

Chapter 5
OUTREACH ACTIVITIES TO EMPLOYERS

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Chapter 5 OUTREACH ACTIVITIES TO EMPLOYERS

5.01 Introduction

Outreach is a proactive, intentional effort by individuals in an organization to connect its ideas or practices to the efforts of other organizations, groups and individuals. Along these lines, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) staff are authorized and directed to contact Veterans with service-connected disabilities, employers, community organizations and other entities in order to:

- Promote training opportunities supported by VR&E to all potentially eligible and entitled Veterans.
- Increase community awareness of the VR&E Program.
- Connect employers with VR&E as a potential source of training for Veterans and a potential source of Veterans for employment.
- Establish employment opportunities for VA VR&E Program participants.
- Develop community relationships and support.

Through outreach, VR&E staff helps individuals and groups learn about VR&E services and how to access them. In this chapter, topics include promotion of training and employment opportunities, employer outreach and marketing, and Internet marketing.

5.02 References and Resources

Regulations: 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 21.252
 38 CFR 21.256
 38 CFR 21.296
 38 CFR 21.299

Websites: www.vetsuccess.va.gov
 www.facebook.com/VeteransBenefits
 www.twitter.com/VAVetBenefits
 www.youtube.com/user/DeptVetAffairs
 www.fedshirevets.gov
 www.va.gov/vecs
 www.flickr.com/photos/VeteransAffairs

5.03 Promotion of Training and Employment Opportunities

VR&E offices are directed to promote the establishment of employment, training and related opportunities to provide eligible Veterans with compensable service-connected disabilities the services and assistance necessary to enable them to become employable and to obtain and maintain employment. Effective promotion of training and employment opportunities for Veterans includes:

- Coordination and cooperation with other disability and employment placement service providers and interested parties.
- Participation in job fairs and related community activities.
- Engagement in outreach activities to employers.
- Providing employers with valuable consultation services.
- Training on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other relevant disability law.
- Assistance in determining and providing assistive technology or other reasonable accommodations needed by a Veteran.

5.04 Role of the Employment Coordinator (EC)

One of the EC's primary duties is conducting outreach activities to employers. These outreach duties include, but are not limited to:

- Establishing effective relationships with potential employers within the Regional Office's (RO) jurisdiction.
- Serving as the primary consultant and point of contact for the VR&E staff members, employers, Veterans and the community regarding employment services.
- Providing labor market information (LMI) to assist case managers in developing suitable vocational goals.
- Advocating for the placement of Veterans in suitable employment through active networking with employers.
- Providing guidance to the Veterans and employers regarding access to the VetSuccess.gov website through assistance with the registration process and

the listing of employment opportunities.

- Utilizing state-of-the-art marketing techniques to promote the hiring of Veterans with service-connected disabilities. This includes media events and job fairs with employers within the office's jurisdiction.

5.05 Outreach Activities

a. Marketing

Good marketing is essential for successful outreach with employers. All VR&E offices are directed to market the VR&E program and the employment of Veterans with service-connected disabilities within their jurisdiction. Each VR&E Office's responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:

- Conducting informational briefings to local and national employers.
- Developing local Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with various employers for job training and placement of Chapter 31 Veterans.
- Encouraging employers to register and list job openings on the VetSuccess.gov website.

b. VetSuccess.va.gov

This website contains valuable information and links to provide employers with qualified Veteran applicants and serves as resource center for the Veterans. These include:

- A repository of Veterans' resumes (Resume Books) for registered employers to review for hiring.
- Online space for employers to list job openings.
- Information on Special Hiring Events in the RO's jurisdiction.
- Tips for preparing applications, writing resumes and interviewing.

The case manager must ensure that each Veteran in his/her caseload is registered in the VetSuccess website and must assist them in registering and using the website.

c. Marketing Material

Each VR&E office is directed to distribute promotional materials developed by

VR&E to employers and the community. These may include, but are not limited to:

- DVDs or other video media developed for this purpose.
- Printed materials – QuickBooks, pamphlets, brochures, posters, flyers, etc.

Each EC is provided an EC portfolio. This is an organizer that contains various items including a VA VR&E Program Standardized PowerPoint Presentation, forms for various employment programs, and informational brochures, DVDs and handouts. The EC portfolio should also be used to carry the resumes of the Veterans the EC is seeking to place. The portfolio is used as the EC's resource center when meeting with employers.

d. Distribution of Marketing Materials

These marketing materials may be distributed during the following and other relevant activities:

- Vocational rehabilitation employers' network meetings.
- Industry expositions, such as Chamber of Commerce events.
- Job fairs sponsored by state employment offices.
- Job fairs sponsored by non-government organizations (e.g., Goodwill Industries).
- Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) sites.
- State vocational rehabilitation offices.

e. Marketing Strategies

1. Targeted Marketing

VR&E endeavors to market the VR&E program and the employment of Veterans with disabilities using a marketing strategy with well-defined target employers. Each VR&E division will analyze the local labor market using available resources and develop a list of local employers that are partners in the employment of Veterans with disabilities or that have potential for collaboration with VA. When developing a list of priority targets for focused marketing, consideration should be given to:

- Employers with a history of hiring VR&E participants.
- Federal, state and local government agencies.
- Employers with a large number of employees.
- Defense and other federal contractors.
- Veteran-owned businesses.

2. Cold Calling

VR&E staff is directed to generate a database or list of potential employers both in order to locate current career openings for Veterans and to promote systematic marketing efforts. Cold calling will often be necessary for both of these aims and should not be avoided. VR&E staff must research the company or agency prior to contacting it and maintain professionalism throughout all contacts. When calling, the VR&E staff member should be simple and direct, first introducing himself/herself and then asking to speak to the hiring manager. He/she should ask the hiring manager for an appointment to discuss the possibility and benefits of employing Veterans who are pre-screened, trained and job-ready.

A list of employers to contact should be compiled from available sources including but not limited to:

- Data-mining job announcements online or in newspapers for employer information.
- Collaborating with the Disabled Veteran Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist or Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) at VETS to identify potential employers.
- Reviewing local Chamber of Commerce listings of companies by location and number of employees.
- Searching the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission listing of publicly held companies for local employers' names, contact addresses and phone numbers.
- Searching business information aggregators.

3. Employer Accounts

Once a company or government agency is determined to be a potential source of employment for Veterans in the VR&E program, the EC will work with the employer to create a relationship in which the employer regards VR&E as a first-class source of pre-screened, trained, job ready candidates for employment. VR&E staff will assist the employer in setting up an account on www.vetsuccess.va.gov. The EC will also work with the employer's hiring manager to determine an appropriate schedule and preferred method of contact for VR&E staff to reach the company to discuss available openings.

f. Social Media

VA has established a substantial online presence utilizing the most current social media. The main goal of VA social media is to interact with the "millions of Veterans and their family members" who already use social media each day. Currently, most social media websites are blocked on VA computers but access can be granted with approval of the VR&E Officer and the local Information Security Officer.

Due to VR&E's responsibility to protect the Veteran's privacy and the Veteran's assumption of the confidentiality of VA communications, it is not appropriate for VR&E staff to communicate directly with Veterans, Servicemembers, and/or their families using social media sites. In addition, VR&E staff will not respond as a VR&E employee to any posting on social media sites unless officially designated to do so by a senior management official. The established media for VA are:

1. Facebook

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) manages a Facebook page to allow real-time feedback on various programs and services. This page is also used to notify Veterans and stakeholders of upcoming events and to make other announcements. VR&E staff is responsible for providing a Facebook posting biweekly.

This site can be accessed at www.facebook.com/VeteransBenefits

2. Twitter

VBA manages an account on Twitter to allow real-time feedback on various programs and services. Twitter is a social networking and microblogging service similar to Facebook. Posts are limited to 140 characters. VR&E

staff is responsible for providing a microblog, called a "tweet", on a weekly basis.

This site can be accessed at www.twitter.com/VAVetBenefits

3. Flickr

Flickr is a photo-sharing site is used to "put a face on" VA personnel, facilities, services and Veterans.

The VA's Flickr address is www.flickr.com/photos/VeteransAffairs

4. Vantage Point

This is the official blog of the VA and provides a forum for Veterans, active-duty military, their families and the general public to learn about the Department and its initiatives and to contribute feedback. Since VA employees are encouraged to submit guest blogs, Vantage Point may also be used in local outreach and marketing efforts if approved by the VR&E Officer and the RO Director.

5. YouTube Channel

YouTube provides a video posting site for individuals to share and view videos. The website also provides a forum for response to videos by written reply or video reply. VR&E Service will solicit and may post testimonial-type videos featuring Chapter 31 participants discussing their experiences in the VetSuccess program. VR&E Service may also utilize YouTube to reach out to employers to market VA Vocational Rehabilitation Program services and to encourage them to consider VR&E as a hiring resource. Staff must contact the VA Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs and the VA Social Media Office before submitting a video.

Go to www.youtube.com/user/DeptVetAffairs#g/c/A93A5833057D78B7 for VA videos on YouTube.

g. Partnerships

Establishing partner relationships with employers not only assists in expeditiously placing Veterans in suitable employment, but also is beneficial when regular hiring proves difficult for Veterans who have special and complicated circumstances.

1. On-the-Job Training

For more information regarding on-the-job training (OJT), refer to 38 CFR 21.296 and M28R.VI.A.12.

2. Non-Paid Work Experience Program

For more information on the Non-Paid Work Experience (NPWE) program, refer to 38 CFR 21.299 and M28R.VI.A.12.

3. Special Employer Incentive

For more information on the Special Employer Incentive (SEI) initiative, refer to 38 CFR 21.256 and M28R.VI.A.7.

4. Memoranda of Understanding (MOU)

MOUs are developed to increase employment and training opportunities for Veterans with disabilities. MOUs provide for a pre-established agreement on shared costs and responsibilities between the employer and VR&E. For more information on VR&E's national MOUs, refer to M28R.VI.A.6. See Appendix K to review VR&E's current MOUs.

5. Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS)

VA has a partnership with U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service (DOL/VETS). The VETS staff provides direct job-placement services to Veterans. VETS offers Veterans assistance with Veterans' preference eligibility information, Uniform Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) guidance, and Hire Vets First initiatives. VETS utilizes DVOPs and LVERs in the field to facilitate outreach and job placement efforts on behalf of DOL and VA.

5.06 Federal Veterans Employment Initiative

The Federal Veterans Employment Initiative, Executive Order 13518, signed November 9, 2009, enhances and promotes recruitment of Veterans for employment opportunities within the executive branch. It establishes an interagency Council on Veterans Employment and requires each federal agency to develop an Operational Plan for the employment of Veterans. Each agency on the Council must also provide a full-time Human Resources Specialist to serve as the agency's Veterans Employment Program Coordinator. This specialist is responsible for coordinating and managing employment of Veterans and must perform outreach activities at the agency, including helping with the placement of

Veterans with disabilities.

More information is available at www.fedshirevets.gov. Any VRC/EC assisting a Veteran in Job Ready Services should utilize this site both as a one-stop shop for information on federal employment of Veterans and as a directory to find the Veterans ECs at different federal agencies.