

SEPTEMBER 2019

HR NEWS

 IPMA 

Diversity & Inclusion

How to Build Diversity

Ease Veterans' Transition

Access Deaf & Disabled Talent

Measure Employee Engagement

Tap Into the Talent and Skills of Veterans Transitioning to Civilian Careers

By Angela Williams

Our nation's veterans are valuable workforce assets, delivering leadership skills, organizational expertise and an exceptional work ethic while demonstrating a relentless pursuit of goals whether working independently or collaboratively in teams. Employers nationwide, particularly federal contractors and subcontractors adhering to the U.S. Department of Labor's recommendation that they maintain a workforce consisting of at least 6.4 percent veterans, are realizing the value of hiring veterans.

Supporting veterans has been a pillar of Easterseals' work since World War II. In 2018 alone, our nationwide network of 69 community-based affiliates provided services ranging from employment and child care to medical rehabilitation and mental health resources to more than 20,000 veterans and military families.

It has been our honor to use our expertise in responding to the needs of veterans and their families to ensure their well-being and success and to give back to those who have given so much to our country, to our communities and to our society at large.



Organizations interested in learning more about Military and Veterans Services at Easterseals can visit www.easterseals.com/our-programs/military-veterans or contact the Easterseals in their community.

So, it is no surprise that employers frequently ask Easterseals how they can tap into this talent pool in their communities and what they can do to ensure the successful transition of a veteran to civilian life through employment.

Here, allow me to share a few recommendations for recruiting and hiring veterans.

Tailor Employment Services to Individual Veterans

In many cases, the most valuable support that a veteran can receive comes from a job coach or mentor. Easterseals Southern California specializes in providing job coaching and mentoring to veterans through its Bob Hope Veterans Support Program. The California program is funded by the Bob & Dolores Hope Foundation, and volunteers and staff offer one-on-one employment services to meet veterans' unique needs as they transition to civilian employment. Similar services are available through Easterseals affiliates in New Hampshire, Oregon and elsewhere across the country.

In addition to meeting with veterans to determine their interests, skills, desires and goals, mentors and coaches help program participants translate descriptions of military experience and skills into language that potential employers will understand. Significant differences exist between military nomenclature and business speak. Convincing them to eliminate jargon and spell out acronyms are essential first steps toward preparing veterans for their first post-military jobs.

The Veterans Staffing Network (VSN) of Easterseals DC MD VA goes further by doing actual placement. Since 2013, VSN has placed more than 2,200 veterans and military spouses in meaningful employment nationwide. The staff, who are also veterans and military spouses, do coaching and coordinate e-learning activities to determine optimal career opportunities for candidates prior to connecting them with employers who opt into the VSN's corporate network.

Make Offices and Worksites Accessible

Each veteran is unique, and some may be entering the workforce with a disability. This is why Easterseals works with employers to evaluate the accessibility of their offices and worksites, as well as to ensure the availability of reliable transportation to work. Employees with disabilities must be empowered to thrive. Sometimes, an accessibility solution is as simple as reconfiguring desks; other times, assistive technology is needed.

Thankfully, assistive technology is becoming more readily available. With support from the Comcast NBCUniversal Foundation, Easterseals has since 2011 had the resources to provide more than



57,000 people with assistive technology solutions so they can live, learn, work and play in their communities.

Once accessibility issues are resolved, employers need to make sure employees with disabilities can commute with minimal difficulties. Lack of reliable transportation is one of the most-frequent barriers to workforce participation, so employers should consider what services are available from local and state transportation agencies. In the D.C. area, the Easterseals Transportation Group has supplemented such resources for decades.

Do Not Neglect the Needs of Families and Caregivers

Public discourse regarding the need to support military veterans often ignores veterans' families and, for disabled vets, caregivers. Military spouses and children served the country in their own ways. Consequently, the most successful transitions to civilian life are inclusive of every member of veterans' families.

Offering family-friendly benefits to new employees goes a long way. These can include child care and afterschool programs, coverage for respite care and health and wellness programs.

Angela F. Williams is president and CEO of Easterseals, the world's preeminent charitable organization serving people with disabilities. She is also a highly decorated U.S. Air Force officer who boasts 30 years of leadership experience in the nonprofit and corporate sectors. You can reach Williams at angelawilliams@easterseals.com.

AW