Celebrate NDEAM with PVA

Introduction

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PVA.org/VeteransCareerProgram
Housekeeping

- Today’s webinar will be recorded and available for viewing on PVA.org.
- Closed Captioning is available. Click the CC button in the meeting controls bar at the bottom of your screen to turn it on.
- Please be on mute with your video off.
- If you have a question, please type it into the Q&A box.
Agenda

- Overview of the PVA Veterans Career Program approach
- High-Level overview of Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Labor, SSA, and government programs
- Highlight of gaps/challenges through Veteran interactions
- Q&A
Veterans Career Program Overview

Who we serve:
Veterans, transitioning service members, their families, and caregivers, with a specific focus on PVA members and veterans with disabilities (service and non-service connected).

What we offer:
High-touch engagement to help clients find employment, education, and volunteer opportunities.

How we do it:
One-on-one support to develop confidence and tools to find the right opportunity for each person.

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Veterans Career Program is Unique

- Focus on Complex Cases
- Love not Like Approach
- Partner for Life
  “We never close a case”
- Ensure Equity with a Personalized Approach

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Veterans Career Program

Team Overview:

- PVA Headquarters
- Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (6)
- Employment Analysts (2)

Regional Responsibilities:
www.pva.org/VeteransCareerProgram
The Veterans Career Program team averages a caseload of 825 clients:

- 93% veterans and transitioning service members
- 7% caregivers and family members
- 39% 50 years of age or older
- 20% spinal cord injury/disease-related disabilities
- 38% “other” significant/catastrophic disabilities
- 65% Have a SC rating of 60% or higher
Veterans Career Program: Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)

PVA is an authorized Employment Network (EN) for the Social Security Administration’s Ticket to Work program. We contract with SSA to provide free employment support services to Social Security disability beneficiaries ages 18 through 64.

Career Planning

Ongoing Employment Support

Job Leads and Job Placement

Benefits Counseling

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Support Services Offered

Three Topic Groups

- Emotional
- Functional
- External

Not Billable Hours
Veterans Career Live: A New Solution to Career Development

- Interactive
- Convenient
- Informal
- Brief
- Small Group

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Veterans Career Program: FY21 Impact

- 159 Employment
- 8 Volunteer
- 45 Education/Training
- 26 SCI/D
- 186 Veterans
- 25 Family Members

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Notable Veterans Affairs Programs

VR&E – Veterans Readiness and Employment; Five Tracks
* Must have 10% Service Connection for Eligibility and be found “feasible”

CWT – Compensated Work Therapy
* Referral required at some locations; must be eligible for VA healthcare services; goal of competitive employment; some time-limited support services and location limitations
Notable VA Programs – Training Programs

- **VRRAP** – Education and Training for high-demand jobs for Veterans unemployed due to COVID-19

- **VetTec** – Training for Veterans interested in high-technology industry; must have one day of GI Bill eligibility and be accepted into the program
Other Programs

**Department of Labor**
- Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program (DVOP) - staff have varying backgrounds and experiences
- State Workforce Agencies – offers veterans priorities of service
- American Job Centers – comprehensive services

**DOD SkillBridge** – time limited, pre-transition; limited eligibility

**Veteran Service Organizations** – Many wonderful resources but also have specific focus areas (era of service; service connected; not individual services; membership requirement)

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Challenges

**Disability:** Service Connected vs Non-Service Connected – plus impact of disabilities increase with age

**Transition Date:** Many VA programs are eligible for those within a period following transition out of military

**Sea of Goodwill/Program Eligibility**- Multitude of programs with varying requirements can be challenging to navigate
Meet Edna

- No service connected rating
- Non-Service-Connected Disability
- Advanced Degree/MBA
- Unable to find meaningful work – working several part time positions to make ends meet
- Tried multiple programs without luck
Edna Next Steps

- Focus areas – specific training and resources
- Paid corporate training program led to full-time position
- Several promotions + new opportunity
- Started the VA claim process (on going)
- Caregiver support services

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“Veterans Career Program literally saved my life. They came into my life when I was about to lose everything. I was working part-time, but I was not able to make ends meet. The paid training program lead to a full-time position and ultimately to the position I have now.”

- Edna, USMC Veteran
Challenges

**Benefit Loss:** Conflicts around SSDI, IU, and Veteran benefits process – *can* discourage *some* from pursuing employment

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Meet Jorge

- No service connected claim
- Injured in break between AD and Reserve Duty
- Receives SSDI
- Recovery from injury took significant time – not eligible for some transitioning benefits/services
Jorge Next Steps

- Initial Placement not a good fit – focus on new opportunities
- Second placement has been much better
- Ongoing education and career development
Jorge: Success Story

“Mom, I know I made you cry when I was injured, but today I am going to make you smile: I got a job!”

"I was concerned about working and losing benefits. But my counselor carefully walked me through how paid employment would impact my SSDI benefits - and I was able to still get my monthly cash benefits while working during that time." (SSDI)
Challenges

Service Era: Pre-9/11 vs Post-9/11 Veterans (Gulf War)

Benefit Loss: Conflicts around SSDI, IU, and Veteran benefits process – can discourage some from pursuing employment

Disability: Service Connected vs Non-Service Connected; impact of disabilities increase with age

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Meet Otis

- Service Connected Disability: 50%
- Successful post-military career
- PVA Member - spinal cord injury in 2015
- Not a SSDI recipient – focus on employment
- Denied Chapter 31/VR&E Support – we appealed and secured additional training.
Otis: Next Steps

✓ Presented Options – determined work was the right option

✓ Appealed VR&E decision and secured additional training

✓ Employed and gaining new skills
“Even though I’m in my 50s, I don’t think I’m done. Why not just make a life? I can still make a life for myself. So that’s my motivation right there, all itself. I can do something with my life...My goal is to go back to work to replenish the system by paying taxes so someone else who needs to go to school can do that.”

- Otis Mattox, US Army Veteran, PVA Member
Challenges

**Work Goals:** Full-Time vs Part-Time

**Service Era:** Pre-9/11 vs Post-9/11 Veterans (Gulf War)

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Meet Sean

- No Service Connection Rating
- Successful transition to civilian workforce – Mechanical Engineer
- PVA Member – Injured in 2014 and C-4 Injury
- Tried American Job Centers and DVOP - referred him to State Voc Rehab:
  “Office focused on those seeking 40 hours a week and those without a disability. The metrics for these offices are always how many people were employed for how many hours, not how long they stayed at the job or how meaningful/good of a fit it is.”

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Sean Next Step

- Focused on employers willing to integrate adaptive equipment
- One position eliminated due to COVID; Continues to identify new positions
- Continues to work on strength/stamina
- Now presents on his experience to other groups
Success Story: Sean

“After my injury in 2014, my life was turned upside down. It was not easy to transition from being a Mechanical Engineer, and a rather avid hunter and fisherman, into a wheelchair dependent individual. After five years of unemployment, I turned to the Veterans Career Program and its employees for assistance in getting back into the workforce. They were a great asset to me and a resource that helped me get my job and gain back my independence and self-confidence.

- Sean, US Air Force Veteran, PVA Member
Challenges

**Support Wrap Around Services:** Many veterans need assistance addressing other external challenges

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Meet Joe*

- 10% service connected (2020)
- Other non-service connected disabilities (significant)
- PVA Member in 2010
- SSI and SSDI recipient
- Potential cognitive challenges
- No high school/GED and no computer skills
- Felony convictions
- Worked part-time consistently until COVID

*name changed
Joe Next Steps

- Assisted with employment in 2012
- Job Saved – 2019
- Support securing unemployment benefits
- Support with ancillary services – housing, paying back taxes, identifying scams
- Challenges – received significant lump sum unemployment insurance payment that put other benefits at risk
Joe Today

"I want to work. It makes me happy and I am lonely without being around others and my social network. Financially, I need to work. It's hard to make ends meet right now. I do not know how long I can go without additional income."

- Joe, Army Veteran, PVA Member
Veterans Career Program: Call to Action

Gaps in Service/
Flexibility = Better Outcomes

Volunteer, Education, and Paid
Employment

Collaborative Approach Benefits Everyone

www.PVA.org/VeteransCareerProgram

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Questions?

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