

Colleagues,

One of VA's top priorities is to assist Service members and Veterans in charting a course to help them realize their educational, financial and employment goals after they leave the military. With the implementation of the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (VOW Act), most Service members will have the opportunity to take advantage of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to gain a basic understanding of how to compete in a tight job market and how to utilize their VA benefits. The VOW Act, which went into effect November 21, 2012, requires mandatory participation in TAP for most Service members transitioning to civilian status; upgrades career counseling options; teaches job hunting skills; and ensures the program is tailored to individuals and the 21st century job market. The Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA), Defense, Education, and Labor in collaboration with the Military Services and Small Business Administration are implementing various benefits, services and programs to support the law.

VA's enhanced benefits briefings, required for all Service members leaving the military to attend as part of TAP, provides a better understanding of Veterans benefits options and how to acquire them. In addition, VA is leading an optional two-day, career-based technical training class, which focuses on transitioning Service members to civilian occupations related to the vocational training of their choice. Other two-day optional courses, led by the Military Services and Small Business Administration include entrepreneurship and education.

The enhanced TAP is more interactive, integrated and relevant to meet today's Service members and their families' employment, financial and educational needs. Attached is a two page handout that provides additional information about TAP. To learn more on VA benefits and services, please visit <http://benefits.va.gov/benefits/>.

V/R

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VA Core Values: Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, Excellence ("I CARE")

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THE VOW TO HIRE HEROES ACT

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

HELPING SERVICE MEMBERS PREPARE FOR WHAT'S NEXT

What is the VOW to Hire Heroes Act?

- The VOW Act combines provisions of the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act and Hiring Heroes Act to provide seamless post-military transition for Service members
- The law also expands education, vocational rehabilitation and employment assistance, and tax incentives to hire Veterans
- The Departments of Veterans Affairs (VA), Defense (DoD) and Labor (DOL) are implementing various benefits, services and programs to support the law
- Transitioning Service members must receive one-on-one counseling, benefits briefings and the DOL employment workshop

Legislative Requirements Began November 21, 2012:

- Continuation of pre-separation counseling
- Mandatory attendance at the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), to include National Guard and Reserve Component Service members demobilizing after 180 days or more of active service
- Mandatory VA Benefits Briefings¹
- Mandatory DOL Employment Workshop¹

Service Members Will be Better Prepared for the 21st Century Job Market by Receiving:

- **Pre-Separation Counseling:** Individual assessments and one-on-one counseling with Military Service Representatives
- **Individual Transition Plan:** Customized roadmap to tailor individual needs for success
- **Employment Workshop:** DOL assists with translating military skills, searching for jobs, writing resumes and interviewing
- **Enhanced VA Benefit Briefings:** Comprehensive benefit workshops covering the entire spectrum of VA benefits for Veterans, Service members, their families and survivors

¹ Through the TAP memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DoD, DOL, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), Small Business Administration (SBA), Military Services, and VA



Enhanced VA Benefits Briefings Features:

- Re-designed briefing utilizes an interactive, adult-education orientated format
- Ratio of 50 attendees to one instructor; spouses or family members are encouraged to attend
- **VA Benefits I** briefing includes the following:
 - One-hour briefing that details VA education benefits
 - Three-hour briefing that covers other VA benefits and services
- **VA Benefits II²**, a new two-hour supplemental briefing includes:
 - Video presentation emphasizing benefits provided by the Veterans Benefits Administration and Veterans Health Administration
 - Guidance on benefits options and assistance with navigating eBenefits

Planned Features by October 2013:

- Two-day Technical Training Track with information on transitioning to civilian occupations, including career goals, pre-requisites and credentialing and cost/benefit analyses for vocational training

VOW Act Roll-Out:

VOW implementation began in November 2012. In collaboration with partner agencies, VA is assisting Service members and families in meeting their employment, financial and education goals. In the summer of 2012, VA, DoD, DOL and SBA piloted the enhanced TAP at select sites.

An interagency Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force has recommended additional initiatives designed to maximize career readiness of transitioning Service members. An overview of the recommendations for future implementation is depicted below.

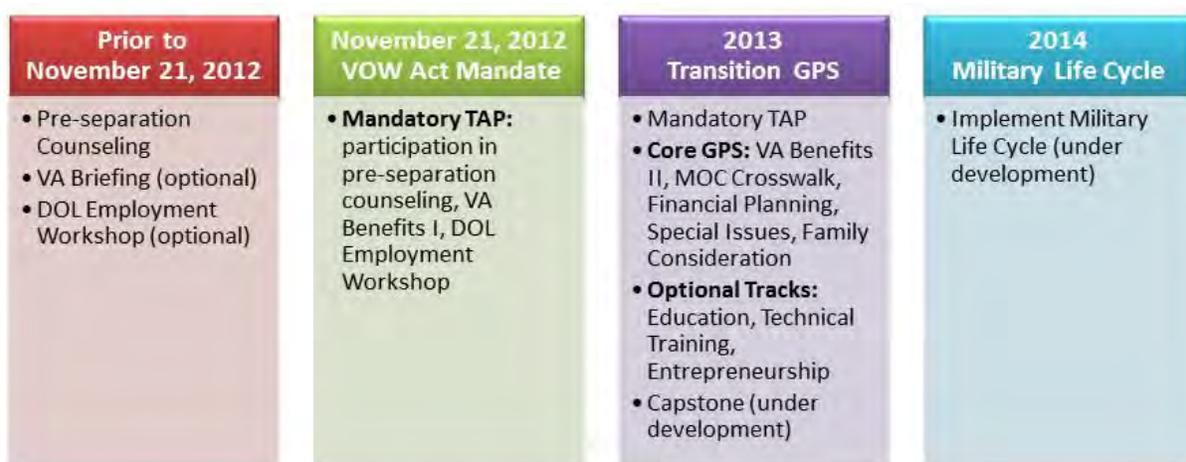


Figure 1. VEI Implementation Phases

www.benefits.va.gov/VOW



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²Full implementation planned for last quarter of FY13

