

Veterans with Disabilities Returning to Work

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With the economy in a downturn, many people are having trouble finding work or staying employed. Even in good times, people with disabilities often have difficulty with employment; this is equally true for veterans with disabilities. Veterans can benefit from the protections afforded all people with disabilities. They also have access to additional services, resources, and legal protections specifically designed to help veterans train for, find, and keep a job.

Protection from Discrimination

Veterans with disabilities are protected from discrimination by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as are all other Americans with disabilities. Veterans with service-connected disabilities also are protected from employment discrimination under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). USERRA goes further than the ADA in that it requires employers to help the veteran to become qualified for the job; this includes providing training or reasonable accommodations beyond those required by the ADA.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

For veterans with service-connected disabilities who want to go back to work, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment services. For information visit the website: <http://www.vba.va.gov/ro/manchester/vremain/vre.htm>. Veterans also can apply for vocational and other benefits online through the Veterans Online Application (VONAPP) at: <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp/main.asp> or by speaking with a VR Program Specialist at (603) 222-5751. For veterans who are unable to work, the VA also can offer independent living services.

Preferences for Federal Employment

The federal government has special preferences and protections for hiring and accommodating veterans in federal jobs, including some preferences in appointments and affirmative action programs. More information can be found at <http://www.opm.gov/veterans/html/vetguide.asp>

New Hampshire Employment

Local offices of the New Hampshire Department of Employment Security have veterans' employment representatives. New Hampshire veterans get top priority for referrals to jobs, services, and training. The department also has an online resource guide: <http://www.nh.gov/nhes/veterans/documents/ForVetsOnly-718-ResourceGuide-1-1-07.pdf>

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR)

ESGR is an organization of the Department of Defense that assists veterans with disabilities who are having problems with employment or reemployment. Veterans looking for help or wanting answers to questions about their rights under USERRA can by speak with an ESGR ombudsman by calling toll free 1-800-336-4590 and selecting option 1 or by emailing USERRA@osd.mil.

Additional information is available on the ESGR website: <http://www.esgr.net/>. If the ESGR ombudsman is unsuccessful in resolving the problem with the employer, the veteran may contact the US Department of Labor's New Hampshire representative, Dennis Viola, (603) 225-1424 to investigate the situation.

Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS)

VETS is a program of the U.S. Department of Labor. Its mission is to provide veterans and service members with the resources and services to succeed in the 21st century workforce by maximizing their employment opportunities, protecting their employment rights, and meeting labor-market demands with qualified veterans. In New Hampshire – U.S. Department of Labor, James C. Cleveland Federal Bldg., Room #3602, 55 Pleasant Street, Concord, NH 03301, Telephone: (603) 225-1424, Fax: (603)225-1545. <http://www.dol.gov/vets/aboutvets/contacts/main.htm#hamp>

Expansion of the Family and Medical Leave Act

In January 2009 a new benefit for military families was signed into law as part of the federal Family and Medical Leave Act. Eligible employed family members now can take up to 26 work weeks of leave in a 12-month period to care for a family member who is a veteran or currently enlisted in the military and undergoing treatment for a serious injury or illness. For online links to additional information and resources visit the Veterans page of the Disabilities Rights Center's website: <http://www.drcnh.org/Issue%20Areas/Veterans.htm>.

The Brain Injury Association of New Hampshire does not support, endorse, or recommend any product, method of treatment, or program for persons with brain injury. We endeavor to inform and believe that you have the right to know what help is available. Information within these pages consists of items that may be of interest to our community.