



Reintegration Toolkit

for Supervisors and HR Professionals





VA for Vets Reintegration Toolkit Instructions for Supervisors and HR Professionals

As you assist your Military Service Member employee through reintegration to the civilian workplace, *VA for Vets* is your partner in fully supporting him or her. This customizable *VA for Vets* Reintegration Toolkit is designed to help supervisors and HR professionals provide that support to the returning employee. By sharing this toolkit and using the resources available on the *VA for Vets* website, you can help ease the transition for your employee and your team.

The Reintegration 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.
- **Post-Deployment Checklist, Reintegration Checklist and Reintegration Tip Sheet**
Specific steps for Military Service Members to follow when preparing to return to the civilian workplace.
- **Reintegration Resources Flyer**
The top online resources for returning National Guard and Reserve members.
- **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 reintegration process.

To view a complete list of *VA for Vets* reintegration 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 (VA) 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 Reemployment 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
- Reintegration Tip Sheet
- Reintegration Resources Flyer
- Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (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:

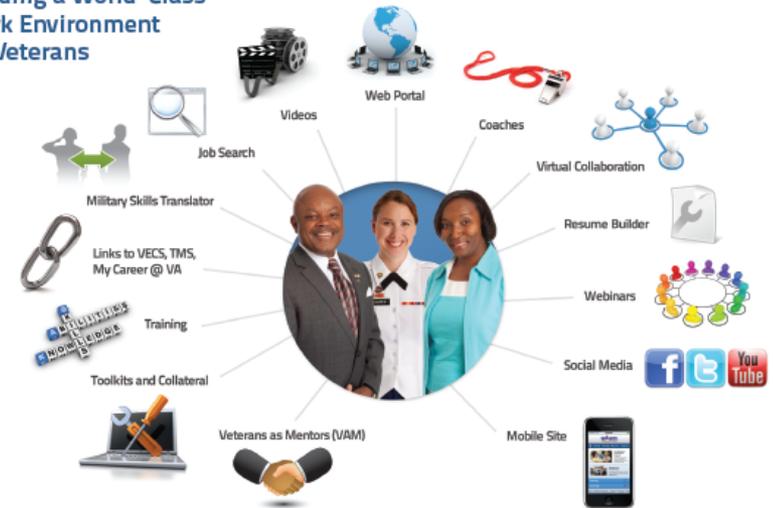
- **Career Center** – Translate your military expertise to civilian skills, create easy-to-read resumes in plain English, apply to open VA positions, and save all your results into one profile using this dynamic career exploration platform.
- **Coaches** – Reach out for help with deployment and reintegration 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



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)



Reintegration Checklist Military Service Members

This checklist will help you return and reintegrate into civilian employment with 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 Reintegration 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. Complete VA check-in with:

- Your Supervisor and Human Resources (HR) on the:
 - o Date you will return to duty at VA including whether you intend to use your 14 - 90 day USERRA return rights, if applicable
 - o Five days of authorized absence, if entitled
- HR professional
 - o Provide a copy of DD 214 to HR
 - o Discuss health insurance issues, e.g., reinstatement of health insurance, electing health insurance once TRICARE ends
 - o Update Veteran status and preference if necessary

2. Review your rights under USERRA (optional)

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

3. Seek reintegration support (optional)

- VA for Vets coaches: 1-855-VA4VETS (1-855-824-8387)
- VA Employee Assistance Program (EAP): contact HR for more information
- Military OneSource (<http://www.MilitaryOneSource.com>)
- AfterDeployment.org (<http://www.AfterDeployment.org>)
- Yellow Ribbon (<http://www.YellowRibbon.mil>)
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255

Reintegration Tip Sheet for Military Service Members

How to Navigate Your Reintegration to the Workplace

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) welcomes you home and is grateful for your service to our nation. It is now our responsibility to provide you with the support you need to successfully reintegrate to your VA career. *VA for Vets* provides centralized, on-demand access to a wide array of work-related reintegration support services. From coaches to reintegration guides, webinars to checklists, the *VA for Vets* program will simplify your transition back into the workplace.

The following tips will help you to prepare for a successful return to your VA career:

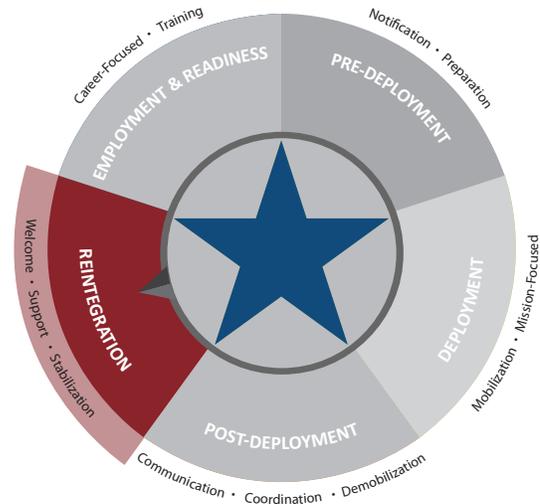
Inform Your Supervisor

Contact your supervisor with the expected date you will be returning to work. Touch base with your coach, if applicable.

Reconnect With Your HR Professional

Contact the human resources (HR) professional who helped with your deployment. If that person is no longer available, ask your supervisor or coach to help you locate the appropriate contact. Set up a meeting with an HR professional when you return to discuss your entitlements, benefits and leave, and for assistance with required forms.

- **Ask about leave:** You may be entitled to additional leave if you were deployed as part of the Global War on Terror. Find out if you are eligible for five paid work days of excused absence. Refer to the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM's) Guidance on the Return to Civilian Employment for Activated Military Members (www.opm.gov/oca/compmemo/2003/2003-14a.asp).



- **Re-enroll in Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB):** If you discontinued FEHB during military duty, an HR professional can help you reinstate it. Refer to OPM's FEHB Frequently Asked Questions (www.opm.gov/insure/archive/health/qa/qa.asp?fedcivil).
- **Review your SF-50:** Look up your Standard Form 50 (SF-50) in your Electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF) to validate that your Leave Without Pay (LWOP) status was correctly coded as LWOP-US to indicate military leave. Annual leave should not be accounted for on your SF-50, only LWOP.

Review Your Rights

- **Know your rights under the Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA):** USERRA guarantees you a job with the same status and pay rate you had when you left for deployment. You are also entitled to training to update your skills. Review Employer Support for Guard and Reserve's (ESGR's) Frequently Asked Questions about USERRA (www.esgr.org/site/programs.aspx;USERRA/FAQ.aspx).
- **Check out Veteran programs and entitlements** (www.vba.va.gov): You may be eligible for education assistance, home loans and vocational rehabilitation.

Get Support

- **Access VA for Vets** (www.VAforVets.VA.gov): Take advantage of on-demand reintegration resources, including coaches, online training, checklists, guides and other reintegration support tools.
- **Use the Yellow Ribbon Program** (www.yellowribbon.mil): Contact your local Yellow Ribbon Program for family support and reintegration activities.

Welcome Back

As a military Veteran, your experiences will allow you to better understand and serve our country's Veterans. We, at VA, thank you for your continued service.

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 reintegration process.
- **Videos and Events** – View videos and online webinars about the *VA for Vets* program and the hot topics surrounding the reintegration to the workplace.

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.





Reintegration Resources for Military Service Members

Looking for detailed information on leave policies or benefits for returning Military Service Members? Need to access reintegration and family support services? VA for Vets has developed this list of top online resources to help ease the transition back to civilian life.

Reintegration Support

VA for Vets Reintegration Resources

(www.VAforVets.VA.gov)

Reintegration guides, checklists, fact sheets, tool kits, coaches, Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment Rights Act (USERRA) guidance and more.

Department of Defense (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, re-employment rights, and assistance for students and small-business owners.

Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

(<http://iava.org>)

Support, resources and connections to other Veterans in the local community.

National Resource Directory

(<https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.gov/>)

Access to services for recovery, rehabilitation and community reintegration. Information on benefits, compensation, education, training, employment, family and caregiver support, health, homeless assistance, housing, transportation and travel.

Returning from the War Zone: A Guide for Military Personnel (<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/reintegration/guide-pdf/SMGuide.pdf>)

Advice for transitioning Military Service Members on adjusting to civilian life, coping skills and seeking assistance.

Returning Service Members of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)

(www.oefoif.va.gov)

Benefits information for Veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, including education, family support, social networking, and welcome home and outreach programs.

Wounded Warrior Project

(www.woundedwarriorproject.org)

Programs and services to meet the needs of injured Military Service Members, including peer mentoring opportunities, benefits counseling and other programs.

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.



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 and wounded warriors.

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, including 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 eligibility for 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

Afterdeployment.org (www.afterdeployment.org)

Behavioral health resources for common post-deployment challenges, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, family issues and substance abuse.

eBenefits (www.ebenefits.va.gov)

Joint VA and DoD program with benefits-related online tools and information, including a personalized workspace to access and download forms, apply for benefits, and view benefits status.

Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) for Federal Civilian Employees who Return from Active Military Duty (<http://www.opm.gov/insure/archive/health/qa/qa.asp?reservists>)

Health coverage guidance for returning Military Service Members on reactivating FEHB, continuing TriCare coverage and other health care issues.

National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (www.ptsd.va.gov)

Resources for Veterans and their families on research, education and support for PTSD. Also sponsors VA National Caregiver Support Line.

Real Warriors (www.realwarriors.net)

The Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE) program for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury. Promotes building resilience, facilitating recovery, and supporting reintegration of returning Military Service Members. Special section for National Guard and Reserve members.

Career Planning and Education Assistance

Turbo Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

(www.turbotap.org)

Supports Military Service Members during their separation from the military and transition into the civilian workforce. Provides transition guides, financial planning tools, employment assistance, and links to local resources.

FedsHireVets (www.fedshirevets.gov)

Federal employment information for Veterans, transitioning Military Service Members and their families, federal HR professionals and hiring managers.

GI Bill Website (www.gibill.va.gov)

Portal for all educational benefits provided by VA, including Post 9/11 GI Bill, Montgomery GI Bill, Reserve Education Assistance Program and more.

Military.com (www.military.com)

Guides and information on education benefits and tuition assistance for Veterans and their families, including job searches, a resume builder, Veteran career network, career fairs, and links to military-friendly employers.

VA Careers (www.vacareers.va.gov)

Online career source for VA's Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Provides up-to-date news on evolving health care for Veterans, open positions and current events, and other VHA programs.

Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO)

(<http://vaforvets.va.gov/aboutva/pages/veso.aspx>)

The strategic program management office that oversees all VA Veteran employment initiatives and manages *VA for Vets*.

Vet Success (www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre)

Training, work readiness assistance and career counseling for Veterans with service-connected disabilities looking for employment beyond the military.

Warrior Gateway (www.warriorgateway.org)

Database allowing users to search for local service organizations to assist with reintegration into home communities. Users can also search for jobs and academic programs.

Retirement Savings

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP): Returning to Federal Civilian Service

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

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

Additional Benefits

Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors, 2011 edition

(http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book.asp)

Full overview of all Veterans benefits, including health care, education, loans, life insurance and memorial benefits.

Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

(www.vba.va.gov)

Process and manage all VA benefits such as education, health care and housing assistance for Veterans, Military Service Members and their families.

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.





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

Publication Date—October 2008