

Returning to the Workforce As a Disabled Veteran

Presented by VetsFirst, a program of
United Spinal Association



Presenter

Heather L. Ansley, Esq., MSW

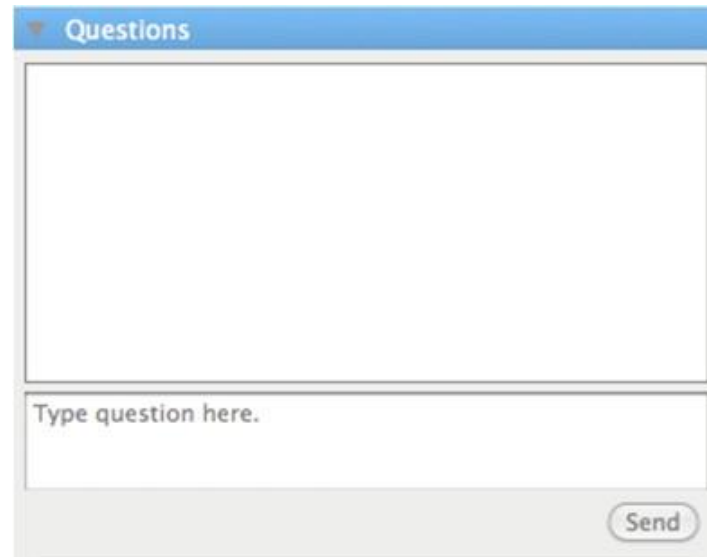
Vice President of Veterans Policy

VetsFirst, a program of United Spinal Association

Email: hansley@vetsfirst.org

Questions

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VetsFirst's History

- Represents 60 years of service to veterans and their families.
- Provides representation for veterans, their dependents and survivors in their pursuit of VA benefits and health care.
- Fights to ensure all veterans with disabilities have the ability to live and work in their communities and achieve greater independence.

Disabled Veterans in the Workforce

- As of Fiscal Year 2011, 3.35 million veterans had a disability that was connected to their military service.
- About 34 percent of veterans had a rating of 60 percent or higher.
- As of August 2011, 26.6 percent of veterans who had a disability rated by VA at 60 percent or higher reported participating in the workforce.

Perception of Disability in the Workplace—Disabled Veterans

- Many disabled veterans have a lot of negative beliefs about how disabilities are viewed in the workplace.
- Although they may know about the Americans with Disabilities Act, many are unsure about disclosing a disability to an employer and fear job related discrimination due to a disability.

Perception of Disability in the Workplace—Employers

- Many human resource professionals believe that it is difficult to find resources to accommodate a disability.
- Many believe, however, that hiring disabled veterans is a huge benefit for their companies.



Disabled Veterans as People with Disabilities

- Many veterans who have disabilities do not think of themselves as people with disabilities.
- Language matters, however, when it comes to understanding the legal protections available to people with disabilities.
- Knowing how to access services and resources in your community is critical to future success.

Bridging the Gap

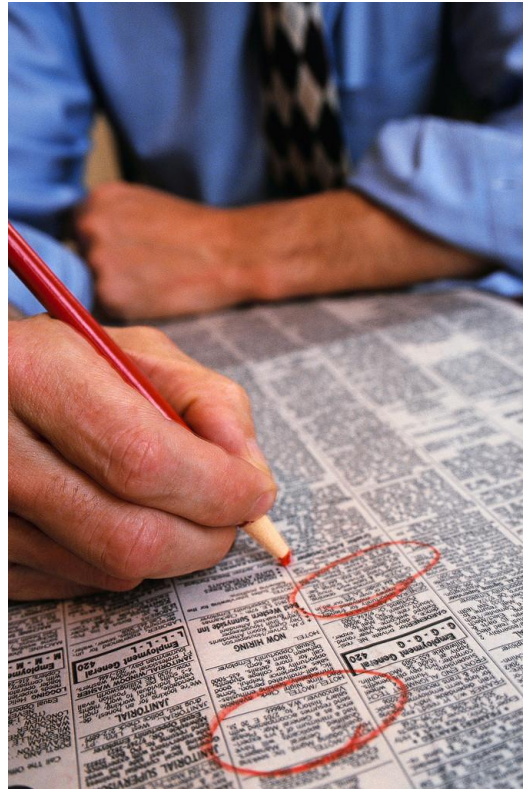
Disabled Veterans Employment and
Education: Gearing Up for Your
Future



Summary of Disabled Veterans Employment and Education Resource

- Section 2—Creating Your Path to Employment
- Section 3—Choosing School as a Path to Employment
- Section 4—Understanding and Defining Disability
- Section 5—Self-Advocacy: Knowing Your Rights and Responsibilities
- Section 6—Resources and Guiding Questions

Creating Your Path to Employment



Six Steps to Success

1. Try a military translator.
2. Check out your local community.
3. Determine jobs that are good fits.
4. Structure your resume and ace the interview.
5. Understand reasonable accommodations.
6. Find a mentor and other support.

Reasonable Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires employers to make “reasonable accommodations” for employees with disabilities, which means changing the work environment or job duties to eliminate barriers that keep them from being able to perform the essential functions of their job.

Understanding Accommodations

- An employer is not required to make an accommodation for you if your employer doesn't know that you need an accommodation.
- If you don't need an accommodation, then you don't need to disclose anything about your disability.
- If you need an accommodation, then it is your responsibility to begin the discussion with your employer.

Help with Accommodations



- The Job Accommodation Network (JAN)
- The Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP)



School as a Path to Employment



Research Your School

- Create your own definition of “veteran-friendly.”
- Examine the school’s website.
- Find out how your military transcripts translate to coursework.
- Review the school’s policies.

Assessing Your Needs as a Student Veteran with a Disability

- Academic tutoring
- Veteran-only courses
- Accommodations
- Health and mental health services
- Career services

Understanding & Defining Disability



Defining Disability

Living with a disability means that you have a condition that was caused by an accident, trauma, genetics, or disease that may limit your mobility, hearing, vision, speech, or mental function.

Disability in Various Contexts

- The Department of Veterans Affairs assigns disability as a percentage. To qualify, you must have a disability that is related to your service.
- The Social Security Administration doesn't use percentages of disability, but instead determines whether you are disabled or not in relation to your ability to work.
- Disability in employment and education is defined under the law to ensure equal protection and nondiscrimination.

Disability in the Eyes of the Law

- Equal protection and anti-discrimination
- Veterans' Preference and other affirmative action regulations
- Family Medical Leave Act

Equal Protection and Anti-Discrimination

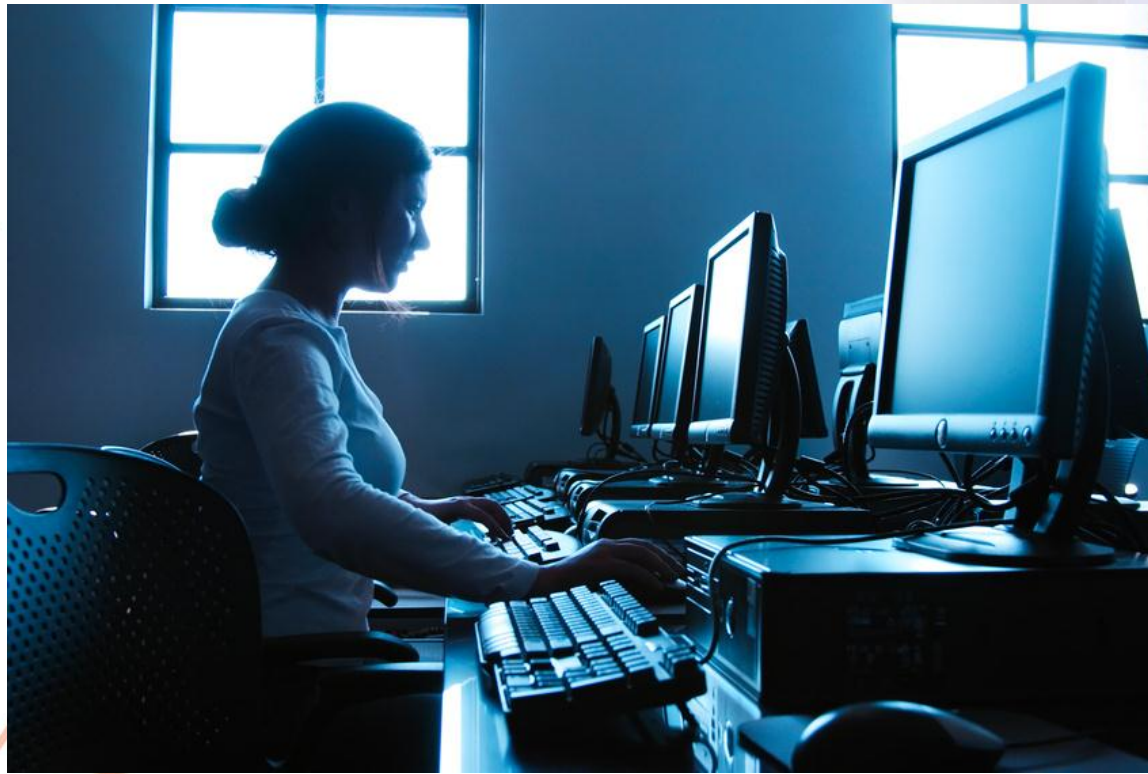
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504)
- Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)

Remedies for Disability Based Discrimination

- Contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
- Seek expert legal advice



Self-Advocacy: Knowing Your Rights and Responsibilities



Developing Self-Advocacy Skills

- Proactively develop an understanding of what you need to be successful, effectively communicate those needs, and ask for help along the way.
- Educate yourself about your rights and responsibilities, as a disabled veteran, in the workplace or at school.

Self-Advocacy at School

- Post-secondary schools do not have a duty to find student veterans with disabilities.
- Student veterans must notify the school about any disability requiring a reasonable accommodation.
- Active participation between you and your school will be more likely to result in your receiving an appropriate academic adjustment.

Self-Advocacy at Work

- The ADA requires employers to provide reasonable accommodations for employees if they need a workplace adjustment due to a disability.
- Employees need to let their employers know if they need a workplace adjustment due to a disability.
- A “plain English” request is sufficient.

Self-Advocacy in Your Community

- Disabled veterans have access to community-based services available to all citizens as well as veteran-specific services.
- These organizations can help with a variety of services.



Tips and Strategies for Self-Advocacy

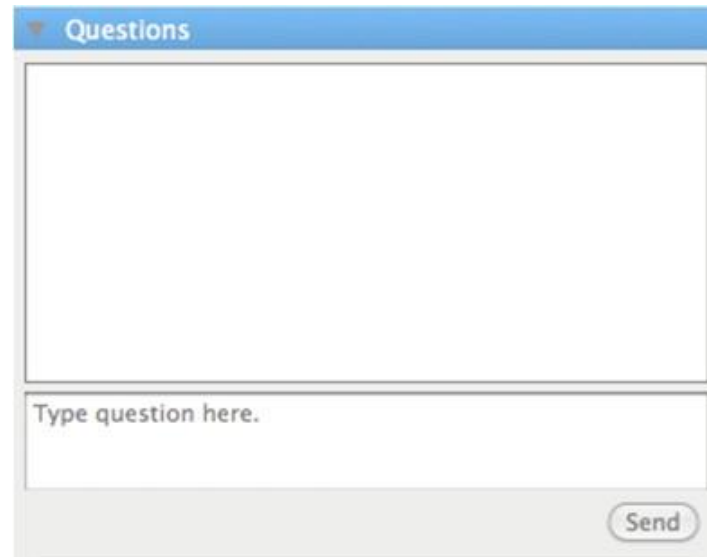
- Learn to talk about your military work experiences in ways that easily convey your skills.
- Find out more about your disability and how it might impact you at work or school.
- Educate yourself about reasonable accommodations.
- Know where to find the resources you need to be successful.

Resources and Guiding Questions



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Presentation Resources

- VetsFirst
 - www.vetsfirst.org/veterans-employment
 - Webinar archive: www.spinalcord.org/webinar-archive
- Department of Labor, Veterans' Employment and Training Service
 - www.dol.gov/vets
- The Job Accommodation Network
 - <http://askjan.org>
- Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
 - www.eeoc.gov