

“Hiring Veterans and Persons with Disabilities” Webcast Transcript

June 30, 2011

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Hello, and welcome to the Division of Diversity and Civil Rights training webcast regarding Hiring Veterans and Persons with Disabilities. My name is Brian Lawler, and I am the Diversity Employment Specialist for Region 1.

This training will take approximately 1 hour to complete, and you may stop and start the webcast at any point.

Let’s begin!

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If you are a manager or a supervisor and would like to receive one hour of DIVERSITY training credit for this webcast, you must complete the 10 question quiz following this presentation.

To receive credit, you must complete the quiz with a minimum score of 70% and either fax your results page to our office at 503-231-2322 or scan and e-mail your results page to fw1_dcr@fws.gov.

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During this webcast, I will discuss how to use your online tool-kit for hiring Veterans and persons with disabilities. I’ll also speak about the ‘value’ of hiring a Veteran to the Service, programs available to aid Veterans in gaining both experience and education, the special hiring authorities for both Veterans and persons with disabilities, and lastly I will talk about the process for performing a targeted recruitment effort for persons with severe disabilities. This webcast will also contain a few slides with common questions and answers.

Attached to this webcast is a handout that contains a list of all the references discussed in this training and a complete transcript for viewing.

To kick off this webcast, please enjoy the video “New Day” which was produced by the Office of Personnel Management.

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“New Day” Video

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The first topic of the webcast covers your hiring tool-kit. This is an online-resource that can be viewed at Americas heroes at work dot gov. This website offers an interactive way to design your strategy, educate, recruit, hire, and retain employees. It also has valuable resources to assist managers and supervisors in building a diverse and inclusive workplace.

Keep in mind; this is just one of many sites that contain information that is helpful in finding the best candidates to fill our vacancies.

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The online toolkit located at America’s heroes at work website has been designed to: Assist and educate Supervisors and Managers who have made the proactive decision to include transitioning military members, Veterans (including wounded warriors) in their recruitment and hiring initiatives.

It pinpoints helpful tools and outline some important steps to take when designing a Veterans hiring initiative that works for our organization.

And it showcases promising practices related to recruiting, retaining and promoting Veteran employees.

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The first step is to design a strategy....

Become familiar with the benefits of hiring transitioning military members, Veterans and wounded warriors

Consider our overall mission and decide how to strategically incorporate this population of jobseekers into your recruitment efforts. Though some employers may be looking to hire Veterans due to a sense of patriotism, most are seeking out this category of job seekers because of pure return on investment. Veterans and returning military members bring unique skills and experiences to the civilian workforce. Because of the training, work ethic and goal-oriented culture of the military, many companies report that Veterans not only make excellent employees, but also tend to have a higher rate of retention. There are many reasons why companies are seeking out Veterans - the most important being that they bring with them the skills to do the job, in a timely and efficient manner. These skills include both the hard and soft skills coveted by today's employers, such as leadership, management, teamwork, accountability and responsibility.

While Veterans and transitioning military members tend to have a similar set of non-tangible skills, each is an individual and should not be "pigeonholed" into a position or career pathway simply because of their military service. A post-military career path has as much to do with training skill sets as it does with personality, interests and individual goals. Though some sources have attempted to identify the top civilian jobs for transitioning military members and Veterans (see [Online-Education.net's](#) "Top Ten" and [Money Magazine's](#) "Top 20" websites for more information), it is important to consider there are many industries not identified in which military members can apply their knowledge and skills.

Planning for the basics will begin with a "Basic Planning [Template](#)" that will get you thinking about the steps necessary to beginning a Veterans hiring initiative. This template is located both online and is available through your Diversity Employment Program Specialist.

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The second step is creating a welcoming and educated workplace.

Creating a welcoming environment for Veterans and returning military members doesn't take much effort – but it does take some thoughtful planning.

Develop an understanding of military culture and experience

When standing up any initiative, or preparing your workplace to welcome Veterans, keep in mind that no two have the same experiences. That said, acquiring knowledge regarding military culture can definitely improve employers' and co-workers' abilities to understand, communicate and effectively interact with Veterans, military members and their families. Military experience varies greatly from military member to military member. For those without a military background, it is helpful to become better educated regarding the levels of responsibilities a Veteran or transitioning military member may have had while in the military:

- **Enlisted Personnel** are the specialists of the military. They are trained to perform specific hands-on tasks in the military as needed for any mission. As enlisted personnel progress up the ranks, they assume more responsibility and provide direct supervision to their subordinates.
- **Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO)** are enlisted military members who possess some degree of authority, usually obtained by promotion for performance, knowledge and discipline. Additional testing and leadership schools are often required to achieve these ranks.
- **Warrant Officers** are highly trained specialists and subject matter experts.
- **Commissioned Officers** have the primary function of providing overall management, planning and leadership. They also must have a minimum of a four-year bachelor's degree.

Bottom line: Commissioned Officers plan, Warrant Officers serve as the subject matter experts, NCOs manage the "doing" with the spirit of the commissioned officer's plan in mind, and the Enlisted Personnel are the ones who "do" the work.

Job shadowing

Consider offering job shadowing opportunities for transitioning military members so they can explore the Service and make an informed decision as to whether or not their skills and experiences meet the needs and demands of our workforce, including the organizational environment.

Considerations for Veterans with Disabilities

Provide all new hires, regardless of disability or perceived need, information outlining the process for requesting reasonable accommodations at every point in the employment process. Making the process for requesting reasonable accommodations known lets ALL employees know the Service's commitment to ensuring equal access and opportunity.

Learn the facts about the invisible wounds of war: Demystifying Traumatic Brain Injury, or TBI, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD, in the workplace

Two of the most common "invisible wounds" are Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and/or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

The America's Heroes at Work program, along with support from its federal partners, has created an online training module designed to educate Human Resource professionals, hiring managers and others about TBI and PTSD employment issues.

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The 3rd step is to actively recruit Veterans and military spouses. Broaden your knowledge of how and where to find Veterans - and consider instituting a few strategies to help Veterans better find you:

Determine employment opportunities and create detailed Position Descriptions, or PD's.

It is important to determine the opportunities that exist and review PD's to ensure they are accurate and up to date. It is also a good idea to revisit PD's annually to ensure they are accurate and true to the mission of the Service. The more detailed and specific the PD, the more likely you are to attract Veteran candidates who understand how their skills and experience can translate to the civilian workforce.

Consider using military language in your outreach and job descriptions

O*NET OnLine offers a [Military to Civilian Crosswalk](#) that may help you improve your Veterans outreach by targeting specific Military Occupational Classification codes that relate to civilian positions.

Simply enter the job title you are looking to fill (e.g., accountant, human resources, warehouse, etc.) into the military search section. Most civilian occupations will display a list of the occupational specialty codes used by the different branches of the military. You might consider including a list these codes in your job announcement as a way to help Veterans better understand the correlation between their military training and the civilian career you have available.

Paid internships

The Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) and Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) are converting to the “Pathways” Program, but until that conversion is complete, we are still able to bring students on under these programs. Both SCEP and STEP offer internships to students, and both are an excellent method for engaging youth into the fields of conservation and natural science.

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Access credible resources from the Federal government to help you look for qualified Veterans and wounded warriors who are seeking employment:

[Service Locator](#) is an online resource that allows you to find workforce-related resources according to your location. Simply enter your zip code, click "go" and you will receive a list of One-Stop Career Centers in your area. All One-Stop Career Centers have Veterans Representatives who work on both the supply and demand side of recruitment. Ask to speak with the Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) or the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) specialist at the center nearest you.

[Army Career Alumni Program](#) (ACAP) was created by the Army to help soldiers succeed in their transition from military service. ACAP's “Employers Path” was created to help employers find the experienced and reliable employees they need to support their economic growth.

[Employer Partnership of the Armed Forces](#), operated by the Army Reserve, lends assistance not only to those looking for a job, but also to public and private employers who are ready to hire former military members.

[VetSuccess.gov](#) is a website sponsored by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. It provides the opportunity for Veterans to post their resumes, and for employers to post job openings, and links directly to Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment resources for employers.

And finally, The [National Resource Directory](#), a collaborative partnership among the Departments of Defense, Labor and Veterans Affairs. It offers vetted resources related to employment for both employers and injured military members.

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Official “Wounded Warrior” Programs

These programs are sponsored by each of the five military service branches. In general, each provides individualized support, assistance and advocacy for severely wounded, ill and injured military members regardless of their military status or location, typically for as long as it takes. Each program connects organizations like ours with wounded military members who are drawing a salary from the Department of Defense, and at the same time can work between 15-20 hours per week as an intern while they are undergoing treatment.

As a sponsor working through one of the official Wounded Warrior Programs, you designate yourself as truly committed to showing a special interest and concern for our nation's disabled Veterans.

For more information on how to sponsor an OWF intern, contact your Diversity Employment Program Specialist at 503-231-2260 or e-mail fw1_dcr@fws.gov.

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The 4th step is to Hire Qualified Veterans and Learn How To Accommodate Wounded Warriors
Make sure that your on-boarding orientation is thorough and effective

Understand your responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Facts about the ADA and the responsibilities of employers with regard to reasonable accommodation can be found in a variety of sources. A few official sources include: the [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#), the [U.S. Department of Justice, Cornell University's Employment & Disability Institute](#) and the [ADA's National Network of Disability Business Technical Assistance Centers](#). Links to these resources are located on the reference sheet that is attached to this webcast.

Consider disclosure concerns

One of the biggest challenges faced by people (Veterans included) experiencing the impact of a non-apparent disability (or invisible injury) is whether or not to disclose this information to a prospective or current employer. Many people believe disclosing such information will have negative consequences, for instance, an employer not furthering an employment opportunity or, if the person is already employed, terminating him or her. Whether or not this is true, it is a common perception that often leads employees or potential employees to not share information. The issue is confusing to both employers and employees alike.

First and foremost, be up front with all employees and prospective employees about the Department of Interior's process for requesting and receiving Reasonable Accommodations on the job.

Know where to obtain free, one-on-one guidance on job accommodations

Should a manager, supervisor, or HR professional need or prefer additional one-on-one assistance regarding accommodations for Veterans with disabilities, or any employees with disabilities, the [Job Accommodation Network](#) (JAN) can help. JAN is the leading source of free, expert and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations. Contact JAN via phone at (800) 526-7234 or (877) 781-9403 (TTY) or online at [AskJan.org](#). Help is also available through Angela Butsch, the Region 1 and 8 Accessibility Coordinator, at 503-231-2260 or fw1_dcr@fws.gov.

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The 5th step is to promote an inclusive workplace to retain Veterans and Persons with Disabilities.

Retaining a skilled workforce requires effort after the hire.

Place a value on military service

Understand that many transitioning military members have leadership capabilities above and beyond the typical civilian employee. Value this characteristic and find ways to weave leadership responsibilities into the civilian position. Be sure to overtly demonstrate the values that the Service places on military training and experience, perhaps by creating a Veteran-specific page on your website or reaching out to a local [Veterans Service Organization](#) (VSO) to find out how you can partner to assist in transitioning military members into the civilian workforce.

Develop and promote mentorship in the workplace - Vet to Vet

Mentorships are not a new workforce concept, but according to the information gathered from Veterans and employer networks, Veterans in particular look for connections (and ways to connect to their peers) in the civilian workforce. Ideally, someone who has had similar experiences and has already been through the transition process could provide support to a new or transitioning Veteran employee. While Employee Assistance Programs help employees address personal problems, the guidance, support, friendship and advice from one Veteran to another is unparalleled. People, as a whole, simply want to feel connected and comfortable - and this is no different for transitioning military members. Consider reaching out to your employees to learn who your Veterans are, as well as military spouses and family members. Find out from those groups what you can do to support them - and what they can do to help support new Veteran employees in your organization.

There are a number of new studies indicating that Veteran mentorships in the workplace are a promising practice for employment and retention. In fact, in 2007, the Disability Management Employer Coalition ([DMEC](#)) convened various experts to discuss issues related to reintegration to support employees and their dependents. A number of recommendations were identified as best practices. Both the full and an abbreviated report detailing these recommendations are available at the [DMEC website](#).

Practice Veterans appreciation and promote a Veteran-friendly workplace

Just as we recognize and celebrate Black history during the month of February, or breast cancer awareness during the month of October, so too should military members and the families of military members be recognized for their service and/or the ultimate sacrifice on Veterans Day and Memorial Day. While our Veterans should be thanked and honored year round, consider special recognition of these national holidays within your organization. Consider including a workforce education initiative on issues related to Veterans and their families.

Of course, appreciating Veterans means much more than specific events during the year. Recognition as a Veteran-friendly organization should be an ongoing effort and can be

accomplished by all organizations, large or small. The point is to make it a purposeful focus and not a haphazard one.

Consider participating in local Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Programs

The Secretary of Defense initiated the [Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program](#) to provide information, services, referrals and proactive outreach programs to Soldiers of the National Guard and Reserve as well as their families through all phases of the deployment cycle. The goal of the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program is to prepare Soldiers and families for mobilization, sustain families during mobilization, and reintegrate Soldiers with their families, communities and employers upon redeployment or release from active duty.

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program was designed to fulfill this need by serving as the "integrator" to link military members and their families with the appropriate service based on their individual need. And for employers, the [Army Reserve Employer Partner Initiative](#) is a one-of-a-kind initiative designed to formalize the relationship between the Army Reserve and the private sector. Both of these entities share the common goals of strengthening the community, supporting Army Reserve soldiers and families, and maintaining a strong economy.

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The 6th step is to keep helpful tools and resources at your fingertips!

Included with this webcast is a list of resources to help hiring managers in their Veteran hiring efforts. While certainly not all-inclusive, this list is designed to be a quick go-to reference guide of helpful sources of information related to Veterans hiring, retention and promotion.

Keeping informed via social networking and e-news

Social Networking

Consider joining groups pertaining to Veterans and Veterans' employment on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. For example, there are currently more than 250 Veteran-related groups on LinkedIn. All will not be appropriate for you to join, of course, but some will be - if not for posting job descriptions, but for receiving and sharing information. Additionally, nonprofits such as Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America and the Wounded Warrior Project have their own social networking sites to support the employment of today's transitioning Veterans.

E-News

Staying connected to issues supporting the employment of Veterans and transitioning military members is easy. There are dozens of e-news sites that cater to Veteran issues.

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In addition to possessing transferable capabilities, Veterans have the proven aptitude to learn new skills and concepts

- The military trains people to lead by example as well as through direction, delegation, motivation and inspiration, even in the most trying circumstances
- Out of responsibility to their colleagues, Veterans understand how to blend individual and group productivity
- Veterans have learned to work side by side one another regardless of their diverse race, gender, geographic origin, ethnic background, religion and economic status and capabilities
- Under the stress of tight schedules and limited resources, Veterans know how to accomplish priorities on time
- With their acceptance of accountability for themselves, superiors and subordinates, Veterans grasp their role within a hierarchical framework
- Working where correct, timely data is critical, Veterans frequently have experience with the most advanced information and network technology
- Veterans know what it means to do “an honest day’s work.” Prospective employers can take advantage of a track record of trustworthiness
- Thanks to extensive training and conscientiousness, Veterans can be instrumental in protecting employees, property, and material
- Beyond dealing positively with issues of personal maturity, Veterans may have overcome difficult situations and personal disabilities through strength and determination

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The history of Veteran’s Preference.

The use of preference in Federal appointments extends back to the days of the Revolutionary War. Though no legal basis existed to govern treatment of war veterans, certain soldiers were rewarded for their service by the Federal government.

It wasn’t till the end of the Civil War in 1865 that congress passed the first significant Veterans preference legislation.

Veteran’s Preference as it exists today, derives from the Veterans Preference Act of 1944. This act was a consolidation of the various preference provisions already in effect by the various Executive Orders and Civil Service Commission regulations.

The act made clear that preference was to be a reward for patriotic duties by a grateful country willing to recognize the sacrifices of its Veterans when peace comes.

In addition, the Act also helps ensure that Veterans obtain or regain an economic position they otherwise would have attained had they not served in the Armed Forces.

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Veteran's Preference in Competitive Hiring

Veteran's preference applies in "Competitive Certificates." This does not guarantee a job to a Veteran and does not apply to internal agency actions such as Promotion, Transfer, Reassignment, and Reinstatement

Derived Preference is a method where you, as the spouse, widow/widower, or mother of a veteran may be eligible to claim veterans' preference when your veteran is unable to use it. You will be given XP Preference or 10 points, in appointment if you meet the eligibility criteria. Both a mother and a spouse, including widow or widower, may be entitled to preference on the basis of the same veteran's service if they both meet the requirements. However, neither may receive preference if the veteran is living and is qualified for Federal employment.

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This next section will cover the hiring authorities that are germane for Veterans.

These include authorities for Veterans who have a disability rating of 30% or more, the Veteran Recruitment Act (VRA), and the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act (VEOA). In addition, we will cover the Schedule "A" hiring authority that allow for non-competitive appointments for persons with disabilities.

Note: Your HR Staffing Specialist can answer questions about these special hiring authorities

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The Veterans Recruitment Act or VRA is a non-competitive hiring authority for positions up to and including GS-11. The promotion potential of the position is not a factor.

The following individuals are eligible for a VRA appointment:

Disabled Veterans;

Veterans who served on active duty in the Armed Forces during a war declared by Congress, or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized;

Veterans who, while serving on active duty in the Armed Forces, participated in a military operation for which the Armed Forces Service Medal was awarded; and

Veterans who have separated from active duty within the past 3 years.

There is no minimum service requirement, but the individual must have served on active duty, not active duty for training. NOTE: For Veterans who have less than 15 years of education, there is a training or education requirement.

Subject to Veterans' preference, you may appoint any VRA eligible candidate who meets the qualifications requirements for the position. No announcement is required.

If an agency has two or more VRA candidates and one or more is a preference-eligible Veteran, the agency must apply the Veterans' preference procedures.

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Veterans who are rated 30% or More Disabled

This hiring authority allows for a non-competitive time limited appointment of more than 60 days or a term appointment to any veteran who:

- Retired from active military service with a disability rating of 30 percent or more; or
- Rated by the Department of Veterans Affairs as having a compensable service-connected disability of 30 percent or more.

There is no grade level limitation for this authority, but the appointee must meet all qualification requirements, including any written test requirement. You may convert the employee, without a break in service, to a career or career-conditional appointment at any time during the employee's temporary or term appointment.

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The Veteran's Employment Opportunities Act, or VEOA, of 1998.

This ACT allows eligible preference candidates and certain Veterans to apply for positions announced under merit promotion procedures when the agency is recruiting from outside its own workforce.

Although VEOA gives Veterans the RIGHT to apply on a merit or MPP Vacancy, their Veterans Preference does NOT apply

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Schedule "A" and Targeted Disability Non-Competitive Hiring Authority

People with certain Severe Physical, Mental or Psychiatric Disabilities who have documentation from a licensed medical professional or other entity may apply for noncompetitive appointment through the Schedule A hiring authority. Applicants with documentation may apply directly to agencies' Selective Placement Program Coordinators (SPPC) or equivalent to receive placement assistance. Simply send a resume plus the proof of your disability and job certification documentation to the agency's SPPC to apply. As proof of disability and certification of job readiness we accept appropriate documentation issued from a licensed medical professional, a licensed vocational rehabilitation specialist, or any Federal or State agency, or an agency that issues or provides disability benefits.

Targeted disabilities, as defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or EEOC, are disabilities "targeted" for emphasis in affirmative action planning. These are: deafness, blindness, missing extremities, partial paralysis, complete paralysis, convulsive disorders, mental illness, and genetic or physical condition affecting limbs and or spine. Although the list of targeted disabilities is meant to include those who are most likely to suffer job discrimination, the EEOC recognizes that some disabilities that are not targeted are nevertheless just as severe or more severe than some of the targeted disabilities.

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Executive Order 13163 signed on July 26th, 2010, set a goal of hiring 100,000 PWD in the next 5 years

Less than 5% of the Federal workforce identifies themselves with having a disability, and less than 1% identified as "Targeted Disabled"

This Executive Order reflects the Presidents direction to make the Federal workplace more reflective of the American public that we serve.

One way to help achieve the goal set forth in the Executive Order is to recruit to fill a vacancy with a persons who has a "Targeted Disability"

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Filling a vacancy through a "Targeted Recruiting" effort

- This process is different than the traditional "USAJobs.gov" approach in that the applicant pool consists only of persons with Severe Disabilities who are eligible for appointment under the Schedule "A" hiring authority.
- The applicant pool is generated by the outreach that the Division of Diversity & Civil Rights performs, and the only people who will be considered are those candidates who have targeted disabilities and qualify for the position.
- The announcement will not be made on USAJobs or open to the general public.

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The process for filling a vacancy with a person who has a "Targeted Disability"
First, identify the position that will be filled.

Verify the Position Description is accurate and up-to-date.

Then, make sure the work environment is accessible to the various communities of Persons with Disabilities

This can be done with the assistance of the Regional Accessibility Coordinator who can be reached at 503-231-2260 or e-mail fw1_dcr@fws.gov

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Contact your Diversity Employment Specialist, or DES, to begin developing a Draft Job Opportunity Notice. Once completed, forward the Draft Job Opportunity Notice, the request for personnel action, and any other supporting documents to fill the vacancy to your HR Staffing Specialist.

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After your HR Staffing Specialist approves the Job Announcement, your DES will perform the outreach and receive applications.

- The ideal amount of time to advertise and generate an applicant pool is 4 weeks
- We will contact the various organizations that work with PWD to find qualified applicants
- And we will screen applications for completeness

Once the deadline for outreach has passed, the DES will forward applications to HR for qualification and eligibility review.

- Those applicants who are qualified will be referred to the selecting official
- As always, Veterans Preference applies!

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And finally, it is time to perform the Interviews and check references on the qualified candidates.

Also remember that you can ask about the need for a reasonable accommodation before, during, or after the interview process!

Once, you have interviewed, you can now make a decision and then inform HR of your decision.

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Know the answers to common questions about Veteran and disability employment, such as:
How much do reasonable accommodations cost?

According to a recent accommodations study from the Job Accommodation Network, 56% of accommodations cost absolutely nothing!

Of those accommodations that did have a cost, the typical one-time expenditure by employers is \$600.

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"Are wounded warrior employees the right fit for the Service?"

First and foremost, it is important to expect the same level of performance from all employees, regardless of age, disability, gender, ethnicity, etc. Plain and simple, no one, Veteran/wounded warrior included, should be hired for any reason other than the fact they are qualified - and have the skills to do the job.

Employees with disabilities should absolutely be held to the same standards as those without disabilities.

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"Why is employment such an important part of a wounded warrior's recovery process?"

For our returning military members, especially those dealing with the impact of a disability, employment serves as a source of achievement, satisfaction and a boost to self-esteem, in addition to providing an income.

Work is often a critical element of a therapeutic road to recovery and routine.

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"Where can I find disability employment training?"

The Division of Diversity and Civil Rights offers many forms of training on disability employment. Contact an EEO Specialist at either 503-231-2260 or fw1_dcr@fws.gov.

Training assistance is also available at a free or nominal cost from the local Disability Technical Assistance Centers or DBTAC. The DBTAC National Network of ADA Centers offers training on the ADA and other disability-related topics in various formats to meet the needs of diverse learning styles. Each DBTAC/ADA Center offers customized training and many of the training programs provide education credit. Check out - Popular Training Formats, What's New in Training!, and Search ADA Training Resource Center. Popular training formats include: Audio

Conferences, Conferences & Training Events, Courses, Podcasts, Publications/Training Materials, Toolkit /Train-the-Trainer, Videos, and Webcasts.

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Thank you for taking the time to learn about the “Hiring Veterans and Persons with Disabilities”.

Please retain the contact information on this page to reach us if you have a need for further assistance or any other questions.

Remember to receive credit for completing this webcast you will need to complete the ten question true and false quiz with a minimum score of 70% and send the results page of the quiz to DCR at fw1_dcr@fws.gov or by faxing the results page to area code 503-231-2322. In order to help us provide better services we certainly would appreciate receiving a completed survey form from you.

Thanks again and have a nice day. Good Bye.