

Veterans As Mentors (VAMs) Guide to Mentoring

September 2012



Message from the Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO)



At the Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO), we want to thank you for volunteering to participate in the Veterans As Mentors (VAMs) program.

We hope you find your role as a Veteran mentor beneficial and satisfying. These are some of the benefits you may experience:

- Respect for your role in imparting the values of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to your mentee.
- Pride in knowing that the mentee's progress and achievements will extend into VA's future.
- An opportunity to validate a Veteran's or Military Service Member's self-worth.
- A chance to cultivate your leadership and interpersonal skills.
- Recognition of service from your peers.
- Knowledge gained from your mentee – mentors and mentees learn from one another.

This guide contains information and tips on mentoring. Whether you are a mentor-to-be or an experienced mentor, you should read this guide at least once. After reading the guide, you'll be prepared to be a Veteran mentor.

Your Role as a Veteran Mentor

Your role as a Veteran mentor is to provide VA cultural mentoring to newly hired Veterans and Military Service Members.

Civilian organizations are less structured than the military. The cultural differences can sometimes cause difficulties for Veterans on the job. Not all Veterans adapt well to the more ambiguous work environment of civilian employers — and they simply need to learn the new culture by asking questions and absorbing the differences.



VA culture includes the shared values and practices of the Department's employees

Others adapt quickly and easily by observing the new culture and learning to speak the new language (civilian language).

Take a moment and reflect about your transition from the military to the federal civilian workplace. What were your frustration points and challenges? Write them in the space below.

The challenges you wrote may be the same for other newly hired Veterans and Military Service Members.

You may also be called upon to answer questions such as:

- What is the protocol for when I've been asked to attend meetings scheduled at the same time?
- What happens if I am late? Absent?
- To whom should I go to resolve conflicts with coworkers and/or supervisors?
- How will my work be evaluated?

In addition, every office has its own style. What is a typical day in the life of an employee at VA? Are people dressed in business casual, jeans and t-shirts, or suits? Do folks get together for after-hours events? You may also need to provide mentoring on the office culture or recommend that they ask their supervisor.

Mentoring Process Overview

The VAMs mentoring process begins with you being assigned a mentee and then contacting the mentee to set up your first meeting.

First Meeting

At the first meeting with your mentee, you should discuss the [Confidentiality Agreement](#) and provide a copy of the agreement to the mentee. Ask the mentee what questions about VA he or she has. During the meeting, complete the [Mentoring Debrief Form](#) to keep track of what was discussed and the goals you may have set for your mentee. At the end of the meeting, make sure to:



- Set up the next meeting.
- Ask your mentee:
 - What did you like about the mentoring meeting?
 - What would you change about the mentoring meeting?

Apply what is working well and what you would change to your next meeting with the mentee.

Future Meeting

Use the completed Mentoring Debrief Form as a starting point for discussions in your next meeting. During each meeting, use open-ended questions and listen actively. Also, encourage conversation and questions from your mentee. Remember to complete a Mentoring Debrief Form so you'll have a starting point for discussion in your next meeting.

Final Meeting

At the final meeting ask your mentee to complete the [Closure Form](#). After the meeting, review and evaluate your own performance and think about how you will mentor differently the next time. Complete the Closure Form.

Use the [Veteran Mentor Checklist](#) to help you keep on track with the VAMs mentoring process.

Tips on Mentoring

Mentoring is...

- Facilitating
- Giving support
- Providing advice
- Building confidence and trust
- Positive guidance
- Motivating the mentee
- Confidential
- Using knowledge

Mentoring isn't...

- Having power over someone
- Dictating
- A way of making yourself look good
- Rigid
- Imposing ideas
- Working in isolation, without purpose
- Counseling
- Judging



Mentoring means listening, sharing and providing encouragement and is about supporting the mentee. You should use your knowledge and experience to respond compassionately and appropriately to questions. Remember to respond honestly and candidly to those questions and share experiences and insights that may be helpful to the mentee.

Keep all information shared by your mentees confidential unless your mentees are a danger to self or others or if your mentees gives you permission to share their personal information so that you can help them.

The more serious and personal your mentee’s issue is, the more cautious you should be about giving advice. Instead, you should refer your mentee to the appropriate resources. Let’s review some resources that you may need to suggest to your mentee.

Mentee’s issue is...	Refer mentee to...
Thoughts of suicide	Veterans Crisis Line by phone at 1-800-273-8255, press 1; by text message to 838255; or by chatting online (http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/)
Serious conflicts with supervisor or coworker	Office of Resolution Management at (ORM) 1-888-737-3361 (1-888-RES-EEO1) or TDD 1-888-626-9008
A disability that he or she feels is affecting work performance	VA Office of Diversity and Inclusion website at www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx
Being deployed and needs help preparing for deployment	VA for Vets website at VAforVets.VA.gov or coach at 1-855-VA4Vets (1-855-824-8387)
Managing anger, financial problems, legal issue, depression, eating disorders, substance abuse, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and so forth	Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 1-800-222-0364 (TDD 1-888-262-7848)
Guidance for career advancement	Other VA career mentoring programs or career support programs such as <i>VA for Vets</i>
Unable to get along with you	If you really cannot get along, tell the mentee you would like to discontinue the mentoring relationship due to your mutual differences. Suggest that he or she find another mentor on the VAMs Forum. Complete the Closure Form.
Lack of interest in mentoring	Try to work out the issue. If you are unable to solve the issue, end the mentoring relationship and complete the Closure Form.