

**STATEMENT OF  
JUANA MARGARITA DEVLIN, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY  
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**March 25, 2025**

**Introduction**

Chairman Van Orden, Ranking Member Pappas, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on the current state of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and the steps that should be taken to continue modernizing and reforming the program.

The mission of the Department of Labor's (DOL), Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS), is to prepare America's veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses for meaningful careers; provide them with employment resources and expertise; protect their employment and reemployment rights; and promote their employment opportunities. VETS administers programs designed to address the employment, training, and job security needs of approximately 200,000 military service members who transition to civilian life each year, 8.4 million veterans in the U.S. civilian labor force,<sup>1</sup> 754,991 National Guard and Reserve members,<sup>2</sup> and 901,882 military spouses (561,008 active duty and 340,874 Guard and Reserve spouses).<sup>3</sup> Along with our partners, VETS is committed to ensuring a successful transition from military to civilian life.

It is always a pleasure for me to testify before this Subcommittee. I am honored to have served veterans for 30 years as a career federal employee. After nearly four years serving in my current role at VETS, I have seen firsthand the passion, talent, dedication, and innovative spirit of our employees, many of whom are veterans themselves. Our partners across the interagency space are also incredibly dedicated. We continue to work together to improve our programs that support the military-to-civilian transition. But we recognize that transition occurs in an ever-evolving landscape, and this requires us to continuously review and improve our services.

We understand that the transition to civilian life is not a one-size-fits-all process, and we are committed to adapting our programs to meet the particular needs of our individual service members, veterans, and their families. We acknowledge that no program is perfect, and there is

---

<sup>1</sup> Civilian noninstitutional population aged 18 years and over. Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) – 2024: <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat48.htm>.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Defense (DoD), Defense Manpower Data Center, Military Personnel Report, Selected Reserve Personnel by Reserve Component and Rank/Grade, November 2024: <https://dwp.dmdc.osd.mil/dwp/app/dod-data-reports/workforce-reports>.

<sup>3</sup> Military OneSource – Demographics Profile, 2023: <https://demographics.militaryonesource.mil/>.

always room for growth. That is why we actively seek feedback from transitioning service members (TSM), veterans, military spouses, Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), and other stakeholders, and we incorporate their insights into our policy and program designs. We are not satisfied with maintaining the status quo. Instead, we tirelessly pursue innovation to ensure that TAP remains relevant, effective, and impactful. To achieve this goal, we have piloted programs, enhanced our curriculum, and strengthened interagency partnerships. The Employment Navigator and Partnership Program (ENPP) is one example of how we have responded directly to the needs of our service members, many of whom have told us that participating in TAP, while informative, can feel like drinking from a fire hose. We listened to their feedback and designed the ENPP pilot to provide tailored, one-on-one employment guidance, and its success has led to its expansion as a permanent program. This initiative exemplifies our commitment to evolving alongside the needs of transitioning service members.

### **TAP Overview**

TAP provides training, resources, and assistance to separating and retiring service members on active duty in the Armed Forces, including those on Guard or Reserve duty, as well as their spouses, pursuant to 10 U.S.C. § 1144. TAP is a cooperative effort among DOL, the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Education (ED), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Small Business Administration (SBA), and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

Congress originally established TAP in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year (FY) 1991 (P.L. 101-510). This enactment authorized the development of a voluntary program consisting of transition assistance counseling and employment assistance for separating service members and their spouses. In 2011, the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011 (P.L. 112-56) mandated TAP participation for all TSMs—including participation in pre-separation counseling and the completion of courses provided by the newly-established interagency partnerships—to start no later than 90 days prior to a service member’s anticipated date of transition. To implement these requirements, DOL, DoD, VA, and SBA collaborated to prepare new curricula and expand training, education, and transition activities to include Career Readiness Standards, a specified set of common activities for service members to complete.

The John S. McCain NDAA for FY 2019 (P.L. 115-232) required TAP classes to commence no later than 365 days prior to an anticipated date of separation or release from active duty, or 24 months prior to retirement. These requirements allowed TAP to evolve from a one-size-fits-all program where service members had to transition to civilian life in a condensed timeframe to an individualized program tailored specifically to the needs of each service member, and operated under a more suitable timeline.

More recently, additional improvements were enacted for TAP in the FY 2024 NDAA (P.L. 118-31), which amended 38 U.S.C. § 320 to add the Assistant Secretary of Labor for VETS to the DoD-VA Joint Executive Committee (JEC). The JEC serves as the primary executive-level federal interagency body for overseeing and supporting transition assistance activities and initiatives for Active and Reserve Component Service members. The FY 2024 NDAA also

renamed the Job Training and Post-Service Placement Executive Committee as the Transition Executive Committee (TEC). The TEC's more targeted mission is to identify areas of improvement in job training, military to civilian transition, and post-service placement.

### **TAP Employment Workshops**

In FY 2024, VETS conducted 10,888 TAP employment workshops, providing instruction to 227,183 participants.<sup>4</sup> There are three core VETS TAP employment workshops. First, VETS is responsible for delivery of the Employment Fundamentals of Career Transition (EFCT) Workshop, which is a mandatory, one-day employment preparation course. The EFCT Workshop is a foundational workshop that introduces the essential tools that TSMs and their spouses use during their job search. In FY 2024, VETS conducted 5,685 EFCT workshops, providing instruction to 138,698 participants.

VETS also offers two elective tracks, each provided as a two-day workshop: (1) the DOL Employment Workshop (DOLEW), and (2) the Career and Credential Exploration (C2E) Workshop. Service members must elect a single two-day track during their individual counseling; however, they are encouraged to attend additional tracks and repeat courses—as needed—to ensure adequate preparation for their transition to the civilian workforce.

The DOLEW is for those service members pursuing employment after their transition. It covers best practices in civilian career exploration, including providing in-depth training on interview skills, building effective resumes, and using emerging technology to network and search for employment. In FY 2024, VETS conducted 4,115 DOLEWs for 72,898 participants.

For those service members on the vocational track, the two-day C2E workshop offers opportunities for participants to complete a personalized career development assessment of their individual occupational interests and abilities. Participants are guided through a variety of career considerations, including labor market projections, educational opportunities, certifications, licensure requirements, and the availability of Registered Apprenticeships that can lead to industry-recognized credentials. In FY 2024, VETS conducted 1,088 C2E workshops for 15,587 participants.

In January 2025, VETS launched an update to its EFCT curricula based on stakeholder feedback. The VETS TAP curriculum development team compiled and categorized input from the following stakeholders:

- TAP service members (through survey results and written comments via the Transition Assistance Participant Assessment);
- DOL TAP facilitators;
- VSOs;
- VETS federal field staff; and
- TAP interagency curriculum subject matter experts (SMEs).

---

<sup>4</sup> Note that an individual service member may attend more than one workshop. References to the total number of TAP workshop participants do not track individual, unique participants.

The VETS TAP curriculum development team used stakeholder input to reorganize workshop content for better flow in the classroom, to remove redundancies, and to add content on responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools. VETS piloted the revised curricula at several military installations, and made further refinements based on SME, facilitator, and participant feedback received during the pilots. VETS followed a similar process with the C2E curriculum, and, as of January 2024, offers apprenticeship-specific resume preparation.

VETS workshops are highly rated by attendees. The results of the FY 2024 Transition Assistance Participant Assessment, through the second quarter, indicated that 96 percent of participants would use what they learned in their own transition planning, and 94 percent reported that the EFCT enhanced their confidence in transition planning.

### **VETS Designed and Implemented Innovative Employment Workshops**

In addition to the three core VETS employment workshops, VETS offers two employment workshops designed to address the unique needs of military spouses, caregivers, and wounded, ill, and/or injured service members:

**Military Spouse and Caregiver Employment Curriculum:** In February 2021, VETS launched a monthly series of career workshops to provide employment assistance to transitioning military spouses, known as the Transition Employment Assistance for Military Spouses and Caregivers (TEAMS) curriculum. TEAMS workshops help military spouses plan and prepare for their job search in pursuit of their employment goals. VETS offers eleven TEAMS courses that combine current curriculum components developed for service members, such as resume development and interviewing techniques, with components specifically tailored to the needs of military spouses—who often face unique challenges and complexities with obtaining employment due to frequent relocations, among other things. In collaboration with SBA, VETS offers its entrepreneurship course through TEAMS. In addition, as a result of our TEAMS staff collaboration with Hiring Our Heroes, an organization sponsored by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, VETS created and is providing a specialized one-hour federal hiring seminar for military spouses at monthly Amplify events, which are free career development events for military spouses hosted by Hiring Our Heroes. In FY 2024, VETS provided 411 TEAMS workshops for 2,523 military spouses and caregivers. We continue to work with our partners at DoD to schedule and promote in-person TEAMS events at DoD military installations and to offer live TEAMS workshops virtually.

**Wounded Warrior and Caregiver Employment Workshop (WWCEW):** Each year, there are approximately 20,000 wounded, ill, and/or injured (WII) service members who are transitioning either through their service branch’s warrior care or military recovery units or through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) program.<sup>5</sup> In April 2022, VETS launched the WWCEW for these TSMs as an alternative means to fulfill the required one-day EFCT workshop. These TSMs face more complex recovery journeys and associated barriers to completing the traditional EFCT workshop. They may encounter difficulty coordinating their class schedules with medical appointments, attending classes of a long duration, working on

---

<sup>5</sup> Military OneSource – Demographics Profile, 2023: <https://demographics.militaryonesource.mil/>.

assignments with medical and health restrictions, and requiring assistance from their caregiver to attend a class. To reduce these challenges, WWCEW is offered at *TAPEvents.mil*, which is DoD's online transition learning system where participants can complete the workshop at their own pace. This online course interface enables participants to register for a virtual session where a VETS facilitator is available to answer their questions and clarify course content. In FY 2024, 11,853 participants completed WWCEW.

Military Life Cycle (MLC) Curriculum: With the adoption by the Services of the MLC approach, TAP begins earlier in a service member's career. The MLC emphasizes career readiness planning at every career step for all service members at key milestones during their service, providing multiple opportunities to align their military career goals with their civilian career goals upon separation. The MLC enables service members to follow a well-planned, organized progression that empowers them to make informed career decisions and to take responsibility to advance their personal professional goals. For example, in FY 2024, VETS added a new course to its MLC course library, entitled, *Set Yourself Apart Using STAR*; this course instructs participants on how to write achievement statements using the Situation, Task, Action, and Result (STAR) method to effectively communicate accomplishments by outlining the STAR in a concise and impactful manner. The MLC curriculum is self-paced and is available to service members online and on demand. VETS plans to develop an additional MLC employment related course each year in coordination with our interagency partners.

### **Off-Base Transition Training**

In January 2022, VETS launched a five-year Off-Base Transition Training (OBTT) pilot program, in accordance with Section 4303 of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 (P.L. 116-315), enacted on January 5, 2021. Section 4303 directed DOL to provide TAP employment workshops to veterans and their spouses at locations other than military installations to improve employment-related outcomes in areas with high veteran unemployment. The OBTT pilot launched in eight metropolitan areas across five states (California, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas). VETS has since expanded to nine additional states (Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, New Jersey, New Mexico, Nevada, New York, Oregon, and Washington) and the District of Columbia. VETS prioritized expansion to states with high rates of veteran unemployment, with preference given to states that have provided recently-separated veterans with Unemployment Compensation for Ex-servicemembers (UCX) at a high rate. The five-year authorization for OBTT will end on January 5, 2026.

The OBTT workshops are offered in-person at various times and locations in the pilot states, as well as virtually nationwide. In FY 2024, 14,731 veterans and spouses attended 2,977 virtual and in-person OBTT workshops. These figures represent a 43 percent increase in participant interaction from FY 2023, demonstrating significant interest in OBTT workshops.

OBTT comprises ten two-hour workshops and three one-hour seminars facilitated by existing TAP contract instructors. Facilitators have extensive understanding of course material and receive supplementary training specific to a veteran audience. Utilizing the existing network

of cross-trained facilitators provides flexibility for the execution of OBTT workshops across the nation. Current workshops cover the following topics:

- Marketing Yourself
- Understanding Resume Essentials
- Creating Your Resume Workshop
- Interview Skills
- Employment Rights
- Federal Hiring
- LinkedIn Job Search
- LinkedIn Profiles
- My Next Move
- Salary Negotiations
- Job Fair Strategies and On-the-Spot Interviews
- Networking and Professional Introductions at Job Fairs
- Federal Hiring Overview

OBTT is a critical component of transition—particularly for those who have been separated from the military for over ten years, as TAP participation was not mandatory for separating service members until 2011. The flexibility OBTT provides allows for greater participation in essential training, which leads to better employment outcomes. As one OBTT participant commented: “The content of tying my military experience to civilian and putting it on paper stood out to me as I had never written a resume. This workshop [Creating Your Resume] provided great examples and resources on how to prepare for writing my own. Speaker was well prepared, well organized, engaging and presented the topic in a thorough way. Overall, an outstanding resource, I would recommend OBTT, 5 stars all the way!” Moreover, 85 percent of participants would recommend OBTT to other veterans and spouses, and 85 percent of participants also found their respective workshop(s) to be informative and helpful in their job search.

### **Employment Navigator and Partnership Program**

ENPP commenced at 13 military installations worldwide on April 1, 2021. ENPP leverages the Secretary of Labor’s authority (10 U.S.C. § 1144) to assist TSMs and their spouses with identifying and connecting to employment and training opportunities. The pilot was designed in response to feedback from veterans who stated that, while their TAP classroom experience was educational, they desired a more personalized approach. ENPP provides one-on-one, tailored services for TSMs and their spouses. After 2 ½ years of initial implementation, our preliminary analysis of employment outcome data indicated a positive impact from the ENPP pilot. Based on these factors, VETS established ENPP as a program on October 1, 2023, and has since scaled it up, adding 10 installations in FY 2024 for a current total of 40 ENPP sites.

Through our full-time contract Employment Navigator staff and our employment partners, ENPP clients receive assistance with their resumes and career direction, as well as referrals to DOL-funded American Job Centers and vetted ENPP Partner organizations, which provide additional personalized support. ENPP Partners are required to select a primary service from nine possible categories of services, which include: digital employment opportunity matching, training services, employment mentorship, hiring events, employment networking, Registered Apprenticeship opportunities, referrals to employment opportunities, placement services, and wrap-around services. A list of our current partners can be found on the VETS

ENPP Partner Page,<sup>6</sup> and organizations that are interested in partnership with VETS can submit an application.<sup>7</sup> In FY 2024, 6,300 TSMs and 346 military spouses received services through ENPP.

At ENPP sites, the lead Employment Navigators also serve as the initial points of contact for TSMs receiving a “warm handover”, a person-to-person connection between the TSM and an American Job Center. No later than 90 days prior to separating, TSMs will go through Capstone, a process by which the military service branch evaluates whether service members have met the Career Readiness Standards (CRS). To meet the employment track CRS, a service member must have either a completed resume or received confirmation of employment. If a service member fails to meet the employment track for CRS, they are provided a warm handover, which connects them to designated services and follow-up resources as needed.

For example, Employment Navigators who participate in a warm handover at ENPP sites help connect TSMs to a designated point of contact at an American Job Center, which then verifies with DOL that the Center has received contact information for, and reached out to, the service member to offer assistance. In addition to being connected with an American Job Center closest to where they reside, many service members who receive a warm handover also obtain services from our Employment Navigators and partners. Providing TSMs with support from ENPP helps more of them meet the employment track for CRS.

Participant surveys demonstrate that ENPP has been a great success. In FY 2024, 99 percent of ENPP survey respondents reported positive feelings after meeting with their Employment Navigators and would recommend ENPP to a friend or colleague. Additionally, 96 percent felt ENPP partners met or exceeded their employment-related expectations. As one ENPP survey respondent stated: “The value of the Employment Navigator is having a one-on-one conversation to go back over the plethora of information you received in TAP classes and give guidance and recommendations specific to your situation.” Our research and data, described below, has also shown very positive results for ENPP participants.

### **Enhanced Data Collection and Research**

VETS utilizes data analytics and research to understand the effectiveness of TAP services and to improve employment outcomes for TSMs. Historically, VETS’ access to data was limited to the number of workshops conducted and workshop participants; however, VETS-driven program improvements and the changes mandated in the FY 2019 NDAA transformed our data collection and analysis capabilities in the transition space. Initiatives such as ENPP, and subsequent data sharing agreements, have enabled VETS to acquire information on the transition experience through an innovative data system and a one-of-a-kind dataset.

In FY 2022, VETS updated its data-sharing agreement with DoD (specifically, the Defense Manpower Data Center) to expand the data transferred to DOL through the Veterans’ Data Exchange Initiative (VDEI). In addition, DOL receives daily information from DoD on TSMs as collected on DD Form 2648 (Pre-Separation Counseling Checklist) and information

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/vets/programs/tap/employment-navigator-partnership/enpp-partnerships>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/VETS/files/tap/DOLVETSENPPPotentialPartnerApplicationForm.pdf>

about TAP course attendance. This data allows VETS to monitor attendance at DOL benefits briefings, DOL-provided TAP workshops, and receipt of warm handovers—to better gauge VETS program effectiveness.

In FY 2023, DOL completed a TAP Impact Study and found that DOL Employment Workshop participants had better employment outcomes than non-participants. Significantly, a higher proportion of participants found jobs in the first-year post-separation; a higher proportion of participating TSMs who were employed at 6 months post-separation were still employed after 12 months; and participants experienced fewer quarters of unemployment by 3 years post-separation.

VETS launched its ENPP case management system in December 2021—the TAP Employment Navigator System (TENS)—used by Employment Navigators, ENPP Partners, and TAP team members to capture data, develop reports, and manage ENPP processes. TENS comprises an integrated client request meeting scheduler, program reporting, policy/guidance storage, and client record management.

In FY 2022, VETS initiated the TAP Evaluation and Employment Navigator (TEEN) Study to analyze the challenges faced by separated and retired service members. In FY 2025, VETS renewed data-sharing agreements with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), first established in FY 2022, which are necessary to continue cross-matching certain HHS data with VDEI and ENPP data. More specifically, this study combines three data sources: (1) armed forces administrative data from DoD through the VDEI; (2) Navigator’s data from VETS’ TENS database; and (3) employment data from HHS’s National Directory of New Hires (NDNH). The data obtained from these combined data sources helps VETS to better understand: (1) the employment outcomes of transitioning service members and their spouses, including DOL TAP Workshop information, and (2) the impact of Employment Navigators on employment outcomes for TSMs. In addition, VETS worked with DOL’s Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) to make necessary improvements to its information technology system to enable the receipt, storage, and analysis of these data; the system upgrade for VETS was completed in the first quarter of FY 2023.

VETS’ preliminary analysis of these data indicates that TSMs who received ENPP services were employed faster and earn more (as demonstrated by quarterly wages) compared to those who do not receive ENPP services. The median time between separation and employment for enlisted TSMs was 90 days for those who received ENPP services versus 153 days for those who did not receive ENPP services. The difference equated to approximately two months (63 days) faster to civilian employment. Further, the median quarterly wages for enlisted TSMs who received ENPP services and were employed six months after separation were \$11,370, compared to \$10,248 for those who did not receive ENPP services, an 11 percent difference. VETS will continue analyzing the data and will provide more nuanced information as the data sets increase and analysis matures.



It also is noteworthy that a 2023 ENPP Formative Study examined the early implementation of ENPP and variations in its implementation by ENPP site.<sup>8</sup> The study found that ENPP was implemented as planned and that recommendations for improvement had been addressed. For example, interview participants stressed the importance of screening Employment Navigators for soft skills, such as their ability to connect with TSMs experiencing a particularly challenging period in their lives. VETS also had established eligibility criteria and an approval process for new partner organizations, and a new data tracking and reporting system. Finally, another VETS ENPP Evaluation is currently underway, and key components of it include an implementation study, a study of ENPP participant outcomes, and an assessment of whether an impact evaluation for the ENPP is feasible.

As DOL completes these studies, we will share results with the public, Congress, our partners, and other stakeholders, so that we continue to improve the quality of VETS programs for our service members and their families.

### **Interdepartmental Collaboration**

VETS works with its interagency partners to provide program oversight. In conjunction with DoD and VA, VETS co-chairs the TEC, the Senior Transition Steering Group, the Transition Working Group, and six functional working groups. Interagency members—including DOL, DoD, VA, ED, DHS, SBA, OPM, and the Armed Services—meet and coordinate regularly to ensure proper support for, and advancement of, TAP; this includes identifying redundancies to improve programmatic efficiency.

DOL is also proud to work with our partners to promote the DoD-administered SkillBridge program, which connects service members with industry partners for real-world job experiences, helping bridge the gap between the end of their service and the beginning of their civilian careers. Employers participate in the SkillBridge program to provide opportunities for service members through specific industry training, Registered Apprenticeships, and internships during their last 180 days of service. Timely access to the SkillBridge program and other TAP programs and services is crucial to the transition process, especially for those who face more challenges in the civilian sector than their peers, such as junior enlisted service members, service members with “exceptional family members,”<sup>9</sup> and those who have unplanned transitions.

TAP requires coordination between interagency partners and public-private partners to be successful. Since DOL is the federal lead for employment and the American workforce system, DOL continues to work closely with DoD, VA, and SBA to ensure all training and employment programs generate quality jobs for TSMs. To accomplish this, VETS will build stronger ties with Congress, its interagency partners, ENPP partners, DoD SkillBridge stakeholders, and employers to improve employment-related TAP outcomes.

---

<sup>8</sup> Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Employment Navigator and Partnership Pilot (ENPP) Formative Study Report, [Transition Assistance Program \(TAP\) Employment Navigator and Partnership Pilot \(ENPP\) Formative Study Report \(dol.gov\)](#). Published July 2023.

<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/resources/millife-guides/efmp-resources/#what-is-efmp>.

## **Conclusion**

Our long-term strategic goal for TAP is for the nation to recognize military service as a path to high-quality civilian careers. The future of the country's All Volunteer Force depends upon this recognition. As the lead federal agency on veteran employment, VETS looks forward to working with this Committee and with our many partners and stakeholders to create opportunities that ensure all transitioning service members and veterans, and their spouses, can have a good job and opportunity for advancement.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my statement. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of this hearing, and I welcome your questions.