MICHIGAN VETERANS AFFAIRS AGENCY

VETERAN FRIENDLY EMPLOYER WORKSHOP

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The Michigan Veterans Affairs Agency serves as the central coordinating point, connecting those who have served in the US Armed Forces and their families with the benefits they deserve.
MVAA Employment Initiatives

Why Michigan?

An amazing collaboration between state agencies...

Veteran-Friendly Certification

98 companies, including state agencies, have pledged to actively recruit veterans, Guard and Reserve.

... partnering with private sector employers and non-profits to attract veteran talent to Michigan.
Examine your Decision!!

- Why hire Veterans?
  - Patriotism?
  - A gesture of thanks?

It Makes Great Business Sense!
We are all facing a common challenge

Demand  
Supply

With today’s falling unemployment rate and increasing demand for skilled workers, the veteran and active component transitioning service member population is a valuable source of quality talent.
The Value of a Veteran

- Your people are your greatest asset.
- Veterans represent a culmination of the best qualities you look for in an employee:
  - Leadership
  - Adaptability
  - Innovation
  - Team Player
  - Resiliency
  - Result-oriented, mission driven
  - Loyalty
Common Employer Misconceptions

- Veterans are walking time bombs, riddled with PTS and emotionally unstable.
- Veterans are rude and not very friendly
- Veterans are job hoppers
- Veterans are mindless drones
- Veterans are aggressive
- Veterans are all perfect
Common Veteran Transition Issues

It is important to remember that most veterans go through some period of adjustment following separation/retirement from the military. Being aware of common transitional stressors and issues can be helpful.

Some common transition issues are:

- Deciding where to live
- Career exploration
- Moving away from friends
- Decreased income
- Changes in medical care
- Struggling with lack of structure
- Missing the “rush”
- Pushing to be “perfect”
- The world is too “laid back”
This is the most common concern for veterans and transitioning service members.

Who is this guy?

I think this may be my boss.

No clue

Doesn't even work here. He's a client.
Michigan Veteran Population*

- Over 660,000 male and female veterans reside in Michigan.
  - Includes 10,500 female veterans – the fastest growing demographic in the military
  - 30,000 – 50,000 veterans will return to Michigan in next 5 years
- High education levels.
  - 45% of Post-9/11 veterans have some college
  - 30% have a BA or higher
- Unemployment rate is still disproportionate.
  - Almost 16% for Post-9/11 veterans 18-24 years old

* As of June, 2015, MVAA
Veteran Hiring Support

- **Relocation:**
  - Many Michigan veterans are entitled to relocation assistance including movement of household goods

- **Health Care:**
  - Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system qualify for cost-free health care including prescriptions and extended care

- **Education Benefits:**
  - 10,500 Post-9/11 Michigan veterans utilize the GI Bill to pay for college
Veteran Hiring Support

- **On-the-Job Training and Apprenticeships:**
  - Employers usually pay a reduced wage and veterans can use their GI Bill and receive a tax-free stipend.

- **Fast Track Programs:**
  - Several Michigan colleges and universities offer fast-track programs that account for a veteran’s military experience.

- **Work Opportunity Tax Credit:**
  - Funded for 2014-2016 – up to $9,600 tax credit (40% of $24,000 first year wages).
Company or organization leadership needs to concur and support at the highest level.

HR Directors, Hiring Managers, Recruiting Staff and Mid-Level Managers need buy in.

- MVAA can provide guidance and information, including management briefs, printed material, and veteran hiring webinars for your leadership.

Rank and File workers need to be aware of the initiative.

- MVAA can conduct online or in-person Military Cultural Competence training for your current employees and managers.
Review Your Current HR Policies

- Are your personnel policies “Veteran Friendly?”

- Consider the following:
  - Differential pay for drilling reservists. Many employers compensate Guard and Reserve employees by making up the difference between their military pay and civilian pay during periods of training, even deployment.
  - Continuation of Health/Life insurance during deployments. Although the military extends insurance, it is often a burden on the family to change providers.
  - ESGR – Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, can assist you with this.
Include Your Current Veterans

- Most companies have veteran employees who have not self-identified.
- Develop a “Vet-Ident” event or time-frame to discuss the value of self-identification.
  - The MVAA can provide generic self-identification forms that outline the benefits of veteran self-identification, as well as determining “protected veteran” classification.
- Include your veteran employees in your veteran hiring efforts.
  - Ask for their feedback and ideas.
  - Solicit veteran volunteers to assist with new employee onboarding
Take a look at your current openings. Use a Military Skills Translator tool to determine which military skill sets best suit your needs.

There are a number of Military Skills translators out on the web, including:

- O-NET Online - https://www.onetonline.org/crosswalk/MOC/
- Careeronestop - http://www.careerinfonet.org/moc/
- Careeronestop Civilian to Military translator - http://www.careerinfonet.org/moc/
- TAO Online - http://www.taonline.com
Modify Internal Position Descriptions

- Start small . . .
  - If you have positions with frequent turnover or postings, add a “Military Translation” paragraph to the position description.
  - Work with your recruiters and hiring managers when developing the requisition. Have the tough discussion . . . “are you willing to accept military equivalency in lieu of civilian experience or formal schooling?”
  - MVAA can assist you in skills translation and position descriptions.
Tailor Your Postings

- Duplicate postings with the words “Veterans Wanted” or “Veterans Encouraged to Apply.”
- Include specific Military Occupational Code information like “If you were a 63B in the Army, we highly encourage you to apply.”
- Post veteran specific job openings on MiTalent.org and whatever job boards you currently use.
- Include the three magic words in each job posting – “Or Military Equivalent” when it comes to required or desired qualifications.
- MVAA can assist you in skills translations for specific job descriptions.
Ask the Question . . .

During screening: “Would you like to take the opportunity to self-identify as a veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States?”

If they answer “Yes” ask them if they have their “Joint Services Transcript.

Consider what exact qualifications you are looking for. Be flexible and understand the value of military experience and education.
Understand PTS and TBI

- Studies have shown that today’s veterans have a higher rate of Post-Traumatic Stress and Traumatic Brain Injuries because of the nature of modern weaponry and frequent and longer deployments.
- HR and hiring managers need to have a basic understanding of these conditions and what accommodations can be made.
- The MVAA can provide either web-based or on-site Understanding PTS and TBI training at no charge. Email dunckeld@michigan.gov for more information.
Pin the Rose on Someone!!

It doesn’t matter if you have one recruiter, or twenty. Have someone, preferably a veteran themselves, lead your Vet/Guard/Reserve recruiting program.

Train the recruiter(s).

MVAA can provide training on understanding military discharge documentation, Military Occupational Code (MOS) translation to civilian equivalents, and interpreting a military resume. Email dunkeld@michigan.gov for more information.
Start Networking . . .

- Build your relationships with like minded employers, non-profits, and governmental agencies.
  - MiTalent Connect is a great place to start.
  - Virtual Career Fairs can be an affordable option to connect to veteran job-seekers.
  - Job Fairs Page - A variety of job and career fairs take place across the state to bring job seekers and employers together. Attending an event will help to expand your network, creating opportunities to engage with and get feedback from employers. It's a great way to connect with future employers.

- MiWorks! Agencies Visit the Michigan Works! Agencies website to find skilled workers and training opportunities to upgrade workers' skills. The Michigan Works! Agencies oversee a statewide network of Michigan Works! Service Centers. Business partners can connect locally with Michigan Works! Agencies to find skilled workers and access training opportunities to upgrade workers’ skills. A variety of services are available to employers, ranging from basic resume searches and writing effective job postings, to providing online job advertisements, recruitment, and resume sorting.
Keep Networking . . .

- MVAA Private Sector Employment Council.
  - Attend the quarterly Veteran Hiring Best Practices Workshops – don’t reinvent the wheel.
  - Watch the monthly veteran hiring webinars . . . Oh . . . wait . . .

- MVAA Regional Outreach Coordinators – serving in each of Michigan’s 10 Economic Prosperity Regions, there is an MVAA rep close by. They are experts at connecting veterans with their benefits, including veteran job-seekers with employers. They work closely with the local Veteran Community Action Teams (VCAT) and can be an important local partner in your outreach efforts.
MVAA Interagency Efforts.

Interagency Veteran Employment Council is made up of state, local and federal agencies as well as non-profits and meets quarterly to discuss a wide variety of veteran employment issues including talent attraction, removing organizational obstacles to veteran hiring, and other interagency efforts.

The “Why Michigan? Talent Attraction Team is a new cooperative effort between state agencies, educators and private sector employers who attend hiring events and pitch the entire “Pure Michigan ®” experience.
Michigan New Job Training Program - Designed as an economic development tool, the Michigan New Jobs Training Program allows community colleges to provide free training for employers that are creating new jobs and/or expanding operations in Michigan. The training for the newly hired workers is paid by capturing the state income tax associated with the new employees' wages. This gives you the opportunity to provide low-cost training for your veteran hires.
US Department of Labor Veterans Hiring Toolkit - This Toolkit can help. It is designed to assist and educate employers who have made the proactive decision to include transitioning Service Members, Veterans and wounded warriors in their recruitment and hiring initiatives.

Veteran Employment Leading Practices - The Institute for Veterans and Military Families at Syracuse University (IVMF) and General Electric (GE) partnered to empower employers with the tools, strategies, and peer resources needed to adopt a collaborative and strategic approach to veteran employment. Select tools include best-in-class practices, processes, resources and programs positioned to increase employment opportunities for our nation’s veterans, contributed by those using them and curated by IVMF experts.
National Networking

- **Army PaYS Program** – The US Army Partnership for Youth Success program forges a relationship between Army recruits and ROTC grads and private sector employers.

- **Hiring our Heroes** - A program initiated by the US Chamber of Commerce, Hiring Our Heroes is a nationwide initiative to help veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses find meaningful employment opportunities. They host a series of hiring events and transition summits each year.
Militaryhire.com — provides employers access to veteran job-seekers through an online job board, hiring events, and resume searches.

RecruitMilitary — similar to Militaryhire, they provide fee-based veteran employment services.

Victory Media — has a number of tools to help fill your veteran talent pipeline, including GI Jobs magazine and the Military-Friendly Employer Program.
The Michigan legislature passed a law in 2014 allowing private employers to adopt a voluntary veterans preference employment policy.

If you, or a portion of your business is engaged in federal contracting, the local OFCCP office can assist you with maintaining compliance in your veteran hiring efforts.
There is no “Bat Signal” that you can send out to let veterans know you are looking for them . . .

It takes a certain amount of effort and some resources, but it is worth the investment.
Attend Veteran Hiring Events

- MiTalent Connect has an excellent Careers Events Calendar.

- Both non-profits like the US Chamber Hiring our Heroes Initiative and for-profit companies like RecruitMilitary hold regional veteran-centric hiring events that can be a great place to find veteran job-seekers.

- Be strategic in your thinking . . . Minimize cost and maximize efforts . . .
Choose the right hiring event location.

The best locations are veteran hiring events that focus on transitioning service members at active component bases. Generally speaking, about $\frac{1}{3}$ of transitioning service members will be heading back home to where they joined. Another $\frac{1}{3}$ will be settling somewhere near the transition point because they have put down roots – kids in school, etc. The remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ will “follow the money” and go where opportunity leads them.
Veteran Hiring Events Strategy

☐ Choose the right hiring event location.

☐ Focus on the 1/3rd who are willing to relocate, and choose locations where the 1/3rd who would normally settle nearby are looking for somewhere else to go. In short, pick a post/base in an area with fewer economic prospects.

☐ Fort Drum, NY.

☐ Fort Campbell and Fort Knox in Kentucky.

☐ Fort Benning, GA.

☐ Avoid the coastal areas like San Diego and Norfolk, VA because the competition is fierce and the weather is amazing.
Bring the right team.

If possible, recruit a veteran employee to go along with you. They can speak to issues of transition and the veteran experience at your workplace.

Hiring managers, decision makers, leadership can all be an important asset at hiring events. Bring the folks that can actually hire or make an offer on the spot. The competition is fierce for this talent pool, and many companies have learned they need to act fast to get the best talent.
Veteran Hiring Events Strategy

- Don’t be shy . . .
  - Don’t sit behind the table, stand in front of it.

- Don’t worry much about your “SWAG.” You will see companies that have stuffed animals, stress balls in every conceivable shape, pens, flashlights, keychains. Remember most job-seekers aren’t there to collect a bag of junk. Brochures, notepads, one-pagers that outline your opportunities and have detailed contact and application information is a better investment.

- Don’t “pack up early.” Be the last employer standing.
A military spouse needs work, too. Keep that in mind, especially if you visit hiring events at active component locations. This can help reduce relocation barriers.
Take advantage of “free advertising.” Local publications, radio shows and television stations are always looking for veteran-centric good news stories. Put out press releases outlining your company’s veteran-hiring efforts. Reach out to local TV and radio stations and offer to be a guest of spots on veteran transition and employment services. You might be surprised at the response!
Stop by your local Veteran Services Office (VSO) like the American Legion, VFW and Disabled American Veterans posts. Let them know you are seeking veteran talent.

Have your recruiters join veteran-centric groups on LinkedIn and Facebook. Veteran job-seekers often start their search there, looking for advice and guidance. It can also be a great networking tool for connecting you with like-minded companies.
Subscribe to MiTalent Connect Newsletters.

The Talent Connect Newsletter from the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) goes out to a wide range of Michigan businesses and contains lots of useful workforce development resources.

The Michigan Talent Investment Agency publishes the Veteran Connect Newsletter that is targeted towards veterans and transitioning service members. They do company profiles and list “hot jobs”.

MEDC also publishes the Job Connect Newsletter which is targeted to job-seekers.
There is a tremendous amount of talent right in your local armories. The Army and Air National Guard, Army – Marine – Air Force – Navy Reserve – Coast Guard... They all have a strong Michigan presence and are oftentimes underemployed. Many commanders will allow employers to visit during drill weekends to talk to their troops about employment opportunities. Contact the Employment Initiative Director for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) for more information... By the way... That’s me!!
Get Social . . .

- Social Media is a quickly growing field and more and more job-seekers are using it as an employment tool.
- Tweet, post, link, and snap your job postings, hiring event schedule, and whatever else you want on a regular and recurring basis.
There are a number of awards and accolades out there that recognize employer’s veteran hiring efforts. Being selected for one of these awards usually results in favorable press, brand awareness, and an increased level of trust in the veteran and transitioning service member community.
Victory Media publishes an annual “Military Friendly Employer” list that is a feature in GI Jobs Magazine. This magazine goes out to over 75,000 transitioning service members each month. Having your company’s name and logo on this list is a great branding opportunity. Recipients are chosen after filling out a survey.
Get Recognized

The CivilianJobs.com Most Valuable Employers award is selected based on those employers whose recruiting, training and retention plans best serve military service members and veterans. To be included for consideration, send an email to MVE@CivilianJobs.com
Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) has a number of awards that your company can be nominated for. Most are initiated by Guard and Reserve employees.
MVAA Veteran Friendly Employer Certification

- **GOLD**
- **SILVER**
- **BRONZE**
Since 2014 98 Michigan companies have become MVAA Veteran-Friendly Certified, and 57 Educational Institutions are certified as Veteran Friendly.

The VFE Family works together to attract veteran talent to Michigan, offer veterans exciting career opportunities across a wide range of industry, and retain veteran talent in their organization.

Numerous networking opportunities and best practices sharing through the Private Sector Veteran Employment Council and the Interagency Veteran Employment Council.
Regional support and partnerships help our VFEs connect to veteran talent:

- Veteran Community Action Teams (VCAT).
- MVAA Regional Outreach Initiative.
- Michigan Veteran Education Initiative.
- Strategic advice and guidance from the MVAA on veteran hiring strategies.
- Veteran-Friendly Best Practices Workshops.
- Monthly webinar series.
- No cost HR/Leader training