizations:

- The official chains of command may be mixed in with many unofficial and unacknowledged—but often powerful—streams of influence.
- Communication is often indirect and meandering, with many undercurrents and subtle meanings.
- Many people explain things in far more detail than is really necessary.
- Many people make excuses or fail to acknowledge their mistakes.
- Some instructions can be appealed or ignored, and many people “just kind of know” which instructions they really have to follow.
- It can be very difficult to sort through the consequences of decisions, or even to figure out “who decided what.”
- Even people who are friendly toward one another may have only limited mutual trust. Differences in personality and communication styles, and undercurrents of competition and mistrust, can undermine teamwork and collaboration.
- In some work environments, interpersonal dramas can receive quite a bit of attention, and employees with abrasive, dramatic, or passive-aggressive personality styles can complicate processes that would otherwise be simple and straightforward

Fresh from the straightforward military culture, the newly returned service member or veteran may find it difficult to form bonds of trust in an organization whose undercurrents tend to overpower its stated structure and direction. Effective management and supervision can compensate for some of the “fuzziness” that may exist in the organizational culture.

Characteristics of effective management and supervision of service members and veterans are the same as those applied to other employees. Important supervision and management practices include:

- Clear and consistent policies and procedures
- Clear, fair, direct, and effective direction and communication
- Logical and reasonable reactions to questions, requests, and concerns
- Positive reinforcement, praise, and acknowledgment
- Respect for the employee’s knowledge and skills
- Giving the employee the authority or power to do the job he or she was hired to do
- Wherever possible, including the employee in the planning and development of processes and procedures that will affect his or her work
- Written work agreements, including clear, written expectations regarding responsibilities and the consequences of not meeting them
- Ample and effective training in job skills and functions

- Mentorship in job skills and functions
- Respect for the employee’s privacy and the boundaries between work and personal topics
- Focusing on work-related issues and behaviors, rather than on personal experiences and characteristics
- Being approachable, but allowing the employee to take initiative if he or she needs help, additional resources, productivity support, or accommodations
- Managing interpersonal conflict and discouraging interpersonal drama in the workplace

If you’re supervising a returning or transitioning veteran or service member, it’s a good idea to ask questions about the skills and work experiences that he or she gained during military service, and to learn all you can about ways in which those skills and experiences might be useful in the current position. The “Downloadable Resources” section lists a number of web-based tools you can use to see how those service-related skills might also be useful in the civilian workplace.

Chapter Three (“Management Responses to War-Zone Stress Injuries”) provides more information about hiring, management, and supervision issues that might arise if the veteran has any work-related challenges due to an injury or disability.

Reducing Workplace Stress

In some cases an employer’s consideration of the impact of stress on a particular group of employees—in this case, service members and veterans—might inspire an organization-wide effort to identify and reduce unnecessary sources of stress. This can be good for all employees, for productivity, and for the company as a whole.

Reducing workplace stress often has very little to do with the amount of work we do, and everything to do with the way we do it and the atmosphere in which we do it. It’s true that working long hours and working at low pay are stressful conditions, and that some companies can’t afford to pay more or reduce the workload, particularly in a bad economy. But there are many other factors that can also contribute to stress and “burnout,” including:

- Ineffective supervision
- Ineffective lines of communication among individuals or departments
- An emphasis on competition rather than collaboration among employees
- Duplication of effort
- Inadequate training or orientation in job duties
- Environmental noise, distraction, or discomfort
- An employee’s sense of isolation or powerlessness
- An employee’s loss of confidence in his or her ability to make a positive difference
- Personality issues and unresolved conflicts that affect communication and collaboration

There are many steps that employers can take. For example, please check any of the following measures you’ve taken:

- ❑ Conduct an anonymous survey of employees, asking about the most common sources of pressure and stress, and soliciting their ideas. (The “Organizational Stress Survey” in *Tools for America’s Best* might be useful as a survey tool or provide some ideas for tools that you want to develop.)
- ❑ Follow this with a group discussion and solution-building process, guided by an outside facilitator with the appropriate skills and qualifications for addressing any issues of interpersonal conflict that might arise.
- ❑ Provide organization-wide support for teamwork, cooperation, and collaboration. Use effective team-building processes and activities, to increase cohesion and cooperation and reduce the stress that comes from a sense of isolation. Rather than encouraging competition, reward employees for making one another, their teams, and the company as a whole look good.
- ❑ Examine lines of supervision (and the physical arrangement of team members’ work spaces) for effectiveness, efficiency, communication, and ease of access to supervision. Restructure or rearrange work spaces wherever a change would make sense and improve the flow of information, direction, and resources.
- ❑ Train supervisors in effective delegation of responsibilities, and in preparing their employees to take on those responsibilities
- ❑ Institute a mentorship program, pairing employees with compatible mentors who have skills and maturity worth emulating. Make sure the mentors have mentors, too.
- ❑ Provide a collaborative process in which employees, supervisors, and management can pool their knowledge and look for duplication of effort and opportunities for collaboration and shared resources.
- ❑ Make overtime voluntary, so that employees have a sense of choice and control and the most highly motivated employees will work the longest hours.
- ❑ If long shifts are necessary, break up the shifts with opportunities for rest.
- ❑ Provide education, training, support, and mentorship in stress reduction (reducing the stressful circumstances in one’s life and work) and stress management (improving one’s skills in handling the stress that exists).
- ❑ Identify future leaders and begin the process of preparing them for effective leadership early in their careers. Get them ready **before** the current leadership is ready to retire.

Support and Reintegration of Guardsmen and Reservists

You may have (or hire in the future) employees who are members of the reserve components of the U.S. Military. What steps do you take in reintegrating these employees when they prepare for and return from deployment?

The reserve components include (at the state level) the National Guard and (at the national level) the Reserves. Both of these components are being called up for active duty in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF, the war in Afghanistan), in many cases for several deployments. If you employ Guardsmen or Reservists, there are steps you can take before, during, and after their deployment.

In general, employers can help by learning more about the Guard and Reserves, signing a “Statement of Support for the Guard and Reserve,” and recognizing and communicating about these service members’ dedication and commitment to your organization and to the nation. You can make sure you have an up-to-date Military Leave and Return policy, and make sure all employees are aware of its provisions.

The process of preparing for deployment can be stressful for service members and their families. Employers (including Human Resources and EAP staff) can help in a number of ways. The service members and veterans themselves are the best sources of information about what they need, but to begin with, employers can provide support by:

- Understanding the stress that these employees and their co-workers and families might be experiencing
- Refraining from trying to persuade them to find a way out of being deployed, even if they’re very valuable to your operation
- Helping them organize the necessary business and benefit-related paperwork (e.g., on benefits for employees and dependents, return policies, account and financial information, contact information) before they deploy
- Reaching out to family members during the preparation process

During deployment, you can help by:

- Encouraging employees who are friends with deployed employees and their families to keep in contact with them during deployment
- Equalizing employees’ pay and benefits while they are deployed
- Including time spent deployed in the time used to compute seniority and retirement benefits
- At bonus time, sending the deployed employee’s bonus to the family
- Keeping in contact with deployed service members, with respect for the stress they’re experiencing and taking care not to place the burdens of your organizations on their shoulders at long distance
- Keeping in contact with the families of deployed employees—with respect for their privacy—inviting them to company events, and offering support
- Offering support to employees who have family members who are deployed

You can prepare for the return of a deployed employee by:

- Making concrete plans for the employee’s return and reintegration
- Making sure your Human Resources and EAP staff are knowledgeable about service members and veterans and the personnel issues (e.g., benefits, reinstatement) that might arise
- Showing appreciation to those who have filled the employee’s job functions during his or her absence, and anticipating, understanding, and addressing their concerns about their own future and their challenges in adjusting to new roles

- Meeting with co-workers to plan a welcoming event, discuss the transition and its impact on the team, listen to their concerns, dispel the myths about military service and its effects, and voice positive expectations
- Giving employees, supervisors, and managers opportunities to express their concerns and other feelings and work through their challenges privately (through Human Resources, EAPs, ombudsmen, etc.)
- Providing employee education on the military and appropriate ways of welcoming service members and veterans home (*Tools for America's Best* has fact sheets on “The United States Armed Forces” and “Welcoming Service Members and Veterans Home”)

When the employee returns, you can promote successful reintegration by:

- Providing an appropriate “welcome back” gesture (a luncheon, a banner, a reception, a newsletter article, etc.)
- Conducting a second orientation for the employee:
 - Explaining any changes in policies, procedures, customers, workload, staffing, etc., and the reasons for those changes
 - Communicating expectations clearly and making it clear that the lines of communication are open
 - Learning about any new skills the employee may have acquired during deployment and discussing ways of using these skills
 - Soliciting the employee’s input on what he or she might want or need in the reintegration process (e.g., additional training or retraining)
 - Providing a packet with all phone numbers, paperwork, and contacts necessary for re-entry and reintegration
- Providing additional training, retraining, and mentorship in job functions and technologies wherever needed
- Encouraging mentorship by service members and veterans already in the workplace
- Understanding that the employee may have been changed by the experience of war and may be experiencing some readjustment challenges, and that other employees (e.g., the employees who held their positions during their absence) may be experiencing adjustment challenges as well
- Understanding that there may be an initial “honeymoon” phase followed by a sense of disappointment, and perhaps some challenges centering on the fact that life and work “went on” in his or her absence
- Understanding that the processes of retraining and reintegration may take some time
- Creating an atmosphere in which people are safe to work through these issues and/or find appropriate channels for support

Although many people return from military service with few work-related challenges, others have sustained injuries that will require productivity assistance or accommodation. The final chapter of this booklet takes a brief look at a few considerations for employers in responding to the effects of war-zone stress injuries.

Chapter Three:

Management Responses to War-Zone Stress Injuries

Like service members and veterans in general, people with war-zone stress injuries can make excellent candidates for employment. This can be true whether or not the conditions and levels of challenge brought on by these injuries would qualify as disabilities.

Many employers will tell you that hiring people with disabilities can hold some strong benefits for the organizational culture and the organization as a whole. This makes sense for a few reasons.

- Human beings naturally tend to build strengths to compensate for our limitations, and people who have been coping with recognized limitations have often developed extraordinary skills in other areas—skills that can make them exceptional employees. Ingenuity is common among these strengths and skills, simply because of the everyday challenges posed by the disabilities.
- People with disabilities are also known for their loyalty and dedication to their employers. They tend to stay longer, reducing the need for new employee training and giving them a history with the organization that will help them train and mentor new generations of employees.
- Hiring people with disabilities can improve your image and standing in the community.

The first step toward effective hiring and management of employees with war-zone stress injuries is a clear understanding of these injuries and their effects. Several of the Fact Sheets in *Tools for America's Best* will help you and/or your staff increase your knowledge and understanding:

- “Resilience, Stress, and Trauma” will help you and your staff understand how people commonly respond to extreme stress and threat, the effects that many people experience afterwards, and what people sometimes do to get help and return to balance.
- “Myths and Realities about Service Members, Veterans, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder” will help you and your staff sort through some of the information and common misinformation on these subjects.

"Many young veterans went directly into the Army upon high school graduation. Now they are back in civilian life, and many are grievously injured. It's important to recognize that they often lack many of the civilian coping skills developed by their peers who did not enter the Army and who now know much more about employers, educational institutions, and civilian service agencies. Many returning veterans also lack adequate family financial management skills, and they're often poor or on the financial edge. This is a population that is both underserved and economically disadvantaged. They need mentoring, guidance, and support to navigate such challenges."

—Administrator, Disability Organization

Many other good materials for increasing understanding are also listed in the “Downloadable Resources” section beginning on Page ___.

This chapter offers a bit more information on three important topics for employers or potential employers of service members and veterans with war-related injuries or disabilities:

- Hiring practices related to people with disabilities
- The need for productivity support or accommodations, where disabilities or limitations exist
- Whether or not you should solicit accommodation information

Hiring Practices

To a great extent, your practices in hiring service members and veterans will be bound by provisions of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). If a candidate has a disability, you’ll also have considerations for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Simply put, it’s illegal to discriminate against qualified job candidates because of veteran status or disability status. Many people with disabilities are advised not to disclose those conditions in job interviews or on the job, and that is within their rights. However, if they do disclose, employers must make any necessary and reasonable accommodations for their disabilities. (The “Downloadable Resources” section has some web sites with much more information on USERRA and ADA.)

But within that framework, what do you do? What might be different about the job interview process? What criteria do you use in hiring service members and veterans?

Hiring the Veteran

When one of the Engineers at the Federal Highway Administration’s Federal Roads Division was interviewing applicants for a two-year trial position as a civil engineer, one of his interviewees was a West Point Graduate and Iraq War veteran with 100% disability from PTSD.

“When I first met him, he was aloof—completely removed from our conversation,” says the Engineer. “But I knew from his record that he was more than capable, intelligent, had handled a remarkable amount of responsibility. I went home and thought long and hard about it, because, even though he seemed withdrawn and uninterested, in my opinion, we owe these guys. We need to help them make the adjustment back to the community.”

The Engineer is a Gold Star Parent. His son was killed in Iraq in 2004, so he understands the impact of war. “Giving a soldier a job is a heck of a lot more supportive than sticking a slogan on the back of your car. My perspective was that as a manager I was giving our employees an opportunity to support our veterans by hiring him, so that’s what I did. I hired the veteran.”

—Story contributed by Celia Straus

First, remember that the fact that someone has served at war does not mean that he or she has war-related injuries like TBI or PTSD, or disabilities arising from those injuries. Even if the candidate happens to mention having been hospitalized during deployment, you really have no idea what the reason for that hospitalization might have been.

During the interview, it would be inappropriate and intrusive to ask any personal questions about military service or experiences at war, or to probe for any war-related injuries. And before you've made a job offer, the ADA prohibits your asking the candidate—or any previous employers or third parties—any questions about:

- Disabilities
- Origins of disabilities
- Mental health conditions
- Other health conditions
- Hospitalizations
- Medications
- On-the-job injuries
- Worker's Compensation filings
- Sick time or medical leaves from previous jobs.

In some cases, if the candidate has volunteered information about a disability, or if the disability is obvious (e.g., a candidate using a wheelchair is applying for a job that ordinarily requires standing and walking), there are some exceptions to these rules. If it seems clear that the effects of a disability might interfere with the performance of a particular duty or task, you may ask whether the applicant would need "reasonable accommodations" or support to perform that task.

- If he or she says "yes," you may ask about the types of accommodations, but not about the underlying condition.
- If he or she says "no," you may not ask any more questions on this topic.

During the interview you may ask questions related to the applicant's ability to perform specific job functions. This includes questions about:

- Education
- Skills
- Training
- Certifications and licenses
- Ability to fulfill physical requirements of the job
- Days absent from the last job
- Ability to meet attendance requirements
- Work history
- Reasons for leaving the last job

Like all other hiring decisions, this one must be based on the individual employee's qualifications for the job you're trying to fill, regardless of veteran status, disability status, or any other cultural factor. In today's economy, you may have hundreds of qualified applicants for a single position, so your decision won't be a simple one.

You may not discriminate against a candidate based on veteran or disability status, but what about “discriminating” on that candidate’s behalf? You might be a veteran or have close friends or family members who have served. You might just be patriotic, sympathetic to the hardship that people experience in war, or drawn to the clarity of the military value system. Is it discrimination if you choose the one veteran out of 100 qualified candidates?

In making their hiring decisions, most employers weigh a host of subjective factors—from the candidate’s personality to the town where he or she was born. Veteran status will probably be one of these criteria. It’s not at all unusual or unreasonable to feel a sense of gratitude toward the men and women who have served your country. And to the extent that military training and experience have provided skills and forged positive character traits, it makes good business sense to consider these among the candidate’s assets.

The Need for Productivity Support and Accommodations

As described in Chapter One, conditions such as PTSD, TBI, and depression have wide ranges of effects and severity of effects. These challenges are often mild and/or internal, so no one can even tell they’re there. But even when injuries lead to more serious disabilities, many significant abilities remain.

Many people with PTSD, TBI, depression, and other such conditions lead normal, productive lives. Many look, sound, and perform the same as people without these injuries, but among those whose effects are evident, many have learned to manage those effects in ways that keep them from adversely affecting productivity or working relationships.

Even so, if one or more effects require productivity aids or accommodations, these measures usually come at very low cost, or at no cost. In many cases the accommodations that service members and veterans need will be relatively simple. Most people with these war-zone injuries and effects know their own circumstances and know what will work for them. Typical statements include the following:

- “I don’t think I’d do well in a crowded situation; crowds upset me.”
- “I want to sit with my back to the wall. I’m more comfortable that way.”
- “Loud noises tend to upset me. I need relative quiet.”

“These kids have a strong work ethic. They’re used to taking on responsibility and getting the job done. Sure, we navigate around their disabilities, but everyone has a weak link somewhere.”

—Employer of veterans with disabilities

Best business practice is first to create an open work atmosphere in which it’s okay for any employee who needs productivity support or accommodations to ask for them, to monitor all employees for the need for these measures, and to educate managers and supervisors in understanding and recognizing the needs that might arise among service members and veterans. Although many people with disabilities are advised not to disclose their disabilities, why not have a policy that supports and encourages the provision of productivity support (a more general and less stigmatizing term that includes accommodations) to all employees who request them, regardless of disability status? It’s in the employer’s best interest to develop all employees and provide the best support for their growth and productivity.

Collaboration and partnership are essential in this process. The employee should be the one requesting productivity support or accommodations. The process of choosing these resources should also be a collaborative one, with the employee acting as an equal or directing partner. In larger organizations, Human Resources or Employee Assistance Program (EAP) staff should be prepared to coordinate the employer's contribution to this collaborative process.

One of the resources in *Tools for America's Best*, the "Job Accommodation and Productivity Support Checklist," offers some suggestions. This checklist is organized under the types of difficulties or impairments that sometimes accompany these injuries. To the left of each suggestion is a check-box, in case the employee and supervisor would like to check off the tools or accommodations that sound useful.

Here are some questions that the employee and supervisor will want to address together, with the employee taking the lead:

- What challenges is the employee experiencing, and how do these challenges affect his or her performance?
- What specific job tasks are problematic as a result of these challenges?
- What productivity support measures or accommodations are available to reduce or eliminate these problems?
- Do supervisory personnel and/or other employees need education or training regarding the employee's condition?

The "Job Accommodation and Productivity Support Worksheet" in *Tools for America's Best* provides a framework for addressing these questions. One way of using both tools together might be to:

1. Fill out the first two columns of the Worksheet ("Area of Difficulty or Limitation" and "Job Tasks Affected")
2. Consult the Checklist for accommodations that might address these issues, checking the ones that might be helpful
3. Use the checklist to help fill out the third column of the Worksheet ("Possible Accommodations")

Should You Solicit Accommodation Information?

What if a veteran—or any other employee—is having challenges that seem to indicate the need for accommodations, but doesn't ask for them? It may be an uncomfortable situation, but it's not the employer's job to ask or probe for that information.

If a particular behavior or challenge violates your company's standards or interferes with the employee's performance of work duties, then it becomes your duty to address that behavior, whether the employee is a civilian, service member, or veteran, and whether or not the behavior or challenge is related to a disability. But you also have a duty to offer reasonable accommodations or productivity support to bring the employee's work up to standards.

And although an employee's disclosure of a disability requires that you offer accommodations, it's a good idea to offer accommodations whether or not any such disclosure has been made. If the result is a more productive and successful employee, it's well worth the effort. Rather than focus on the absence or presence of a disability, it's best to simply keep open communication with employees and let them guide you on what they do and don't need.

What about the emotion-related effects of some of these conditions? If an employee seems to be having trouble at work, you might say something like, "You seem to be having a difficult day," creating an opening in case he or she wants to talk about it and look for solutions. But it's important to respect the boundary between private life and work life.

However, if any employee's trouble handling stress or emotions is interfering with productivity or working relationships, referral to your EAP might be appropriate. In a smaller organization with no EAP, you'll want to craft policies that can guide managers, supervisors, and Human Resources staff in making appropriate referrals to appropriate sources of help and support without overstepping the boundaries of their roles. Any such referrals should be:

- Addressed in private
- Made by appropriate supervisory, management, or Human Resources staff who are knowledgeable about these conditions and skilled in the referral process
- Made in a respectful, collaborative manner that recognizes the employee's knowledge of his or her needs and responsibility for decision-making about his or her life
- Focused on these behaviors as they relate to the employee's ability to perform job-related tasks
- Respectful of the separation between the employee's work and personal lives
- Supported on an ongoing basis by accommodating the employee's need to take time off for appointments with counselors, physicians, etc.

Obviously, civilian employees also experience challenges that affect their emotions, relationships, productivity, and ability to manage stress. These challenges can include the effects of divorce, serious illness or loss of a loved one, conditions such as depression or other disorders, etc. Appropriate roles in providing support and productivity assistance for service members and veterans are no different from appropriate roles in addressing the challenges that other employees face. In each case, it is essential to respect both the individual employee and the boundaries of the employer's role.

You're Not Alone

The "Downloadable Resources" section (beginning on Page ___) lists a number of web sites, agencies, organizations, and other resources for information and support on disabilities and accommodations.

As an employer, you're not alone in formulating your response to a service-related injury or disability. You have the individual service member or veteran—the ultimate expert on his or her life and condition—and you have a number of knowledgeable and generous sources of information and support.

Conclusion

Many of life's decisions are difficult because they pit one problematic choice against another. When we come across a true "win-win" situation, we're relieved. The decision to hire service members and veterans is one of those rare win-win propositions. Everyone stands to gain.

From the satisfaction of doing the right thing through the far-reaching benefits to your business and your bottom line, the decision to hire service members and veterans just makes sense. If this also sets in motion a process that reduces company-wide stress, increases the general tone of respect, and educates your employees on human responses to stress and common effects on their own behavior, so much the better. It's worth doing, and it's worth doing right. And so many resources are available that you won't have to do it alone.

What are some possible next steps? Here are a few ideas:

- It's essential that employers engage in dialogue about the benefits that service members and veterans present, the support that some will need, and ways in which the business and not-for-profit communities can respond. These discussions should take place both within and among individual organizations and fields.
- The business and not-for-profit communities also have a responsibility for outreach into the surrounding community, where many service members, veterans, and their families need jobs and have much to offer.
- Employers can develop simple means of evaluating the effectiveness of their programs for welcoming, mentoring, and integrating service members and veterans.
- Institutions that have developed innovative and particularly effective programs can offer their guidance and example to the larger business and not-for-profit communities.

Our nation has made enormous progress since the Vietnam era, when opposition to the war translated into disregard or even scorn for the veterans who returned from that war. The isolation in which those men lived and suffered still haunts some veterans to this day. Many of us have resolved that those circumstances will never again be repeated on our soil.

As an employer, a member of your community, a citizen of your country, and a human being, you have a chance to break through the isolation and create a place of understanding, respect, and opportunity. It is only a fitting "thank you" to the men and women who have risked their lives, careers, and well being to serve our nation. Please give them a chance to make your mission their own.

Downloadable Resources

Most of the information contained in this booklet and the accompanying tools has been drawn and synthesized from resources listed in this section. The authors and organizations that have published these materials deserve recognition as the true sources of this content.

For ease of access, only resources that can be found on the internet and downloaded at no cost are included in this list. However, many of these resources detail and link to additional materials and services of all sorts. The resources listed here are divided into four categories:

- Hiring and Reintegration of Service Members and Veterans
- Employment of People With Injuries and Disabilities
- Information about PTSD, TBI, and Other Injuries and Illnesses
- Organizational Change and Stress Reduction

Hiring and Reintegration of Service Members and Veterans

“10 Reasons to Hire a Vet,” HireVetsFirst, <http://hirevetsfirst.dol.gov/10reasons.asp>

“A Non-Technical Resource Guide to the Uniformed Services Employment and

All Volunteer Force: From Military to Civilian Service, Mary McNaught Yonkman and Marshall Bridgeland, Civic Enterprises, <http://www.civicerprises.net/pdfs/allvolunteerforce.pdf>

“Coming back from the battlefield,” Richard D. Quinn, *Employee Benefit News*, <http://ebn.benefitnews.com/news/coming-back-battlefield-240075-1.html>

“Employer FactSheet,” Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, <http://www.jan.wvu.edu/media/PTSD.pdf>

Employer Resource Guide, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, <http://esgr.org/site/Resources/EmployerResourceGuide/tabid/106/Default.aspx>

“FAQ for Employers,” Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, <http://esgr.org/site/Resources/FAQforEmployers/tabid/119/Default.aspx>

Helmets to Hardhats (opportunities and resources for employers and veterans), <http://www.helmetstohardhats.org/>

“Helping National Guard and Reserve Reenter the Workplace,” *Courage to Care*, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, <http://www.usuhs.mil/psy/GuardReserveReentryWorkplace.pdf>

Job Seekers Bookmarks, search engine for resources for job seekers, employees, and employers, with special emphasis on veterans and service members, http://www.mybookmarks.com/public/Job_Seeker

“Military Deployment—Helping Employees Leave and Return,” *Mental HealthWorks*, American Psychiatric Association and American Psychiatric Foundation,
http://www.workplacementalhealth.org/pdf/mhw3rd2003_121003.pdf

Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA),” U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment and Training Service, <http://www.dol.gov/vets/whatsnew/uguide.pdf>

“Returning to Work,” Operation Healthy Reunions, Mental Health America,
<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/reunions/infoReturnWork.cfm>

“Silent Barriers—On Job Trail, Veterans with PTSD Fight Stigma, Misconceptions,” *New York Post*
http://www.nypost.com/p/news/business/jobs/silent_barriers_qOOkTzAjCamJuEWKhL91CK

“Small Business Matters: Hiring Heroes,” Charles “Chick” Ciccolella and Neil Romano, *Free Enterprise*,
<http://www.uschambermagazine.com/article/hiring-heroes>

“Soldier Re-employment Rights,” Steve Chucala, *Legal Forum*, Soldiers Magazine Online,
<http://www.army.mil/publications/soldiersmagazine/legalforum/sep04LF.pdf>

“Suggested Reading and Resources” (links to many resources), Disability Management Employer Coalition,
<http://www.dmec.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=234>

“Tax Credits, Other Strategies in the Works to Help Returning Vets,” Tim Anderson, *Stateline*, CSG Midwest, <http://www.csgmidwest.org/MemberServices/Publications/SLMW/2007/0307/page5.pdf>

“TBI, PTSD, and Employment,” web-based training for employers from America’s Heroes at Work,
<http://www.americasheroesatwork.gov/forEmployers/presentations/TBIptsd/>

“The Employers’ Legal Obligations to Employees in the Military,” Jeffrey Schieberl, JD, MBA and Charles P. Leo, PhD, MBA, *Graziadio Business Report*, <http://gbr.pepperdine.edu/073/veterans.html>

“Tips for Employers,” Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve,
<http://esgr.org/site/Resources/TipsforEmployers/tabid/103/Default.aspx>

“Transitioning Tips for the Work Place,” Ernst & Young,
http://www.pdhealth.mil/downloads/Tips_on_Returning_to_Work.pdf

Troops 2 Truckers (opportunities and resources for employers and veterans),
<http://www.troops2truckers.com/>

Troops to Teachers (opportunities and resources for employers and veterans),
http://www.dantes.doded.mil/dantes_Web/troopstoteachers/index.asp

Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS), web page on Department of Labor Web Site
<http://www.dol.gov/vets/>

“When Workers Go to War: How Small Companies Cope with Called-up Employees,” *The Costco Connection*, April, 2007, <http://www.costcoconnection.com/connection/200704/?pg=21#pg21>

Women Veterans in Transition (series of reports from the Business and Professional Women's Foundation)
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The “America’s Best” Series

The “America’s Best” series was originally conceived by Basil Whiting, a senior fellow at the National Organization on Disability and former program director for the NOD Army Wounded Warrior Career Demonstration Project (Wounded Warriors Careers).

Early in the 2008 start-up phase of Wounded Warriors Careers, the NOD Career Specialists informed Basil that they had no useful materials or guidance that they could provide to those in educational institutions or training organizations (teachers, trainers, classmates) or in workplaces (employers, supervisors, co-workers) about the nature of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). More important, there seemed to be little if any practical information about ways in which those in classrooms and workplaces could help veterans with these afflictions succeed in their education, training, or work. In the absence of clear, positive, practical information and guidance, many educators/employers, etc. were reacting to sensationalized press accounts about sometimes-problematic behaviors on the part of veterans with PTSD and/or TBI. These conditions did not bode well for veterans seeking jobs or educational/training opportunities.

Since it was the mission of NOD’s Wounded Warriors Careers project to help wounded veterans and their family members succeed in education, training, and work, Basil quickly surveyed the available materials. That effort revealed that the resources that existed at the time were fragmented, limited, sometimes too technical, and generally inadequate for these purposes. Although excellent resources were available, they tended to focus on limited aspects of the topic, requiring that educators/employers/trainers gather and synthesize information from a number of sources—something that most would not have the time or the motivation to do.

NOD needed to mount a project to develop the kind of practical, laymen’s materials needed by NOD and others working with injured veterans. Basil wrote a paper outlining what was needed and why; allocated modest NOD consulting funds for it; recruited Pam Woll (author) and Celia Straus (project manager, editor, and contributor) to develop these products; and contracted with Barbara Van Dahlen of Give an Hour™ to direct the project, oversee the work of the consultants and volunteers involved, and ensure the technical accuracy of product contents. Throughout the life of this project, Mr. Whiting continued to work as an active colleague, guide, and mentor.

The “America’s Best” series took more than two years from conception to completion, and during that time others have produced valuable information in response to the same perceived need. We believe that these NOD/GAH products hold an important place in that limited array of practical resources and would welcome the comments and reaction of the readers and users of these products.

Acknowledgments

Under the leadership of Carol A. Glazer, President, The National Organization on Disability has sponsored and provided funding for this project. Under the leadership of Barbara Van Dahlen, PhD, Founder and President, Give an Hour™ has directed and carried out the development of these materials.

As mentioned in the previous section, Basil Whiting of NOD conceived and funded the project and continued to serve as advisor and mentor, providing everything from enthusiastic encouragement to meticulous subject matter and editorial support. In the development process, Dr. Van Dahlen served in the role of Project Director, providing thoughtful editing of all drafts and invaluable knowledge and technical expertise from many perspectives, including that of the clinician working with PTSD, TBI, and other combat stress effects. As Project Manager and Editor, Celia Straus, MA provided tireless and insightful mentorship, encouragement, and editorial expertise.

The writing and compilation of these materials was the work of many hands, including the following:

- Consultant Pamela Woll, MA, CADP researched and wrote two of the booklets in this series (*Teaching America's Best* and *Hiring America's Best*), developed or compiled many of the additional Tools, and compiled the resource booklet, *Learning about America's Best*.
- Project Manager and Editor Celia Straus, MA also wrote the boxed-in stories and examples of veterans' experiences in *Teaching America's Best* and *Hiring America's Best*. She originated development of the project with Basil Whiting and contributed content and editorial guidance based on her research and the writing of her book, *Hidden Battles on Unseen Fronts: Stories of American Soldiers With Traumatic Brain Injury and PTSD* (Casemate, 2009).
- Give an Hour™ student volunteer Micheline Wijtenburg, MS made a significant contribution to this effort by interviewing a variety of subject matter experts and writing the booklet entitled *Preparing America's Best*. Volunteer Ellen Gibson also contributed one of the interviews to this effort.
- A number of the resources listed in *Learning about America's Best* were contributed through the “DMEC Workplace Warrior – Think Tank 2007 Resource List” developed by the Disability Management Employer Coalition.
- Two of the Tools for educators and trainers (“Strategies for Improving Attention” and “Strategies for Improving Memory”) were compiled by Jason Demery, PhD, neuropsychologist at the North Florida/South Georgia VA Medical Center
- The Tool entitled “Accommodations for Learning Challenges” was developed by Duane E. Dede, PhD, Valerie Pitzer, PhD, and Susan Swiderski at the University of Florida.

One additional reviewer, Mary E. Dolan-Hogrefe, MA, Director of Public Policy for the National Organization on Disability, also contributed her expertise to the effort.

For the gathering of resources to build these materials—particularly for the overview of resources presented in *Learning about America's Best*—Give an Hour™ drew from its large pool of dedicated volunteers. Seventeen volunteers were assigned to help on this project, in most cases with the literature search process. The volunteers who contributed to these efforts were Jill Anderson, Mark Brayer, Hillary Bilford, Susan Buckmaster, Staci Bullard, Katherine De Launay, Gabriel Feldmar, PhD, Geri Hart, Kate Hurley, Sarah McCumiskey, Lisa Prudenti, Leonora Rianda, Daniella Saunders, Sarah Smith, Christina Trefcer, Micheline Wijtenburg, MS, and Paul Weaver. In her role as Project Manager and Editor, Celia Straus organized, oriented, and managed this volunteer pool.

The twelve subject-matter experts interviewed for *Preparing America's Best* gave graciously of their time and expertise. Their ideas and insights not only made *Preparing America's Best* possible, but also informed the development of the other booklets and Tools in the series. These leaders included:

- Marcia Carruthers, MBA, ARM, CPDM, Co-founder, President, and CEO, Disability Management Employer Coalition (DMEC)
- Dr. Jason Demery, Neuropsychologist, North Florida/South Georgia VA Medical Center
- L. Tammy Duckworth, MA, Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- Carol Harnett, MS, Clinical Physiologist, Assistant Vice President and National Disability and Life Practice Leader, Group Benefits Division, The Hartford
- Ilona Meagher, Editor, *PTSD Combat: Winning the War Within* and Author, *Moving a Nation to Care: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and America's Returning Troops*
- Patrick O'Rourke, Retired Army Lieutenant Colonel, Director of Veteran Affairs, California State University, Long Beach
- Gary Profit, Senior Director, Military Programs, Walmart
- Michael Reardon, Senior Policy Advisor, Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor and Manager, America's Heroes at Work
- Ed Veiga, Vice President, Strategic Communication and Development, Military Child Education Coalition
- Garland Williams, Associate Regional Vice President, Military Division, University of Phoenix
- Mary Yonkman, Chief Strategy Officer, The Mission Continues and Co-author, *All Volunteer Force: From Military to Civilian Service*

Of course, this selection represents only a few of the many leaders who are contributing to these vital efforts. Thanks are due to all of the dedicated and creative souls who have made this mission their own.

Thanks are also due to the Veterans Club members at Northern Illinois University who met with Ilona Meagher and Pam Woll to talk about their group's excellent work and their ideas for effective approaches, and to former club president JD Kammes for his generous and insightful interview.

The most significant acknowledgment goes to the service members and veterans who have offered their experiences and insights to this process, and to all the brave men and women who have served our country in the theater of war. They have persevered through hardship, injury, challenges in reintegration, and often-formidable obstacles to education and employment. From the veterans of past wars whose reintegration struggles have taught us a sobering lesson to the current generation of service members and veterans whose story is still being written, all have inspired and informed this project. Words are not sufficient to express our gratitude for their service and for their continuing courage and dedication.

Sponsorship, Direction, and Authorship

Although the “America’s Best” series was inspired by and focused on a single mission—helping service members and veterans succeed in the civilian world—it was created with the help of many hands. This section provides more information on the organizations and individuals who have played central roles in this process.

Organizational Sponsorship and Direction

The National Organization on Disability (Project Sponsorship)

The National Organization on Disability (NOD) is a private, non-profit organization that promotes the full participation of America’s 54 million people with disabilities in all aspects of life. In 2006 NOD narrowed its focus to increasing employment opportunities for the 67 percent of working-age Americans with disabilities who are unemployed.

With programs on the ground, the National Organization on Disability is demonstrating new employment practices and models of service delivery, evaluating results, and sharing successful approaches for widespread replication. NOD is conducting research on disability employment issues, including the field’s most widely used polls on employment trends and the quality of life for people with disabilities. And the organization’s subject matter experts in disability and employment provide consulting services to public agencies and employers seeking to harness the unique talents that people with disabilities can bring to the workforce.

To achieve its goals, NOD works in partnership with employers, schools, the military, service providers, researchers, and disability advocates. Current employment programs are benefiting high school students with disabilities transitioning into the workforce, seriously injured service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, employers seeking to become more disability friendly, and state governments engaged in policy reform.

Founded in 1982, NOD is the oldest cross-disability organization in the country. To this day, the National Organization on Disability remains one of few organizations committed to representing all Americans with disabilities, regardless of their particular conditions or circumstances.

Give an Hour™ (Project Direction)

Give an Hour™ (GAH) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, founded in September, 2005 by Dr. Barbara Van Dahlen, a psychologist in the Washington, DC area. The organization’s mission is to develop national networks of volunteers capable of responding to both acute and chronic conditions that arise within our society.

Currently, GAH is dedicated to meeting the mental health needs of the troops and families affected by the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Give an Hour’s™ volunteers provide counseling to individuals, couples and families, and children and adolescents. GAH offers treatment for anxiety, depression,

substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injuries, sexual health and intimacy concerns, and loss and grieving.

In addition to direct counseling services, Give an Hour's™ providers are working to reduce the stigma associated with mental health issues by participating in and leading education, training, and outreach efforts in schools and communities and around military bases.

With increasing frequency, GAH has been featured and Dr. Van Dahlen has been interviewed in countless articles, television segments, and radio casts, as the mental health needs of the troops have become strikingly apparent.

Individual Contributions

Carol Glazer (Project Sponsor)

Carol Glazer joined the National Organization on Disability (NOD) in July, 2006 as the Executive Director of its National EmployAbility Partnership. She became NOD's President in October, 2008. Under her leadership, NOD has doubled its revenues and increased net assets by more than 300 percent; increased its focus on employment by a factor of ten; and developed important new relationships with the US Army, leading employers, national and local foundations, scores of new corporate donors to its programs, and the CEO Council. She put in place NOD's signature employment demonstrations, Wounded Warrior Careers and Bridges to Business.

For seven years prior to joining NOD, Ms. Glazer was a program development and management consultant to foundations, universities, and nonprofit organizations working to improve conditions in inner-city communities. Before that, she held positions as Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation and Senior Vice President for National Programs for the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), where she served on a five-member senior management team that grew the organization from a staff of forty with \$10 million in assets to a \$3-billion, 500-staff bank with 36 field offices.

Ms. Glazer holds a Master's Degree in Public Policy from Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. She has two children, one of whom was born with hydrocephalus and has physical and cognitive disabilities.

Barbara Van Dahlen (Project Director)

Barbara Van Dahlen, president of Give an Hour™, is a licensed clinical psychologist practicing in the Washington, DC area for 20 years. A specialist in children's issues, she served as an adjunct faculty member at George Washington University. She received her PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Maryland in 1991.

Concerned about the mental health implications of the Iraq War, Dr. Van Dahlen founded Give an Hour™ in 2005 to provide free mental health services to U.S. troops, veterans, and their loved ones. Currently, the organization has 5,000 providers nationwide.

Dr. Van Dahlen frequently participates in panels, conferences, and hearings on issues facing veterans. Recently, she was named among “50 Women Changing the World” by *Woman’s Day* magazine and was named a 2010 recipient of the Maryland Governor’s Volunteer Service Award. She also writes a monthly column for *Veterans Advantage* and has contributed to a book on post-traumatic stress and traumatic brain injuries. She has become an expert on the psychological impact of war on troops and families.

Basil Whiting (Project Originator and Advisor)

Basil Whiting has more than 45 years of line and staff leadership in the public and private sectors, for both nonprofit and for-profit organizations. Mr. Whiting served for five years in U.S. Army Counter-Intelligence and attained the rank of Captain. Upon returning to civilian life, he earned his master’s degree in 1967 from Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. He then spent nine years as Senior Program Officer at The Ford Foundation, in charge of workforce and community development programs, among other responsibilities.

Mr. Whiting served for four years as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA throughout the Carter Administration, after which he spent six years consulting to management and labor on joint teamwork efforts to improve work life, productivity, quality, and organizational performance. From 1987 to 1991 he implemented such concepts in his role as Vice President, Human Resources for the Long Island Rail Road, the nation’s largest commuter railroad.

In 1991, Mr. Whiting returned to consulting, working with foundations, non-profits, and business groups. For more than a decade, he worked with the nonprofit arm of the National Association of Manufacturers, helping the peer structure of employer organizations engage more effectively in workforce development. Mr. Whiting joined NOD in 2006.

Celia Straus (Project Manager and Editor)

Celia Straus is a writer/producer for print, video, and new media, with special expertise in the fields of adolescents, mental health, military issues, and disaster response and crisis training. She is the author of *Hidden Battles on Unseen Fronts*, *Stories of American Soldiers with PTSD and TBI* (Casemate Publishing, April, 2009).

Celia is also a nationally known author and workshop facilitator on adolescent girls and spiritual parenting. She has authored three books: The national bestseller, *Prayers on My Pillow, Inspiration for Girls on The Threshold of Change* (Ballantine 1998); *More Prayers On My Pillow, Words of Comfort and Hope for Girls On The Journey To Self* (Ballantine 2000); and *The Mother Daughter Circle, Making Lifelong Connections With Your Teenager* (Ballantine, 2003) www.motherdaughtercircle.com.

Celia is a graduate of Mary Washington College of the University of Virginia and holds a master’s in Literature from Georgetown University. She lives in Washington, DC.

Pamela Woll (Author)

Pamela Woll is a Chicago-based consultant in writing, training, and instructional development. Pam has been writing books and manuals in addiction treatment, prevention, mental health, and other human

service fields since 1989, on topics including stigma reduction, strength-based treatment, resilience, trauma, depression, cultural competence, addicted families, violence, and disaster human services. She received her bachelor's degree from Bradley University in 1975 and her master's from DePaul University in 1995.

Since 2007, Pam's primary focus has been on trauma, resilience, neurobiology, and the needs of service members and veterans. Her most recent works include *Resilience 101: Understanding and Optimizing Your Stress System*, a workbook for service members and veterans; and *The Power and Price of Survival: Understanding Resilience, Stress, and Trauma*, a workbook for general audiences, both published by her own organization, Human Priorities. Other recent works include the *Finding Balance After the War Zone* manual for civilian clinicians, co-published by Human Priorities and the Great Lakes Addiction Technology Transfer Center (ATTC); and *Healing the Stigma of Addiction: A Guide for Helping Professionals*, published by the Midwest AIDS Training and Education Center and the Great Lakes ATTC.

At the other end of the spectrum, Pam is also the author of the *How to Get the Piranhas Out of Your Head* booklet and workbook. You can find many of Pam's materials at <http://xrl.us/humanpriorities>, and most are available for free download.

Micheline Wijtenburg (Author, *Preparing America's Best*)

Micheline Wijtenburg received a bachelor's degree from Florida State University and non-terminal master's degree in Clinical Psychology from Nova Southeastern University. Currently she is a doctoral clinical psychology trainee and is on internship at the Oklahoma Health Consortium, University of Oklahoma.

Micheline has clinical experience with both inpatient and outpatient populations. She has gained experience working with adolescents, adults, and older adults. Micheline formerly worked as a practicum therapist at the Healthy Lifestyles/Guided Self-Change Clinic, The Renfrew Center, and the Psychological Assessment Center. Her areas of interest include compulsive and addictive behaviors, co-occurring disorders, trauma, and psychological and neuropsychological assessment.