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FALL 2022

# Transition Guide

November 10, 2022

**ACE YOUR FIRST  
INTERVIEW WITH  
THESE TIPS**

**4 THINGS TO  
CONSIDER**

**BEFORE SEPARATING  
FROM THE MILITARY**

**OPERATION  
NEXT**

**ARMS SERVICE MEMBERS  
WITH IN-DEMAND JOB SKILLS**

**PREPARE YOUR  
FINANCES FOR THE  
TRANSITION TO  
CIVILIAN LIFE**

**DO'S and DON'TS  
WHEN PREPPING YOUR RESUME**



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# Exploring the Do's and Don'ts of Prepping your Resume

So, you've found the job you think is right for you? As you plan your application, take a few minutes to review your resume and consider these tips before you hit "submit."

## **DO** Tailor your resume to each application

While you may have a basic resume saved in your files, it may not tell a hiring manager why you're a good fit for a job. You want to make sure that the resume you provide matches the key theme of the job announcement.

Tailoring your resume also has a very basic function: it shows you care. If you're taking the time to match the job requirements, it shows that you recognize the employer's needs and shows you're willing to work to be the best candidate.

## **DON'T** Copy and paste

When you're looking at job announcements, you may have a strong desire to copy and paste what you're reading into your updated resume. If you meet those qualifications, why not? And the more



Courtesy of the Department of Veterans Affairs

keywords you feed to the applicant tracking system, the better your chances, right?

Nope. Don't take word for word from the job announcement. That's as much of a red flag as not tailoring your resume. Instead, use the information in the job announcement to introduce key themes and carefully employ specific keywords that match the announcement.

## **DO** Read the job description

A job announcement is much more than just a job title. There's a tendency among applicants to jump into the application when we see something that looks familiar.

Just because you've had the same job title in the past, though, doesn't mean you're qualified for this position.

This advice may seem to go hand-in-hand with the reminder above to tailor your resume, but it's a small detail that could just save your whole application.

## **DON'T** Disqualify yourself

In keeping with the theme of reading the job announcement, make sure you pay special attention to the requirements you find there. You may be an expert in your field, and more than qualified, but you could also take yourself out of the

running before you even get started without meaning to do so.

Is the position open to the public? Does it offer Veterans' preference? Do you need to provide documentation for any of your certifications, experience or education? If you miss something so basic as eligibility, qualifications or even necessary documentation, you've inadvertently set yourself up for failure from the start.

## **DO** Proofread your resume

This is another tip that should go without saying, but if you turn in a resume with mistakes or errors in it, you can be sure hiring managers aren't going to look at you too fondly. That missing period or misspelled word might cost you a chance at a great job.

Take the time to polish your resume, word for word. Make sure you're saying what you mean to say, and make sure that you're using those keywords we talked about above. Check your grammar and your punctuation. Read it out loud, read it backwards,

but read it until you know what you want is there on the page.

## **DON'T** Hesitate to ask someone else to look at your resume

Any writer or editor will tell you that we're prone to missing our own mistakes. No matter how many times you proofread your work, there's a good chance something will slip through. It's a human condition: we know what we want to say, so we'll see what we want to see.

Having someone else look at your resume is a great way to make sure those mistakes don't cost you a chance at your dream job. They'll have a better chance of seeing grammatical errors, problematic sentence structure or something that just doesn't make sense.

When in doubt, don't be afraid to consult a professional resume writer either. Those folks make their living by helping people whip their job histories into shape, and the more eyes looking at your resume, the better.

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# Celebrating 100 Years of the Uniformed Division



**T**oday, the U.S. Secret Service celebrates 100 years of the Uniformed Division (UD). On September 14, 1922, President Warren G. Harding created the White House Police Force as a vital effort to safeguard the White House and the elected officials inside its walls.

At its inception, the White House Police Force was made up of elite candidates from the Metropolitan Police Department and U.S. Park Police and fell under the direct control of the President.

In 1930, the White House Police and the U.S. Secret Service joined forces under the direction of President Herbert Hoover. Since 1930, the Secret Service has facilitated seamless physical security surrounding the nation's highest elected officials and the White House. In 1970, protecting foreign diplomatic missions was added to the force's responsibilities, and the name was changed to the Executive Protective Service. The name United States Secret Service Uniformed Division was adopted in 1977.

"We are a dynamic Force and the range of our responsibilities has evolved to meet the challenges of a complex and shifting threat landscape. Protecting the many foreign missions and embassies based in Washington, DC, is a prime example of that evolution," said Uniformed Division Chief Alfonso Dyson. "Our initial mandate to guard the buildings that compose the White House Complex itself did not envision the need to police the city streets, busy neighborhoods or residential communities around the White House and throughout the city."

Since 1930, the Secret Service has facilitated seamless physical security surrounding the

United States' highest elected officials and the White House. Today, the Uniformed Division has grown to be one of the most robust and respected security forces in the world, with expertise not only in the most effective methods of physical protection, but also in risk assessment and mitigation tactics.

The Uniformed Division has evolved into a diverse team of highly trained professionals who protect and patrol locations in the nation's capital and travel across the world to secure facilities and venues for U.S. Secret Service protectees. There are also several special operations teams operated by the Uniformed Division, including the Emergency Response Team, Explosive Detection Canines, Personal Screening Canine – Open Area Team, counter Sniper Team, Crime Scene Search Unit, Trek Team, Motorcade Support Unit, Magnetometer Support Team and Patrol Unit.

"Behind the shield of every Uniformed Division officer is a highly trained public servant dedicated to honoring the oath we all swore the day we were commissioned. We are forged, women and men, as links in an unbroken chain of law enforcement excellence that is as vital today as it was a century ago," said U.S. Secret Service Deputy Director Faron Paramore.

Learn more about the Secret Service Uniformed Division on our website and follow #UD100 on social media.

## Emergency Response Team

In conjunction with the 100th anniversary of the Uniformed Division, the Office of Communication and Media Relations has highlighted various sections within UD.

The Emergency Response Team (ERT) was

established July 14, 1985. The proliferation of terrorist activity, the availability of military-style assault weapons and the high-profile nature of the White House Complex were some of the deciding factors involved in establishing the ERT.

ERT's initial mission focused on tactical responses to unlawful intrusions and other security-related challenges at the White House Complex. Prior to the unit's formation, White House officers filled in as necessary in an emergency response role. Within the Complex, the team provides added security for Presidential movements, responds to breaches of security, performs sweeps of the White House grounds and responds to any incident of a suspicious nature.

Between July 1992 and August 1998, ERT was under the command of the Uniformed Division's Administration and Program Support Branch. On August 13, 1998, ERT was relocated under command of the Special Operations Division (SOD) within the Office of Protective Operations (OPO).

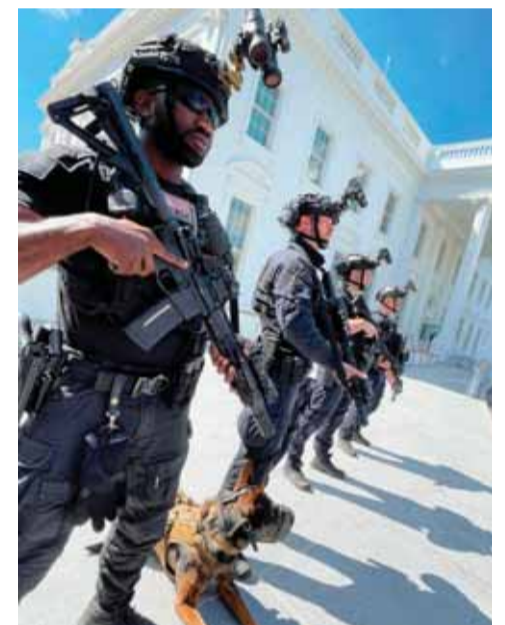
In 1994, two significant security incidents at the White House prompted changes in the way ERT personnel train and operate. The two incidents – the Frank Corder plane crash on September 12, 1994, and the October 29, 1994, Francisco Martin Duran shooting – prompted the Treasury department to create the White House Intrusion Review Committee. In April of 1996, the committee recommended that ERT begin specialized tactical weapons training administered by the Special Operations Training section at the Secret Service's training facility in Beltsville, Maryland.

In ERT's capacity under SOD, ERT officers conduct security sweeps of the White House grounds, provide additional security coverage for outdoor events and stop infiltration at the perimeter. A tactical squad capable of responding to any crisis, ERT is capable of neutralizing threats by large, organized groups as well as individuals, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

## Special Operations Section

The Special Operations Section (SOS) is a specialized unit of the White House Branch, Presidential Protective Division.

Uniformed Division officers assigned to this group handle myriad of special duties and functions at the White House Complex,



including conducting the daily Congressional and public tours of the White House and handling events such as state dinners and official arrival ceremonies for foreign heads of state.

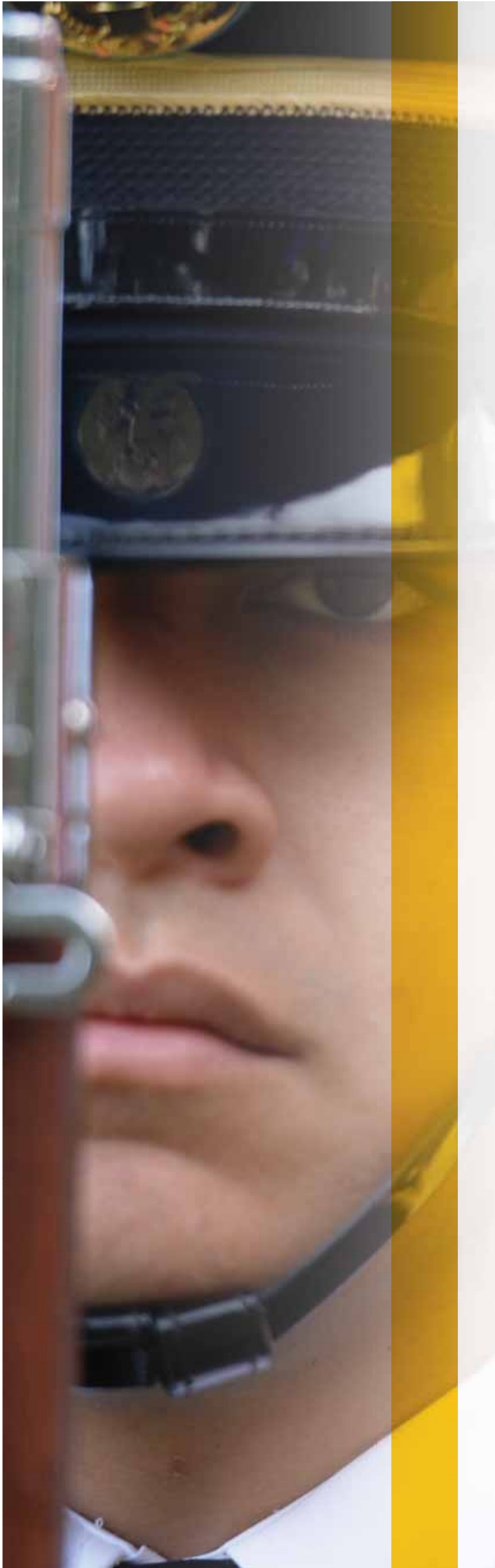
Officers go through an extensive training period before they become SOS certified. They are required to learn the history of the White House and its furnishings from material compiled by the White House Curator's Office.

President Harry Truman first requested that guided tours be afforded to visitors as early as 1946. At that time, White House police officers were already functioning minimally in such a capacity, by answering visitors' questions as they maintained security in the public rooms. SOS was then known as the White House Tour Detail. A small detail was pulled together (just two officers who gave a 7-minute tour) and a program was put in place to combine both tours and security. The initial program has grown considerably over the years and has proved to be remarkably successful.

Today, screening visitors to detect weapons is a very important part of the SOS role since maintaining a secure and safe environment for Secret Service protectees at the White House is paramount. More than one million guests visit the White House annually, including many public officials and celebrities.

Go to [www.secretservice.gov/careers/uniformed-division-officer/role](http://www.secretservice.gov/careers/uniformed-division-officer/role) to learn more and apply.





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## Service Members Find Civilian Career Opportunities Through SkillBridge

SkillBridge is one DOD effort to help service members more successfully transition from military life into the civilian workforce. Now, after service members complete the Transition Assistance Program before separating from the military, they can also apply to participate in SkillBridge to help them find meaningful civilian employment.

*By C. Todd Lopez, Courtesy of DOD News*

Skillbridge has been around for about 10 years. It started as a pilot in 2011 to address concerns about U.S. military personnel returning to civilian life following the 2008 financial crisis. Lawmakers wanted to ensure service members leaving the military at that

time would be able to find work.

According to Caroline Baxter, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Education and Training, more than 50,000 service members have participated in the program with external employers,

developing skills to help them secure post-military employment.

"SkillBridge is a critical part of the investment the department makes in the future success of those who serve our nation in uniform," said Baxter. "We are proud to see

the number of companies and service members participating in this vibrant and consequential program grow year over year, and we are meeting this growth in demand with redoubled oversight to ensure this opportunity retains its promise to service members for years to come."

Well before their last six months of military service, eligible service members should meet with a career counselor at their military installation to begin the process of using Skillbridge. There, they can use the SkillBridge website and professional SkillBridge social media networks to learn about careers with as many as 1,700 different private sector companies now offering internships and apprenticeships.

With the support of their commander, service members can then move into a private sector internship or apprenticeship program as early as six months before their end of service.

"The SkillBridge program is an opportunity provided to service members during the last 180 days of their time in service to give them valuable civilian work experience through industry training, apprenticeships or internships," said Gary J. Schaub Jr., senior advisor for professional military education. "This establishes a connection between

an industry partner and a service member in a real-world job to facilitate their transition to employment after separation."

SkillBridge was recently highlighted as part of President Joe Biden's Trucking Action Plan, which aims to address supply chain concerns and trucking industry workforce shortages. SkillBridge has several apprenticeship programs to help transitioning service members and veterans obtain their commercial driver's licenses. Baxter indicated that the White House considers SkillBridge to be an essential part of providing this critical industry with a trained and capable workforce.

Military careers that do particularly well within SkillBridge include those in medical, transportation and logistics. Service members who are approaching separation and are interested in finding post-military employment can visit the SkillBridge website at [skillbridge.osd.mil](http://skillbridge.osd.mil).

"We don't keep service members in for life," Schaub said. "Instead, we have a force where people come in and serve for a set period of time — normally between four and 30 years. SkillBridge helps us set our people up for success and is a great way to transition to a civilian career."

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# SPECIAL NEEDS CONSIDERATIONS WHEN YOU SEPARATE OR RETIRE FROM THE MILITARY

*Courtesy of Military OneSource*

As a military family with a family member with special needs, you probably have faced transition challenges like PCS moves, deployments and separations. The transition to civilian life will bring more change, but preparing ahead of time can help ease your family's shift to new support systems, resources and services.

Begin your separation journey by learning about transition assistance programs and resources. You can also schedule appointments with a Military OneSource consultant for transitioning veterans. Start early and contact your resources as often as needed to increase your post-transition success.

## Build your plan

Take these steps as part of your transition from the military to make sure you cover all the bases for your family member with special needs.

- Meet with EFMP professionals. Get assistance from EFMP Family Support on your installation or a Military OneSource special needs consultant. They can help you develop your plan and guide you to resources in your current or future location.
- Review your finances and revisit retirement planning. Meet with a free personal financial counselor, talk to a financial consultant from Military OneSource and check out the resources on Financial Planning and Assistance for Families with Special Needs. You can also find financial info and tools from the Office of Financial Readiness to manage finances today and in the future.
- Take advantage of free legal services. Prepare and update your legal documents before you transition by contacting Legal Services on your installation. Review the legal checklists on EFMP & Me to learn more about estate plans, wills, trusts, guardianship and power of attorney. You can also get tips and information by listening to podcasts on legal and financial planning.
- Ensure continuity of medical care. Set up a meeting with your TRICARE representative to review your options. Remember to schedule your Separation History and Physical Examination between 90 and 180 days before you separate or start terminal leave. Not eligible for TRICARE? Review the Health Insurance Coverage Considerations for Transitioning Families for alternatives.
- Review education needs and transition plans. Connect with the school liaison officer on your current installation to review and guide you with your transition plan. Contact providers and schools in your new location directly if you have questions about their programs and services.

## Capture and store necessary information

Check out these tips to help you gather and keep information to have available when you need it.

- Use EFMP & Me. Create customized checklists to guide you through planning for separation and retirement, transitioning your medical care, moving and so much more.
- Contact the appropriate community agencies in your current or future location that provide services to support the disabled so you will have an understanding of available resources.
- Keep a list of all important contacts you make as you prepare for transition. Take time to update the appropriate Special Care Organizational Record, and have copies of all necessary medical and education records ready to hand-carry to your new location.
- Review the Transitioning From the Military With a Child With Special Needs fact sheet for an overview of support and resources available as you transition from the military.
- Use the Plan My Move tool and the Transitioning/Moving checklist from your SCOR for ideas on transitioning with a special needs family member.

## Ease the transition

You and your family members may feel the stress of military transition to civilian life due to the unknown and to fears you don't recognize. Some suggestions for easing transition stress when you separate or retire from the military include:

- Review the Stepping Beyond videos on Military OneSource including Transitioning out of the Military with a Child with Special Needs.
- Use tools from Sesame Street for Military Families: Military to Civilian Life to start discussions about transition and lessen stress and anxiety that could cause emotional or behavioral issues.
- Relax with Chill Drills, a new app that helps lower stress levels as you refresh and recharge.

As you prepare for military separation, you may feel anxious about the new and unknown hurdles ahead. Every transition is different so the better prepared you are, the smoother your transition can be.

Use the wealth of available tools and resources to find the answers you need to create and execute your plan for a smooth, successful transition from military to civilian life. And remember, you have access to Military OneSource for 12 months after your military separation.





# RE-ENLIST, RESERVES, OR TRANSITION

## 4 Things to Consider

Courtesy of Military OneSource

Maybe you're just ending your first tour of duty. Maybe you've fulfilled your obligation to your country. Now, you're at a crossroads - re-enlist, reserves, or transition out? How do you know you're making the right call?

**Y**our decision is going to affect your future, so think it through and review your options. Here are four things to consider to help you make your best decision:

### What benefits will you have available?

Benefits differ, depending on whether you're separating, transitioning to the reserves, or retiring. The Department of Veterans Affairs offers benefits briefings as part of your transition assistance. Here are some of the benefits you may be able to receive:

- Transition assistance for active duty, guard, reserve, wounded service members and more
- A steady paycheck, if you decide to continue your service in the reserves
- Education and training opportunities
- Home loans and housing assistance
- Life insurance
- Medical services can be accessed for up to two years after discharge for some service members
- Commissary and exchange privileges are available for retirees, National Guardsmen and reservists

Learn more about transition assistance programs and

resources. If you've been injured during service, you may receive extra care and support. Find out about wounded warrior specialty consultations, health care, benefits and more.

### Living costs outside the military

Civilian life has advantages and drawbacks. No more basic allowance for housing, but you can move anywhere you want without orders. You won't have that steady military paycheck and job security, but you can go for that civilian job you've always wanted. Here are some important costs of civilian life to consider:

- Housing will probably be your biggest monthly expense, but you may be entitled to VA home loans as well as benefits to help you make your final move.
- Health care. Veterans who aren't enrolled in VA health care will need health insurance. That can mean monthly premiums and out-of-pocket costs. TRICARE Reserve Select is available worldwide for qualified Selected Reserve and their families.
- Saving for retirement. Setting aside some money every month for retirement is vital. Got a job on the horizon? Compare the employer's plan with the military's retirement

plan. You can also contact your installation Personal Financial Management Services office for retirement information and assistance.

### A job and income after service

A good civilian job makes all the difference for a successful transition out of the military.

You'll find lots of assistance and resources available to help you line up a good job. When you're making the decision to separate, start planning for employment as soon

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

# STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

## TO STARTING YOUR NEW CAREER

A practical guide for any service member who is transitioning to a civilian career, and wants to accelerate their climb to the top.

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as possible, ideally about a year out.

- Contact your installation Transition Assistance Program office. Take an employment workshop. Get referrals for employment agencies and recruiters, job leads, career counseling and computer access for online job searches. Transition assistance offices have a wealth of services.
- Visit the Department of Labor Transition Assistance Program website and learn about resources available from the Department of Defense Career Ready Portal.

### Civilian living versus military life

You're not just changing jobs or making a move – you're changing the way you and your family live. Sure you're used to change, but this can be different. Be prepared.

- You'll be leaving behind close friends, but can keep in touch and make new ones. Workplace camaraderie will probably be different. Job security may be different too. But on the other hand, no more orders.
- Some people choose to combine military and civilian life and transition to the reserves.
- Talk to your family before you make your decision. Don't underestimate the impact transitioning will have on them. Listen to their concerns and opinions. List the positive and negative aspects of the changes and consider which are most important for you and your family.

The takeaway? Don't rush a decision to avoid less-than-ideal orders. At the same time, don't re-enlist just to avoid the uncertainty of leaving. If you're still undecided, contact your installation Transition Assistance Program office for more guidance on the transition process and next steps.

Whatever you decide, once you've made your decision, be all in. You've done your homework and can move ahead with confidence.



**U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Lara Soto inspects measuring equipment at Training and Education Command Human Performance Branch at Marine Corps Base, Quantico, Va. Capt. Soto served for four years within the Selected Marine Corps Reserve (SMCR) prior to transitioning to the Individual Ready Reserve. (U.S. Marine Corps)**

# MY JOURNEY TO ACCEPTING MENTAL HEALTH CARE



*By Christopher Vidaurre*

"I'm OK," I'd say when anyone asked me how I was doing. Or "I'm fine."

Why was anyone even asking? I looked calm, collected, physically fit, and carried on with business as usual. I didn't talk about my anger, depression, and anxiety. But they were all boiling up inside me, and I felt I could snap at a moment's notice. Of course, I eventually did, and it would send me down to my darkest days.

Not once did I consider seeking mental health care, and nobody ever suggested treatment. I convinced myself that no one could recognize that I was struggling on a day-to-day basis. Triggers brought back all the traumatic events I experienced in childhood, adolescence, and my time in the military – family violence, loss of loved ones, a suicide bombing, and having to carry fellow Marines who had passed.

I kept these things inside and didn't seek care, putting my life on a dark path, while watching the people around me happily go about their daily lives as if there were no real issues occurring on the other side of the world. Because mental health within the military and veteran community continues to carry a huge stigma. But it's an issue that needs to be normalized – just like seeking care for physical health.

Because I couldn't recognize the signs that would have been identified if I'd been receiving care, I had mood swings and prolonged bouts of anger that would cause me to shut down from my loved ones. I dealt with these issues as I knew how, but it wasn't soon enough to keep me from becoming homeless on the streets of San Antonio after I left the Marine Corps. I ignored all the signs and symptoms, wrecking all my relationships and leaving me completely isolated. I was unable to speak about what I felt or what I was going through until it was too late.

It didn't have to be this way.

The veteran community has begun to recognize that mental health is a topic that needs to be discussed and is a major component to the overall quality of life. There's an acknowledgment that we must tackle the idea that seeking mental health care or asking for help makes you look weak or as if you can't handle your issues. I know firsthand how that stigma can manifest: I wasn't comfortable and didn't feel I was able to communicate about the issues I was dealing with.

I've learned that addressing your mental health is just as important as focusing on your physical health. The two shouldn't be treated differently in terms of importance.

I can now self-reflect and identify what is triggering my emotions and handle them in a healthy way. I now communicate about my feelings in both individual and group settings and look for other outlets that help me relieve any stress I may be feeling.

We should treat a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress-related depression or anxiety the way we would treat diabetes – by giving the person the tools to learn how to manage their medical condition on a day-to-day basis.

It starts by openly talking about depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and PTSD without judgment or shame. Having service members and veterans educate themselves and others on how to identify the signs and symptoms, learn how to have these difficult conversations, and recognize when someone requires care or emotional support.

I'm encouraged by new resources available in the military and veteran community that can help knock down many of the barriers to care. One is Check-In, at [veteran-checkin.org](http://veteran-checkin.org), which quickly, efficiently, and reliably connects veterans to high-quality, compassionate providers. Powered by the Veteran Wellness Alliance, the resource delivers best-in-class mental and brain health care from organizations that are culturally competent about the military.

Other stepping stones include learning how to have the conversation about seeking mental health care and how family, friends, and peers can best support servicemembers or veterans seeking care. Knowing that I was not alone, and that people close to me had my back was vital to my care.

Today, I know asking for help when I'm not OK is a good thing. I share my testimony to give hope to those who struggle with any type of traumatic experience and to let them know it's OK to ask for help.

I used to think, as others did, that asking for help was a sign of weakness and doing everything on my own, never knowing how to ask for any kind of help, was normal.

Take it from me, the improvement in quality of life is enormous when you don't have to struggle alone. I waited too long and didn't have the support I needed to walk down that dark road. But we can create pivotal changes for others, by letting them know, it's OK not to be OK.

*Christopher Vidaurre is Senior Program Manager of Health and Well-Being for Veterans and Military Families at the George W. Bush Institute.*

# inTRANSITION A Mental Health Resource for All Transitioning Service Members

*Courtesy of the Military Health System*

**T**ransitioning can be a difficult and stressful time for many military members. To help ease this process, service members can take advantage of the inTransition program.

The inTransition program is a free, confidential program that offers specialized coaching and assistance for active-duty service members, National Guard members, reservists, veterans and retirees who need access to mental health care when:

- Relocating to another assignment
- Returning from deployment
- Transitioning from active duty to reserve component or reserve component to active duty
- Preparing to leave military service
- Any other time they need a new mental health provider or need a provider for the first time

The inTransition program matches coaches with service members. The coaches are skilled counselors who understand military culture and who maintain privacy and confidentiality. They help participants:

- Connect to a new provider
- Monitor their transition and motivate them to remain in treatment
- Locate local community resources and support groups
- Find crisis intervention services in the new location
- Learn tools to continue making healthy life



**Mental health technicians work closely with providers to coordinate delivery of timely and quality mental health care. (U.S. Air Force)**

### choices

Services are available to ALL military members regardless of length of service or discharge status and there is NO expiration date to enroll.

Enrolling with inTransition is easy. Military members can sign up at any time from any location. Alternatively, they can ask for a referral from their health care provider or case manager.

The inTransition program is accessible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year via a toll-free phone number, email, or online chat:

- 800-424-7877 (CONUS)
- 800-424-4685 (OCONUS toll free)
- Email: [dha.ncr.j-9.mbx.intransition@mail.mil](mailto:dha.ncr.j-9.mbx.intransition@mail.mil)
- Online chat available at [health.mil/intransition](https://health.mil/intransition)

*"My coach was great. She always called on time, listened attentively, and gave me lots of good information. When I kept running into roadblocks, I felt like my coach was on my team, helping me get the help I needed."*

*- inTransition customer*

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## Find your career at VA through the Military Spouse Employment Program

*Courtesy of VA Careers,  
Department of Veterans Affairs*

The Department of Veterans Affairs values the experience that military spouses bring to the table, and are proud to be part of the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP), which helps military spouses find meaningful careers.

The resiliency and adaptability military spouses show makes them a perfect fit for VA's mission to care for Veterans.

### The path to a rewarding VA career

MSEP creates employment connections that provide companies with direct access to military spouses seeking career opportunities and provide spouses with direct access to employers – like VA – who are actively recruiting.

When you register with MSEP online, you gain access to the program's career portal. This system gives you the opportunity to build an online resume and apply to jobs directly. A search feature allows you to search all available job opportunities in your area and refine the search by job type, company and industry. (Naturally, you'll want to search for "Veterans Affairs" first!)

Searches can be saved so you can be notified immediately of potential job opportunities in your area or from favorite partners, like VA. In addition to applying for available jobs, you can send your resume directly to partners to be considered for future job openings.

### Additional resources

VA's commitment to supporting military spouses doesn't stop at MSEP.

VA has also partnered with DOD's Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) program, which provides education and career guidance to military spouses worldwide. SECO offers comprehensive resources and tools related to career exploration, education, training and licensing, employment readiness, and career connections.

If you're interested specifically in a healthcare career at VA, you may be eligible to receive up to \$4,000 (\$2,000 a year across two years) through a Military Career Advancement Account (MyCAA) scholarship. These scholarships help pay for education and training required to enter a portable career field, including health care.

Finally, VA is doing everything possible to make your job search easier. The organization tags VA openings ideal for military spouses on USAJobs.gov (look for the "military spouses" filter in your initial search). In those job announcements, you'll find highlighted key information – remote work opportunities, flexible work schedules, child care, and health benefits – that appeals to military spouses.



## YOUR LEAST FAVORITE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS and How to Answer Them

*Courtesy of the Department of Veterans Affairs*

We've all been there. Your coveted interview begins, and just as you think things are going well, the hiring manager throws you a curveball. They ask one of your least favorite interview questions, one of those questions that should be easy to answer, but completely throws you off your game.

Everyone has that one question that we just dread, the one that makes you break out in a cold sweat the second you hear the interviewer ask it. During a recent episode of "Talk About It Tuesday," we asked the audience to share their least favorite interview questions, and today we're going to help you answer the top three on that list.

### 1. "What is your biggest weakness?"

Far and away, questions about your weaknesses topped the list. Some folks paired it with describing your strengths, as well, but being asked to describe your weaknesses was a clear winner (or loser) for most of us.

When this question comes up, it feels like you're being asked to give the interviewer a reason not to hire you, which seems completely contrary to the whole point of the interview. The real subtext behind this question, though, is a bit more strategic.

When asking about your weaknesses, hiring managers are often testing your self-awareness, checking to see if you're willing to be honest about where you need to improve.

And that's the key to answering the question. When you're asked about a weakness (or three), be honest, but frame your answer in a way that shows you're

committed to improving.

For example, if you struggle with time management, tell the interviewer that you try to make lists and schedules for yourself to keep on track. If you don't like public speaking, explain that you aren't always comfortable talking in front of a group, but you welcome opportunities to share your expertise with the team.

### 2. "Tell me about yourself."

A close second on our list of least favorite questions from your interviews was this gem, which seems deceptively simple, but often leaves us stumped. Is the interviewer genuinely interested? Is this just an icebreaker? Should you answer on a more personal level, or keep it professional?

Before you answer, one thing to keep in mind is that this question allows you to set the tone for the interview. It's an early chance to get comfortable with your interviewer, and a great opportunity to let your personality shine. They've opened the floor to you, so take advantage of it.

That said, keep your answers on the professional level. Much like you use a cover letter to tell the story that isn't in your resume, use this question to dig into the things you want to highlight. Tell the interviewer about the career

accomplishments you're most proud of, your current work and what you're looking for in your career.

As you frame your response, think of your answer like it's running along a timeline: share something from your past, address the present and speak to your plans for the future.

### 3. "Why do you want to work here?"

Rounding out our top three least favorite questions is one that seems almost redundant when you hear it. Why would you be applying to a job if you didn't want to work at the company? Is this a trick question?

Once again, there's subtext here that isn't immediately apparent. Hiring managers often use this question as a roundabout way of seeing what you know about the job and the company. Make your response a one-two punch that shows interest in the company, followed by the value you bring to the position.

If you were applying at VA, for example, you could talk about how serving Veterans is the greatest mission in all of health care, or the appeal of our benefits, before explaining how your skills and background will prove valuable to your team.

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family.

"I've never heard anyone complain about saving too much," Andrews says. But if you have money left over in your transition fund, you can apply that to other goals, such as emergency fund, retirement, buying a home or paying down debt.

### Military retiree considerations

If you're retiring from active duty, your military pension will provide consistent income that can help offset how much you have to withdraw from your transition fund.

TRICARE can also help military retirees offset medical costs, which can quickly erode your emergency or transition fund.

If you're in the Guard or Reserves, you may not get your military pension and medical benefits immediately, but at the same time, the transition to civilian life is likely less dramatic.

As Guard and Reserve service members leave military service, they'll have some decisions to make around the Reserve Component Survivor Benefit Plan. This article can help.

Congratulations on your upcoming transition to civilian life. There are so many opportunities, and the experience will be full and rich if you're financially prepared.

# PREPARE YOUR FINANCES for the Transition to Civilian Life

*Courtesy of USAA*

**T**here's a lot of upside to transitioning to civilian life. No more early morning runs, PT tests or deployments, to name a few. But as with most of life's exciting transitions, there are also challenges, such as finding a new civilian job, settling into a new community, and navigating the civilian world of insurance and health care.

It's important to prioritize your finances in the wake of all the excitement around returning to civilian life. To strengthen your financial foundation, first focus on building your transition fund.

### What is a transition fund?

A transition fund is money you set aside to help you move from the military to civilian life. Aim to stock your transition fund with six to twelve months' worth of living expenses — a big number that will come in handy if you have an employment gap or paycheck delay.

"It's important to note that this transition fund doesn't take the place of your emergency fund," says Josh Andrews, USAA Director of Military Advice and a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel. You need an emergency fund with three to six months' worth of living expenses, plus a transition fund with six to 12 months' worth of living expenses.

"For most of us, leaving the military is not an emergency but a known life event," says Andrews. "If you know it's coming, plan for it."

### What your transition fund covers

After returning to civilian life, you can use your transition fund to pay for items like

rent or mortgage, medical expenses, job search expenses and even groceries.

"Some things are obvious, like your family needs food for meals and groceries even if you don't have a job," says Andrews. But it also helps with expenses you might not think about. "When I was transitioning from the Air Force, my transition fund covered things like civilian clothes for my job at USAA."

As a pilot, Andrews always just wore a green flight suit. "I didn't have civilian work clothes — much less a whole wardrobe — and that's an expense I was not expecting," he adds.

Searching for a new job is already one of life's most stressful events. There's a lot of pressure to secure employment, and if you're strapped for cash, that pressure can turn to anxiety. If you have a transition fund, you have some flexibility to wait for a job that's a good fit, not just the first job that comes along and pays the bills.

"I can't tell you how many stories I've heard from veterans who took a job they didn't want simply because they needed to pay bills," says Andrews.

### How to stock your transition fund

So how do you save such a large sum of money?

"This is a very common question," says Andrews. Most importantly: Get a head start. "USAA believes in beginning to save for the transition fund at least two years before your expected transition date."

Follow these steps to prioritize your transition fund:

1. Review your current budget to find savings opportunities, which might

include reducing expenses like eating out, vacations or entertainment.

2. Once you find those savings opportunities, automatically deposit the extra money into your transition fund each paycheck.
3. Contribute any unexpected windfalls, such as a tax refund, to make large gains.

"It's the principle of 'paying yourself first,'" says Andrews. "If you wait until the end of the month to save out of what is left over, you will probably reach the end of the month and find there's nothing left

with which to save. Most of us are that way."

### What to do with any leftover funds

If you don't deplete your transition fund as you return to civilian life, consider yourself lucky. A 2019 Pew Research study reported that among post 9/11 veterans, 43% took longer than six months to find a job. If your job search takes longer than you expect, the transition fund will be a life saver when it comes to paying bills and providing for you and your



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## Operation Next Prepares Service Members for In-demand Manufacturing Jobs

By Alyssa McBeth

LIFT, the Detroit-based, Department of Defense (DOD)-supported national manufacturing innovation institute, is continuing to bring its "Operation Next" manufacturing certification program to military bases and college campuses across the country.

Operation Next is a DOD-funded and SkillBridge-approved program that provides military personnel and their spouses with free training in advanced manufacturing skills. Delivered through fast, flexible learning modules, this instruction puts trainees on strong career paths with opportunities to land high-paying, in-demand jobs nationwide.

There are currently 13 Operation Next training locations with more coming soon, according to Joe Steele, Senior Director of Communications and Legislative Affairs at LIFT. The program

currently operates in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky-Fort Campbell, Kentucky-Fort Knox, Michigan, Montana, New York, North Carolina, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin.

Active-duty service members that are six months out from their transition date and in a location where Operation Next is offered can enroll in the program and earn a credential in some of the most in-demand advanced manufacturing jobs. This includes: Industrial Technologies Maintenance (ITM), Robotics Technician, Computerized Numerical Control (CNC) Machine Operator, and Welding. Not all credentials are offered at every location.

"Welding, ITM and CNC are the most in-demand jobs around the country, and robotics is really the fastest growing," Steele said.

Operation Next is in-line with LIFT's

mission to drive American manufacturing into the future through technology and talent development.

"It was really an opportunity to give back to our service members and provide them with an opportunity to begin their next civilian career by having a national, industry-recognized credential in their hand when they leave the service," said Steele.

And a great opportunity it is. According to a study by Deloitte, 2.4 million advanced manufacturing jobs are expected to go unfulfilled over the next decade because not enough people are entering the advanced manufacturing workforce.

"Combine that with retirement and there you have the skills gap," Steele said.

LIFT is actively working to bridge that gap through Operation Next while

providing a unique opportunity for service members and their families.

Each of the programs are flexible, self-paced and combine online learning with hands-on learning.

"You're not locked down to a schedule," Steele said. "And, if you already have some of these skills, you can quickly move through and test out and earn that credential faster."

If you are separating military personnel, a member of the National Guard and Reserves or a military spouse, visit [opnextjobs.com](http://opnextjobs.com) to learn more about Operation Next, view program locations, and register.

"A lot of [military members] already have some of the skills employers are looking for," Steele said. "That's one of the reasons the military population is a great fit for these positions."

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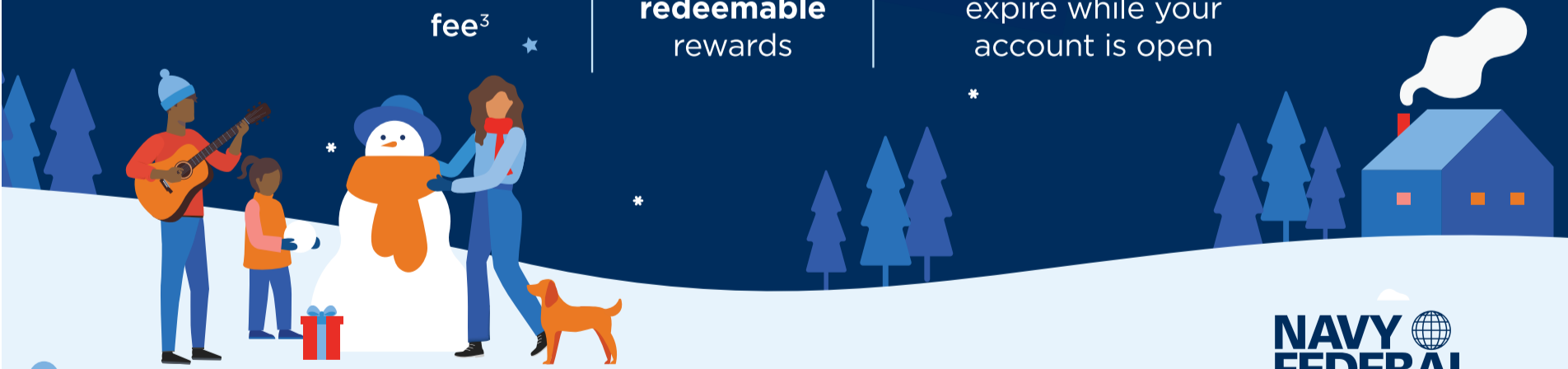


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