



Deployment Toolkit

for Supervisors and HR Professionals





VA for Vets Deployment Toolkit Instructions for Supervisors and HR Professionals

As you assist your Military Service Member employee through deployment to military duty, VA for Vets is your partner in fully supporting him or her. This customizable VA for Vets Deployment Toolkit is designed to help supervisors and HR professionals provide that support to the employee, as he or she prepares for military duty. By sharing this toolkit and using the resources available on the VA for Vets website, you can help to ensure a smooth transition for your employee and your team.

The Deployment Toolkit includes the following components:

- **Supervisor Letter Template**
Cover letter for the supervisor to customize and attach to the toolkit materials.
- **VA for Vets Program Brochure**
A high-level brochure providing an overview of the features and benefits of the program.
- **Deployment Tip Sheet**
Specific steps for Military Service Members to follow when preparing for a deployment.
- **Deployment Resources Flyer**
The top online resources for deploying National Guard or Reserve members.
- **Deployment 411 Contact Card**
A wallet-sized card with contact information for critical VA support services.
- **USERRA Flyer**
Summary of the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA).

In addition to these materials, feel free to add other relevant information (articles, VA department communications, etc.) that will aid the employee with the deployment process.

To view a complete list of VA for Vets deployment resources, go to www.VAforVets.VA.gov/servicemembers/resources.



Dear

On behalf of your colleagues at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), I want to formally welcome you back and thank you for your service. We truly appreciate the sacrifices you have made to help keep our country safe.

The Department of Veterans Affairs created the *VA for Vets* program to support our National Guard and Reserve members before, during and after military service.

Throughout the reintegration process, I will be working closely with I encourage you to access the *VA for Vets* program resources as you transition back into your VA career.

The *VA for Vets* website (www.VAforVets.VA.gov) provides specific guidance on reintegration, including information about benefits, leave, the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA) and much more. If you are looking for additional support during any part of the transition process, you can reach out to a *VA for Vets* coach by calling 1-855-VA4VETS (1-855-824-8387), Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (EST).

To help you prepare to return to work, I have attached the *VA for Vets* Reintegration Toolkit, which includes:

- *VA for Vets* Program Brochure
- Post-deployment Checklist
- Reintegration Checklist
- Reintegration Tip Sheet
- Reintegration Resources Flyer
- USERRA Flyer

If you have any questions or concerns upon your return, please feel free to contact me or

Thank you again for your service to our country and to VA. Welcome home.

Sincerely,



Your Gateway to VA Careers

VA is a place where Veterans want to work. And a place where Veterans can build careers. Ensuring the satisfaction of Veterans, as well as their supervisors, HR professionals and coworkers, moves us closer toward achieving Secretary Shinseki's goals. VA for Vets offers the tools, resources and support services to turn this vision into a reality.

**We owe Veterans more than a job.
We owe them a career.**

"We will ingrain a sense of advocacy for Veterans into our organizational culture and our business processes – to sustain momentum into the future and enable VA to meet the ever-changing needs of Veterans and their families."

-VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki

For more information, explore www.VAforVets.VA.gov



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

VETERANS ARE PROVEN PERFORMERS.

They distinguished themselves in uniform and they distinguish themselves as employees.

THEY WILL HELP ALL OF US ACHIEVE OUR MISSION.

— VA Secretary Eric K. Shinseki



Helping Veterans Thrive at VA

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to increasing the number of Veterans employed at VA, while effectively supporting those already on our team. This pledge has led to the creation of a new, comprehensive career solution: *VA for Vets*.

VA for Vets provides employment and career management resources designed to attract, retain and support Veteran employees at VA, including those serving in the National Guard and Reserve. We are dedicated to helping Veterans find jobs that maximize their military skills and offering them practical tools for professional development.

Come see how *VA for Vets* is connecting Veterans to the information and tools they need to build a successful career at VA.

Did You Know?*

VA Employs:

7,000+
Military Service Members

100,000+
Veterans

9.3%
disabled Veterans

* Statistics current as of October 2011

How Does it Work?

Visit the *VA for Vets* (www.VAforVets.VA.gov) website to access real-time tools and personalized support resources. Key program features include:

- **Career Center** – Translate your military expertise to civilian skills, create easy-to-read resumes in plain English, apply to open VA positions, and save all your results into one profile using this dynamic career exploration platform.
- **Coaches** – Reach out for help with deployment and reintegration issues and questions related to employment at VA.
- **Deployment Lifecycle Resources** – Access vital information to prepare for deployment and reintegration, such as toolkits, checklists, guides, tip sheets, resource directories, contact lists and more.
- **Professional Development** – Take online programs to sharpen your skills or to learn more about hot topics surrounding deployment.
- **Social Media** – Connect with other Veterans and share experiences.
- **Surveys** – Tell us what you think about the program, where we need to improve and how we can best support our employees.
- **Videos and Webinars** – Learn about Veteran achievements and how you can support Military Service Members by watching videos and online webinars.
- **Virtual Collaboration Tool** – Interact with a reintegration coach, supervisor or HR professional in a personalized virtual workspace where you can review and edit documents, whiteboard, and watch videos in real-time.

Our Goal: Veterans Serving Veterans.

You've served your country and understand the unique challenges faced by Veterans.

Come see how a career at VA can help you make a difference for all the Veterans and families we serve.

Building a World-Class Work Environment for Veterans



The Benefits

Veterans Seeking Employment at VA

- Effectively market your experience to the federal sector
- Explore and apply to VA jobs closely matched to your skills and interests
- Position yourself for civilian career success with automated tools

Veterans Building Careers at VA

- Develop professional skills to augment your current role
- Increase connections to other Veterans
- Search open positions and new career paths at VA

National Guard and Reserve Members at VA

- Understand your rights, benefits and responsibilities during military duty
- Transition seamlessly between military and civilian roles
- Get personalized support through coaching and virtual collaboration

VA Support Staff (Supervisors, HR Professionals and Coworkers)

- Create a supportive and inclusive workplace
- Improve team and organizational performance
- Effectively collaborate and clarify roles and responsibilities

Department of Veterans Affairs

- Boost Veteran recruiting and retention efforts across the federal government
- Integrate with and augment other VA career programs
- Position VA as an employer of choice for Veterans who want to continue a career in public service



Pre-deployment Checklist Military Service Members

This checklist will help you prepare for deployment as an employee of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The actions you take will depend on your personal circumstances as well as the length and location of your deployment. For more details, see the Pre-deployment section of the *VA Deployment Lifecycle Guide for Military Service Members* on the VA for Vets website (VAforVets.VA.gov).

Directions: Complete each activity on this checklist. Place a check mark in the box provided next to the activity when completed.

1. Review your rights under USERRA (optional)

- Access *USERRA for Military Service Members* training on the VA Talent Management System (TMS)
 - o Review the Pre-deployment lesson

2. Notify your supervisor

- Inform your supervisor as soon as possible:
 - o You are anticipating receiving deployment orders
 - o You have received military deployment notification
- You may, but are not required, to provide your supervisor with a written copy of your deployment orders
- Let your supervisor know what you need to prepare for deployment, such as use of leave, medical, etc.

3. Enter deployment date in the Case Management System (CMS)

- Log on to the CMS (<https://mycase.VAforVets.VA.gov>) to enter your deployment date

4. Get pre-deployment support from Human Resources (HR)

- Schedule a meeting with your HR professional to discuss leave, compensation and benefit options
- Use the *Pre-deployment Advisor* to review your benefit options
- Bring the results from the *Pre-deployment Advisor* to your meeting with your HR professional to discuss leave, compensation and benefit options

5. Complete Transition Plan

- Assist your supervisor with the Transition Plan

6. Update your resume

- Provide your supervisor with your resume for consideration of advancement opportunities that may present themselves while you are deployed

7. Determine the type of communication from VA you want to receive while deployed

- Discuss with your supervisor and HR professional the type of communication you want to receive from VA; if you want to be contacted while deployed, provide your contact information

Note: You can inform your supervisor and/or HR professional that you do not want to be contacted while you are deployed.

8. Seek other pre-deployment support (optional)

- VA for Vets coaches: 1-855-VA4VETS (1-855-824-8387)
- Military OneSource (<http://www.MilitaryOneSource.com>)
- Military HOMEFRONT Program (<http://www.MilitaryHomeFront.dod.mil>)
- National Resource Directory (<http://www.NationalResourceDirectory.gov>)
- Yellow Ribbon (<http://www.YellowRibbon.mil>)



Post-deployment Checklist Military Service Members

This checklist will help you prepare for your return to civilian employment at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The actions you take will depend on your personal circumstances as well as the length and location of your deployment. For more details, see the Post-deployment section of the *VA Deployment Lifecycle Guide for Military Service Members* on the *VA for Vets* website (VAforVets.VA.gov).

Directions: Complete each activity on this checklist. Place a check mark in the box provided next to the activity when completed.

1. Notify your supervisor

- Of your anticipated date of return to employment
- When you have a firm date for your return to employment
- If you need any special accommodations

2. Review your rights under USERRA (optional)

- Access *USERRA for Military Service Members* training on the VA Talent Management System (TMS)
 - o Review the Post-deployment lesson

3. Get post-deployment support from HR (optional)

- Discuss any questions with your HR professional that you may have about returning to VA

4. Update Resume (optional)

- Add new skills to your resume that you may have acquired while deployed using the *VA for Vets* Career Center or contact a *VA for Vets* Coach for career and resume support at 1-855-VA4VETS (1-855-824-8387)

Deployment Tip Sheet for Military Service Members

How to Prepare for Your Upcoming Deployment

VA is committed to supporting you through deployment, providing the information, resources and tools you need to make a smooth transition from your civilian to your military role.

The following tips will help to ensure all your bases are covered before military duty:

Inform Your Supervisor

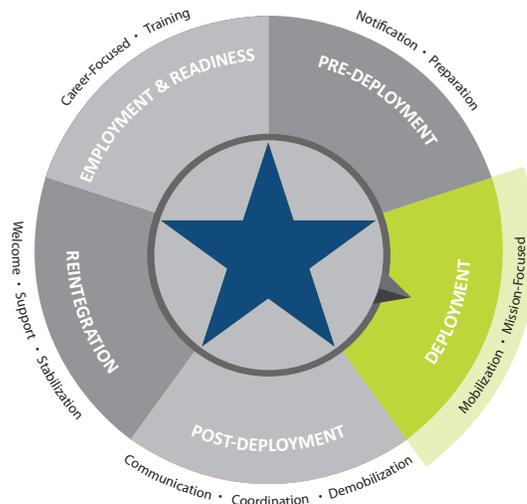
You do not need to wait for written orders to get started. A verbal notification is sufficient until your written orders are available.

Connect with your organization's human resources (HR) professional. Your supervisor can help you locate the appropriate HR professional. Schedule a meeting with him or her to review your rights and benefits options.

Meet With an HR Professional

An HR professional will guide you through your entitlements, benefits and leave usage, and assist you with the associated forms. Together, you can determine the best selections for you and your family.

- **Discuss health care:** You will be enrolled in TriCare, but you can also continue your Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB). Enrollment in TriCare is mandatory for deploying Military Service Members, but optional for family members. View the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) FEHB Frequently Asked Questions (www.opm.gov/insure/health/faq/reservists.asp).
- **Understand leave usage:** You are entitled to use accrued annual and military leave during deployment if you desire extra income. For more information, refer to OPM's Military Leave Fact Sheet (www.opm.gov/oca/leave/html/



MILITARY.ASP) and Frequently Asked Questions on Military Leave (www.opm.gov/oca/leave/html/milqa.asp).

- **Review your Thrift Savings Plan (TSP):** You can contribute to your military TSP while on active duty. Your civilian TSP will remain in place, but you cannot contribute to it. Automatic contributions will resume when you return to your federal position.
- **Review Standard Form 52 (SF-52):** A supervisor or administrative officer from HR will initiate your SF-52 and submit it to HR. Review your SF-52 with an HR professional to discuss the best options for you and your family and to ensure it is accurately completed. During military service, your employee status can be changed to any combination of military leave, annual leave and Leave Without Pay (LWOP-US).

Know Your Rights

Learn about your rights as a Military Service Member, particularly under the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA).

- **Be familiar with USERRA:** When you return, you are guaranteed a job with the same status, seniority and rate of pay you had when you deployed. You are also eligible for pay increases that you would have received if you had not deployed. For more information, refer to Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve's (ESGR's) Frequently Asked Questions about USERRA (www.esgr.org/site/USERRA/FAQ.aspx).

Coming soon: *VA for Vets* USERRA training through VA's Talent Management System.

Access Support Programs

- **Use *VA for Vets* resources:** Reach out to a coach to discuss deployment questions related to your VA position. Visit the *VA for Vets* website (www.VAforVets.VA.gov) for checklists, guides, online training, social media connections and additional deployment support services.
- **Connect your family:** Touch base with your unit's Family Support Program Coordinator or Yellow Ribbon Program for family support before, during and after deployment. The Military OneSource (www.militaryonesource.com) and Military Homefront (www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil) programs also provide helpful support resources.

Know That You are a Valued Employee and Will be Missed

We value the sacrifice you are making to serve our country. Your military experience contributes to the important work you do at VA, and we look forward to welcoming you home.

Have Questions? Need Help?

Visit *VA for Vets* (www.VAforVets.VA.gov) to access personalized, 24/7 support resources:

- **Coaches** – Contact a trained coach to discuss your deployment and reintegration questions one-on-one at www.VAforVets.VA.gov.
- **Virtual Collaboration Tool** – Interact with your coach, supervisor or HR professional in a personalized virtual workspace.
- **Training** – Attend online training programs through VA's Talent Management System to learn about deployment roles and your rights under USERRA.
- **Resources** – Use checklists, deployment and reintegration guides, resource directories, contact lists and other *VA for Vets* resources to plan for a successful deployment.
- **Videos and Events** – View videos and online webinars about the *VA for Vets* program and the hot topics surrounding the deployment process.

What is "*VA for Vets*?"

VA for Vets is a comprehensive program designed to attract, retain and support Veteran employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). We are dedicated to helping Veterans find jobs that maximize their military skills, while offering them effective career management tools to develop professionally. Come see how *VA for Vets* is connecting Veterans to the information, resources and tools they need to succeed at VA.





Deployment Resources for Military Service Members

Looking for detailed information on military leave policies or health care options while deployed? Need guidance on family support programs, employee rights and benefits? Before deploying, take a few minutes to review this list of the top online resources.

Deployment Support

VA for Vets Deployment Resources

(www.VAforVets.VA.gov)

Deployment guides, checklists, toolkits, training resources, fact sheets, coaches, key contacts and more.

AmeriForce Deployment Guides

(www.ameriforce.net/deployment)

Guidance on creating a family care plan, maintaining relationships, packing for deployment, managing finances and more.

Armed Forces Crossroads Pre-deployment Guide

(www.afcrossroads.com/famseparation/main.cfm)

Preparation checklists and advice on issues related to family separation and coordinating support for loved ones.

DoD Reserve Affairs Mobilization Guide

(<http://ra.defense.gov/documents/mobil/pdf/sections.pdf>)

DoD policy documents, pay and allowances information, health care options, family support resources, financial assistance, demobilization information, and re-employment rights and assistance for students and small-business owners.

Military.com's Guard and Reserve Deployment: Guides and Resources

(www.military.com/benefits/resources/deployment/guides-and-resources-for-guard-and-reserve)

Tips on preparing financial and legal affairs, coping with family issues and securing benefits.

Family Support

Military OneSource (www.militaryonesource.com)

Branch-specific information for Military Service Members and their families, including special needs, child care, family and financial counseling, health coaching, education assistance and career planning.

National Resource Directory

(www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov)

Comprehensive directory of services and benefits information at the national, state and local levels for Military Service Members and their families.

Operation Homefront (www.operationhomefront.net)

Emergency financial and other assistance for the families of Military Service Members and wounded warriors.

Yellow Ribbon Program (www.yellowribbon.mil)

Events for National Guard and Reservists and their families to learn about local resources available during and after deployment, including health care information, education/training opportunities, financial assistance and legal benefits.

National Military Family Association

(www.militaryfamily.org)

Non-profit organization focused on ensuring military families understand and access their benefits, with guidance on health care, education, marriage, childcare, wounded warriors and more.



Employee Rights

Department of Labor Vets Pocket Guide to Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA) (<http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/USERRA%20Pocket%20Guide.html>)

Plain-language reference guide that explains employee rights and obligations when reintegrating to the workplace.

USERRA Frequently Asked Questions

(<http://www.esgr.org/site/programs.aspx;/USERRA/FAQ.aspx>)

User-friendly guide to USERRA regulations as they apply to National Guard and Reserve members. Includes notification of deployment and re-employment, leave use and accrual, roles and responsibilities for employers and employees, and information on seeking assistance and filing complaints.

Leave

Guidance on the Return to Civilian Employment for Activated Military Members

(<http://www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2003/2003-14a.asp>)

Employee rights and responsibilities when seeking re-employment and additional leave prior to returning to the workplace.

Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Military Leave Fact Sheet (<http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/MILITARY.ASP>)

Overview of the different types of leave, leave accrual, and acceptable uses of leave for activating National Guard and Reserve members.

OPM Military Leave Frequently Asked Questions

(<http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/HTML/MILQA.asp>)

Information about employee eligibility for additional leave, pay, and accrual and use of leave for activating National Guard and Reserve members.

Health and Wellness

eBenefits (www.ebenefits.va.gov)

Joint VA and DoD program supporting all benefits-related online tools and information for Veterans, Military Service Members and their families. A personalized workspace allows users to quickly access and download forms, apply for benefits, and view benefits status.

Frequently Asked Questions about Federal Employee Health Benefits (FEHB) Coverage for Federal Civilian Employees Called to Military Duty

(<http://www.opm.gov/insure/archive/health/qa/qa.asp?reservists>)

Health coverage guidance for deploying Military Service Members on terminating medical insurance, premium payments, refunds and other issues.

Retirement Savings

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP): Before You Go On Active Duty

(<https://www.tsp.gov/lifeevents/military/beforeDuty.shtml>)

Fact sheets with frequently asked questions about contributions and loan repayments during deployment, with links to TSP forms.

What is "VA for Vets?"

VA for Vets is a comprehensive program designed to attract, retain and support Veteran employees at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). We are dedicated to helping Veterans find jobs that maximize their military skills, while offering them effective career management tools to develop professionally. Come see how *VA for Vets* is connecting Veterans to the information, resources and tools they need to succeed at VA.



IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

VA for Vets Coaches 1-855-VA4Vets (824-8387)
VAforVets@VA.gov

Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) 1-800-633-4542

Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP) 1-877-888-FEDS (3337)
TTY 1-877-889-5680

Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS)

Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP) 1-800-582-3337
TTY 1-800-843-3557

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) 1-877-968-3778
TDD 1-877-847-4385



YOUR GATEWAY TO VA CAREERS

VA for Vets is a complete career solution supporting VA's Military Service Members, their coworkers, Supervisors and HR Professionals throughout the deployment lifecycle. Services include:

- Online Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) training.
- A personalized virtual workspace to interact with a coach, Supervisor or Military Service Member.

In addition, the program is dedicated to helping Veterans find the right position at VA to maximize their skills and experiences, while offering them effective career management tools to develop professionally.

Learn more at www.VAforVets.VA.gov.



YOUR GATEWAY TO VA CAREERS



YOUR RIGHTS UNDER USERRA

THE UNIFORMED SERVICES EMPLOYMENT AND REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS ACT

USERRA protects the job rights of individuals who voluntarily or involuntarily leave employment positions to undertake military service or certain types of service in the National Disaster Medical System. USERRA also prohibits employers from discriminating against past and present members of the uniformed services, and applicants to the uniformed services.

REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

You have the right to be reemployed in your civilian job if you leave that job to perform service in the uniformed service and:

- ☆ you ensure that your employer receives advance written or verbal notice of your service;
- ☆ you have five years or less of cumulative service in the uniformed services while with that particular employer;
- ☆ you return to work or apply for reemployment in a timely manner after conclusion of service; and
- ☆ you have not been separated from service with a disqualifying discharge or under other than honorable conditions.

If you are eligible to be reemployed, you must be restored to the job and benefits you would have attained if you had not been absent due to military service or, in some cases, a comparable job.

RIGHT TO BE FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION AND RETALIATION

If you:

- ☆ are a past or present member of the uniformed service;
- ☆ have applied for membership in the uniformed service; or
- ☆ are obligated to serve in the uniformed service;

then an employer may not deny you:

- ☆ initial employment;
- ☆ reemployment;
- ☆ retention in employment;
- ☆ promotion; or
- ☆ any benefit of employment

because of this status.

In addition, an employer may not retaliate against anyone assisting in the enforcement of USERRA rights, including testifying or making a statement in connection with a proceeding under USERRA, even if that person has no service connection.

HEALTH INSURANCE PROTECTION

- ☆ If you leave your job to perform military service, you have the right to elect to continue your existing employer-based health plan coverage for you and your dependents for up to 24 months while in the military.
- ☆ Even if you don't elect to continue coverage during your military service, you have the right to be reinstated in your employer's health plan when you are reemployed, generally without any waiting periods or exclusions (e.g., pre-existing condition exclusions) except for service-connected illnesses or injuries.

ENFORCEMENT

- ☆ The U.S. Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) is authorized to investigate and resolve complaints of USERRA violations.
- ☆ For assistance in filing a complaint, or for any other information on USERRA, contact VETS at **1-866-4-USA-DOL** or visit its **website at <http://www.dol.gov/vets>**. An interactive online USERRA Advisor can be viewed at **<http://www.dol.gov/elaws/userra.htm>**.
- ☆ If you file a complaint with VETS and VETS is unable to resolve it, you may request that your case be referred to the Department of Justice or the Office of Special Counsel, as applicable, for representation.
- ☆ You may also bypass the VETS process and bring a civil action against an employer for violations of USERRA.

The rights listed here may vary depending on the circumstances. The text of this notice was prepared by VETS, and may be viewed on the internet at this address: <http://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra/poster.htm>. Federal law requires employers to notify employees of their rights under USERRA, and employers may meet this requirement by displaying the text of this notice where they customarily place notices for employees.



U.S. Department of Labor
1-866-487-2365

U.S. Department of Justice Office of Special Counsel

1-800-336-4590

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