

## Appendix C: The Official Transition Process

Veterans transitioning from the military, as prescribed by federal law, have a four part transition process available to them. The Transition Assistance Program (TAP) is offered under a partnership between the Department of Defense, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of Homeland Security (e.g. the Coast Guard), and the Department of Labor.<sup>33</sup>

Veterans who are retiring from service have 24 months prior to their retirement to access the TAP and those separating from the military (i.e. ending a tour of duty or coming to the end of a contracted enlistment) have 12 months prior to their separation to access TAP.

### Four Steps:<sup>34</sup>

1. Pre-separation counseling—a mandatory process run through the DOD for all military personnel separating from the military, which addresses the logistics of transition such as moving household goods, getting a final physical or dental exam. Participants can also ask to take the TAP Employment Workshop.
2. TAP Employment Workshop—a 2.5 day workshop run by the Department of Labor—Veteran’s Employment & Trainings Services. The workshop is mandatory only for those separating or retiring from the Marine Corps. Military personnel can take the TAP program or access TAP services as many times as desired during their final year before separating (or 24 months for retirees). Currently, about 60 percent of separating military personnel participates in the TAP Employment Workshop.
3. Veterans’ Benefits Briefing—a four hour briefing run by the Department of Veterans Affairs to familiarize military personnel with the veteran benefits for which they are eligible.
4. Disabled Veterans’ Transition Program—a two-hour briefing conducted by the Department of Veterans Affairs for those with service connected disabilities.

Members of the Guard and Reserve arms of the armed services demobilize back to their guard and reserve units in their home states, which may not have a standing TAP program such as those found on military bases. Units demobilizing have time constraints as well as mandatory aspects to their demobilization, which makes participating in a TAP program problematic. The availability of the TAP program may also vary based upon the state to which the unit belongs. A number of states offer a mini-TAP that is a half day or one day program. The DOL-TAP has developed a version of the curriculum for guard and reserve units, which offers a core module that covers the local labor market, instructions on how to access the Department of Labor’s Career One-Stop Centers, the risks of homelessness, the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), and small business opportunities.<sup>35</sup>

When veterans are discharged from the military, they are discharged based on their character of service.<sup>36</sup> Character of service refers to honorable or dishonorable discharge. If dishonorable (undesirable), or bad conduct, they usually are unable to qualify for benefits.

Upon leaving the military, veterans receive a DD214 (discharge). The DD214 is a one-page document containing the veteran’s name, social security number, character of discharge and list of awards. Veterans are given the original. They then can take the original to a local Veteran’s Affairs Office to have certified copies of the discharge made. The certified copies are used to access any service for which a veteran wants to apply.

Once a veteran has officially separated from the military, the veteran can no longer access the TAP program. Instead, they have access to one of the 3,100 One-Stop centers run by DOL in local communities. Veterans have priority access to their services.

<sup>33</sup> Public Law 101-510. Title 10 Sections 1141 to 1143 and 1144 to 1150.

<sup>34</sup> Winter, Tim (Interview) (October 5, 2007) Transition Assistance Lead for the Department of Labor; (2005) *Military and Veterans Benefits: Enhanced Services Could Improve Transition Assistance for Reserve and National Guard*. Retrieved October 2007 from <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05544.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> USERRA prohibits employers from discriminating or retaliating against any employee or applicant because of the individual’s past, present, or future application for uniformed service or performance of such service. The prohibition extends to decisions regarding hiring, reemployment, retention, promotion, or any benefit of employment.

<sup>36</sup> Manning, Lory (Interview) (Summer 2007). The Women’s Research and Education Institute.