

Profiles in Success

Veterans Employment Services

Texas Veterans Commission

Disabled Veterans Outreach and Local Veterans Employment Representative Programs *in Austin*



The state of Texas has a long history of assisting its veterans. This history dates back to the War of Texas Independence in 1835, a conflict that preceded the Civil War by twenty-five years. In 1927, the 40th Texas Legislature created the Veteran's State Service Office. Now called the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), one of this agency's most critical functions includes helping Texas veterans find jobs and establish careers.

Recent data from the U.S. Department of Labor indicates that Texas has been more successful at helping its veterans find jobs than any other state in the country. 2009 figures show that the TVC assisted 47,556 veterans enter employment, the highest number of any state. This figure is also higher than the number of veterans entering employment in the five states with the largest veteran populations combined.

Texas' veteran population is the fastest growing in the country, numbering over 1.7 million in 2010. Out of this number approximately 605,000 served in the Vietnam War and 100,000 served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. According to the TVC, approximately \$1.9 billion is paid each year to Texas veterans and their families or survivors, an

amount large enough to significantly impact the Texas economy.

In Texas, Veterans Employment Services are offered to all veterans through the TVC. These services seek to match veterans looking for jobs with the best available employment opportunities. The Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) and the Local Veterans' Employment Representative Program (LVER) both help veterans find employment through job matching.

The DVOP provides employment services to disabled veterans, but it also serves veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged. In addition, this program assists veterans who may have other significant barriers to employment, including homelessness. The primary aim of the DVOP is to maximize services to veterans in that target population. Program representatives are specialists trained to help veterans with job



applications, resume preparation, job searching and job matching. They also conduct outreach activities at various sites, including veteran service organizations, VA outpatient clinics, faith-based organizations, homeless shelters, community-based organizations, veteran county service offices, supportive service organizations, one-stop centers and military installations.

The LVER program is focused on assisting recently separated veterans who have prior work experience and specific marketable skills. Veterans Employment Representatives conduct outreach activities that include planning and participating in job fairs, and also coordinate with providers and licensing agencies. In addition, they work with unions, apprenticeship programs and business organizations to establish and promote employment and training opportunities for veterans.

Veterans Employment Representatives also promote credentialing and training opportunities. The LVER program focuses primarily on employer outreach, and works to promote veterans as job-seekers with highly marketable skills and experience. In sum, both the DVOP and LVER programs are open to all veterans and are designed to help them with employment and training needs.



In 2010, TVC added a Business Outreach Coordinator to its staff as another strategy for strengthening veterans employment services. The Business Outreach Coordinator works directly with employers to identify and create new career opportunities for veterans and then recruit qualified veterans for these jobs. This initiative showed substantial success in its first six months, with results involving 23 employers who were able to dedicate 78 jobs especially for veterans.

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Gabriel Galindo, is a veteran whose Military Occupational Specialty in the U.S. Army was that of Paralegal Noncommissioned Officer, working in Legal Assistance, Military Justice and Operational Law. Gabriel held several other leadership positions, notably Platoon Sergeant, Convoy Commander, Weapons Trainer and Small Arms Master Marksman. He is pictured above on one of his two deployments in Iraq with the 1st Cavalry Division. After 11 years in the military, Gabriel exited the Army in 2008.

Gabriel and his family returned to their home state of Idaho where he began looking for work. A Veterans Employment Representative there analyzed his military work experience and saw that his paralegal skills would enable him to understand and competently sift through unemployment regulations. Gabriel’s skill set successfully matched a workforce development specialist position with the Idaho Department of Labor in the area of unemployment benefits.

However, earlier in his military career, Gabriel and his family had been stationed at Fort Hood and once they moved away, they realized how much they all missed Texas. Eventually, Gabriel decided to pursue employment opportunities in Texas, and he started by making contact with a Veterans Employment Representative in Austin. After a great deal of searching, a couple of trips to Texas and considerable perseverance, Gabriel was hired by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) as an Employment Specialist at Workforce Solutions – Capital Area.

Once situated and working at TWC's Workforce Solutions, Gabriel was pleasantly surprised to find himself placed next to several Veterans Employment Representatives. The experience enlightened him on two fronts. In addition to what he already knew, Gabriel learned more about veterans' benefits by virtue of being in close proximity to individuals working for the TVC. Second, and on a more subtle level, he realized how important working with and among veterans was to him. Gabriel had spent over a decade of his professional life in the military, and as he acclimated to his new job, he noticed how much he was thriving professionally and personally alongside veterans.

Eventually, Gabriel learned of an opening at TVC for a Veterans Employment Representative and he applied for the job. Successful at getting this job, he still works at Workforce Solutions – Capital Area, but in a different location, and this time, as an employee of TVC specifically assisting veterans seeking employment.

His new position draws upon Gabriel's numerous and diverse experiences. For example, his familiarity with regulations relating to unemployment benefits translates to an ability to navigate and advise job seekers through the vast system of veterans' benefits. Gabriel's experience as a paralegal sharpened his writing skills and helps him to assist veterans with resumes and cover letters. Similarly, it helps him guide veterans through the process of developing their profiles on WorkInTexas, the premier online job-matching tool used by the Texas workforce system.

Gabriel's teaching experience in the military as a weapons trainer has given him a heightened awareness of the value and accessibility of training and education services for veterans. He is well-versed in the education and training programs designed for veterans and he knows exactly where

and to whom to send veterans who want to pursue further education.

Last, and very important, Gabriel's personal experience in Iraq enables him to relate to recently separated veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, a veteran population that is experiencing its own set of challenges and a comparatively high unemployment rate. Gabriel can offer them the empathy and support needed to ease the transition back into civilian life. Gabriel's personal experience has strengthened his abilities and effectiveness in outreach activities targeting young and recently separated veterans.

Each day Gabriel utilizes technical, writing and analytical skills to help veterans seeking employment. No two situations are alike, and veterans of all ages often face difficult odds. Gabriel assists them with the same determination and resolve he used when he was in active military service. Over the long term, Gabriel has thought of building on his paralegal skills by enrolling in law school to become an attorney. However, his current job engages him on many levels and it is as rewarding as it is challenging—so much so that he is considering focusing on a career in veterans' affairs and services.



The Texas Workforce Investment Council promotes the development of a well-educated, highly skilled workforce for Texas and advocates a workforce system that provides quality workforce education and training opportunities.

For more information, visit:
<http://governor.state.tx.us/twic/>