



# **Guide For Transition Counselors: Script on Pre-separation/Transition Counseling**

**Effective May 1, 2018**

***Released April 4, 2018***

***For use only upon official implementation by the Department of Defense***

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## Introduction and Welcome

### OPENING REMARKS and GREETING

On behalf of the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Homeland Security, Welcome to the Transition Assistance Program or TAP Pre-separation/Transition Counseling session. THANK YOU for your Service to the nation. As a result of your dedication and commitment, you have earned various benefits and services, which I will explain to you.

In this session, we go over benefits you may have earned, and provide information on services and programs that will assist you with your transition to civilian life.

This session is titled "Pre-separation/Transition Counseling." This counseling session is the result of a law passed in the early 1990s which called for the Secretary of Defense and Department of Transportation (U.S. Coast Guard) to provide "Pre-separation Counseling" to Service members being discharged or released, who have served 180 continuous days or more on active duty in the Armed Forces in accordance with Title 10, U.S. Code, Chapter 58, Section 1142.

After collaboration with representatives from the National Guard Bureau and the Reserves, DoD policy subject matter experts were informed that members of the National Guard and Reserves do not separate, they return to their units, or to the Individual Ready Reserve.

In response to this information, DoD changed the title of the counseling to add "Transition" so eligible members of the National Guard and Reserves understand if they meet the eligibility criteria, then the Transition Assistance Program applies to them. The title used today is: "Pre-separation/Transition Counseling."

Are there any questions?

### TAP Transition Goals, Plan, Success (GPS)

To begin, I'll explain the TAP process you will be going through over the next several months. This training is designed to prepare you to be career ready when you separate, retire, or are released from active duty.



**COUNSELOR NOTE: Counselor should ask for a show of hands to see how much time attendees have left before separation, retirement or release from active duty:**

- 24 – 18 months remaining
- 18 – 12 months remaining
- 12 – 6 months remaining
- 6 – 3 months remaining
- \*Less than 90 days remaining

- Note: Attendees with less than 90 days should be referred to staff and unit Commanders for close monitoring. This is to ensure they meet all VOW (Veterans Opportunity to Work) to Hire Heroes Act requirements and applicable Career Readiness Standards (CRS), and also have an Individual Transition Plan (ITP) before departure from full-time active duty. Installation TAP staff should pay close attention to this group and make sure they receive a “warm handover” to partner agencies and local resources in the communities to which the Service member plans to relocate.

Your transition process started when you first considered whether you should stay in the military or separate. By now, all of you should have had a face-to-face discussion with a member of your unit’s chain of command, or a Career Counselor about transitioning. Your presence here today tells me that you are planning to transition.

This Pre-separation/Transition Counseling session is the starting point for your formal transition process. There are two things we will cover in the Pre-separation/Transition Counseling session: First, an overview and explanation of “Transition Goals, Plans, Success” or “Transition GPS.” Second, I will go through the “Service Member Pre-separation/Transition Counseling and Career Readiness Standards eForm for Service Members Separating, Retiring, Released from Active Duty (REFAD),” which will hereafter just be referred to as “DD Form 2648.”

I will provide a brief overview and explanation of benefits, services, programs and resources required under Pre-separation/Transition Counseling, which will be documented using DD Form 2648.

**COUNSELOR NOTE: Counselor explains Transition GPS by asking the question, “What is Transition GPS?” followed by the answer.**

**Transition GPS stands for the following:**

**G - Goals:** You will be asked to identify and write out your goals at the end of today’s session and document them on your Individual Transition Plan or ITP.

**P - Plans:** You will develop a plan to successfully achieve your goals. Transition GPS requires you to develop and complete an ITP. Your ITP will serve as a personal road-map which guides you toward achieving your goals. Your ITP may change as you go through the transition process, so plan to be flexible.

**S - Success:** We want you to successfully achieve your post-transition goals, whether your goal is to find a job or start a new career; attend school or obtain a license or certification in your career field; or start your own business.

## **PART 1: PRE-SEPARATION/TRANSITION COUNSELING -TRANSITION GPS OVERVIEW**

Transition GPS is an outcome-based, multi-part curriculum with standardized learning objectives, that prepares Service members transitioning to civilian life by building skills and helping to meet mandatory Career Readiness Standards or CRS, regardless of your branch of

Service. You will be scheduled to attend a series of classes and workshops, collectively referred to as the “Transition GPS core curriculum,” which is a full one-week curriculum, including:

- **Transition Overview**
- **Resilient Transitions – Lecture and Discussion**
  - Considerations for Families
  - Special Issues
  - Value of a Mentor
- **Military Occupational Code (MOC) Crosswalk**
- **Financial Planning For Transition Seminar**
- **U.S. Department of Labor Employment Workshop (DOLEW) (mandatory with exemptions – exemptions will be explained as we go through the DD Form 2648)**
- **Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits Briefing I and II (mandatory, with NO exemptions)**
- **Individual Transition Plan (ITP) Review**

In addition to the Transition GPS core curriculum, you may also choose to attend one or all of three additional Transition GPS Tracks, based on your personal post-transition goals.

**The three additional tracks are:**

- Accessing Higher Education – Two days
- Career Technical Training Track – Two days
- Entrepreneurship – Boots to Business (B2B) – Two days
  - **REMEMBER: Each of the two-day tracks is in addition to the full one-week Transition GPS core curriculum**

Service to your county has earned you up to \$200,000 - \$300,000 in GI Bill benefits, which can be applied towards post-secondary education. While pursuing higher education and career technical training opportunities will help you achieve your career goals, it is a big investment in time and effort. The Accessing Higher Education Track and the Career Technical Training Track will lead you through the steps of becoming a well-informed educational consumer and provide a wealth of resources to help you best maximize the return on your GI Bill benefits.

**Accessing Higher Education Track**

Accessing Higher Education, or AHE Track, is for those of you who are pursuing higher education. This two day track will help prepare you for college life and re-entering school, completing college applications, transferring credits, researching schools, financial assistance, and learning about campus realities. You will hear about vocational education counseling available through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) during the VA portion of today’s workshop. Please take this opportunity to sign up for the AHE track.

**Career Technical Training Track**

The Career Technical Training Track, or CTTT is a two day session led by the Department of Labor (DOL). The CTTT workshop will help participants answer the questions; “What do I want to do, and how do I get there?” This workshop offers a unique opportunity for individual career exploration, and to identify skills, increase awareness of training and credentialing programs, and develop an action plan to achieve career goals. Service members and spouses who

attend the two-day Department of Labor CTTT workshop will complete a personalized career development assessment of occupational interest and ability. This industry-standard assessment will present workshop participants with a variety of tailored job recommendations aligned with interests and aptitudes. Workshop facilitators will guide participants through a variety of career considerations including labor market projections, increased wage potential, education, apprenticeships, certifications, and licensure requirements. Please take this opportunity to sign up for the CTTT.

### **Entrepreneurship Track**

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) designed two days of special curriculum for anyone interested in pursuing a small business or franchises. This track explores the personal side of entrepreneurship. For example, what it takes to start a business, such as having a vision and staying self-motivated. This track also covers the development of a business plan and potential sources of capital and financing. It will also give you an opportunity to learn from other business owners.

When we go through Part 2 of today's Pre-separation/Transition Counseling Session, I will provide information that will help you assess personal circumstances, which will enable you to identify individual needs and match information, resources, and referrals available to you.

I will talk more about the personal assessment at the end of today's session when I go into more details about developing your ITP.

The Department of Defense policy, DoD Instruction 1332.35, "Transition Assistance Program (TAP) for Military Personnel," requires you to meet the CRS, such as register for a VA eBenefits account, develop and complete an ITP, complete an assessment tool to assess your aptitude, interests, strengths, and skills, and attend a Capstone event.

**COUNSELOR NOTE: The Counselor has the option of describing each item below, or skipping and describing them at the end of the day once the Counselor has completed the Pre-separation/Transition Counseling session. If the Counselor chooses to wait, they should tell the class they will explain the CRS later in the session.**

- **Career Readiness Standards (CRS)** –You must meet the CRS before you separate. CRS demonstrate that you are prepared to transition effectively to pursue your personal post-transition higher education, career technical training, and civilian employment goals. I will go over the CRS at the end of the Pre-separation/Transition Counseling session, as well as identify the type of documentation you must have to present to your Commander, or your Commander's Designee during Capstone. I want to ensure the CRS will be fresh in your mind.
- **eBenefits Registration – Service members demonstrate they have an eBenefits account**
  - eBenefits is a joint VA/DoD web portal that provides resources and self-service capabilities to Veterans, Service members, and their families to research, access and manage their VA and military benefits and personal information.

- If you already have an eBenefits account, log-on and bring up your account on the computer, or if you brought your own laptop, you can log-on and bring up your account. I am required to verify and document that you have an eBenefits account before you depart today.
  - If there is anyone in class who has not registered for their eBenefits account, you will obtain your DS Log-on and register for your eBenefits account before you leave today. I will verify and document that you have an eBenefits account.
- **Individual Transition Plan (ITP)** – You are also required to complete an ITP over the course of the transition process before you separate. Every branch of Service has a Service specific criterion-based ITP.

Your ITP serves as the roadmap to keep you on track to achieve your transition goals. When we complete the Pre-separation/Transition Counseling and the DD Form 2648, I will ask you to complete **Page 1 (Section 1)** of the DD Form 2648.

Take your ITP with you to every Transition GPS class you attend and you should update your ITP accordingly. Prior to separating, retiring, or being released from active duty, your ITP will be reviewed by a Counselor along with the DD Form 2648, Section III, to verify you have met any or all of the CRS and ensure you have completed your Pre-separation/Transition Counseling Needs Assessment.

The ITP has six blocks. Everyone will complete Block 1 today. The remaining blocks will be completed based on your career path. For example, if your post-transition goal is to find a job, you will complete the Employment Section (**Section 2**) of the ITP.

If your career path is to go to college or a university, you will complete the Education block (**Section 3**) of the DD Form 2648. You can change and modify your ITP accordingly. Make sure you document changes in your ITP and date the entries.

Your ITP will not be completed in one day, one week, or even in a month. It will continue to develop as you move through the transition process and make informed decisions about your career preparation.

- **Assessment Tool** – You must show documentation that you completed a standardized assessment tool that assesses your aptitude, interests, strengths, and skills; and can inform you on decisions about education, career technical training, or employment towards a future career field. Contact your local installation Transition Office to find out which assessment tool you are to use and complete.
- **Capstone** – No Later than 90 days before you separate, your military Service will have you participate in Capstone to verify you met the CRS, completed an ITP, and have been provided an opportunity for a “warm handover” with a partner agency.
  - When we say, “**provided an opportunity for a warm handover,**” we mean we help connect you with the appropriate partner agency (VA, DOL, SBA), or other resources that will help you meet your CRS. In some cases, you may be

scheduled to go back into one of the classes to strengthen your skills or improve your ability to navigate important websites to help achieve your goals. The “warm handover” could also mean setting up an individual appointment with a Counselor, or some other subject matter expert, to give you the assistance you need for a successful transition.

**COUNSELOR NOTE: Counselor may want to explain what happens if the Service member needs additional training (e.g. refresher training) or further assistance. The Service member will be placed in the appropriate curriculum for meeting CRS, referred to the appropriate installation resources for assistance, or handed over to VA, DOL, SBA, etc., for assistance and follow-up.**

## GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

### SECTION II of DD Form 2648 -- SERVICE MEMBER PERSONAL INFORMATION

**Note:** If a Service member is unable to access an online form due to disconnected ops, a manual form may be completed. Please provide instructions, if this is the case.

The majority of the items in Section II of the .pdf version of the form will be pre-populated with the Service members' information from DEERS upon entering the DoD identification number. If you are using the eForm enterprise solution, all data will be collected in real-time as you go through the transition process.

Block 8. DATE FORM INITIATED.

Enter the numerical date the Pre-separation/Transition Counseling session was initiated: Year (Four digits), Month (Two digits), Day (Two digits), without dashes.

**COUNSELOR NOTE: Counselor should explain Item 9, "Opt-in" to the transitioning Service members. They will also explain item 9a, regarding language skills/regional expertise.**

Item 9a - Select one by marking the appropriate box with an "X"

Item 9b - Post-Separation Email: Service members' post-separation email address

Item 9c - Post-Separation Phone Number: Service member's post-separation telephone number

### **PART 2: PRE-SEPARATION/TRANSITION COUNSELING, PRE-SEPARATION/TRANSITION COUNSELING NEEDS ASSESSMENT, REVIEW, AND VERIFICATION TO MEET CAREER READINESS STANDARDS (CRS) AND VOW COMPLIANCE**

**COUNSELOR NOTE: Counselor should know whether the class consists of a mixed audience –Active, National Guard and Reserve Component Service members, as well as any spouses. NOW is the time to assess the audience to determine how many Active, National Guard, Reserve, or spouses/dependents are present. Counselor should refer to the counseling script to ensure the information that is unique to National Guard, Reservists and spouses is emphasized to them during the session.**

As I stated earlier, over the next few weeks and months, you will be going through the transition process to prepare you to leave active duty. We will help you become career ready during your transition. The tools available to help you transition smoothly have evolved. We are excited that you will be experiencing a comprehensive program to assist you in your transition.

At the end of Pre-Separation/Transition Counseling, Pre-Separation/Transition Counseling Needs Assessment, Review, and Verification to Meet Career Readiness Standards (CRS) and

VOW Compliance – Section III, DD Form 2648, you will acknowledge receipt of this counseling and briefing and will be asked to sign and date the DD Form 2648 in the appropriate blocks by accessing your eForm. I will also assist you in scheduling your attendance in the Transition GPS modules, the additional Transition GPS tracks, and your Capstone review and Capstone verification sessions at the appropriate times.

Our objective for this session is to provide an overview, explain all of the Pre-separation/Transitioning Counseling topics required by law and DoD policy, and answer any questions before you move on to the next phase of your transition.

During your time in the military, you may have met some great people, and learned useful and valuable transferable skills. Many of your skills, talents, and experiences can be used in the civilian sector. These skills are called transferable skills.

Throughout this session, you will be introduced to resources, tools, and a network of professionals available to help you prepare for your path back to civilian life. The key to a successful transition rests with your strategic planning, completing tasks, doing research, and doing interactive activities using technology for the journey ahead.

In the military, you focused on your unit and the mission. Now is the time to focus on your own future and possibly a new career path.

This Pre-separation/Transition Counseling session will be documented on the DD Form 2648. It also serves as your personal needs assessment. The briefing will help you assess your personal circumstances, assist you in identifying your personal needs, identify any gaps, and help you match information, services, programs, and other resource referrals available to help you with your transition.

After completing Section III of DD Form 2648, print a .pdf version of your data to be put into your official military record. Remember to retain a copy of the .pdf version and refer to it throughout your transition process. Note that printing out the document prior to obtaining verification by commander/commander's designee would be strictly for personal reference purposes; not for the Service member's official personnel record.

I will now begin guiding you through the Pre-separation/Transition Counseling session and provide you with an overview of the benefits and services you may have earned, as well as resources available to assist you in obtaining your benefits. Hopefully, this session will answer many of your questions and educate you to the wide array of benefits, programs, resources and other assistance available to help you. Let's get started!

**PART 3: SECTION III – DD FORM 2648, “Service Member Pre-Separation /Transition Counseling and Career Readiness Standards eForm for Service Members Separating, Retiring, Released From Active Duty (REFRAD).”**

**1. Effects of a Career Change**

The purpose of this section is to help you and your spouse develop an awareness of the possible effects of career changes.

Your military career had challenges and rewards, and you should be proud of your service. Now you are ready for a new career and will face new challenges as a civilian.

Stress is not an attitude, trait or personal characteristic. It is a physical response to situations that, if ignored, can lead to conflict, mental and physical exhaustion or even serious illness.

As you transition to civilian life, you should identify your own indicators of stress and implement coping techniques that work best for you. Stress indicators can include the following symptoms: fatigue, headaches, trouble sleeping or sleeping too much, stomach problems, feeling nervous, and a desire to be alone. If you are suffering from any of these symptoms, you may want to seek assistance. Numerous resources are available to assist you, and your family members, during your transition and we will be going over many of them in this session.

Separating from the military may seem like you are losing a part of your identity. As a Service member, you worked to achieve your current rank or grade, however, upon leaving the Armed Forces, you leave this rank or grade behind. There is nothing comparable in the civilian world, and many civilians will not understand your experience.

Transition can be stressful, but it opens up a whole range of new possibilities. If you approach your transition as an opportunity for personal and professional growth, you have already taken a giant step toward reframing your identity.

Now is a good time to begin to think about the changes that lie ahead and plan for dealing with stress or apprehension. It may be helpful to write down the anticipated examples on your ITP.

Professionals are available for you to speak with, and many agencies exist to help ease your transition and the stress that accompanies it. Some of the professionals and agencies available on military installation are:

- Chaplaincy
- Medical Clinic professionals
- Behavioral Health Teams
- Education Office (for assessment and college credit information)
- Military and Family Support Centers (Army Community Service Center, Airman and Family Readiness Center, Fleet and Family Services)
- Military Family Life Consultants
- Service Specific:

- Army- Soldier For Life: Transition Assistance Program Centers
- Navy- Fleet and Family Support Centers
- Air Force- Airman and Family Readiness Centers
- Marine Corps - Marine Corps Community Services
- Coast Guard- Health, Safety and Work-Life Services Center

These centers have professional staff, programs and services to assist you and your family members in counseling, career workshops, resume writing, reference libraries, training, and job search assistance. Keep in mind that your family members are also transitioning into a new life and you will go through this together. They can be a source of comfort and encouragement during this time.

Some of the agencies outside the installation that can also help are:

- The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Vet Centers
- Military OneSource
- Military and Veteran Service Organizations (MSO/VSO)

For further information go to: <https://veterans.house.gov/resources-for-veterans/veterans-service-organizations.htm>

**VA Vet Centers** were established by Congress for the provision of readjustment counseling as a resource available to you, and your family after separating from the military. Be aware, VA Vet Centers are not the same as VA Medical Centers, which are staffed with professionals experienced and trained in providing mental health and readjustment counseling to Veterans. For more information go to: [www.vetcenter.gov](http://www.vetcenter.gov).

**Military OneSource** is a Department of Defense-funded information, referral and assistance program. Confidential services are provided worldwide through the call center and website 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, at no cost to eligible users. Masters-level consultants and counselors provide support for a wide range of topics, such as:

- Financial Counseling and Tax Filing
- Non-medical Counseling
- Spouse Education and Career Opportunities
- Relocation
- Health and Wellness Coaching
- Adult Disability and Elder Care
- Education
- Peer-to-Peer Support
- Adoption
- Special Needs
- Document Translation
- Language Interpretation Services
- Wounded Warrior and Caregivers

You can call Military OneSource toll-free at 800-342-9647. International calling options are available online at [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil).

**Military and Veterans Service Organizations** are also valuable resources for assistance and guidance. Veteran Service Organizations provide advocacy, education, and other support for the unique issues facing Veterans. Many have their own job referral and registration services, sponsor job fairs, and provide networking opportunities. Military Service Organizations can provide assistance and representation for Veterans, Service members, and families. These organizations offer a wide variety of services, including scholarships for dependents of military personnel, and other support functions.

Research and explore social service agencies and support groups in your community. Search online for agencies and resources in your area. You will also learn tools and techniques to help mitigate the effects of a career change by attending the Resilient Transitions workshop.

I hope this information will be helpful to you in your transition. Understand there are a lot of agencies and professionals in place to help you with challenging and new situations.

## **2. Reserve Affiliation and Reserve Component Counselors at Installations**

If you served eight years or more of active duty and no longer have a military Service obligation you do not have to affiliate with the National Guard or Reserve. However, we strongly encourage you to join a Reserve Component so you can continue to serve the nation.

If you served less than eight years of active military Service, you must complete the remainder of your contractual obligation.

The information I am sharing with you today will inform you of your Reserve options and obligations. You can satisfy your obligation by becoming a member of the Ready Reserve in one of the following categories:

### **Selected Reserve**

The Selected Reserve (also called SELRES, or SR) are members of a U.S. military Ready Reserve unit that are enrolled in the Ready Reserve program and the Reserve unit they are attached to.

- You may voluntarily affiliate with the Selected Reserve, either with a National Guard or Reserve unit or a Reserve individual program.
- Upon becoming a member of the Selected Reserve, you may be recalled to active duty in time of war or national emergency. You may also be ordered to active duty involuntarily for up to 270 days, for any single contingency operation, without a declaration of a national emergency.
- You will participate and train as required by the Reserve category to which you belong. For National Guard and Reserve unit programs, this usually means a minimum of one weekend a month, and two weeks of annual training per year. For Reserve individual programs, the training requirement may be somewhat less.

### **Inactive National Guard**

- If you served in the Army, you may become a member of the Army National Guard and request transfer to the Inactive National Guard if unable to participate in regular unit training.
- Currently, only the Army maintains an Inactive National Guard. This consists of National Guard personnel in an inactive status, who are attached to a specific National Guard unit but do not participate in training.
- As a member of the Inactive National Guard, you would be recalled to active duty with your unit. To remain a member, you must muster once a year with your assigned unit.

### **Individual Ready Reserve (IRR)**

If you do not affiliate with one of the above programs, your military Service branch will automatically assign you to the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR).

- IRR consists mainly of individuals who have had training and who have served previously in the Active Component. Other IRR members come from the Selected Reserve and have some of their military Service obligation remaining.
- IRR members may be involuntarily recalled upon declaration of a national emergency. Otherwise, participation requirements may include an annual day of muster duty to satisfy statutory screening requirements.
- IRR members may participate in voluntary temporary tours of active duty and military professional development education programs.

I encourage you to explore the Reserve options in the geographic area where you plan to relocate and reside.

If you want more information you can contact a Reserve recruiter on your installation. I can also provide you with specific referral websites, by military Service.

**COUNSELOR NOTE: The following CRS is required for Active Component Service members only: Service members must have documentation that shows they have completed a “Continuum of Military Service Opportunity Counseling.”**

### **3. Verification of Military Experience and Training (VMET), DD Form 2586**

The purpose of the VMET session is to explain what the VMET is and explain how you obtain your VMET document.

#### **What is VMET?**

The DD Form 2586 is the Verification of Military Experience and Training (VMET), which documents and verifies your military experience and training that is useful in discussing civilian occupations related to your military Service, as well as in translating military terminology and training into civilian terms. The VMET form is available to all eligible departing Service members, including eligible National Guard and Reservists.

Although VMET is not an official transcript, it assists you in verifying your military experience and training to potential employers, helps you write resumes, interview for jobs, negotiate credits at schools, and obtain licenses and certificates.

Download your VMET at: <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/tgps>, as soon as you decide to leave the Service. We recommend you download DD Form 2586 at least 120 days before you separate. Since there is a quarterly update cycle on VMET, pull it again before you transition so you have time to make corrections, if you find errors.

VMET is created from automated records on file. Missing information on members currently serving may be added through the standard personnel file submissions to the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC). Errors may or may not be corrected for separated or retired members. Please visit your local personnel office, or see “Data Omissions/Errors” FAQs on the VMET website, or call DMDC at, 1-800-727-3677.

#### **4. Civilian Occupations Corresponding to Military Occupations/O\*NET**

The purpose of this section is to inform you of the resources available through the Occupational Information Network (O\*Net) and other education and training tools. Resources like:

- Licensing and Certification
- American Job Centers (AJC), also known as One-Stop Centers
- Army Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL)
- The United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP)
- Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES)

The O\*NET program developed under the sponsorship of the DOL Employment and Training Administration. It is the nation's primary source of occupational information.

The O\*NET database contains information on hundreds of different occupations and describes job functions, tools used in specific jobs, and knowledge, skills, abilities, training and education required for the positions.

O\*NET contains career exploration tools and a set of valuable assessment instruments for workers and students looking to change careers. These tools include an Ability Profiler, Interest Profiler, and Work Importance Profiler. In addition, O\*NET helps with identifying industry standard keywords you use when writing your resume. This database is available at no cost and is continually updated. For more information, go to <https://www.onetonline.org/>.

As a part of O\*NET, the site “[mynextmove.org](https://mynextmove.org)” has useful information to assist in researching potential occupations. This site allows you to browse careers by keywords, or by MOC. You will learn more about this and other tools during the MOC Crosswalk Transition GPS module.

## 5. Licensing, Certification, and Apprenticeship Information

The purpose of the licensing and certification section is to inform you of some of the advantages of having credentials when pursuing an occupation outside of the military. Credentials help increase your employability.

Credentialing is the “umbrella term” for licenses and certifications. Some federal, state or local laws may require specific credentials to legally perform some jobs. Employers choose to hire only employees having certain credentials, or offer those employees a higher salary. Having credentials improves your prospects for promotion. Credentialed Service members demonstrate to prospective civilian employers that their technical skills are on par with their civilian peers.

**There are two primary types of credentialing: licenses, which are granted by a governing body in a particular profession or jurisdiction; and certifications, which demonstrate unique skills or abilities.**

### Licenses

Governmental agencies (federal, state, or local) grant licenses to individuals to practice a specific occupation, such as a medical license for doctors. State or federal laws or regulations define the standards that individuals must meet to become licensed. For these types of professions, licenses are typically mandatory.

### Certifications

**Certifications are different.** Non-governmental agencies, associations, and even private sector companies may grant certificates to individuals who meet predetermined qualifications. These qualifications are generally set by professional associations (for example, the National Commission for Certification of Crane Operators), or by industry and product-related organizations (for example, Novell Certified Engineer). Certification is typically an optional credential; although some state licensure boards and some employers may require certification. For many occupations, more than one organization may offer certifications.

**The DOL American Job Centers (AJC) website is another resource available to you to help you explore credentialing requirements for various career opportunities.**

**The web address is:** [www.careeronestop.org/CREDENTIALING/CredentialingHome.asp](http://www.careeronestop.org/CREDENTIALING/CredentialingHome.asp).

**Another DOL website that can assist you is:** [www.dol.gov/vets/](http://www.dol.gov/vets/).

Be aware that licenses and certifications can be expensive. You may be able to use your GI Bill to help with the cost of credentialing. VA can only pay for the cost of the test(s); VA does not cover other fees connected with obtaining a license or certification.

However, it is important to check with the state in which you will reside for the required credential needed. Also you should check with the particular occupation’s professional organization to learn about the credentialing requirements. You will have a clear advantage in applying for jobs by having your licenses and certifications in order.

Regardless of the military training, experience, military licenses, or expert badges you have earned, separate civilian credentials are required for many civilian jobs. Some credentialing authorities may grant credit for your military training or experience.

For more information, see: [www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/licensing\\_certification.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/licensing_certification.asp).

**COUNSELOR NOTE: Counselor should have a list of resources on hand to provide to Service members.**

I also recommend visiting the Installation or virtual Educational Office representative. In the past, financial resources available to help achieve a credential after leaving the military were limited primarily to assisting with the cost of additional training and/or education that might be required. New legislation allows for payment of exam fees through the Montgomery GI Bill. Application and renewal fees are not typically covered.

## **6. Military Occupational Code (MOC) Crosswalk**

While attending the MOC Crosswalk module during your Transition GPS core curriculum, you learn to translate your military skills into civilian language. You develop a “Gap Analysis” that helps you see any gaps between your military skills and those required in the civilian industry. You learn whether or not your military occupation requires a civilian license or certification. If it does, you identify the requirements in order to acquire your civilian certification.

AJCs are designed to provide a full range of assistance to any and all job seekers. The AJCs are now authorized under a program called the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which I will explain later. The AJCs offer employment-related services both through a personal visit to the center, or online.

AJCs are conveniently located in communities and provide a wealth of information to all, including persons with disabilities and persons with limited English-speaking ability.

Another reason for visiting an AJC is to connect to employment, education, and training services provided through local, state, and federal programs. Each of these centers serves as a one-stop resource that links Service members to the national network.

The website, [www.careeronestop.org](http://www.careeronestop.org), is beneficial in finding career information. Its resources help you identify potential careers using your current occupation. By selecting a career on: [myskillsmyfuture.org](http://myskillsmyfuture.org), you can explore training, compare skills banks, examine typical job duties and technology, and search employers and jobs. This site provides information about the field and current labor market information for the career selected.

If you are interested in learning more, call the toll-free help line at, (877) US-2JOBS, or the website at: [www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org).

## **7. Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (COOL)**

Each branch of the military has a COOL website. There, Service members can:

- Get background information about civilian licensure and certification
- Identify licenses and certifications relevant to your military rating

- Learn how to fill gaps between military training and experience and civilian credentialing requirements
- Learn about resources available to help gain civilian job credentials

**In deciding if you want or need a civilian credential when you transition out, it may help to consider the following five basic scenarios:**

1. The civilian equivalent of your Army Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) does not require a license or certification.

In this scenario, you do not necessarily need to pursue credentialing, but having a credential may still give you an advantage.

2. Your military training and experience provides all of the necessary credentials to practice the occupation as a civilian.

For example, the Army requires 68W (Health Care Specialists) to obtain Emergency Medical Technician certification from the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians. In this scenario, you already have the civilian credential – of course, there may be additional credentials that give you an added advantage.

3. Your military training and experience provide certification in the field, but not the state or government license required for civilian employment.

In this scenario, your transition to the civilian workforce may be relatively seamless because certification and licensure requirements are often similar. However, you may still need to obtain a license from the appropriate government agency.

4. Your military career provides education, training, or experience necessary to become licensed or certified, but not the formal license or certification from the credentialing board.

In this scenario, you have to follow an administrative process that typically requires completing an application, documenting military training and experience, and possibly taking an exam.

5. Your military education, training, or experience may need supplementation to meet licensure and certification requirements.

If you are in this situation and seek employment in a position that requires a certification or license, you need to start right away to finish the requirements for credentialing.

It is a good idea to identify what credentials you need as soon as possible before transitioning, because obtaining credentials may take time. Ideally, you have your credentials in hand by the time you leave the Service.

## **8. U.S. Army Credentialing Opportunities On-Line (Army COOL)**

Army COOL helps Soldiers find information on civilian certifications and licenses related to their military jobs.

For more information, go to: [www.cool.army.mil](http://www.cool.army.mil).

## **9. U.S. Navy Credentialing Online (Navy COOL)**

The Navy COOL web site is designed for Navy personnel. It explains how you meet civilian certification and license requirements related to your rating, job, designator, and occupation.

For more information, go to: [www.cool.navy.mil](http://www.cool.navy.mil).

## **10. U.S. Air Force Credentialing Online (AF COOL)**

The Air Force COOL is designed for Air Force enlisted personnel. It assists Airmen with not only obtaining civilian industry recognized credentials and licensures for use upon transition, but also enhances their skillsets related to their Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) while they are serving. AF COOL also assists members with purchasing the necessary study materials, preparatory courses (i.e., boot camps), and other items.

For more information, go to: <https://afvec.langley.af.mil/afvec/Public/COOL/>.

## **11. U.S. Marine Corps Credentialing Online (Marine Corps COOL)**

The Marine Corps COOL web site is designed for Marine Corps personnel.

It explains how you can meet civilian certification and license requirements related to your Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), job, designator, and occupation.

For more information, go to: [www.cool.navy.mil/usmc](http://www.cool.navy.mil/usmc).

## **12. United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP)**

USMAP is a program for active duty Service members who are serving in the U.S. Marine Corps, Coast Guard, or Navy that allows you to improve your job skills and complete different civilian apprenticeship requirements while on active duty.

DOL provides a nationally recognized certificate upon completion of the program and is widely acknowledged and accepted by many companies and organizations throughout the nation.

The USMAP is a win-win in that it helps streamline and formalize different types of training in the military and civilian workforce, and also helps to bridge the gap between the two.

Participation in the USMAP does not require you to make any off duty investment of hours. You can complete up to half of the program through requirements achieved doing your job on active duty.

To apply, you need to speak with your education office professional for information and assistance. They provide instructions on completing your application. Once your application has

been processed, you will receive instructional materials on how to record your hours toward completion of the program.

### **13. DoD SkillBridge**

If you are uncertain about what your job will be following separation, DoD SkillBridge could help. The DoD SkillBridge initiative promotes the civilian job training authority available for transitioning military Service members. Eligible Service members can participate in civilian employment training, including apprenticeships and internships. SkillBridge allows transitioning Service members to gain valuable civilian job skills training from employers, including apprenticeships and internships, beginning up to six months before they leave the military. In doing so, it can offer a critical bridge to a new civilian career. The link to SkillBridge is: <http://dodskillbridge.com/>.

#### **Here are the basic rules:**

Service members with approval from their first field-grade level Commander in their chain of command can apply to participate in an available SkillBridge job skills training program. Programs must offer a high probability of employment and be provided to the Service member at little or no cost. Service members continue to receive their military pay and benefits while participating.

#### **Contact your transition office if interested:**

More than 30 installations currently offer a SkillBridge program. If you are interested in finding out more, we encourage you to inquire with the transition office of the installation from which you are separating. While there are overall program guidelines, each Service has its own procedures for participating.

#### **Please keep in mind:**

SkillBridge is still evolving and not every installation offers programs. Although waivers are possible, it is currently difficult for Service members to participate in a program more than 50 miles from their installation. (We are working to resolve this issue.) Be sure to check with your transition office on the latest information and guidelines.

#### **General online resource:**

In addition to your transition office, more information on the program is available at: [www.dodskillbridge.com](http://www.dodskillbridge.com). This online resource will soon feature an interactive social forum to be designed for transitioning Service members, along with their Services and installations, to connect with each other and share information about SkillBridge.

To date, some 4,500 military personnel have successfully participated in SkillBridge in dozens of industries, ranging from welding and advanced manufacturing to information technology. Programs are developed by major corporations like General Motors and Microsoft, labor unions like the United Association of the Plumbing/Pipefitting Industry and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, as well as other nonprofit training providers. Almost all of the Service members who participated received jobs in the private sector through their participation.

SkillBridge represents a true win/win for businesses and for those transitioning. It allows businesses to gain early access to skilled Service members as prospective employees before those Service members become Veterans. Meanwhile, it allows Service members to gain valuable civilian experience and help launch their new careers – while reducing the uncertainty of transitioning to civilian life.

#### **14. Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES)**

What is DANTES?

Since 1974, the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support, a DoD agency, provided quality educational opportunities to Service members worldwide. In the true collaborative spirit of the voluntary education community, DANTES sponsored programs helped Service members navigate the postsecondary learning experience and attain academic achievement throughout their military careers and beyond.

DANTES mission is to help Service members achieve their educational goals by managing a portfolio of defense education programs. Website: [www.dantes.doded.mil](http://www.dantes.doded.mil).

#### **SERVICE MEMBER SUPPORT**

During every step of a Service member's military career, education programs and services help foster personal and professional growth through learning.

- Enables access to quality post-secondary educational opportunities that prepare a Service member for college entrance and a successful learning experience.
- Equips education counselors with tools and resources to assist Service members with individualized guidance and face-to-face interaction.
- Expands the opportunities for obtaining college credits and completing degree requirements, leading to success in higher education.
- Supports Service members during transition into the civilian workforce.

#### **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

Programs such as Kuder-Journey, Online Academic Skills Course (OASC) and College Placement Skills Training (CPST), National Test Centers and National Test Prep, ensure that Service members have the program support necessary to identify post-secondary education goals, attain degree completion, and ultimately transfer valuable knowledge and skill sets to civilian life. Programs and services include:

- **College Preparation - OASC**  
Providing a starting point and enabling academic college readiness
- **Career & Education Planning - Kuder Journey**  
Assessing a Service member's interests and aptitudes in order to recommend appropriate education and career paths

- **Distance Learning Readiness Self-Assessment**  
Helping to determine a Service member's readiness for education outside a classroom setting
- **College Comparison Support Tool**  
Comparing educational programs to assist with choosing the right academic institution
- **College Entrance Exams**  
Providing assistance with college admission and officer accession programs
- **Military Training and Experience Evaluation**  
Translating training courses and occupations into recommendations for college credit
- **Transcript Services**  
Delivering a Service member's academic and testing transcripts to colleges and universities for the award of credits that satisfy degree requirements
- **College Credit-by-Examination**  
Allowing Service members to earn college credit for knowledge they have already acquired
- **Teacher Credentialing and Transition Support**  
Fostering continued service to community upon separation from the military
- **Voluntary Education (VolEd) Community Support**  
Enabling education counselors to assist Service members with decisions based upon quality and value
- **Academic Institution Partnerships**  
Maximizing post-secondary educational opportunities for Service members; for the complete list of academic institution partnerships go to:  
<https://www.dodmou.com/Home/InstitutionsList>.
- **OCONUS Education Center Contact and Support**  
Providing education center support to Service members around the world in forward deployed areas

## 15. DoD TAP Web Portal

The DoD TAP web portal is a comprehensive resource with the capabilities to support separation and retirement-related issues. It provides information to ensure Service members and their spouses are prepared for the next step in civilian life, whether pursuing additional education, finding a job in the public or private sector, or starting their own business.

From the DoD TAP web portal, Service members and military spouses can:

- Learn about the Transition GPS core curriculum
- Determine how and where to prepare for their transition to civilian life
- Discover a host of online resources, including:
  - VA benefits

- Financial planning assistance
  - Assessing and documenting their skills for transition to civilian life
- Access the VA website: [www.vets.gov](http://www.vets.gov).

## **16. America Job Centers - Priority of Service**

Priority of service (POS) means that you, as a Veteran, and eligible spouses, are given priority over other non-covered (or ineligible) persons for any DOL funded employment or training programs.

This is how it works. If you go to an Employment Service or an AJC, you go to the head of the line. If the resources are limited, lack of training dollars for instance, you would receive access to those services instead of other applicants.

Federal law requires all states to develop policies for the delivery of POS in their state workforce plan.

The workforce system and other DOL programs must enable Veterans and eligible spouses to identify themselves at the point of entry to the system or program, and Veterans and eligible spouses must be given the opportunity to take full advantage of the priority.

To be eligible for POS, you must be a Veteran or eligible spouse. The Veteran definition for POS means a person who served at least one day in the active military, naval, or air Service, and was discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable.

Write down the website: [www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org) to locate your nearest office or you can write down the office address.

## **17. DOL Website**

The DOL website helps you translate military skills and experience into civilian terms, build a resume, search for jobs, and provides essential interview tips and resources to link you with job search websites and databases. You can visit the DOL website at: [www.dol.gov/vets](http://www.dol.gov/vets).

## **18. DOLEW and Service Sponsored Transition Workshops/Seminars**

The purpose of this section is to present the Department of Labor Employment Workshop or DOLEW and how this workshop greatly benefits you in your pursuit of employment opportunities. In addition to DOLEW, the military Services also provide transition employment workshops and seminars, such as Federal Resume Writing. These are excellent resources you (and your spouse) should take advantage of.

DOLEW gives you, and your spouse, a first-hand look of what to expect after military Service, and can help ease your transition to civilian life.

REMEMBER, spouses or caregivers of eligible transitioning Service members may be eligible to receive job assistance through their local transition office. They should contact the installation Military and Family Support Center, Spouse Employment Program Office, which has a robust spouse employment program. Spouses are strongly encouraged to attend the DOLEW.

This workshop provides information on various job search techniques, labor market information, resume and interview skills, and more. DOLEW will help with individual transition planning, employment assistance, small business information, and POS for Veterans in all DOL funded employment and training programs.

Studies indicate those who attend DOLEW find employment sooner than those not participating. The workshop provides valuable training and information that give you an edge over other applicants. If you attend a similar workshop following your transition you could possibly pay hundreds, if not thousands of dollars for this type of training in the private sector.

**COUNSELOR NOTE: Explain where, when and how they can register for DOLEW.**

Before you attend the workshop, you must present a completed standardized assessment tool to your counselor. This tool is selected by your military Service and is used to assess aptitudes, interests, strengths, skills, or leanings used to inform a Service member's decisions about education, technical training, or employment towards a future career field.

While all Service members can benefit from this assessment, the assessment must be given to the target population, i.e., Service members completing their first term of duty, 18-24 year old Service members, those being involuntarily separated, and those Service members separating rapidly. To find out what assessment tool you are to use, you must contact a Transition Counselor at your installation's Transition Office. The contact information for the Transition Office serving this installation is: **(Counselor should provide the information here.)**

**COUNSELOR NOTE: Counselor should provide the location and phone number at the installation of the military Service hosting the Pre-separation/Transition Counseling session. Counselor should explain what each Service calls TAP for those Service members that may choose to use a sister Service for transition assistance.**

**Army-** Soldier For-Life Transition Assistance Program (SFL-TAP) Centers

**Navy-** Fleet and Family Support Center

**Air Force-** Airman and Family Readiness Center

**Marine Corps-** Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS)

**Coast Guard-** Health, Safety and Work-Life Service Center (HSWLSC)

Once you separate, you can still get help with employment by contacting the nearest local DOL AJC in your local community. They provide Veterans with Priority of Service, and the same assistance and information as you would have received by attending a DOLEW. Post-9/11 Veterans can receive enhanced intensive services; this also applies to eligible National Guard and Reserve Service members.

You are required to attend the DOLEW unless you meet the criteria for an exemption. I will explain the exemption criteria later.

## **19. Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA)**

USERRA is a Federal law that establishes rights and responsibilities for uniformed Service members and their civilian employers.

The purpose of this topic is to provide you with some general information about USERRA, employment rights, and where to seek additional assistance.

DOL – VETS interprets and administers USERRA. VETS provides assistance to anyone who experienced problems with civilian employment related to their military Service; and information to employers about reemployment rights. VETS provides technical assistance and briefings to Service members, Veterans, employers, military units, or professional associations, and may involve conducting formal investigations when a Veteran or Service member alleges that their employment or reemployment rights were violated.

For example, if you leave your job to join the military, or are called up for active duty in the National Guard or Reserve and need to leave your job, when you return you may have reemployment rights to your job with your previous employer if you meet the eligibility criteria under USERRA.

Or, another example might be that you believe you are being discriminated against by an employer who is reluctant to hire you because of your military commitment.

This law protects you in those circumstances. But it's more complicated than that. USERRA clearly establishes that reemployment protection does not depend on the timing, frequency, duration, or nature of your Service as long as the basic eligibility criteria are met. The eligibility criteria for reemployment rights are:

1. Must leave civilian employment to perform a period of covered military Service.
2. While employed with a single employer, Service cannot exceed five years, subject to a number of statutorily-mandated exceptions.
3. Cannot have a disqualifying discharge (e.g. dishonorable, bad conduct, other than honorable).
4. Must submit a timely application for reemployment which varies according to the time spent on active duty.

And this applies to active duty and the Guard and Reserve.

USERRA also provides that the returning Service member be reemployed in the job that they would have attained had they not been absent for military Service. It's called the "escalator" principle, and the Service member is hired back with the same seniority, status and pay, as well as other rights and benefits determined by seniority.

The law requires reasonable efforts (such as training or retraining) are made to enable the returning Service member to refresh or upgrade their skills to help them qualify for reemployment in the escalator position.

The time period an individual has to apply for reemployment or report back to work after military Service is based on time spent on military duty.

USERRA requires that Service members provide advance written or verbal notice to their employers for all military duty unless giving the employer notice is impossible, unreasonable, or precluded by military necessity. Service members are strongly encouraged to provide that notice in writing in order to avoid potential disputes or conflicts when they seek reinstatement with their civilian employers.

USERRA provides protection from discrimination. If you are a past or present member of the uniformed Service, have applied for membership in the uniformed Service, or are obligated to serve in the uniformed Service, then an employer may not deny you initial employment, reemployment, retention in employment, promotion, or any benefit of employment because of this status.

VETS provide assistance to anyone with a claim under USERRA. USERRA protects civilian job rights and benefits for Veterans and members of Reserve components. The Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is another great resource.

For additional USERRA information and assistance, the website is: <http://esgr.mil/USERRA/What-is-USERRA.aspx>, or call, 1-800-336-4590, Option 1, to speak to an Ombudsman.

For more information, contact the VETS website at: [www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/index.htm](http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/index.htm), or go to: [www.benefits.va.gov/guardreserve](http://www.benefits.va.gov/guardreserve).

## **20. State Employment Agencies**

Once you leave the military, there are state employment agencies that receive federal funding to assist you in finding a job. And they provide a lot more than just job assistance. These offices are also called AJCs, but may be referred to differently by each state.

These AJCs offer you the best chance of finding employment. Veterans who use these centers receive priority for job referrals, testing, counseling and other services. If you have not yet been to an AJC, I would strongly encourage you to go and take advantage of all the services that are available to you. Services and benefits vary from state-to-state; therefore AJC registration must be done in person.

Every member of AJC is required to provide Veterans with Priority of Service. Most AJCs also have Veteran Employment Representatives specifically there to assist in a wide-range of

employment and training related services and to overcome any significant barriers to employment or SBEs.

The Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists exclusively serve Veterans with SBEs. Their main focus is on Veterans who have SBEs and deliver intensive one-on-one assistance to overcome those barriers using a case management approach to service delivery.

The Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) program has a staff who conduct employer outreach to develop job and training opportunities directly with businesses and industry associations. They are responsible in facilitating services to eligible Veterans through the AJCs and may engage in job search workshops and setting up job clubs.

The AJC system website has a resource that can help you identify potential careers using your current occupation. By selecting a career on [myskillsmyfuture.org](http://myskillsmyfuture.org), you can explore training, compare skills banks, examine typical job duties and technology, and search employers and jobs. This site also provides information about the field and current labor market information for the career selected.

In order to locate your nearest state employment office, use the telephone directory, or visit the service locator website at: [www.servicelocator.org](http://www.servicelocator.org).

## **21. State Job Boards**

Each state has its own job board. These job boards, which are typically electronic, have job postings and are found on the specific state website. Employers can search for job applicants using their state site and you can post your information, such as a job experience profile and/or resume, directly on most state job board sites. The website job boards serve as a place where individuals seeking employment and businesses seeking employees can be matched up and brought together to fit each other's needs. These job boards are free resources for employers and job seekers.

To explore state job boards go to: [www.careeronestop.org/jobsearch/cos\\_jobsites.aspx](http://www.careeronestop.org/jobsearch/cos_jobsites.aspx), and select the specific state.

## **22. Public and Community Service Opportunities (PACS)**

The purpose of the PACS is to encourage and assist you and your spouse in pursuing public and community service employment.

As a Veteran, you can put your military training and skills to greater use at the national, state, and local levels. Military Service has prepared and equipped you with experiences possessed by only a small percentage of the American population. While considering your transition options, consider non-profit, public and community service organizations such as schools, hospitals, law enforcement agencies, social service agencies and many more for employment opportunities.

These career fields enable you to share your military training to help address compelling community issues and challenges in education, public safety, health and human services, the environment, and more. Opportunities may include efforts to tutor children and adults, rehabilitate housing for low-income families, immunize children against preventable diseases, respond to natural disasters, mentor young people, help persons with disabilities and the elderly maintain their independence, and manage after-school programs for social and academic enrichment, to name a few.

At the federal government level, extraordinary efforts are made to attract trained military talent into the federal workforce. Transitioning Service members (soon-to-be Veterans) have technical skills in areas of critical importance, and many also already have security clearances required for some federal positions.

There are as many reasons to serve as there are people who serve, from solving problems in your community to sharing your skills to serving your country. If you are interested in continuing to serve America, you are encouraged to explore public or community service options. For more information visit: [www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov).

### **23. AmeriCorps and Volunteering**

Serving in AmeriCorps following your military Service can be a bridge to your future career and community. AmeriCorps is a national service program that enables people of all ages help solve tough community challenges while advancing their careers and connecting with their community. AmeriCorps gives you exposure to careers that may seem out of reach today by providing opportunity to gain hands-on experience, learn new skills, and build connections that can improve your resume, job or school applications. AmeriCorps is a way to keep serving your country and make a real difference in peoples' lives. AmeriCorps transitions military leaders into community leaders.

- (1) You can find volunteer opportunities in your community on sites, your state's Service Commission, or through local organizations in your community.
- (2) The federal government awards competitive grants to nonprofits, faith-based groups, and state and local government agencies to run vetted AmeriCorps programs. This year, 75,000 Americans (including more than 1,500 Veterans) will join AmeriCorps programs and serve in more than 21,000 communities across the country. Among other opportunities, AmeriCorps members provide peer-to-peer support to other Veterans and military families; fight wildfires on public lands and other ecological conservation; help communities struck by disasters; teach, tutor, and mentor disadvantaged youth; build and weatherize houses; serve in the healthcare field with doctors, nurses, counselors, and social workers; and meet many other urgent community needs.

AmeriCorps members receive a flexible education award that complements your GI Bill benefits, and full-time members receive a modest living allowance, health care benefits, and childcare assistance. Nearly 400 employers nationwide, including companies and state and local governments are Employers of National Service – employers that prioritize hiring

AmeriCorps alumni. Some AmeriCorps members can also be eligible for direct hiring into federal government service.

For more information, visit: [www.AmeriCorps.gov/veterans](http://www.AmeriCorps.gov/veterans), to find an AmeriCorps position in your community and see profiles of Veterans who served in AmeriCorps. Opportunities are available for military spouses and dependents as well.

Volunteer service can be valuable for your transition into civilian life. If you are unemployed and looking for a job, volunteering will help improve your employment prospects and stay engaged in your job field and community. Research shows that volunteering, including through AmeriCorps increases a person's likelihood of finding a job by 27% nationwide and volunteers in rural communities have a 55% higher chance of finding a job.

Volunteering helps you build your resume, experience and job network, which can lead to employment opportunities. Consider choosing a volunteer opportunity based on your skills, experience, and employment objectives. If you do not have the experience or network connections for the job you want, look for a volunteer opportunity that offers a chance to gain new skills and connections, as well as insight into the nature of the work you are interested in pursuing.

### **Troops to Teachers Program – “Proud to Serve Again”**

Have you considered teaching as a second career after the military? You are transitioning with skills, knowledge and experience that could be translated into an invaluable role as a mentor, leader and teacher. Education systems across the nation are looking for qualified teachers. Service members and Veterans bring a rich combination of skills which are a natural fit for the classroom. In fact, the skills that are honed in the military including leadership, initiative, discipline, teamwork, integrity, and the ability to thrive in an ever-changing environment contribute to making some of the best teachers.

**Troops to Teachers (TTT)** is a DoD program that helps put you on the best pathway to begin your next mission of becoming a K-12 public, charter or Bureau of Indian Affairs school teacher.

The goal of TTT is to provide every Service member interested in teaching with assistance to transition his or her leadership skills, training and core values to a teaching career in grade K-12 schools. To meet this goal, a network of state TTT offices works to provide participants with counseling and knowledge about certification requirements, routes to state certification, and employment leads to secure a teaching position.

### **Eligibility**

All current and former members of the U.S. Armed Forces, whose last period of Service is characterized as honorable, may participate in the program for counseling and referral services. These services help participants meet certification and licensing requirements to teach and subsequently help to secure a teaching position.

## **Financial Assistance**

For Service members that meet certain criteria as defined by the legislation, financial assistance is provided (upon availability of funds) to eligible participants to assist with their transition to the classroom. The purpose of the financial assistance is to provide transition assistance for those becoming first-time teachers. The financial assistance is not available to those that became teachers prior to registration with TTT.

Members must register with TTT within three years after their separation or retirement date and prior to first day of teaching to apply for financial assistance. After program registration, the TTT National Office determines applicable financial assistance and incentives to assist with licensing costs or as an incentive for teaching in a high need school.

Over 20,000 of your fellow Service members have successfully transitioned to a second career as public school teachers through the TTT program. Service members and Veterans have a lot to offer our nation's youth in the classroom. Your commitment, sense of teamwork and ability to lead are skills that make you a natural fit for teaching.

If you are passionate about continuing your Service to this nation, inspiring young minds and are up for another challenge, our nation's schools are waiting for you in a classroom nearby. Share your skills, knowledge and experiences and motivate the next generation to be the best they can be by becoming a teacher.

You owe it to yourself to consider teaching. It is not an easy career, but it can bring you great satisfaction and a chance to continue to give back to the nation.

Registration is completed online by visiting [www.proudtoserveagain.com](http://www.proudtoserveagain.com). It is important to note that prospective participants must register within three years after their military separation or retirement date, and prior to their first day of teaching.

## **24. Federal Employment Opportunities**

Another option available to you after you leave the Service is working for the federal government. Let's spend a moment discussing the information you need to know about federal employment opportunities.

There are three main ways to acquire a federal position:

- Merit Promotion
- Special Hiring Authorities
- Competitive Appointment

The Merit Promotion access method is through the Veterans' Employment and Opportunities Act of 1988 (VEOA). We will cover additional special hiring authorities later in DD Form 2648 when we cover Veterans' Preference for federal positions.

Veterans eligible for VEOA have access to Merit Promotion positions. Eligible Veterans can apply to a merit promotion announcement that is open to candidates outside the agency, but not open to the general public like a competitive appointment. The Veteran competes against civil-service candidates only. A Veteran with a VEOA appointment will be given a career or career conditional appointment in the competitive service.

To be eligible you must have separated under honorable conditions and be a preference eligible or Veteran separated after substantially completing three years of continuous active duty Service. (Eligibility for Veterans released in close proximity to the three year is determined by the hiring agency.)

As a VEOA eligible you are not subject to geographic area of consideration limitations. When applying under VEOA, you must rate and rank among the best qualified when compared to current employee applicants in order to be considered for appointment. Your veterans' preference does not apply to internal agency actions such as promotions, transfers, reassignments and reinstatements.

If you are interested and eligible for this access program, you should seek out agency merit promotion announcements open to candidates outside the agency. Applications should be submitted directly to the agency. Please note Veterans who have career status or are reinstatement eligible are not eligible for VEOA appointments.

**COUNSELOR'S NOTE: IT IS IMPORTANT THAT COUNSELORS STRESS THIS VERY IMPORTANT REQUIREMENT TO ALL RETIREES.**



**REPEAL OF CERTAIN BASIS FOR APPOINTMENT OF A RETIRED MEMBER OF THE ARMED FORCES TO DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE POSITION WITHIN 180 DAYS OF RETIREMENT (AUTHORITY: Section 1111, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017)**

**Section 3326(b) of the title 5, United States Code states:**

- A retired member of the armed forces may be appointed to a position in the civil service in or under the Department of Defense (including a non-appropriated fund instrumentality under the jurisdiction of the armed forces) during the period of 180 days immediately after retirement age if
  - the proposed appointment is authorized by the Secretary concerned or his designee for the purpose, and, if the position is in the competitive service, after approval by the Office of Personnel Management; or
  - the minimum rate of basic pay for the position was increased under section 5305 of this title.

Retirees should consult the Human Resources office of the hiring agency if they have questions.

For more information go to, [www.fedshirevets.gov/](http://www.fedshirevets.gov/), for on-line assistance and contact information.

## **25. USAJOBS**

USAJOBS is the official job site of the U.S. federal government. Registering on the USAJOBS website allows you to search for federal jobs, and follow helpful instructions on how to submit application packets.

For more information, go to: [www.usajobs.gov](http://www.usajobs.gov).

## **26. Go-Defense**

If you are interested in a career in national defense, this website is very helpful. It includes many employment levels ranging from entry level to executive positions, as well as non-appropriated fund jobs. Additionally, this website has links to DoD agency websites.

For more information, go to <http://godefense.cpms.osd.mil>.

### **Veterans' Preference in Federal Employment**

In order to receive preference for a federal job, you must have been discharged or released from active duty in the Armed Forces with an honorable or general discharge.

#### **A "point system" is used to determine Veterans' hiring preference:**

You are a 0-point preference eligible if you were released or discharged from a period of active duty from the armed forces, after August 29, 2008, by reason of being the only surviving child in a family in which the father or mother or one or more siblings:

1. Served in the armed forces, and
2. Was killed, died as a result of wounds, accident, or disease, is in a captured or missing in action status, or is permanently 100 percent disabled or hospitalized on a continuing basis (and is not employed gainfully because of the disability or hospitalization), where
3. The death, status, or disability did not result from the intentional misconduct or willful neglect of the parent or sibling and was not incurred during a period of unauthorized absence.

Note: No points are added to the passing score or rating of 0 point preference eligible, but you are entitled to be listed ahead of non-preference eligible people with the same score on an examination, or in the same quality category.



You are 5-point preference eligible if your active duty Service meets any of the following:

1. For more than 180 consecutive days, other than for training, any part of which occurred during the period beginning September 11, 2001, and ending on August 31, 2010, the last day of Operation Iraqi Freedom, OR
2. During the Gulf War, between August 2, 1990 and January 2, 1992, OR
3. For more than 180 consecutive days, other than for training, any part of which occurred after January 31, 1955 and before October 15, 1976, OR
4. Between April 28, 1952 and July 1, 1955, OR
5. In a war, campaign or expedition for which a campaign medal or badge has been authorized.

You are a 10-point preference eligible if you Served at any time, and you:

1. Have a service connected disability, OR
2. Received a Purple Heart.

You must provide acceptable documentation of your preference or appointment eligibility.

A copy of your DD Form 214, "Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty," showing dates of Service and discharge under honorable conditions, is acceptable documentation.

If you are currently in the Service, you may provide a "certification" that is a written document from the Armed Forces that certifies the Service member is expected to be discharged or released from active duty Service under honorable conditions not later than 120 days after the date the certification is signed.

If the certification has expired; an agency must request other documentation (e.g., a copy of the DD form 214) that demonstrates the service member is a preference eligible per 5 U.S.C. 2108, before veterans' preference can be awarded.

When claiming a 10 point preference, you will need to submit a Standard Form SF-15 from the OPM website: [www.opm.gov/forms/pdf\\_fill/SF15.pdf](http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/SF15.pdf) "Application for 10 point Veterans' Preference."

**NOTE: Prior to appointment, an agency will require the Service member to provide a copy of the DD Form 214.**

Military retirees at or above the grade of O-4 are not eligible for Veterans' Preference unless they are a disabled Veteran.

Reservists who are retired from the Reserve, but are not receiving retired pay, are not considered "retired military" for purposes of Veterans' preference.

If you are not sure of your preference eligibility, visit the DOL Veterans' Preference Advisor at: <https://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/vetspref.htm> or [Feds Hire Vets](https://www.fedshirevets.gov/job/vetpref/index.aspx) and <https://www.fedshirevets.gov/job/vetpref/index.aspx>

If you believe you have not been properly accorded your rights, you have several different avenues of complaint. This will depend on the nature of the complaint and your Veteran status. You may file a complaint with the DOL's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) at: [www.dol.gov/elaws/vets/vetpref/agency.htm](http://www.dol.gov/elaws/vets/vetpref/agency.htm).

If DOL VETS is unable to resolve the complaint within 60 days, the Veteran may appeal to the Merit Systems Protection Board at: <https://e-appeal.mspb.gov/>.

For more information, visit the OPM site at: [www.fedshirevets.gov/job/vetpref/index.aspx](http://www.fedshirevets.gov/job/vetpref/index.aspx).

## **27. Veterans Federal Procurement Opportunities**

This section of DD Form 2648 will be beneficial if you are interested in starting your own business. In 1999, the Small Business Development Act set an annual government-wide goal that three percent of all prime contract/subcontract awards should be given to small businesses owned and controlled by Service-disabled Veterans each fiscal year. This automatically gives you an advantage over other small businesses when competing for government contracts.

In addition, Executive Order 13360 requires federal procurement officials and prime contractors to provide small businesses owned and controlled by Veterans or Service-disabled Veterans with the maximum possible opportunity to participate in the performance of contracts awarded by any federal agency, including subcontracts.

Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned small businesses are awarded government contracts through a sole-source or a set-aside award based on competition that is restricted to these firms. To find the competitive procurement announcements, visit [www.fbo.gov](http://www.fbo.gov).

Before the award of a contract, the Veteran-owned company must be registered in the Central Contractor Registration system at: <https://uscontractorregistration.com/central-contractor-registration-ccr/>.

There is a Mentor-Protégé Program offering substantial assistance to you if you are a small disadvantaged business. Be sure to check out what is available through the SBA. You will learn more about this and other opportunities through the two-day optional Entrepreneurship Track we will discuss later on.

## **28. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Special Hiring Authorities**

There are several ways to get a federal job. One way is by utilizing a Special Appointing Authority for Veterans, which is a noncompetitive appointment. Eligibility under these types of special authorities gives you a very significant advantage over others because you do not compete outside the special authority category.

As an example of how this works, if two candidates qualified for a particular position, the agency can simply appoint the eligible Veteran (using a special hiring authority) to the position for which the Veteran is qualified. Use of these special authorities is at the discretion of the agency.

To be eligible for a special appointing authority you must have been discharged or released from active duty in the Armed Forces with an honorable or general discharge.

We are going to talk about two authorities. First, the Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA), and second, the thirty percent or more disabled Veteran authority.

## **29. Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA)**

VRA is a special authority where agencies appoint an eligible Veteran without open competition. To be eligible for VRA, Veterans may be appointed to any position they are qualified for, up to GS-11 or equivalent.

If the Veteran has two years of satisfactory employment, the Veteran is then converted to a career-conditional job. Note, however, that a Veteran may be given a noncompetitive temporary or term appointment based on VRA eligibility. These appointments do not lead to career jobs.

Once on-board, VRAs are treated like any other employee within the organization and may be promoted, reassigned, or transferred.

Eligible Veterans include:

- (a) Disabled Veterans; **or**
- (b) Veterans who Served on active duty in the Armed Forces during a war, or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized; **or**
- (c) Veterans who, while Serving on active duty in the Armed Forces, participated in a U.S. military operation for which an Armed Forces Service Medal was awarded, to include Global War on Terrorism Service Medal (GWOTSM); **or**
- (d) Recently separated Veterans.
- (e) Veterans claiming eligibility on the basis of Service in a campaign or expedition for which a medal was awarded must be in receipt of the campaign badge or medal.

You should contact directly the federal agency personnel office where you are interested in working to find out about VRA opportunities.

## **Thirty Percent or More Disabled Veterans**

If you are thirty percent or more disabled, you may be given a temporary or term position for which you are qualified. Unlike VRA however, there is no grade limitation. If you then have a satisfactory performance, you may be converted at any time to a career-conditional appointment.

You should contact the federal agency personnel office in the location where you are interested in working to find out about available opportunities. You must submit an official document,

dated 1991 or later, from the VA; or from a branch of the Armed Forces, certifying receipt of compensation for a Service-connected disability of 30% or more.

A list of Veteran Employment Program Offices responsible for promoting Veterans' recruitment, employment, training and development, and retention within their respective agencies can be found at: [www.fedshirevets.gov/AgencyDirectory/index.aspx](http://www.fedshirevets.gov/AgencyDirectory/index.aspx).

For more information on this topic, visit: [www.fedshirevets.gov](http://www.fedshirevets.gov).

### **30. Hiring Preference in Non-Appropriated Fund (NAF) Jobs**

The purpose of this section is to inform you that you might be eligible for a one-time preference for a Non-Appropriated Fund (NAF) job.

NAF jobs are found on military installations, as well as at the Departments of Transportation and VA activities. NAF positions are filled by employees who work in three areas of the civilian work force: the career executive force; general work force; and entry level workers. They may be skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled and may even be foremen or supervisors.

How do you determine if you are eligible for the hiring preference? You need one of the following:

- You are an involuntary separatee and have an honorable discharge with the Separation Program Designator (SPD) Code that provides transition benefits
- Separating with a special separation benefit
- Separating with the voluntary separation incentive

Keep in mind that this is a one-time preference for you and your family members for NAF positions.

If you don't know your specific SPD Code, you may want to visit the personnel office for more information. This is the code placed in Block 26 of DD Form 214, and the narrative reason for the SPD Code is in Block 28.

If you are interested in more information on NAF jobs, visit the website: [www.nafjobs.org](http://www.nafjobs.org).

### **31. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**

The WIOA, administered by DOL in collaboration with the Department of Education, focuses on preparing individuals to enter the workforce. WIOA provides training and education opportunities to meet the needs of businesses looking for skilled workers, assists job seekers and those who want to further their careers. The premise of the program is to allow local boards to manage training and education programs accessible to the community and meet local employers' needs for skilled workers.

Local boards determine which occupations, called “demand occupations” to expend training funds on. Customers who take advantage of WIOA choose the funded training programs that best benefit their personal situation and control their own career development by accessing career services. Career services are available to all adults with no eligibility requirements.

Basic career services include initial assessment, job search and placement assistance, local labor market information, information and referral to other AJC programs about assistance, and follow-up services.

Individualized career services are also available, including comprehensive assessment, development of individual employment plans, group and individual counseling, case management, and short-term pre-vocational assistance. Training services are also available in the AJC.

If you would like to know more about WIOA, or the local AJC/One-stop, visit the WIOA website at: [www.doleta.gov/WIOA](http://www.doleta.gov/WIOA).

### **32. Small Business Administration (SBA) Entrepreneurship Track – Boots to Business**

Boots to Business (B2B) is the entrepreneurial training program offered by the SBA as part of DoD TAP. Many Veterans, and their spouses, are opening new businesses and growing or managing existing businesses as they transition from military to civilian life. Don’t miss this opportunity to learn valuable business skills and gain the tools to become a successful entrepreneur.

B2B is a two-step entrepreneurship training program offered by the SBA as a training track within TAP which helps participants improve business skills, and learn to use and access tools and resources necessary to launch and maintain a successful business.

Step One- A two-day TAP Entrepreneurship Track workshop. Industry experts, top university professors and representatives from SBA lead the course.

- The curriculum for the two-day B2B course consists of eight modules, including entrepreneurial mindset, financing, business plan development, franchising, market analysis, and the legal issues associated with business ownership.
- This course introduces participants to many resources from SBA and communities across the nation that can be useful in creating and growing a business.
- To cover the spectrum of topics in the eight modules, a variety of instructors (often consisting of local lenders, franchise owners, lawyers, and local success stories) provide specific instruction and guidance to participants.
- Other resource partners, such as Veterans Business Outreach Centers, Small Business Development Centers, Women’s Business Centers, and SCORE, used to bring specific expertise to class discussions.

Step Two - After completion, participants wanting to pursue business ownership are encouraged to engage in follow-on services provided by SBA such as online course offered by a consortium of

entrepreneurship professors and practitioners or using other SBA resources, such as local SBA District Offices or the SBA network of Veterans Business Outreach Centers at: [www.sba.gov/vboc](http://www.sba.gov/vboc).

Through a variety of pathways, Step Two focuses on the fundamentals of developing a business plan and achieving a successful business start-up.

Attending the B2B program does not disqualify you from attending the Accessing Higher Education or Career Technical Training tracks. Transitioning Service members and spouses may participate in multiple tracks and all Service members and their spouses, no matter when they are transitioning, are eligible for the TAP Entrepreneurship Track.

B2B teaches Service members and their spouses to identify business opportunities, draft business plans, and launch new business enterprises and is available free of charge to Service members and military spouses. It is also available “24/7” through the Joint Knowledge Online (JKO) system for those interested but unable to attend an in-person course.

A link is available on the website: [www.sba.gov/bootstobusiness](http://www.sba.gov/bootstobusiness) and <https://www.sba.gov/offices/headquarters/ovdb/resources/160511>.

Planning ahead is the key to a successful transition out of the military. B2B offers information related to the benefits and challenges of entrepreneurship for Service members pursuing self-employment in private or non-profit sectors. Or you may not be sure that you want to open a business right away. The skills you’ll learn during B2B are applicable to many post-Service jobs, especially if you work at a small or medium sized company.

Visit your transition office for more information on how you can learn the basics to be a successful entrepreneur. To register for B2B class, please see the Transition Service Manager.

### **33. Permissive Temporary Duty (PTDY) and Excess Leave (EL)**

Permissive Temporary Duty (PTDY) and Excess Leave (EL) may be authorized for the purpose of job search and house hunting activities that facilitate the relocation to civilian life. This section applies only to a well-defined group of eligible personnel and will provide you with information on what the rules say about the amount of time allowed if you are planning to relocate. You can request excess leave or PTDY/Temporary Additional Duty (TAD), but not both. Granting PTDY (or EL) is subject to mission requirements and approval of the unit commander.

The purpose of this program is to authorize your time away from your assigned duties to assist with the types of things you’ll need to do in your transition. It allows you the time to look for a job and go house hunting so you don’t have to take chargeable leave. There are certain restrictions about returning to your separation site and you need to check with your command and personnel office for details.

As I mentioned, you have the option of taking either PTDY or EL. I would recommend PTDY because excess leave is not a duty a no-pay status and should only be used in rare circumstances. EL is not available for retirees.

An authorized permissive absence may be taken in conjunction with a transition leave of absence by retiring members, members being separated involuntarily under honorable conditions, or members voluntarily separating through a military department force reduction or force shaping program.

The permissive absence and transition leave of absence may be taken in a series of trips prior to separation, but the total number of days of combined permissive absence and transition leave of absence may not exceed 30 days.

Service members voluntarily separating at the end of a normal term of service (ETS, or end of active duty obligated Service) or involuntarily separating under conditions other than honorable are not eligible for permissive absence.

For you to be eligible for permissive absence, you must have separated with an SPD Code that provides transition benefits. If you do not know your SPD Code and what benefits you are eligible for, check with the personnel office for specific information on your SPD Code.

Individuals who are eligible for permissive absence include:

- Members who involuntarily separated under honorable conditions (including VSI and SSB)
- Members retiring from active duty (including transfer to the Fleet Reserve and disability retirements)
- Members voluntarily separating through a military department force reduction or force shaping program
- Members who are being discharged for medical reasons. Certain conditions apply, but you may be eligible upon receipt of separation

The military Secretaries concerned may grant:

- A recalled Reserve component Service member, serving on active duty, a PTDY up to 30 days in conjunction with involuntary separation or release from active duty
- A recalled Reserve Component or active duty Service member PTDY up to 30 days after the Service member receives approval for retirement based upon at least 20 years of accumulated active duty Service

### **Time Frames:**

No more than 30 days EL can be granted.

If you are a retiree or separating with an SPD Code that confers transition benefits, you may take up to 20 days PTDY for job hunting, house hunting, or other relocation activities.

If you are stationed overseas, or if you are an OCONUS resident not stationed at your home of record, you may take up to 30 days PTDY. OCONUS residents must use the 30 days PTDY only for house and job-hunting to the State, territory, possession, or country of their domicile.

If you are overseas, have a legal residence in the United States, and you plan to return to your home state after involuntary separation or retirement, you may be authorized up to a total of 30 days transition PTDY. The domicile is defined as your home of record, or the place from which you were called-up or ordered to active duty, the place of first enlistment, or your place of permanent legal residence.

If you are overseas and not planning to return to your OCONUS domicile after involuntary separation or retirement, you may only receive a maximum of 20 days transition PTDY.

There are some rules you need to be aware of when it comes to PTDY:

- You cannot combine it with liberty weekends, special liberty, or holidays, to extend the period of actual job/house hunting activities beyond the days authorized
- It can also be taken in conjunction with chargeable leave at no cost to the government
- It may be taken in conjunction with transition leave (immediately upon completion of all separation processing) but the total number of days of combined permissive absence and transition leave may not exceed 30 days
- You can take the PTDY all at once, or in increments, except in cases of disability retirement or separation in which time constraints dictate that it is taken all at once, or not at all

If you desire more information on PTDY and excess leave, mark “Yes” and write down “personnel office” in the “referred to” section. You are to contact your supporting personnel office for additional information regarding PTDY. You should also meet and discuss applying for and obtaining approval for PTDY with your Commander.

### **34. Travel and Transportation Allowances**

The move accompanying your separation/retirement is different from the other ones you’ve done in the military.

As a separating Service member you are authorized travel and transportation allowances from your last duty station to your home of record (HOR) or place entered active duty (PLEAD).

If you are retiring, you are authorized travel and transportation allowances from your last duty station to a home of selection (HOS) anywhere in the United States, to a home of record, or to the place you entered active duty outside the United States.

Some individuals get confused between the HOR and HOS. The HOR is the place recorded as the individual’s home when commissioned, appointed, enlisted, inducted, or ordered into a tour of active duty. The HOS is any destination within the United States.

Eligible retirees and certain involuntary separatees (e.g., with separation pay and at least eight years continuous active duty) are authorized for storage and shipment of household goods for up to one full year. Household goods may be shipped to:

- Any destination within the United States

- HOR outside the United States: HOR is the place lived when they entered the military
- The place outside the United States from which they were initially called to active duty

All other separatees are authorized storage and shipment of household goods up to six months. Items may be shipped to the location in which they collected separation travel pay.



Travel must begin within established time frames. If you are separating with less than eight years of service, or being discharged under adverse conditions, you are eligible to request shipment of household goods and six months storage of household goods and home of record move.

Separated members must begin travel within **180** days. Retirees must begin travel within one year after separation/retirement. In limited circumstances, you may be allowed an extension of the time limit to move. To request an extension visit the transportation office for more information.

In some circumstances, you may be able to extend your stay in military housing for up to 180 days after separation. These extensions are allowed for individuals who are eligible involuntary separatees, or a Selected Early Retirement Board (SERB) retiree. Be aware that you will have to pay a rental rate and that housing is available on a space permitting basis. Contact the Base Housing Office for more information.

Storage time frames are similar to moving timeframes. Household Goods (HHG) may be moved to the HOR/HOS. The HHG must be turned over to the transportation officer within the 180 days/one year time limit. HHG may be stored for up to 180 days for separatees and one year for retirees.

There are additional guidelines on transportation and allowances. You are strongly encouraged to contact the Personal Property or Transportation Office to schedule a personalized appointment with an expert in this area.

One last thing we need to discuss is the Department of Defense Dependents School Extension. Subject to Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA) overseas, and providing each child has completed the 11th grade by the Service member's date of separation, extensions may be granted for dependents of Service members who are involuntarily separating from active duty.

They must meet the criteria outlined in Title 10, U.S. Code, Section 1141, "Involuntary Separation", or being separated due to a medical condition.

There are many additional resources on this topic. You can check out Military and Family Support Center Relocation Assistance Program/relocation assistant point of contact (in USMC) or go to: [www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com) or look up the Joint Federal Travel Regulations (JFTR) website at: <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/>

Additionally, you can check out MILPERSMAN 1320-220, as well as the DoDI 1332.36 – “Overview of PCS Travel and Transportation Allowances Table.”

### **35. Contact Information for Housing Counseling Assistance**

This subject is really three-fold. It encompasses military housing, rental property and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

If you live in government quarters, you must arrange a time for a member of the housing staff to come and perform a pre-inspection and explain the requirements for cleaning and vacating quarters, as well as options available to get this accomplished.

If you are moving from a rental property, notify the landlord as soon as possible. The Housing Office can assist you if any problems arise in conjunction with your military separation.

The HUD mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities, free from discrimination, and provide quality affordable homes, all with the goal of improving quality of life for everybody.

The HUD website lists state resources and a variety of program offices for assistance. There is information on:

- Avoiding foreclosure
- Financing home improvements
- Buying and selling a home

The HUD Veteran Resource Center (HUDVET) has a wide variety of HUD homeless assistance programs and services for Veterans. HUDVET also helps with some of the tougher issues Veterans can encounter, such as combat-related domestic violence, runaway youth, and affordable housing for individuals with disabilities.

If you want to explore some options and information from HUD, call the VA care line number which is: 1-877-424-3838. Or if your issues are around military housing, you can write “housing office.”

### **36. U.S. Department of Education Federal Aid Programs**

In an earlier section, I pointed out the education benefits you can receive through the military. However, it is important for you to know about other financial aid programs you can take advantage of as well. Federal Student Aid is an office of the U.S. Department of Education.

The Federal Student Aid Programs, authorized under the Higher Education Act, include grants, loans and work-study programs. These federally funded programs are administered by post-secondary institutions to help provide money for college to eligible students.

It is important to note that Veterans’ educational benefits can be used in conjunction with federal student aid.

Additionally, there is a Veterans Upward Bound Program available to help you refresh your academic skills so you can successfully complete your college program.

To learn more about these programs, please make sure to sign up for the AHE track. You will learn more about grants and low-interest loans offered through Federal Student Aid. For additional information, visit the Federal Student Aid website at: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/>.

### **37. Other Federal, State, or Local Education/Training Programs and Options**

Now that we've talked about military education benefits and federal student aid, let's focus on additional education options you may want to take advantage of during your transition.

As I mentioned earlier, it's important to visit the base education office. This center, depending on each military Service has Education Service Specialists (ESS), Education Services Officers (ESO), and professional counselors who can provide you with information and guidance on the educational opportunities available and how to proceed along this path.

Those resources can include learning about the different undergraduate, graduate, or certificate programs there are and the options you have through military programs. These programs include a variety of services, such as:

- College-level testing
- Professional military education
- Veterans' benefits
- Tuition assistance
- Financial aid
- Deferments
- Distance learning

Speaking to an ESS / ESO about your career or educational path is an important part of preparing to transition from active military Service. I encourage you to take advantage of the subject matter expertise and knowledge at the base education office.

### **38. Information on Availability of Healthcare and Mental Health Services**

The next several sections deal with all the health care options available for you and your family. The best way to get all of this information explained to you is to attend the Veterans Benefits Briefing and talk to a TRICARE representative. They can tell you specifically what you are eligible for and how long that coverage will last. Medical coverage can be very expensive, so it is important you are aware of what is available so you make the best choice for your own unique situation.

A comprehensive medical evaluation, the Separation History and Physical Examination (SHPE), is now a requirement for all separating Service members and helps to make sure any medical conditions requiring ongoing care are identified and documented in your military medical record.

For members making a disability claim with VA, the exam requirement may be met by the disability exam performed by the VA.

Members wishing to take advantage of this option are encouraged to begin the process 180 days prior to their separation.

One service available to you is the DoD Mental Health Self-Assessment Program. This is a mental health and alcohol screening and referral program provided for military families and Service members affected by deployment and mobilization. It is a voluntary and anonymous program offered online, by phone, and through special events held at installations and Reserve units.

Anonymous, self-assessments are available for depression, bipolar disorder, alcohol use, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and generalized anxiety disorder. Individualized results and military health resources, including TRICARE, Vet Centers and Military OneSource are provided at the end of every assessment.

Active duty Service members can self-refer for mental health if seen at a Medical Treatment Facility (TRICARE Operations Manual 6010.56-M, Feb 1, 2008 Chapter 16 Addendum B; Tricare Policy Manual 6010.57-M, Feb 1, 2008 Chapter 7 Section 3.10.).

Each Service offers clinical and non-clinical prevention, education, and treatment programs, as well as various campaign efforts, that address mental health and substance abuse disorder (SUD) services for active duty and Guard and Reserve Components, as well as services for family members. Additionally, TRICARE offers the full range of services for mental health and SUD treatment options to include: acute psychiatric hospitalization, SUD inpatient/residential detoxification and rehabilitation, partial hospitalization, intensive outpatient treatment, outpatient therapy and medication assisted treatment, such as buprenorphine or methadone, for treatment of opiate use disorder, to include opiate treatment programs and office-based opioid treatment from an authorized prescriber. Contact your TRICARE regional managed care support contractor for your eligibility status for these services.

National Guard Service Members may also seek assistance regarding mental health and substance use disorder counseling and treatment resources from the National Guard Bureau's Psychological Health Program. The website for the program: <https://www.jointservicesupport.org/PHP/Default.aspx> contains a locator for how to contact your State National Guard Director of Psychological Health and local psychological health resources. Additionally, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program promotes the well-being of National Guard and Reserve members, their families and communities by connecting them with resources throughout the deployment cycle.

All Service members once deployed as part of a contingency operation are asked to complete post-deployment mental health assessments for issues such as depression, PTSD, substance use problems, and other mental health concerns at six months, one-year, and two-year post-redeployment anniversary.

DoD's *inTransition* Program is a confidential coaching program that answers questions about treatment options, provides information about community resources, and secures and appointment with a behavioral health provider at your new location.

All Service members who have seen a behavioral health provider within one year of separation from active duty are automatically enrolled in the *inTransition* Program and will be contacted by an *inTransition* Coach. You will have the ability to opt-out when you are contacted by the *inTransition* Coach.

Now let's talk about coverage through the VA. There are several different requirements, and we are going to discuss three main types of VA coverage for your transition.

1. If you are a Combat Veteran discharged from active duty on or after January 28, 2003, you can receive enhanced enrollment placement for five years after the date you leave the Service.
2. An activated Reservist or National Guard member who was on active duty in a theater of combat operation after November 11, 1998 and left Service under any conditions other than dishonorable. If you enroll with VA under the Combat Veteran Authority, you may be able to keep enrollment eligibility even after the five year period ends.
3. Conditions identified in the Separation History and Physical Examination (SHPE) may also make you eligible for care in the VA after separation. If you believe you have such conditions, you should file your claim with the VA and try to have your disability exam performed as soon as possible so it may meet the separation exam requirement.

The VA also offers specialized treatment of mental health issues, such as PTSD and substance use disorders. These treatments include pharmacotherapy, psychotherapy, group therapy, and for opiate use disorder, medication assisted treatment. The VA recently changed its policy regarding the eligibility of former Service members with dishonorable, or "bad paper" discharges, and separated Service members with urgent mental health or substance use problems are now considered a high priority for VA care. One does not necessarily need to have service connected disability to be eligible for VA care.

Community alcohol, drug, and mental health treatment facilities and programs around the country may be found via the Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator at [findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov). This website has information on locating physicians and treatment programs authorized to treat opioids, such as prescription pain relievers.

For active duty family members seeking outpatient mental health and substance use disorder treatment, referral and preauthorization are not required if the family member seeks care within the network from an individual professional provider of care (e.g., psychiatrist, psychologist, clinical social worker, licensed mental health counselor, etc.). TRICARE will review the course of treatment and ensure it is medically necessary. (TRICARE Operations Manual 6010.56-M, February 1, 2008, Chapter 16, Addendum B; Tricare Policy Manual 1610.57-M, February 1, 2008, Chapter 7, Section 3/10)."

### **Suicide Prevention Resources for Veterans, Families and Friends**

The Veterans Crisis Line is available for Veterans and their families and friends, who may be the first to realize a Veteran is in emotional distress, to reach out for support when issues reach a

crisis point, even if it is not a suicidal crisis. The Veterans Crisis Line is a toll-free, confidential resource that connects Veterans in crisis, and their families and friends, with qualified VA responders.

Veterans and their family and friends can **call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1**, chat online at: [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net), or send a text message to 838255, to receive free, confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year; even if they are not registered with the VA or enrolled in VA health care.

I remind you to attend the Veterans Benefits Briefing I and II, at which time you will have the opportunity to talk with a professional VA liaison in more detail on benefits, programs and resources available through VA.

For active duty family members seeking mental health appointments, the first eight visits do not require preauthorization if the family member seeks care within the network (TRICARE Operations Manual 6010.56-M, February 1, 2008, Chapter 16, Addendum B; Tricare Policy Manual 1610,57-M, February 1, 2008, Chapter 7, Section 3/1).

### **39. Separation History and Physical Examination (SHPE)**

All separating active duty Service members must now complete a separation health exam prior to separation. This requirement can be met by a DoD exam, called the Separation Health Physical Exam, or if applying for VA benefits prior to separation, by the Separation Health Assessment (SHA). Reserve and National Guard members who served a minimum of 180 days on active duty or 30 days in a contingency operation must also have a SHPE or SHA completed prior to release from active duty.

The purpose of the SHPE or SHA examination is to make sure that any medical conditions you have developed during your service requiring ongoing care are identified and documented in your Armed Forces Military Service Treatment Record (STR). This examination is useful to support any ongoing needs you may have for medical care, and helps you make other choices about your health care options. It also helps you establish service connection for any medical conditions you developed if you plan to apply for VA benefits either prior to your separation or at some point in the future.

If you are applying for VA benefits prior to separation through the Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD) program, the SHA you receive from the VA, meets the DoD exam requirement. If you do not choose to apply for VA benefits or don't have enough time to complete the BDD process prior to separation, you will receive your SHPE through your Military Treatment Facility (MTF). We recommend starting this process six months prior to your separation date.

It is essential that your STR (medical and dental records) is maintained with the appropriate DoD authority, such as your medical department or MTF. The STR is a chronological record documenting the medical and dental care and treatment received primarily outside of a hospital (outpatient), but it may also contain a synopsis of any inpatient hospital care and mental health

treatment related to the Service members' service. The Military Health System must maintain your STR per DoD policy and U.S. health care laws. When you file a claim for benefits, a copy of the STR will be provided to VA using electronic systems. You are entitled to access your entire record, and MHS efforts are increasing and improving your on-line access to the STR. You may also ask for a printed copy. You should review your record as part of your separation exam and help ensure it is complete by the time you separate, as it is maintained by MHS and provided to VA for all future VA benefits determinations. Missing information may affect future benefits.

The SHA and SHPE require you to complete DD Form 2807-1.

The form and further instructions on how to complete the SHPE, as well as linkages to VA resources, are available at the TRICARE Online Patient portal: <https://www.tricareonline.com>.

#### **40. Transitional Healthcare Benefit/TRICARE**

Your health care options may be different depending on whether you retire from active duty, or if you separate, or are released from active duty.

You can always visit the TRICARE website's Plan Finder, [www.tricare.mil/planfinder](http://www.tricare.mil/planfinder), to learn about options based on your status, including TRICARE options for retirees. The Plan Finder allows you to enter specific information, answers questions and explains your options.

If you are eligible for TRICARE, then you can explore your TRICARE program options at: [www.tricare.mil](http://www.tricare.mil).

#### **TRICARE COVERAGE FOR RETIRED MEMBERS AND FAMILY MEMBERS**

If you retire from active duty, or if you are a Retired Reserve member turning age 60 and you have submitted your retirement application to your Reserve Component, your TRICARE eligibility as a retired Service member begins the day you retire. You may submit a request to enroll in a qualifying retiree TRICARE health plan up to 90 days prior to your retirement date. Certain family members also remain eligible for TRICARE benefits when you retire, including your spouse and unmarried dependent children, among others. If you go on terminal leave prior to retirement, you and eligible family members remain covered by your current TRICARE program until your retirement date.

**COUNSELOR NOTE:** TRICARE Health Plans have changed. Beginning January 1, 2018 retirees and their eligible family members **must** enroll in either TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select by the effective date of retirement to be eligible for continuous health care coverage. TRICARE Select has replaced TRICARE Standard. TRICARE Select is very similar to the former TRICARE Standard, however the significant difference is you **must be enrolled** in TRICARE Select to qualify for coverage.

**Members who fail to enroll in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select will lose all TRICARE coverage and default to direct care, space available only coverage, provided in a military**

**hospital or clinic. Any other health care delivered outside of a military facility will not be covered.**

### **TRICARE Health Plans**

#### **Under age 65 when you retire:**

**TRICARE Prime:** Must be enrolled and pay annual enrollment fee (only available if you reside in a Prime Service Area)

**TRICARE Select:** Must be enrolled. Currently no enrollment fee (Available anywhere in the Continental United States)

**US Family Health Plan (USFHP):** Must be enrolled, a TRICARE Prime Option and pay annual enrollment fee. (Available in designated locations)

**TRICARE Young Adult (TYA):** For qualifying young adults. Must be enrolled and pay monthly premiums. TYA is available with TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select plans.

#### **Retired and over age 65 or otherwise qualified for Medicare:**

**TRICARE For Life (TFL):** A Medicare-wraparound coverage option for TRICARE beneficiaries who have Medicare Part A and Medicare Part B, regardless of age or place of residence.

**NOTE:** You may only change enrollment between plans during the annual Open Enrollment season held for three weeks beginning mid-November. Outside of Open Enrollment, you can only start or change plans after a Qualifying Life Event (QLE) such as a change in status, birth, marriage, change in location, etc. You have 90 days after a QLE to take action. See [www.tricare.mil](http://www.tricare.mil) for list of QLEs.

Visit [www.tricare.mil/retiring](http://www.tricare.mil/retiring) for more information.

### **TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

If you are separating from active duty, then you **may** be eligible for the Transitional Assistance Management Program (TAMP). TAMP provides 180 days of premium-free TRICARE transitional health care benefits after regular TRICARE benefits end. Later in this presentation, you will also hear about the Continued Health Care Benefit Program (CHCBP), which is a premium-based plan that gives you temporary health coverage for 18-36 months when you lose all eligibility for TRICARE.

This information is for individuals who are eligible for transitional health care through the Transitional Assistance Management Program (TAMP).



TAMP offers 180 days of premium-free health care to you and your eligible family members after you separate from the military. If you're eligible, TAMP starts the day after you separate from service.

TAMP eligibility is not automatic, as individuals must meet one of the six qualifying criterion as described below.

I remind you to attend the Veterans Benefits Briefing I and II, at which time you will have the opportunity to talk with a professional VA liaison in more detail on benefits, programs and resources available through VA.

**To be eligible for the 180 day transitional medical and dental benefits, you must be:**

- (1) Involuntarily separated from active duty with an SPD Code that designates transitional benefits; or
- (2) A Reservist separated from active duty after serving more than 30 days in support of a contingency operation; or
- (3) Separated from active duty after being involuntarily retained on active duty in support of a contingency operation; or
- (4) Separated from military Service following a voluntary agreement to remain on active duty for one year or less in support of a contingency operation.
- (5) A member who receives a sole survivorship discharge; or
- (6) Separated from active duty and agree to become a member (affiliate) of the Selected Reserve of the Ready Reserve of a Reserve Component the day immediately following last day of active duty (If there is a gap in affiliation, the member will not qualify for TAMP).

**NOTE: In this instance, a member may not have a qualifying SPD Code that conveys TAMP benefits. The member must work with their gaining Reserve unit to obtain this transitional benefit and there can be no break in Service. The Reserve unit must update the member's Selected Reserve status in the Military Personnel Data System (MilPDS) for the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). DEERS conveys the transitional healthcare based on the MilPDS Selected Reserve update as the TA-180 is reflected on the ID card for qualifying members and family members.**

You must make sure that you and your family members are enrolled and that your status reflects eligibility for TAMP the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS). Contact your personnel office and/or your command unit if you have questions regarding eligibility.

While you are on active duty, you may verify or update DEERS information for yourself or your family members by contacting or visiting a local identification (ID) card issuing facility. To locate the nearest personnel office or ID card facility, visit the DEERS website at: <https://milconnect.dmdc.osd.mil>.

Once DEERS is updated with your separation date and qualifying SPD code that authorizes the 180-day TAMP coverage, you and your eligible family members will be automatically enrolled in TAMP with TRICARE Select coverage effective the day after your discharge date.

If this does not occur within 90 days of your separation date, please check with your Uniformed Service or Reserve Component to make sure the appropriate information has been transmitted to DEERS.

Be aware that if you or your family members were enrolled in TRICARE Prime immediately prior to your separation, you can re-enroll in TRICARE Prime, if available, up to 90-days from the start of TAMP to avoid a break in coverage. You may also be eligible to enroll in the US Family Health Plan, a TRICARE Prime option available through networks of community-based not-for-profit health care systems in six areas of the U.S. For more information on how to enroll in a TRICARE health plan, visit [www.tricare.mil/enroll](http://www.tricare.mil/enroll).

You should visit the TRICARE website “Plan Wizard” at, [www.tricare.mil/mybenefit](http://www.tricare.mil/mybenefit), to receive specific benefits based on your status and to learn more about the two TRICARE options for retirees. This site allows you to enter specific information, ask questions, and explains the services available.

If you are eligible for TRICARE, you can explore your TRICARE program options at: [www.tricare.mil](http://www.tricare.mil). If you are losing TRICARE or are not TRICARE-eligible, you can find other health care coverage options at: [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov). For more information, visit: [www.tricare.mil/aca](http://www.tricare.mil/aca), or call your TRICARE regional contractor.

If you want more information on transitional health care, visit the website at: [www.tricare.mil/mybenefit](http://www.tricare.mil/mybenefit).

### **Dental Coverage During TAMP**

During TAMP, dental care is provided on a space-available basis in military dental treatment facilities. However, you need to know that space-available dental care is very limited and not available for dependents.

### **Health Insurance Marketplace**

The Marketplace helps uninsured people find health coverage. View Health care coverage options for military Veterans at: [www.healthcare.gov/veterans](http://www.healthcare.gov/veterans). If you're enrolled in TRICARE or the Veterans health care program, you're considered covered under the health care law.

If you're a Veteran who isn't enrolled in VA benefits or other Veteran's health coverage, you can get coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace.

If you're a Veteran enrolled in (or are a beneficiary of) a VA health care program, you may have dependents who aren't eligible for a VA health care program. They can get coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace.

When you fill out the Marketplace application, they will tell you if you qualify for private insurance plans. You might qualify for lower costs based on your household size and income. If you don't qualify for lower costs, you can still use the Marketplace to buy insurance. Plans cover essential health benefits, pre-existing conditions, and preventive care.

If you can afford health insurance but choose not to buy it, you must have a health coverage exemption or pay a fee. The fee is adjusted each year and could continue to increase.

A Special Enrollment Period may allow consumers to enroll in a Marketplace plan outside of the annual Open Enrollment Period if they experience a qualifying event. You may qualify for a Special Enrollment Period if you (or anyone in your household) lost qualifying health coverage. Some examples of qualifying coverage include: Coverage through a job, or through another person's job. Visit [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov) and answer a few questions to find out if you qualify for a Special Enrollment Period to enroll in or change plans.

To apply or learn more visit [www.healthcare.gov/veterans](http://www.healthcare.gov/veterans), [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov), or call the Marketplace Call Center at 1-800-318-2596. TTY users should call 1-855-889-4325. Find someone nearby to help you apply at: <https://localhelp.healthcare.gov/#intro>.

## **41. Financial Management**

The Financial Management portion of this session deals with financial information and resources. It's important to be aware of the financial resources that are available to help you during this transition.

As I mentioned earlier today, I will go over the Career Readiness Standards (CRS) each of you must meet before separating after we complete going through Section III of the DD Form 2648.

One of the CRS you must meet requires you to develop and produce a criterion-based Financial Plan for Military to Civilian Transition. You will be provided the criteria for your Financial Plan for Military to Civilian Transition when you attend the "Financial Planning For Transition" module, which is part of the Transition GPS core curriculum.

The goal of the financial management module is to familiarize you with the tools and requirements for criterion-based Financial Plan. You will develop the budget as you navigate the transition process, but you likely will not leave the class with a complete budget. You should continue to work on the budget and include your spouse in that endeavor.

There are courses offered by the personal Financial Management Program. Counselors can assist you with financial management planning.

If you are a member of the National Guard or Reserve, or not located near a military installation, Military OneSource can offer financial management assistance at, 1-800-342-9647, or you can access their website at, [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil).

If you want to research financial information on your own, you may want to consider the following websites: [tsp.gov](http://tsp.gov), [saveandinvest.org](http://saveandinvest.org), [cfpb.gov](http://cfpb.gov), or [www.defenselink.mil/militarypay](http://www.defenselink.mil/militarypay). Also, the Service member's Civil Relief Act and Military Lending Act provide a wide range of protections for individuals on active duty.

If you are separating from the military prior to retirement, you need to carefully compare your current benefits to what is available in the civilian sector. These benefits include paid leave, paid

holidays, enlistment bonuses, and tax- free portions of pay, pension plans, health care and retirement health care plans.

Also consider your non-cash benefits such as gym memberships, theaters, recreation programs, commissary and exchange. After transition you will pay for many of the free or low cost services you access on the installation while on active duty.

One benefit that you retain whether you are separating or retiring is your contributions to the Thrift Savings Plan or TSP. TSP is a defined contribution retirement/savings plan similar to a civilian 401K plan with the purpose of providing retirement income. Retirement income received from a TSP account depends on how much you contribute during your working years and the earnings from those contributions. Unlike participation in the uniformed services retirement system, participation in the TSP is optional.

The amount contributed into the plan, and earnings you receive, belong to you, even if you have not served long enough to receive Uniformed Services retirement pay. If you have a vested account balance of \$200 or more after leaving military Service, you can leave the money in the TSP until later, or you can withdraw the account at any time. If you have less than \$200, TSP will automatically send you a check for the amount and close the account.

There are two types of post-separation withdrawals; a partial and a full withdrawal. Because this is a retirement savings plan, any withdrawals or distributions prior to age 59 1/2 are subject to penalties. Additionally, withdrawals of traditional TSP funds are subject to income tax at the time of withdrawal.

Making a withdrawal from your TSP prior to retirement can be a very costly decision. Be sure to discuss your options with a financial counselor or planner before taking action.

1. A partial withdrawal is taking out \$1,000 or more and leaving the rest in the account until withdrawing at a later date.
2. A full withdrawal can be made in three options: a single “lump sum” payment, series of monthly payments or a TSP life annuity. There are withdrawal deadlines you need to be aware of. If you have a TSP account and are interested in withdrawing from your contributions you need to see the TSP representative on base, or go to [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov).

Another topic you should know about is the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP). SBP is specifically for retirees. All active duty Service members are automatically covered under SBP at the full amount while on active duty. Basically, upon your death, your retirement pay stops. This means that the survivors will be left without a substantial income source.

SBP is an optional insurance plan that will pay the surviving spouse a monthly payment, or annuity, to help make up for the loss of retirement income. At the time of retirement you must decide if you wish to keep this coverage. If you choose to continue SBP, you will be required to pay premium from your monthly retirement annuity to maintain SBP coverage. SBP premiums and benefits are based on the “base amount,” or benefit level elected.

Election of SBP is an important financial decision and should be considered carefully. Your spouse will be required to sign the SBP Election Form and must be included in the decision making process. Coverage may be selected for a spouse, spouse and children, children only, former spouse, former spouse and children, or if the member does not have a spouse or children they may be able to cover an “insurable interest” (such as, a business partner or parent). If you are divorced, review your divorce decree to determine if the court requires you to elect coverage. Failure to accept or decline coverage will result in your being automatically covered at the full retirement pay amount. There are, of course, alternatives to SBP such as investments, or permanent and term life insurance. There are many resources to help you make informed decisions about your options, including talking to the Legal Office and the Family Service Center Financial Counselor.

As you can see, getting as much information as possible about your financial management plan is one of the most important aspects of your separation from the military. I strongly suggest you, explore various websites to include [www.tsp.gov](http://www.tsp.gov), [www.saveandinvest.org](http://www.saveandinvest.org), [www.cfpb.gov](http://www.cfpb.gov), [www.military.com](http://www.military.com) or [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil), and/or call the Thriftline at 1-877-968-3778 to learn more about your particular financial situation.

## **42. Separation Pay**

A topic you are surely interested in is separation pay. Public Law and Assistant Secretary of Defense Policy established separation pay to monetarily assist certain involuntarily separated or released members from active duty.

Separation pay eligibility and amounts are determined by the type of separation. The specifics on eligibility vary greatly from person to person and based on SPD Codes. Your personnel office can provide more details on your particular eligibility.

Personnel medically separated for a disability incurred in a combat zone or from combat-related operations may be entitled to an enhanced disability separation pay. For more information contact the administration/personnel office.

You may also be eligible for final pay at separation that would include any earned entitlements and pay for accumulated leave. That amount will be reduced by any outstanding balances on advance pay you may have received, along with unearned bonus recoupment and other debts you’ve incurred throughout your Service. And do not forget about taxes.

In addition, some transactions already in process could result in additional payments to you after separation, or may create a debt. You are responsible for repayment of all debts owed the federal government. Specific questions about separation pay issues should be directed to your military personnel office. The actual amount of separation pay is computed by the local finance office.

If you are interested in more information on separation pay, you should check “Yes” and you can write in the “referred to” column: personnel office or the regulations that cover separation pay are: Title 10, Chapter 59, Section 1174, Separation Pay Upon Involuntary Discharge or Release

from Active Duty or Department of Defense Instruction 1332.29, Eligibility of Regular and Reserve Personnel for Separation Pay.

**NOTE: Service members who received separation pay need to review the law (10 U.S. Code §1174 (h) (1) covers offset for retired pay, (2) covers offset for disability compensation) and policy (Department of Defense Instruction 1332.29, Section 3.6.2) governing Separation Pay, which includes guidance on the possibility for recoupment of the entire amount of separation pay by the VA if the members subsequently becomes eligible for disability retirement pay.**

The Directive-Type Memorandum (DTM) on Implementing Disability-Related Provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2008, dated March 18, 2008, contains information on separation pay for those medically separated.

### **43. Unemployment Compensation**

You may be familiar with unemployment benefits in the civilian sector, but did you know transitioning military members may be eligible for unemployment compensation?

You may qualify for Unemployment Compensation for ex-Service members (UCX) when you separate or retire. The UCX law provides payment for specific reasons. Different states have different requirements and rules for eligibility. You should contact the state where you will be looking for work. Receiving unemployment while you are looking for work will help provide financial stability in the event it takes a long time to find a job. Remember, the military has paid into UCX on your behalf. Keep in mind, due to National Defense Authorization Act NDAA 16, those using Post- 9/11 GI Bill are no longer able to draw unemployment compensation at the same time.

To begin the process, you will have to file a claim in your state. Visit and register at your local AJC. Staff will assist you in filing your claim. The state workforce agency then determines your eligibility and makes a determination on your claim.

If you are interested in learning more about unemployment compensation, you can also check this website: [www.servicelocator.org/](http://www.servicelocator.org/). This website has links to each state where you can locate your specific UCX information.

### **44. General Money Management**

We have talked about assistance, programs and plans that may help with your financial transition. Let's spend some time talking about personal finances, such as your general money management, savings and investment.

Money management encompasses how you handle monetary assets. The basic rule of thumb is to have at least three to six months living expenses in a savings account in the event of lost wages and other emergencies. Having this financial cushion as you make your transition will reduce

some of the stress transition brings. It's a good idea to set a savings goal now and start aiming to reach that goal as quickly as possible. If you are close to your separation or retirement date, your savings efforts may need to be especially aggressive.

If you haven't already done so, transition is a good time to set some financial goals. To reach these goals, you'll want to have some helpful tools. Businesses use financial reports to track their financial condition, these same reports can help you determine your financial condition. The two documents you will likely find most helpful are balance sheet and a cash flow statement.

A balance sheet is a snapshot of your current financial status and includes information on what you own (assets), and what you owe (liabilities). Gathering this data into a single document helps you calculate your net worth and provides a starting point for financial goal setting.

A cash flow statement is used to summarize income and expense transactions that have taken place over a specific period of time, such as a month or a year. It tells you where your money came from and where it went.

Once you've compiled your balance sheet and cash flow statement, you're ready to construct a working spending plan or budget. While a budget is a requirement for all transitioning Service members, your spending plan will also help you navigate the changing financial situations you'll encounter as you transition from military to civilian life. A spending plan is a living document and should be reviewed and updated as circumstances change.

There are many resources available to assist you with developing a budget. You can visit the Family Support/Service Centers and meet with financial Counselors, or access financial planning on-line. Military OneSource – [www.militaryonesource.mil](http://www.militaryonesource.mil), has more information on budgeting.

**COUNSELOR NOTE: Counselors will provide website links to the Family Center's electronic budget when Services members sign-up for Transition GPS so members can complete a draft budget as pre-work.**

Service member must produce a criterion-based Financial Plan as one of your CRS. Doing this pre-work will make developing your criterion-based Financial Plan easier than if you wait until you get into the class.

As you complete your balance sheet and spending plan, you will gain a clear picture of your current debt obligations. Credit and debt management are a critical components of financial management.

If you find that you would like assistance in managing credit or reducing debt, the Personal Financial Management Program at the Family Support/Service Center offers financial counseling and education on these topics. These programs are not always accessible after your transition. In addition, there are scores of companies you can find online who have a lot of experience in helping people handle their debts. It is advisable to thoroughly research online options.

For more information and assistance, visit the financial specialist at your command or installation.

#### **45. Personal Savings and Investment**

We talked about budgeting and debt reduction. Now let's shift our attention to discussing savings and investments. I will provide an overview of the information but again I encourage you to talk with a subject matter expert about your personal financial situation at the installation.

Most banks and credit unions offer savings accounts designed to help you reach your short- and long-term financial goals. When opening a savings account, look for an FDIC or National Credit Union Association (NCUA) - insured savings account that offers competitive interest rates.

Check withdrawal and deposit guidelines carefully, as some institutions limit the amount of free transactions available. Generally, savings accounts do not provide high interest earnings on deposits. For higher interest earnings you may want to invest in a variety of products that improve earnings on investment. **There are four common types of investments:**

1. The first, and probably most inexpensive type of investment, is a bond, specifically, the U.S. Savings Bond. Companies, cities, states and the federal government sell bonds to help raise money to run their particular institutions. The safety of a bond is based on the financial stability of the issuing entity. Prior to investing in a bond, research the issuer and understand the terms of the bond.
2. Another investment type is a Certificate of Deposit, or CD. CDs are insured savings accounts issued by commercial banks and savings and loans. A CD differs from a traditional savings account in that it has a specific fixed term, generally a minimum deposit amount, and typically a fixed interest rate. When a CD matures (reaches the end of the specified term of deposit), the owner can withdraw the money and any accrued interest. CDs generally offer a slightly higher interest rate than a standard savings account.
3. Stocks are another type of investment. When buying a stock, you purchase an ownership share in a company. Companies sell stocks to raise capital. Stocks are not insured and investors may lose some or all value of their stock investments. Most investors purchase stocks through a broker. The broker transaction may take place face to face or online via an online brokerage firm. Broker fees vary so be sure to do your research before committing. You can also save on broker fees by buying some stocks directly from the issuing company.
4. The most common type of investment is mutual funds. A mutual fund is an investment vehicle comprised of a pool of funds, from many investors, for the purpose of investing in securities. Mutual funds may invest in stocks, bonds, money market instruments, or a combination of multiple securities categories. The key advantage to a mutual fund is professional management of the investment portfolio to match the fund objectives.

5. Mutual funds are not insured and investors may lose some or all of value of their investment.

If you want to know more about savings and investments, go to, [saveandinvest.org](http://saveandinvest.org), which is sponsored by the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority, Inc. (FINRA). This is another valuable resource for online education and information.

#### **46. State Veteran Benefits**

Many states offer Veterans benefits beyond the ones you would already be eligible for through the federal VA.

Additional benefits may include:

- Educational grants and scholarships
- Special exemptions or discounts on fees and taxes
- Home loans
- Veteran's homes
- Free hunting and fishing privileges

Each state manages its own benefit programs and some states are very extensive, while others are minimal.

The website [www.va.gov/landing2\\_locations.htm](http://www.va.gov/landing2_locations.htm) has a link for each individual state that show the types of Veterans benefits your state offers. I encourage you to take advantage of the benefits you have earned by visiting your state VA.

#### **47. Two-year Commissary & Post Exchange Privileges (Eligible Involuntary Separates)**

Military commissaries and exchanges are essential elements of the military non-pay compensation and benefit package.

Service members who are involuntarily separated from active duty during the period beginning on October 1, 2007, and ending on December 31, 2018, can continue to use commissary and exchange stores during the two-year period beginning on the date of the involuntary separation in the same manner as members on active duty. Eligibility is based on your SPD Code.

Service members who, upon separation, are entitled to a DD Form 214, "Armed Forces of the United States Geneva Convention Identification Card (Reserve)," and/or DD Form 1173-1, "Department of Defense Guard and Reserve Family Member Identification Card," are permitted to use Morale, Welfare, and Recreation revenue-generating facilities, e.g., clubs, bowling centers, golf courses, and other resources.

**If you separated or retired and elect to live in a foreign country, you may lose commissary and/or Base Exchange privileges due to treaty, SOFA, or military base agreements between the United States and a host country.**

## 48. Voting Assistance

While on active duty, you are covered by The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act; commonly referred to as, UOCAVA.

UOCAVA citizens are active members of the Uniformed Services, the Merchant Marine, their family members, and U.S. citizens residing outside the United States as defined by 52 U.S.C. § 20310 (1).

As you transition back to civilian life, you will no longer be covered by the UOCAVA. You and your eligible family members should notify your local election official of your change in voter registration status and update your information to vote locally. You can do this in either one or two easy steps.

If you have voted absentee or locally and are staying in the same voting residence after separation:

**Step 1:** Notify your election official of your change in status and that you will be voting at the poll site in future elections. A sample letter ([www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/VAO/staying\\_template.docx](http://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/VAO/staying_template.docx)) is provided for your convenience.

If you voted absentee or locally and are moving to a new state or county after separation:

**Step 2:** Notify your election official of your change in status and that you will no longer be voting in that jurisdiction. A sample letter ([www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/VAO/moving\\_template.docx](http://www.fvap.gov/uploads/FVAP/VAO/moving_template.docx)) is provided for your convenience.

**Step 3:** Complete a National Voter Registration Form ([www.eac.gov/nvra/](http://www.eac.gov/nvra/)) to register as a civilian.

Additional information about registering to vote locally can be found on your State/Territory Election websites ([www.fvap.gov/links](http://www.fvap.gov/links)).

If you will be remaining or moving abroad after separation from the military, you will be covered by UOCAVA as an overseas citizen instead of in your military capacity. You can find additional information on voting assistance for Service members, their families and overseas citizens at: [www.fvap.gov/military-voter/transition](http://www.fvap.gov/military-voter/transition).

## 49. Legal Assistance

Military installations have legal assistance offices available to assist you with legal matters such as: will preparation, powers of attorney, review of most contracts, debit/credit problems, landlord/tenant issues, family law, tax law and estate planning. All of these services are a no-cost benefit to you for your active duty Service.

Legal assistance provides quality legal services regarding personal civil legal matters to eligible persons by educating them regarding their personal legal rights and responsibilities. Legal assistance officers are well-versed in the special issues facing those retiring and separating from military Service.

Speak with a licensed attorney before relying on the information contained within a legal assistance website to make a decision or take any action. Contact your local installation legal assistance offices or use the Legal Services Locator to find the nearest military legal office within the continental United States.

Retirees can use the installation legal and financial offices on a space-available basis, and depending on the location, may have to wait to see a representative. The installation legal and financial offices will specify the services available. It is helpful to call as far in advance as possible. Retirees residing overseas may have restrictions on privileges based upon SOFA.

If you need more information on this topic, go to:  
[www.legalassistance.law.af.mil/contnt/locator.php](http://www.legalassistance.law.af.mil/contnt/locator.php)

## **50. Post-Government (Military) Service Employment Restriction Counseling**

DoD Components shall provide guidance on relevant Federal and DoD Government service employment restrictions, as part of out-processing procedures, to military members who are leaving Federal service. The guidance will provide you information on what is permissible, career-wise, after leaving the military.

A brief summary of the most common post-government employment restrictions includes:

- Personal Lifetime Ban
  - After leaving government service, you may not represent another individual or company to the government regarding particular matters you worked on while in government service.
- Seeking or Negotiating for Post-Government Employment
  - Official Responsibility Two-Year Ban
    - For two (2) years after leaving government service, you may not represent someone else to the government regarding particular matters that were pending under your responsibility during the last year of government service.
- Trade or Treaty One-Year Ban
  - For one (1) year after leaving government service, you may not aid, advise, or represent someone else regarding trade or treaty negotiations that you worked on during the last year of government service.
  - Compensation for Representation to the Government By Others

You cannot decline this counseling, as it required. Contact the installation legal office (Staff Judge Advocate or legal counselor's office) to ensure you receive a post-government (military) employment restriction briefing or counseling from an ethics official.

**COUNSELOR'S NOTE: IT IS IMPORTANT THAT COUNSELORS STRESS THIS VERY IMPORTANT REQUIREMENT TO ALL RETIREES AND SEPARATEES WHO PARTICIPATED IN AN ACQUISITION OR CONTRACT VALUED IN EXCESS OF \$10M.**

Section 847 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 **requires** military officers serving in the grade of O-7 or above who participated personally and substantially in an acquisition valued in excess of \$10M; **OR** a military member in any grade who served as a program manager or deputy program manager for an acquisition program; procuring contracting officer; administrative contracting officer; source selection authority; member of the source selection evaluation board; or chief of a financial or technical evaluation team for a contract in excess of \$10M; **AND** who have a tentative offer of employment or compensation from a defense contractor to perform specific duties for that contractor within 2 years of leaving DoD to obtain written advice from their component Ethics counselor regarding the proposed employment.

Members to whom this requirement applies should seek advice from their servicing component Ethics counselor.

**COUNSELOR'S NOTE: IT IS IMPORTANT COUNSELORS STRESS THIS VERY IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO ALL RETIREES AND SEPARATEES IN THE GRADES OF O-7 OR HIGHER.**

Section 1045 of the Fiscal Year 2018 National Defense Authorization Act has imposed certain prohibitions on lobbying activities with respect to the Department of Defense by officers of the Armed Forces in the grade of O-7 or higher following separation from Military Service. If you currently serve in this grade band, you should contact your servicing component Ethics office for specific post-government employment advice.

### **Individual Transition Plan (ITP)**

All of what we covered can be considered part of your ITP. This form and the resources, such as <https://dodtap.mil/index.html>, and several other sites mentioned during this session should be part of your ITP. If you need assistance in completing your ITP, please contact a member of the transition staff at your installation.

Transitioning requires a carefully thought-out ITP. The ITP is your game plan for a successful transition to civilian life. It's a framework used to fulfill realistic career goals based upon your individual skills, knowledge, experience, and abilities.

One of the CRS for your transition is to have a criterion-based ITP. The ITP is your personal employment plan of goals, actions, and milestones. Some of you completed an Individual Development Plan (IDP) at your enlistment, and the ITP becomes an extension of that original plan as you separate or retire.

The criterion-based ITP varies for all branches of Service, however, during this session you will complete most of Part 1. You will need to complete additional sections based on your personal needs assessment. Specific sections coincide with the path you take. For example, if you are planning on pursuing further education at a college, your ITP will look different than someone pursuing entrepreneurship.

The ITP should assist you each step of the way into your new life. It is a “living, breathing” document that won’t be completed this week. Fortunately, you will not have to do this alone. This session, followed by your attendance in the Transition GPS core curriculum and additional tracks, if applicable, will help you develop your ITP. There is transition staff and Counselors available to assist you at the installation offices indicated below:

Army – Soldier for Life-Transition Assistance Program Center (SFL-TAP Center)  
Navy – Fleet and Family Support Center  
Air Force – Airman and Family Readiness Center  
Marine Corps – Marine Corps Community Service Centers  
Coast Guard – Health, Safety and Work-Life Centers

#### SEC. 528. NOTIFICATION OF MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES UNDERGOING CERTAIN ADMINISTRATIVE SEPARATIONS OF POTENTIAL ELIGIBILITY FOR VETERANS BENEFITS.

(a) NOTIFICATION REQUIRED. A member of the Armed Forces who receives an administrative separation or mandatory discharge under conditions other than honorable shall be provided written notification that the member may petition the Veterans Benefits Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs to receive, despite the characterization of the member's service, certain benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

(b) DEADLINE FOR NOTIFICATION. Notification under subsection (a) shall be provided to a member described in such subsection in conjunction with the member's notification of the administrative separation or mandatory discharge or as soon thereafter as practicable.

It is important to note that despite the characterization of service, you may always petition the Veterans Benefits Administration of the Department of Veterans Affairs to receive certain benefits under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. For those who may anticipate a less than honorable characterization, this is an especially important topic to discuss with the VA counselor in the benefits briefing.

**NOTE: Written acknowledgment of the restrictions is required by all Service members.**

#### **MANDATORY VA BENEFITS BRIEFING I AND II**

NOTE: It is mandatory that every transitioning Service member attend the VA Benefits Briefing I and II.

**COUNSELOR NOTE: Read topics to participants that will be covered during the VA briefings. They will not be explained or covered during this Pre-separation/Transition Counseling Session.**

## **1. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**

Your attendance is mandatory by law and DoD policy that you attend the VA Benefits Briefing I and II before separating, retiring or being released from active duty. The briefings provide all the information regarding the VA and the laws, benefits, programs, and services administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

## **2. Education Benefits (Post-9/11 GI Bill Chapter 33), (Montgomery GI Bill Chapter 30), (Veterans Educational Assistance Program), (Vietnam-era, etc.)**

This section deals with your VA educational benefits and the following education programs that may be available to you.

It is important to know your education benefits and VA programs available to you could be affected by your contract, the amount of time you served in the military, and the characterization of your discharge. The goal of the VA Benefits Briefing I and II is for you to learn everything about your education benefits.

I want to discuss the Post-9/11 GI Bill today.

If eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill program you may be able to transfer unused educational benefits to your spouse or children, if you meet certain criteria.

**COUNSELOR NOTE: Transferability of education benefits is a retention incentive. In order to transfer educational benefits to a family member, military members must make an irrevocable election to convert from their existing educational program (such as the Montgomery GI Bill) to the Post-9/11 GI Bill. This transfer of educational benefits to dependents can ONLY be made while serving in the Armed Forces WHILE ON ACTIVE DUTY (as in before retirement or separation). Members who join the Selected Reserve may have the option to transfer unused benefits to family members.**

Additionally, the military member must be on active duty, have Served a minimum of six years, and be willing to agree to an additional Service commitment on active duty or in the Selected Reserve. If you are separating from active duty in less than four years, you are probably not eligible to transfer education benefits. See your career counselor or education office for more information.

When transferring benefits to family members, all Service members acknowledge the following statement:

“I understand and agree to remain in the Armed Forces for the period required.  
I understand that failure to complete that Service may lead to an overpayment by the

Department of Veterans Affairs for any payment made. (Service documentation will remain on file with the Service.)”

I encourage all who have transferred educational benefits to their family members to log into milConnect and ensure they have, or will have, completed their required obligated Service before separating. The Obligation End Date is reflected at the top of the page under “Sponsor” and also on the “Approval Form.”

**ONCE RETIRED OR SEPARATED FROM THE MILITARY, MEMBERS ARE NO LONGER ELIGIBLE TO TRANSFER THEIR EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS.**

Full details about transferability can be found in the “Frequently Asked Questions” section of: <http://benefits.va.gov/gibill>.

**3. VA Health Administration**

You will receive information on VA Health Administration when you attend the mandatory VA Benefits Briefing I and II.

**4. VA Health Care**

You will receive information on VA health care when you attend the mandatory VA Benefits Briefing I and II.

**5. A Dental Care**

You will receive information on VA dental care when you attend the mandatory VA Benefits Briefing I and II.

**6. VA Vet Center**

You will receive information on VA Health Administration when you attend the mandatory VA Benefits Briefing I and II.

**NOTE: COUNSELOR WILL EXPLAIN THIS TOPIC SINCE IT IS NOT ABOUT FEDERAL VA BENEFITS.**

**7. State and Local Health Care and Mental Health Services**

State departments of health promote public health through policy initiatives, research and service programs. Often, a state's public health administration is combined with the provision of social services. "Health" generally encompasses behavioral and environmental health as well as physical well-being, illness and communicable diseases.

Social service websites may include information and programs dealing with welfare, early childhood development, foster parenting, poverty, juvenile delinquency, sex offenders, aging, public assistance, and rehabilitation. There may also be listings of private social service agencies.

A great resource for what is available in your state is: [www.statelocalgov.net](http://www.statelocalgov.net).

## **8. Other VA Health Care and Other Benefits**

You will receive information on health care and other benefits to which you may be entitled under the laws administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs when you attend the mandatory VA Benefits Briefing I and II.

## **9. Continued Health Care Benefits Program**

VA will talk to you about the type of health care that is available to you if you meet the eligibility criteria. If you aren't eligible for any of those types of coverage, and you separate from the military voluntarily, you are not eligible to use any of the military treatment facilities or TRICARE. That's where the Continued Health Care Benefits Program (CHCBP) comes into play.

CHCBP is temporary health care coverage that you are eligible to purchase for a period of 18 months, including pre-existing conditions coverage. This program is premium-based health care that is similar to, but not a part of, TRICARE and is administered by Humana Military Healthcare Services.

The CHCBP program extends health care coverage to you when you lose your military benefits. It is available to you and your family, certain un-remarried former spouses, and children who lose military coverage.

To obtain this coverage, you must enroll and pay premiums to CHCBP within 60 days after your separation from active duty (if you don't have TAMP benefits), or the loss of eligibility for military health care.

Many employer programs may require continuous health care coverage. By purchasing CHCBP, it acts as a "bridge" between military health benefits and a new job's medical benefit. This allows you and your family to receive continuous medical coverage.

It is important that you research your different health care options. CHCBP may be the best option for temporary health care coverage. However, participation is completely optional. If you want coverage, you are required to purchase coverage.

A common question, with regards to separation, is what about pregnancy? The best option for any pregnant Service member separating, or whose spouse is pregnant, is to talk to a representative at the military treatment facility. Make sure you know your coverage.

You may also want to look at the Service regulations that cover this topic. Regardless of your situation, you should ask your service personnel office and military treatment facilities for detailed information about health care provisions and application procedures. Also, you need to know that application does not constitute approval. Each application is evaluated on individual merit.

If you want more information on CHCBP, visit: [www.humana-military.com](http://www.humana-military.com), or call the Tricare Customer Service at: 1-800-444-5445.

### **10. Veterans' Group Life Insurance (VGLI)**

You will receive information you need on "Veterans' Group Life Insurance" when you attend the mandatory VA Benefits Briefing I and II.

### **11. Service members' Group Life Insurance (SGLI)**

You will receive information on "Service members' Group Life Insurance" (SGLI) when you attend the mandatory VA Benefits Briefing I and II.

In a collaboration of the Veteran Affairs, Department of Defense, Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), Defense Manpower Data Center and the uniformed services, the Service members Group Life Insurance (SGLI) Online Enrollment System (SOES) is now available. SOES is a web-based system that allows Service members to validate or change SGLI or Family SGLI (FSGLI) coverage amounts and beneficiaries quickly and easily without using paper forms. SOES is available 24 hours a day and provides detailed guidance to Service members that enables them to make informed decisions on their life insurance policy elections.

### **12. Traumatic Injury Protection under Service members' Group Life Insurance (TSGLI)**

You will receive information on "Traumatic Injury Protection Under Service Members' Group Life Insurance" (TSGLI) when you attend the mandatory VA Benefits Briefing I and II.

### **13. Family Service Members' Group Life Insurance (FSGLI)**

You will receive information on "Family Service members' Group Life Insurance" (FSGLI) when you attend the mandatory VA Benefits Briefing I and II.

### **14. Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (S-DVI)**

You will receive information on "Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance" (S-DVI) when you attend the mandatory VA Benefits Briefing I and II.

### **15. Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance (VMLI)**

You will receive information on "Veterans' Mortgage Life Insurance" (VMLI) when you attend the mandatory VA Benefits Briefing I and II.

### **16. VA Life Insurance**

You will receive information on "VA Life Insurance" when you attend the mandatory VA Benefits Briefing I and II.

### **17. Transitional Health Care Benefit**

You will receive information on "Transitional Health Care Benefits" when you attend the mandatory VA Benefits Briefing I and II.

The best way to get information tailored to your particular circumstances is to attend the Veterans Benefits Briefing I and II, and talk to a TRICARE representative. They can tell you specifically what benefits you are eligible for and how long that coverage will last. Medical coverage can be very expensive, so it is important you are aware of what is available to you so that you can make the best choice for your situation.

You are encouraged to ask questions when you attend the Veterans Benefits Briefing I and II. We recommend you explore the VA website: [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov), or call the VA toll-free number: 1-800-827-1000.

### **18. VA Disability Benefits**

For those of you who have or think you may have a disability, you will receive all the information about “VA Disability Benefits” when you attend the mandatory VA Benefits Briefing I and II.

You will also be taught to navigate the VA website for filing a claim, as well as what documentation you are required to submit when filing your claim.

### **19. Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD)**

When you attend the mandatory VA Benefits Briefing I and II, the VA Benefits Advisor will explain the “Benefits Delivery at Discharge (BDD)” program. You will learn the criteria and timeline for applying under BDD how you can access this program; and how they can help you speed up the process of having your disability claim adjudicated.

**COUNSELOR WILL EXPLAIN COMPLETING THE FOLLOWING ITEMS OF SECTION III of DD Form 2648.**

**27. I was counseled on all items in Section III.**

**28a. MY PRE-SEPARATION/TRANSITION COUNSELING WAS CONDUCTED 89 DAYS OR LESS BEFORE MY SEPARATION, RETIREMENT, OR RELEASED FROM ACTIVE DUTY BECAUSE OF:**

**Item 29. SERVICE MEMBER SIGNATURE AND DATE**

Self-explanatory

**Item 30. TRANSITION COUNSELOR SIGNATURE & DATE**

Self-explanatory

Does anyone have any question about any topics or item we covered on Section III of the Pre-separation/Transition Counseling DD Form 2648?

We have covered a great deal of material and information. Let’s take a **(designate time)** minute break.

After the break, we will do a review of the key takeaways from today’s Pre-separation/Transition Counseling Session.

## PRE-SEPARATION/TRANSITION COUNSELING REVIEW

### Let's start our review with the CRS

- As I mentioned earlier, you must meet the CRS before you can separate, and demonstrate documentation or evidence that you have met the CRS. Let's go over the CRS, you must meet the following:

#### Common CRS

1. **Complete an assessment of your personal circumstances - Pre-separation/Transition Counseling DD Form 2648 eForm.**

This eForm assesses your personal circumstances and enables you to identify your individual needs and match information and resource referrals available to you for a successful transition. **PLEASE NOTE:** You will ONLY have a paper copy of the DD Form 2648 if you are operating in a Disconnect Ops environment. If you are working with a paper copy, you must take it with you when you attend future Transition GPS classes, as well as when you meet with a Counselor, or member of your unit's chain of command regarding your transition. You must also complete your criterion-based ITP. Completing these two documents will show you have completed a personal assessment. If you using the eForm, all data will be collected in real-time as you go through the transition process.

2. **Complete criterion-based Financial Plan for Military to Civilian Transition –**

It is strongly recommended that you do pre-work before you attend the Financial Planning Seminar, which is part of the Transition GPS core curriculum I explained earlier today. Check with your transition office to get the link to the electronic budget that will be used in the class. You cannot go into the classroom unless you have prepared yourself to do this work. The pre-work will be needed when you go through the Financial Planning Seminar.

Service members should bring their most current End of Month (EOM) Leave and Earning Statement (LES) (or be prepared to access it online), and their ITP.

Service members should also bring the following items to assist with creating a spending plan: list of goals (career, location, and home options), list of expenses, list of debts, and a recent credit report.

3. **Active Component Service Members – Affiliation with a Reserve Component**

You are to meet with a Counselor and document that you were counseled on continuum of military Service opportunity. Documentation can be made on your ITP, but it has to be reviewed by a transition staff member or Counselor and must be verified by your Commander or Commander's Designee during Capstone.

4. **MOC Crosswalk Gap Analysis –** You must develop your MOC Crosswalk Gap Analysis when you attend the MOC Crosswalk class, which again is part of the five day Transition GPS core curriculum.

5. **Document requirements and eligibility for licensure, certification and apprenticeship –** As part of the Gap Analysis activity, you will be able to document these requirements and determine if any of the additional tracks (Accessing Higher Education, Career Technical Training, or Entrepreneurship) are needed.

6. **Register on eBenefits** – This was or will be verified today or you will be required to establish your eBenefits account during this session.
7. **Complete a criterion-based ITP.** You are to take your ITP with you when you attend the Transition GPS modules, when meeting with a Counselor, and when meeting with your Commander or their Designee when it is time to verify you have met CRS and have a viable ITP.

**COUNSELOR NOTE: Inform Service members they must take their ITP with them when they attend Transition GPS core curriculum classes every day of the week, as well as when they attend the Transition GPS Track and Capstone.**

**REMIND SERVICE MEMBERS – Their ITP is their roadmap. They should document any changes on the ITP throughout the transition process. They can also put appointments on their ITP in the appropriate section based on the purpose of the appointment. They should use the ITP to document any “warm handover” to a partner agency or other resources.**

**KEY POINT: REMIND THEM THAT AS OF TODAY – Through this process, they must keep the ITP with them at all times when they met with a transition counselor and/or attend transition-related classes.**

**Employment CRS you must meet:**

1. **Complete a Standardized Assessment Tool** – Can anyone tell me who do you have to see to get your Standardized Assessment Tool?  
ANSWER: Transition GPS Counselor
2. **Complete job application package consisting of:**
  - a. Resume (private/federal)
  - b. References (personal/professional)
  - c. Submitted applications (two)**OR**
  - d. Job Acceptance Letter
3. **DOL Gold Card Certificate 09/09/2016 4:04:21 PM04/04/2018 9:20:05 AM– You must download a copy of the DOL Gold Card (looks like a certificate – 8 ½ x 11 document) – or take the copy of the Gold Card attached to your DOLEW Participant’s Manual.**

**COUNSELOR NOTE: Counselor will show example of Gold Card and explain that Gold Card gives them (Post-9/11 Veterans) enhanced intensive services at any AJC, including up to six months of follow-up. (Remember: They must register at your local AJC). They will learn more about this when they attend the DOLEW during the Transition GPS core curriculum.**

## **Education & Career Technical Training CRS you must meet:**

- 1. Complete a Standardized Individual Assessment Tool** – This was described to you earlier today.  
Can someone tell me where you go to get this assessment tool?
  - a. Answer: Transition Office
- 2. Complete a comparison of academic or technical institution choices.**
- 3. Complete your college, university or technical training application(s).**
- 4. Confirm your one-on-one counseling with a college, university or technical training institution advisor.**

As a result of today's Pre-separation/Transition Counseling session, you should have a clear understanding of your personal needs and based on your personal needs assessment, you should know that upon separation, retirement or release from active duty, you plan to:

- Find a job or pursue a career
- Go back to school/pursue a technical program (complete a degree/obtain a credential)
- Start your own business

As a result of your personal needs assessment, you need to sign up for one of the additional tracks that will help you meet your CRS and achieve your post-transition personal goals. Transition is a process. Use your time wisely. Do your pre-work before attending the Transition GPS curriculum. Do not hesitate to ask for help.

Finally, let me explain the exemption policy that applies to your attending the mandatory DOLEW.

## **EXEMPTIONS/WAIVERS**

All transitioning Service members are required to complete the Pre-Separation/Transition Counseling and attend the VA Benefits Briefings. No one is exempt from attending these mandatory components of TAP.

However, DoD and the Secretary of Homeland Security (U.S. Coast Guard), after consulting with the Secretaries of Labor and Veterans Affairs, have established exemptions for participation in DOLEW. The exemptions are as follows:

1. Eligible Service members retiring after 20 or more years of active federal service in the military departments.
2. Eligible Service members, who, after serving their first 180 continuous days or more on active duty, pursuant to Title 10 U.S.C., that meet at least one of the following:
  - Are able to provide documented evidence of civilian employment.
  - Are able to provide documented acceptance into an accredited career technical training, undergraduate, or graduate degree program. Have specialized skills which, due to unavoidable circumstances, are needed to support a unit on orders scheduled to deploy within 60 days. The first commander in the eligible Service

members' chain of command, with authority pursuant to Chapter 47 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), must certify on the DD Form 2648 any such request for exemption from the DOLEW. A make-up plan must accompany the postponement certification.

- Eligible recovering Service members who are separating, retiring, or being released from active duty, who are enrolled in the Education and Employment Initiative, or similar transition program designed to secure employment, higher education, or career technical training post-separation.
- Eligible Reserve Component Service members who have previously participated in the DOLEW.

Service members who qualify for an exemption, and elect not to participate in the DOLEW, must request to be exempted and formally record their decision on the ITP.

**REMEMBER, you are still required to meet the CRS associated with employment.**

You still must:

1. Complete a Standardized Assessment Tool
2. Complete job application package consisting of:
  - a. Resume (private/federal)
  - b. References (personal/professional)
  - c. Submitted applications (two)
  - d. Job Acceptance Letter
  - e. Show a DOL Gold Card Certificate

**COUNSELOR NOTE: At this point of the Pre-separation/Transition Counseling session, the Counselor has to accomplish the following tasks before dismissing the class:**

1. Have each Service member initiate their ITP by completing Section 1 of the ITP.
2. On the DD Form 2648, record which Service member meets any or all of the CRS and which Service member meets the criteria for exemption and chose to be exempted from DOLEW and any Transition GPS core curriculum (except VA Benefits Briefing I and II, based on showing documentation they meet CRS during the Pre-separation/Transition Counseling session).

**NOTE: Exemption from the Transition GPS core curriculum (except VA Benefits Briefing I and II) still requires the Service member to meet CRS.**

3. Verify each person has an eBenefits account and document their ITP accordingly.
4. Save the data and submit it to DMDC real time, but no later than the next business day.
5. Those Service members in the class who meet the following exemption criteria:  
Service members with specialized skills who, due to unavoidable circumstances, are needed to support a unit on orders to be deployed within 60 days. The first commander in the Service member's chain of command with proper authority pursuant to Chapter 47 of Title 10, United States Code, also known as the "Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ)," must certify on the ITP and the DD Form 2648, any such request for exemption from TAP. A make-up plan must accompany the postponement certification.

**COUNSELOR NOTE: The Counselor will enter the data accordingly. Service member will retain their ITP.**

We have concluded the Pre-separation/Transition Counseling Session. The session is now open for any questions, comments, or areas that you require clarification. If there are no questions, comments or requests for clarification, the Counselor should proceed to complete the tasks listed above and dismiss the class accordingly.