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## How to Support Hiring Events for Veterans and Military & Veteran Spouses

### Background Information:

While the overall unemployment rate in 2012 was slightly lower among veterans than the national average (7.0 percent compared to 8.1 percent), the unemployment rate among current conflict veterans in 2012 was 9.9 percent<sup>a</sup>. The May 2012 report of Monster's *Veterans Talent Index* (a bi-annual survey of veterans and employers by Monster and Military.com) found that only 29 percent of veteran respondents are "confident about finding work that suits them," down from 44 percent six months before. Meanwhile, 99 percent of employers who had hired a veteran reported they would recommend hiring a veteran and 70 percent reported hiring veterans because they were the best qualified for the job<sup>b</sup>.

The unemployment rate of military spouses has been found to be more than three times the national average.<sup>c</sup> Family relocation due to servicemembers' periodic changes in duty station makes it difficult for spouses to maintain steady employment, leading to resume gaps and skepticism among potential employers. Common careers for military spouses, such as those in the educational field, often require state-specific licensing that does not transfer easily from state to state. Deployment further complicates the issue, as spouses are often left to balance finances, care for children and adapt to limited support from her/his partner.

Several initiatives are underway to address veteran, military spouse, and veteran spouse underemployment and unemployment. Common responses are hiring fairs and networking events, which bring employers and potential employees together. Veterans, servicemembers and their spouses can have face-to-face mini-interviews and disseminate copies of their résumés. Having a minute or two to speak with a representative may open the door to an off-site job interview.

The American Legion Auxiliary is proud to support the employment programs of The American Legion and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes initiative. These programs aim to improve the lives of veterans, military spouses and veteran spouses by helping them achieve upward mobility in the workplace through hiring fairs, networking events, and online and in-person mentoring.

### Getting Involved:

There are two types of ways a unit or member can get involved with veteran and military & veteran spouse employment programs – 1) by organizing or participating in hiring and networking events or 2) by serving as a mentor. This guide explains how members can get involved with hiring events. To find out how to get more involved in mentoring, please see our guide titled "How to Collaborate with the Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse eMentor Program" at [www.ALAforVeterans.org/Programs/Community-Service](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org/Programs/Community-Service).

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<sup>a</sup> Employment Situation of Veterans—2011: <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>

<sup>b</sup> Monster's Veterans Talent Index: Insights and Analysis from Veteran Professionals, Recruiters and Hiring Managers (May 2012): [http://www.about-monster.com/sites/default/files/MonsterVeteransTalentIndex\\_May2012.pdf](http://www.about-monster.com/sites/default/files/MonsterVeteransTalentIndex_May2012.pdf)

<sup>c</sup> Report highlights employment burdens on military spouses (February 2012): <http://www.cnn.com/2012/02/15/politics/military-jobs>



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### Steps to Support Hiring Events:

There are five ways a unit or member can get involved in veteran and military & veteran spouse hiring events. Members can (a) work with The American Legion post(s) in their community to implement a Legion-sponsored hiring fair or with Hiring our Heroes to implement a military spouse-specific hiring fair; (b) co-host a Legion Family information table at a U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation-sponsored hiring fair; (c) initiate and host a hiring fair for veterans and military & veteran spouses in their community; (d) participate in military spouse networking events; and (e) participate in military spouse career LinkedIn networks.

- A. Support the Legion's or Hiring Our Heroes' hiring fair efforts in your community:
  1. Contact the post commander in your area to see if the post is sponsoring a hiring fair of its own, or in collaboration with Hiring Our Heroes. Dates and locations are listed on the Legion's Veteran Career Center, but may not be posted in time for your unit to assist in planning.
  2. Inquire with the post's point of contact for the hiring fair to see how your unit may provide assistance through volunteering on-site and through in-kind contributions. Some potential opportunities include:
    - Assisting with site set-up and break-down.
    - Serving as greeters of employers, veterans and spouses as they enter the fair.
    - Preparing and serving meals or refreshments to veterans, spouses, children, and employers.
    - Organizing and providing information and activities for the families attending with the veterans and spouses, such as information on social opportunities for spouses or recreational activities for children and youth.
    - Assisting with distribution of satisfaction surveys of attendees and employers.
  3. Visit the Hiring our Heroes Military Spouse Employment Program website at to determine if they plan to hold a military spouse-specific hiring fairs in your community. If so, offer the same type of support recommended for veteran hiring fairs.
  4. Remember to wear Auxiliary attire on-site, if available.
- B. Co-host a Legion Family table at hiring fairs where the Legion Family is invited to participate:
  1. The American Legion is often invited to participate in U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring our Heroes hiring fairs. When the Legion's National Economic Division is alerted of these fairs, they work to make arrangements with local posts to staff a claims and membership table. To co-host these information tables with the Legion, Auxiliary members are encouraged to:
    - Stay in regular communications with the post commander as they may extend an invitation to join Legionnaires as volunteers at an information table.
  2. Remember to bring Auxiliary program and membership information, if available.
  3. Remember to wear Auxiliary attire on-site, if available.
- C. Implement a hiring fair of your own in your community:
  1. Decide on your target job-seeking population. Will your unit invite only a National Guard or reserve unit(s) that just returned from deployment, or open up the hiring fair to all veterans in the community? Will the fair be oriented towards military and veteran spouses only, or in addition to servicemembers and veterans?



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2. Contact employers to see who is interested in participating. A good time frame to contact employers is three months in advance of the hiring fair date. Invite a wide range of employers. Hiring fairs range in size from 10 to 100 employers. Be sure the employers actually have jobs available! Think about the employers you plan to have in attendance. Consider talking with the Veterans Administration Certifying Officer from a local college or university (perhaps someone from the school would be willing to counsel veterans about the possibility of returning to school with G.I. Bill benefits). Other possibilities include speaking with someone who might work with veterans at the community's one-stop workforce center. Consider inviting representatives of companies that have declared a willingness to hire veterans, banks, car dealers, colleges and universities, utility companies, federal agencies such as Department of Labor, Homeland Security and Veterans Affairs, fire and emergency response departments of local and state government, government (local, state and national, if applicable), law enforcement agencies (local police, sheriff's office and highway patrol), phone companies (both landline and mobile), railroad companies, shipping companies, and health care organizations.
3. Determine where the hiring fair will take place. If your unit home will accommodate a large number of people and tables, try to have it there. If not, perhaps a neighboring unit in your area can accommodate your needs. Other potential venues include school gymnasiums, community centers, libraries or government buildings. The room will need to be large enough for each employer to have a table or booth while providing guests enough walking room. Ideally, there should be a partition between each table or booth. It is important to choose space to accommodate at least 10 percent more people to arrive than planned. Make sure to have enough parking for volunteers (members), the veterans and spouses, and the employers. Consider convenience of those attending, i.e., on a bus line. Ask about potential cost associated with certain venues.
4. Arrange for adequate numbers of tables and chairs at the event. Ideally, every employer would have their own table and at least two chairs. A registration table might be needed. Create a handout to provide attendees with a map of booths, with tables and employers numbered and a key (e.g., American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters—Table 19).
5. Your unit should aim to have the hiring fair in the afternoon. Depending on the size of the fair, plan between two and four hours in length. Consider hosting your hiring fair when servicemembers return from deployment or a national day of service, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. Day or the 9/11 Day of Service and Remembrance.
6. If the unit or post has a website, advertise the hiring fair and the employers that will be attending on the website. This advertisement gives servicemembers, veterans and spouses attending the opportunity to tailor their résumés to specific jobs and research different employers. You may also consider making flyers and passing them out to local homeless shelters, or posting them in community centers. Inquire of your local news media outlets (print, radio and TV) if they will advertise the event for free or a reduced rate (they may be willing to sponsor the event!).
7. Remind attendees to bring multiple copies of their résumé to hand to the employers, to dress for success and if possible bring résumés on a removable USB drive (memory stick/pen drive) or CD.



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8. Remember to arrive at the venue early in order to do any cleaning or additional setup, and require employers and volunteers to arrive an hour before the official start time.
  9. Designate a team to greet and help the employers, veterans and spouses at the hiring fair. The team should have nametags and wear Auxiliary attire, if available.
  10. Consider having a table set up with a few computers connected to the Internet, space permitting, for helping veterans and spouses with little or no web access at your fair. Assign a web-savvy Auxiliary member to help veterans and spouses at this station. If your hiring fair is open to current reservists and National Guardsmen, have them use the free job database from Armed Forces Employer Partnership. Current conflict veterans also can use Hire Heroes USA. Avue is a government job agency that lists jobs by state. To apply for many of these jobs, servicemembers and veterans will need to have their résumé on disk or removable USB drive to upload their job history to these websites. If you do not have the resources for a computer station, make fliers with a list of online resources for job seekers who may be able to access the Internet at another location.
  11. Make satisfaction surveys for attendees and employers to complete before they leave. By asking questions of attendees about what types of job fields should be present in the future, you will learn valuable information about which employers to invite next time.
    - Ask for email addresses from attendees in case you have another hiring fair.
    - Please remember not to treat your hiring fair as a membership recruitment event.
  12. Within one week of the hiring fair, send thank-you letters to participating employers for supporting our servicemembers, veterans and their families.
- D. Participate in Military Spouse Networking Events
1. The Hiring our Heroes Military Spouse Employment Program organizes networking events to bring together business and civic leaders from the community and military spouses, senior spouses and military installation staff to help spouses integrate into, and get involved in, their communities. A calendar of events is available on their website.
  2. ALA members in communities with networking events (typically, but not always in the same location as military spouse-specific hiring fairs) can help by recruiting local business and civic leaders to participate. Members can serve as greeters or mentors at the event. Members are also welcome to simply come to the event and share their knowledge about the local business community with military spouses.
- E. Participate in Military Spouse LinkedIn Networks
1. The Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse Employment Program establishes private LinkedIn networks for participants in the hiring fairs and networking events. The LinkedIn networks provide a place for participants and allies to post job opportunities and announcements about local career or business/civic events. This helps spouses integrate even further into the community by getting engaged with local civic and business efforts over a long-term.
  2. ALA members in communities with hiring fairs and networking events can join the associated LinkedIn networks. Members may do so by requesting to join a group by searching for “Military Spouse Employment Regional Network” on LinkedIn and selecting groups on the left hand side. In the group, ALA members can post information about local jobs or interesting career events. Members can also use the LinkedIn networks to promote ALA and other events of interest to military spouses.



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### Report Your Impact:

Please also be sure to report your volunteer activities and hours to your unit's Community Service Chair, the committee with oversight of ALA's efforts for veteran and military & veteran spouse employment.

### Important Laws to Be Aware of:

1. The **VOW to Hire Heroes Act** seeks to get veterans back to work and to better prepare servicemembers for employment prior to separating from the military. There are tax credit incentives for employers to hire unemployed veterans and veterans with service-connected disabilities. Also the VOW to Hire Heroes Act requires all servicemembers separating from service to participate in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to prepare them for the job hunt in the civilian workforce. It offers unemployed veterans 35-60 years of age educational benefits for jobs that are in high demand through the Veterans Retraining Assistance Program (VRAP) and provides additional benefits to disabled veterans through the Department of Veterans Affairs' Veterans Rehabilitation and Employment Services (VR&E). Additionally, this act requires the Department of Labor to evaluate how military skills can be translated to the civilian workforce. Visit [www.veterans.house.gov/vow](http://www.veterans.house.gov/vow) for more information.
2. The **Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA)** outlines the rights and responsibilities of National Guardsmen, Reservists and all civilian employers in the event the servicemember becomes activated to service for any length of time. The Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) executes USERRA. ESGR works to provide free services to the employer while assisting the servicemember. Services provided by ESGR include helping an employer understand serving in the Armed Forces, mediating between employer and employee (servicemember) and issuing return-to-service letters. Visit [www.esgr.org](http://www.esgr.org) for more information.

### Resources:

- The American Legion's Veteran Career Center: [www.legion.org/careers](http://www.legion.org/careers)
- Armed Forces Employer Partnership: [www.armyreserve.army.mil/ARWEB](http://www.armyreserve.army.mil/ARWEB)
- Avue: [www.avuecentral.com](http://www.avuecentral.com)
- Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve: [www.esgr.org](http://www.esgr.org)
- Hire Heroes USA: [www.hireheroesusa.org](http://www.hireheroesusa.org)
- Information on the VOW to Hire Heroes Act: [www.veterans.house.gov/vow](http://www.veterans.house.gov/vow)
- US Chamber of Commerce Foundation Hiring Our Heroes: [www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes](http://www.uschamber.com/hiringourheroes)
- US Chamber of Commerce Foundation Hiring Our Heroes Military Spouse Employment Program: [www.hiringourheroes.org/milspouse](http://www.hiringourheroes.org/milspouse)