

Fact Sheet: President Obama's Work to Honor our Military Families and Veterans

Obama highlights his work for veterans in address to VFW

Jul 23, 2012

On Monday, July 23, President Obama addressed the Veterans of Foreign Wars and discussed his Administration's work to secure our nation, fight terrorism, renew American leadership in the world, better serve our troops and military families and honor our veterans. In his remarks, President Obama announced a redesign of the Transition Assistance Program. Developed by the Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force established by the President last August, *Transition GPS* will help our separating servicemembers successfully transition to the civilian workforce, start a business, or pursue higher education. The President also called on Congress to pass his Veterans Job Corps proposal and to extend the *Returning Heroes* and *Wounded Warrior* tax credits for businesses that hire veterans.

[Read President Obama's Remarks.](#)

Additional background information on President Obama's work to honor and support America's military families and veterans is included below.

Transition GPS: Transforming the Transition Assistance Program

In August 2011, President Obama visited the Washington Navy Yard and directed the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs to lead a task force to develop the first major redesign of the military's Transition Assistance Program (TAP) in over 20 years. Prior to the President's announcement, TAP consisted of pre-separation counseling and a voluntary, three-day workshop from the Departments of Labor, Defense, and Veterans Affairs that was presented at selected military installations nationwide, and attended by nearly half of the service members who separated from the services each year.

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In his remarks to the VFW, the President announced the launch of a revamped transition program, which will help our separating service members successfully transition to the civilian workforce, start a business, or pursue training or higher education. This new transition program, entitled *Transition GPS*, will:

- Extend the transition program period from 3 days to 5-7 days.
- Strengthen, standardize, and expand counseling and guidance for service members before leaving the military.
- Transform the military's approach to education, training, and credentialing for service members.

Transition GPS will be implemented throughout the Armed Forces by the end of 2013 and includes the following key components:

- *Pre-Separation Assessment and Individual Counseling:* Through the new transition program, separating service members will have individual counseling to discuss their career goals and start their transition process. Subsequently, members will have a needs and goals assessment coupled with a counseling session about benefits, resources, and available assistance across a wide scope of military separation topics. Each service member will develop an Individual Transition Plan that documents his or her personal transition, as well as the deliverables he or she must attain to meet the new transition program's Career Readiness Standards.
- *5-Day Core Curriculum:* The five-day *Transition GPS* Core Curriculum will include a financial planning seminar, a workshop offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs on available veterans' benefits and services, and a re-designed employment workshop offered by the Department of Labor. Transitioning service members will also undertake a Military Occupational Code Crosswalk to translate their military skills, training, and experience into civilian occupations, credentials, and employment. An Individual Transition Plan session will allow Members to seek guidance from subject matter experts, identify career goals, and develop a roadmap for their transition.
- *Career-Specific Additional Curriculum:* In addition to completing the *Transition GPS*

Core Curriculum, transitioning service members will also have the option of participating in a series of two day tailored tracks within the *Transition GPS* curriculum: (1) an Education track, for those pursuing a higher education degree; (2) a Technical and Skills Training track, for those seeking job-ready skills and industry-recognized credentials in shorter-term training programs; and (3) an Entrepreneurship track, for those wanting to start a business.

- *CAPSTONE Event*: Before their separation from military service, service members will participate in a CAPSTONE event, which will verify that transitioning service members completed the *Transition GPS* curriculum and achieved Career Readiness Standards. Service members who require additional assistance will be referred to supplemental training opportunities. In addition, through the CAPSTONE event, all service members will be offered a ‘warm handover’ to appropriate government agencies and organizations that will be able to provide them continued benefits, services, and support as veterans.
- *Military Life Cycle Transition Model*: The new transition program will incorporate career readiness and transition preparation into the entire span of a service member’s career. In the past, transition and preparation for the civilian workforce occurred late in a service member’s time in the military – near the point of separation. Under this new program, these concepts will be incorporated earlier to ensure that the counseling, assessments, and access to resources to build skills or credentials occur at earlier stages of a service member’s military tenure.

Hiring Our Veterans

Since the President took office, he has been committed to putting veterans back to work rebuilding and protecting America. From the work of the Joining Forces Initiative to encourage the private sector to hire tens of thousands of veterans to the passage of tax credits for businesses that hire veterans, the President has implemented a range of policies to connect veterans to job. Additionally, the President continues to call on Congress to pass the Veterans Job Corps proposal he announced in the State of the Union to help Afghanistan and Iraq veterans get jobs as cops and firefighters, as well as other jobs serving their communities. The President’s record on hiring veterans includes:

- ***Creating Two New Veterans' Tax Credits:*** In November 2011, the President signed into law two new tax credits for hiring veterans, both of which he proposed as part of the American Jobs Act. The Returning Heroes Tax Credit provides an incentive of up to \$5,600 for firms to hire unemployed veterans and the Wounded Warrior Tax Credit doubled the existing tax credit for long-term unemployed veterans with service-connected disabilities to \$9,600. Both credits are set to expire at the end of this year, and the President is calling on Congress to extend those credits.
- ***Helping More Veterans Start Businesses:*** Nine percent of all U.S. firms are owned by veterans and more than 2.4 million veteran-owned businesses employ more than 5.75 million individuals. Between 2009 and 2011, over \$3 billion through over 12,000 Small Business Administration loans went to small businesses owned by veterans and service disabled veterans.
- ***Increasing Access to Intensive Reemployment Services:*** Post-9/11 veterans are now able to download the Veteran Gold Card, which entitles them to enhanced reemployment services including six months of personalized case management, assessments and career counseling at their local American Job Center.
- ***Developing Online Tools to Boost Veteran Employment:*** The Administration launched the Veterans Jobs Bank, an easy-to-use tool to help veterans find job postings from companies looking to hire them. It already searches over one million job postings and is growing. Additionally, the Department of Labor launched My Next Move for Veterans, a new online resource that allows veterans to enter their military occupation code and discover civilian occupations for which they are well qualified.
- ***Increasing Hiring of Veterans in Healthcare-Related Fields:*** The President challenged Community Health Centers to hire 8,000 veterans – approximately one veteran per health center site – over the next three years and the Health Resources and Services Administration pledged to open up career paths in addition to nursing and expand opportunities for veterans to become physician

assistants.

- ***Hiring More Veterans in the Federal Government:*** The federal government has helped lead efforts to employ veterans, hiring more than 200,000 veterans since 2009.
- ***Streamlining Civilian Credentialing for Service Members and Veterans:*** Last month, the Department of Defense established, under the President's direction, a Military Credentialing and Licensing Task Force, which will identify opportunities where service members can earn civilian occupational credentials and licenses without the need for additional training. As the first action of the Task Force, all branches of the military worked with manufacturing credentialing agencies to enable up to 126,000 service members to gain industry-recognized, nationally-portable certifications for high-demand manufacturing jobs.

Supporting Our Veterans and Military Families

Other steps taken by the Obama Administration to support veterans and military families include:

- ***Strengthening the VA:*** Under President Obama, the VA has received record-levels of funding, with the FY13 budget calling for \$64 billion in discretionary spending, and \$76 billion in mandatory funding. In addition, the Administration has made it clear that veterans benefits are exempt from sequestration.
- ***Strengthening Military and Veteran Education Benefits:*** In April, President Obama signed an Executive Order to help ensure all of America's service members, veterans, spouses, and other family members have the information they need to make informed educational decisions and are protected from aggressive and deceptive targeting by educational institutions.
- ***Extending Benefits to Victims of Agent Orange:*** In the last two years, VA has processed 230,000 claims and awarded \$3.62 billion in retroactive benefits to nearly 130,000 Veterans and survivors who were harmed by Agent Orange.

- ***Mental Health:*** The Deployment Health Clinical Center (DHCC), a Component Center of Defense Centers of Excellence, developed the RESPECT-Mil program, which enables primary care providers to screen and treat patients for PTSD and depression. To date, the program has screened over one million primary care patients, identifying more than 68,000 Service members with previously unmet psychological health needs and referred them to care. The program has expanded to more than 60 primary care clinics across more than 25 Military Treatment Facilities. Today, more than 1,117 DOD Military Family Life Consultants (MFLC) provide support on active duty installations in all 50 States, four Territories, and the District of Columbia. In FY11, MFLCs provided approximately 6.8 million face-to-face counseling sessions.
- ***Ending Veterans Homelessness:*** The Obama Administration is on pace to meet the President's goal of ending veterans homelessness by 2015. The number of homeless veterans has decreased by 12 percent from 2010 to 2011 on a given night.
- ***Working to Prevent Suicide:*** VA has increased the number of mental health professionals by 48 percent since 2006 and in April, announced they would hire an additional 1,600 mental health providers. Since 2009, VA has increased the mental health care budget by 39 percent. The Department of Defense has made suicide prevention a top priority, increased behavioral health care providers by 35% over past three years and increased the number of these health care providers in front line units.
- ***Eliminating the Disability Claims Backlog:*** While VA has processed more than one million disability claims in the last year, more work remains to be done. VA has redeployed 1,200 claims experts to target and tackle the most complex claims in the backlog. The Department is also deploying new technology and procedures to ensure our Veterans get the timely, quality benefits they need and deserve.
- ***Supporting Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder:*** In July 2010, the VA published a historic change to its rules, streamlining the process and paperwork needed by combat veterans to pursue a claim for disability pay for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The VA has also expanded its mental health programs, hiring more than 3,500 mental health professionals since 2009. Additionally, VA's 2013 budget proposal includes \$6.2 billion for mental health initiatives.

- ***Honoring Vietnam Veterans:*** President Obama and the entire federal government have partnered with State and local governments, private organizations, and communities across America to launch the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War—a 13-year program to honor and give thanks to a generation of proud Americans who saw our country through one of the most challenging missions we have ever faced and pay tribute to the more than 3 million men and women who answered the call of duty with courage and valor.
- ***Traumatic Brain Injury:*** VA has launched a comprehensive program to identify, screen and treat all Veterans with traumatic brain injury (TBI), and to ensure that they receive patient-centered, integrated care and benefits. President Obama signed an amendment to the Americans with Disabilities Act which allows individuals with PTSD and TBI to more easily seek legal protections as they look for and participate in employment opportunities.