

# Operation Warfighter: Career Transition Assistance for Wounded Warriors

For many Service members, dealing with an injury or illness can change the entire trajectory of their career paths, leaving them unsure of their future. According to the Government Accountability Office, over 200,000 military personnel leave the military annually. While most of these Service members leave on their own terms, many leave for medical reasons caused by their active-duty service. What happens when a military career ends unexpectedly and how do we take care of our recovering Service members?

## Military Transition Challenges

In addition to experiencing anxiety and uncertainty around a new civilian career, some additional challenges veterans may experience with transitioning from military life to civilian life include:

**Health Concerns:** Health is a top concern for veterans after separating from military service. A Veterans Affairs study found that 53% of participants reported having chronic physical health conditions within three months of leaving the military. Additionally, mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may worsen during this period.

- **Identity Reevaluation:** The abrupt end of a military career can lead to a profound identity crisis. Veterans may struggle with defining their sense of purpose and self-worth outside the military.
- **Navigating Services:** Veterans transitioning out of the military may need to learn how to access civilian

services such as healthcare, life insurance, and other benefits. These services were previously provided by the military, so adjusting to the new system can be challenging.

- **Social Network Changes:** Leaving the military means losing the built-in social network that comes with military life. Veterans may find it difficult to establish new connections and maintain a sense of camaraderie.
- **Employment:** While most veterans successfully transition into civilian jobs, others face difficulties in finding suitable employment. Adjusting to a different work environment and culture can be a significant challenge.
- **Paperwork and Benefits:** Navigating the paperwork and processes involved in obtaining benefits and services from the Department of Veterans Affairs can be overwhelming. Veterans may need assistance in understanding their entitlements and how to access them.

## **Navigating the Transition to Civilian Employment**

Magellan Federal helps solve the problems of Service members transitioning from the military to the civilian sector. Operation Warfighter (OWF) is a Department of Defense (DoD) internship program that provides opportunities for recovering Service members to participate in internships with Federal agencies during their medical board and rehabilitation process.

The main objective of OWF is to place recovering Service members in supportive work settings that positively impact their recovery. The program presents opportunities to facilitate the recovering Service members' development and employment readiness by assisting in providing comprehensive resources that assist them with their transition and support their needs. This is done through resume building, exploring

employment interests, and developing job skills through internship opportunities. Currently, there are over 533 participating Federal agencies that accept OWF interns.

## **Building Skills for a Civilian Career**

Magellan's Regional Coordinators (RCs) work with the recovering Service members to help identify areas of interest and hone in on transferable skills along with soft skills they have gained through their military service. Our Regional Coordinators coach them on how to build resumes, LinkedIn profiles, and make suggestions to assist them in learning how to navigate a civilian workforce setting. Our Regional Coordinators partner with all branches of service and work closely with Transition Coordinators, Recovery Care Coordinators, Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officers, Command Teams, Medical Providers, and Individual Disability Evaluation System staff to ensure participation is in the best interest of the recovering Service member.

The average Medical Board process lasts between 180 days (about 6 months) to 1 year. The OWF program is a valuable experience that lasts between 90 and 120 days (about 4 months). Participation in OWF can positively impact recovery time, provide valuable work experience in a non-military environment, and assist with developing new skills while providing benefits of career preparedness upon transition to civilian life.

All OWF Regional Coordinators have personal experience as military spouses or have served in the military themselves. They understand the military lifestyle and culture, and the stress surrounding transitioning out of the service.

## **Getting Started**

Operation Warfighter Regional Coordinators are in 10 different regions throughout the United States. These individuals work

with wounded, ill, and injured Service members at all military installations. A Service member can participate in OWF if they are on active duty and meet the basic criteria of being enrolled in the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) and/or assigned to a service Wounded Warrior program. The first step in the OWF process is to obtain "medical and command approval" from the Service member's recovery team and chain of command. Once they are determined to be ready to participate, a Regional Coordinator assists the individual in identifying an internship opportunity based on their interests and capabilities.

The Operation Warfighter program is a wonderful opportunity for Service members to get real-world work experience to ease the transition to civilian life. Magellan Federal is proud to deliver OWF services that make a difference in the lives of recovering Service members around the nation.