



Ten Tips: Supporting a Veteran Family Member Returning to Work

Your loved one with a disability has a lot to offer in the workplace: skills, discipline, teamwork ability, resilience and courage. This is as true now as it ever was, even though things might have changed. Your loved one also has a range of rights, services and resources to support them in the transition to work life. A key challenge for any veteran with a disability is to not sell themselves short. Your loved one's talents, skills, passions and aspirations matter now as much as they ever did.

1. Work as part of the healing process.

Work isn't just about money. It's also about getting back to civilian life, about meeting people and about applying the skills and experiences learned in the military. Returning to work can be part of the healing process. Laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and state laws protect the rights of veterans with disabilities who wish to return to work. Also, there are a variety of resources for family members supporting a veteran with disabilities returning to civilian work life. Here are a few:

www.dol.gov/vets/programs/Real-life/main.htm

www.dhs.gov/xabout/careers/gc_1246894993888.shtm

www.militaryfamily.org/search/search.jsp

www.dol.gov/compliance/laws/comp-userra.htm

familysupportclearinghouse.org

www.familyofavet.com/aboutus.html

www.askjan.org/topics/veterans.htm

biztaxlaw.about.com/od/taxcredits/f/Whats-The-Tax-Credit-For-Hiring-Unemployed-Veterans-.htm

www.hireahero.org

vetcentral.us.jobs

www.hirevetsfirst.org

www.vetjobs.com

healmyptsd.com/

www.americasheroesatwork.gov

2. What about working and benefits?

Benefits and work incentives planning are critical supports to aid veterans in balancing their recovery, managing the array of public benefits they receive (e.g. Veterans Administration, Social Security Administration, healthcare and others) and taking their first steps toward going back to work. Work Incentive Planning and Assistance programs provide these important services. For more information, go to:

www.military.com/benefits/military-pay/va-disability-compensation

www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/va-compensation-tables

yourtickettowork.com/wipas

www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/

www.va.gov/

www.military.com/benefits/veteran-benefits/state-veterans-benefits-directory

www.fallenheroesfund.org/

biztaxlaw.about.com/od/taxcredits/f/Whats-The-Tax-Credit-For-Hiring-Unemployed-Veterans-.htm

3. Can families of veterans take work leave to care for a family member with a service-connected disability?

Yes. Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), family members of veterans with service-connected disabilities can take leave from work to deal with this issue. New FMLA provisions expand the law to include work leave related to deployment and service connected disabilities. For more information, go to:

www.dol.gov

(Click on Family & Medical Leave Act)

4. Telling others about a disability when applying for a job-- It's your loved one's legally protected choice.

Conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, or traumatic brain injury may not always be obvious to others. But these conditions are often still considered disabilities. This is important because veterans with both obvious and non-obvious disabilities have rights under the American with Disabilities Act and other laws. Veterans (or anyone else with a disability) do not have to tell a potential employer about a disability when applying for a job. This is the case even when they believe they might need an accommodation once on the job. Veterans who decide they don't want to tell about their disability when they apply for a job are not "lying." They are exercising a legally protected choice. For more information, go to:

www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/guidance-inquiries.html

www.earnworks.com

www.careeronestop.org/militarytransition/disability.aspx

5. Telling about a disability: Making a decision that's right for your loved one.

Before applying for a job, support your loved one in making a decision about telling a potential employer about a disability. Some choose not to tell about their disability. They might think the disability doesn't impact the job; they might believe they won't be considered fairly for the job; or they might fear a potential employer will not understand. Others may decide they do want to tell a potential employer about their disability. They might want to discuss their needs on the job; they might be eligible for special considerations in the workplace; or they might just want to avoid surprises after they get hired. Help your loved one think through a decision that's right for them. For more information, go to:

www.askjan.org/topics/discl.htm

www.eeoc.gov/facts/jobapplicant.html

6. What if my family member needs an adjustment or medication at work in order to do the job?

Veterans (and any worker) with a disability often have a right to a reasonable accommodation when applying for a job and when working. Simply put, an accommodation is any change in the work environment or in how things are usually done that enables a worker with a disability to enjoy equal work opportunity and perform the essential functions of a job. Needing an accommodation does not mean your family member cannot do the job. It's just a different way to get the job done. Examples of accommodations are changing facilities or equipment, changing schedules, changing work location, changing marginal (non-essential) job tasks, or getting extra time to do a test during a job application. For more information, go to:

www.askjan.org

www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/accommodation.html

7. Does our family have to pay for this accommodation?

No. The employer pays for accommodations that are needed and used in the workplace. However, there are financial incentives and supports in place to help employers pay for accommodations. Before approaching an employer to discuss accommodations, it might be helpful to come into the discussion with this information. For more information, call 1-800-949-4232 or go to :

www.askjan.org

cap.tricare.mil/wsm

8. Think through what accommodations your family member might need.

When it comes to accommodations, no one size fits all. Even veterans with the same condition might need different types of accommodations depending on their job, their situation and the duration of their disability. Support your family member in thinking through their condition, how their condition could impact job tasks, their own work style, and how their condition might change over time. For more information, go to:

www.askjan.org/media/atoz.htm

cap.tricare.mil/wsm

9. Getting an accommodation on the job is a right, not a weakness.

Just because someone needs an accommodation does not mean they are unqualified for the job. Also, an employer cannot penalize or terminate an employee because they ask for an accommodation. If your family member is working with a disability, she or he should consider asking for an accommodation before the disability impacts job performance. An accommodation is not a special favor or a sign of weakness; it is a legally protected right. For more information, go to

www.askjan.org/Eeguide/IIRequest.htm

10. Myths about workers with disabilities—Don't buy into them!

Studies show that employees with disabilities perform as well on the job as any other employee. They may just do things a little differently. For more information, go to

www.doleta.gov/disability/html/docs/myths.cfm

www.whitman.syr.edu/ebv

The contents of this brief were developed under a grant from the Department of Education, NIDRR grant number H133 A110020. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Contact Information

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Employment and Disability Institute
Cornell University
Dolgen Hall
Ithaca, New York 14853-3901

Toll-Free: 800.949.4232 (NY, NJ, PR, USVI)

Voice: 607.255.6686

Fax: 607.255.2763

TTY: 607.255.6686

Email: northeastada@cornell.edu

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