

Texas Workforce Investment Council

VETERANS WORKFORCE SERVICES IN TEXAS



June 2018

The Mission of the Texas Workforce Investment Council

Assisting the Governor and the Legislature with strategic planning for and evaluation of the Texas workforce system to promote the development of a well-educated, highly skilled workforce for Texas.



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TEXAS WORKFORCE INVESTMENT COUNCIL



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Introduction

The Texas Workforce Investment Council (Council) was created by the Texas Legislature in 1993 and charged with promoting the development of a well-educated and highly skilled workforce for Texas. The Council assists the Governor and the legislature with strategic planning, research, and evaluation of the Texas workforce system.

State and federal statutes require the Council to promote alignment, integration, and collaboration of over 20 programs and services that need to work together. While the Council works to facilitate and promote partnerships, its impact is demonstrated through initiatives that improve outcomes for workforce customers and employers of Texas.

As required in Chapter 2308 of the Texas Government Code, the Council is charged with evaluating the Texas workforce system for effectiveness and providing recommendations to the Governor. The Council evaluates workforce programs administered by agencies represented on the Council to identify any duplication of or gaps in the services provided by those programs; to identify other problems that adversely affect the delivery of services; and to develop and implement comprehensive strategies to address problems identified by the Council. As part of this evaluation, the Council determined a need to identify the workforce system services available to veterans in Texas.

Scope of the Report

When it comes to employment and training, veterans have an abundance of workforce services available to help them prepare for and obtain employment. Services assist individuals who are transitioning from military life to civilian life to: find employment, complete postsecondary education, and obtain a relevant license or certification to compete in the job market.

The Council prepared this report as an overview of workforce services for veterans in Texas. This report is intended to provide readers with current information about relevant legislation, funding, workforce services, and statewide initiatives.

Governing and Relevant Legislation

The overall governing rules that apply to veterans are included in United States Code, Title 38. Legislation dates back to 1926 when Congress established Veteran's Employment Services (Public Law 96-466)—today's U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Services. The intent of the law was to establish policy, programs for employment and training, job counseling services, and job training placement services.

President George W. Bush amended United States Code, Title 38, and signed the Jobs for Veterans Act of 2002. This act was intended to create more effective job and training programs for veterans and to create priority of service for veterans and their spouses.

The Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 governs the Employment Service program, which provides a variety of employment-related services that include job search and referral, assessment of skill levels, career guidance, and job placement. Employment Service provides universal services that have no eligibility requirements for job seekers and employers, and also provides specialized services to veterans.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA, Public Law 113-128) was enacted on July 22, 2014. WIOA authorizes federal employment and training programs and contributes to economic growth and business expansion by ensuring that the workforce system is job-driven and matches skilled individuals with employers. Additionally, the law emphasizes customized training programs as opportunity pathways toward employment and provides more opportunities for aligning services with the needs of veterans.

Texas Labor Code, Chapter 302, includes the rules for administering Texas veterans' employment services and programs. The statute refers to priority of service, as well as employment and training opportunities funded under United States Code, Title 38.

Texas Government Code, Chapter 657, contains the statutes referencing a state agency that hires a veteran and the veteran's employment preference.

Texas Government Code, Chapter 434, includes the administrative rules for the Texas Veterans Commission, which is responsible for ensuring veterans and their families understand and receive all the benefits, support, care, and recognition of their service.

Definition of Veteran

There is a federal definition of veteran and a state definition of veteran. Both definitions are important when determining eligibility for services and priority of service.

United States Code, Title 38 §101, defines a veteran as "a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was discharged or released therefrom under conditions other than dishonorable. Active services include full-time duty in the National Guard or a reserve component, other than full-time for training purposes."

Texas Government Code §2308.251 specifies that a veteran must have been other than dishonorably discharged from the branch of the service in which the person served in order to be eligible for services. It defines a veteran as a person who has served in:

- The army, navy, air force, coast guard, or marine corps of the United States;
- The Texas military forces; or
- An auxiliary service of one of those branches of the armed forces.

Priority of Service

United States Code, Title 38 §4215, explains that priority of service for covered persons, including veterans and eligible spouses, applies to any workforce program or service directly funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Labor.

In federal statute, priority of service means that for any qualified job training program, veterans and eligible spouses will be given priority over nonveterans to access employment, training, and placement services. Such priority includes providing access to a covered person before a non-covered person or, if resources are limited, giving access to a covered person instead of a non-covered person.

Texas Labor Code §302.152 states that priority of service applies to a covered person who is entitled to priority in obtaining services or resources over persons who are not considered covered persons. A covered person refers to the following individuals:

- A veteran
- A spouse of any of the following individuals:
 - A veteran who died of a service-connected disability
 - A veteran of the armed forces serving on active duty who at the time of application for assistance has been listed for a total of more than 90 days as missing in action; captured in the line of duty by a hostile force; or forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power
 - A veteran who has a total disability resulting from a service connected disability
 - A veteran who died while a disability so evaluated was in existence

In state statute, priority of service means priority must be given to a covered person who meets the minimum eligibility requirements to participate or enroll in training or assistance under a job training or employment assistance program or service that is funded in whole or in part with state money.

A covered person may take precedence in obtaining services or resources over persons who are not covered. Precedence may mean:

- The covered person receives access to workforce services before a person who is not a covered person; or
- If services are limited, the covered person receives access to services instead of a person who is not covered.

Funding for Veteran Workforce Programs

There are various funding streams for serving veterans. Like any other job seekers, veterans can be served under any available and appropriate program if they meet the eligibility requirements.

Veterans are eligible for universal workforce programs such as the Wagner-Peyser Employment Service program and programs funded by WIOA. The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service program and WIOA are administered by the United States Department of Labor. Funding for Wagner-Peyser Employment Service and WIOA is provided to the states through formula grants. State funds under WIOA are delivered through grants based on the state's population and the size of the labor force. The state allotment for Wagner-Peyser Employment Service is funded by the unemployment insurance taxes assessed on employers.

Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services

Senate Bill (SB) 1796 passed by the 82nd Texas Legislature established the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services. The Council was created to:

- Coordinate the activities of state agencies that assist veterans and service members;
- Coordinate outreach efforts to ensure that veterans and service members are made aware of services; and
- Coordinate the work of state, federal, and local agencies, and of advisory councils in addressing issues affecting veterans, service members, and their families.

The Council is composed of the following Texas agencies and departments:

- Texas Veterans Commission
- Texas Veterans Land Board
- Texas Military Department
- Texas Commission on Jail Standards
- State Bar of Texas
- Texas Workforce Investment Council
- Texas Department of Transportation
- Texas Department of Public Safety
- Office of Public Utility Council
- Texas Department of Motor Vehicles
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice
- Health and Human Services Commission
- Texas Workforce Commission
- Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs
- Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
- Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation
- Texas Commission on Law Enforcement

Veteran Workforce Services

The U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service coordinates with the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration to serve veterans through the public workforce system.

The workforce system in Texas includes several workforce programs, related services, and education programs that support career preparation and advancement for veterans through the statewide network of workforce solutions offices. Workforce programs and services are administered by three state agencies and 28 local workforce boards, along with community and technical colleges. Veterans are eligible for services under universal workforce programs and related services and are entitled to priority of service.

Texas Veterans Leadership Program

The Texas Veterans Leadership Program assists returning veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. The program is designed to provide veterans with the tools they need to successfully transition into civilian life. Services are tailored to the individual veteran and include referrals for job search and employment assistance, education and training resources, medical care, mental health and counseling, veterans benefits, and services from community organizations.

One veterans resource and referral specialist is assigned to each of the 28 local workforce development board areas in Texas. The specialist works closely with the workforce solutions and the Texas Veterans Commission staff who are co-located in the workforce solutions offices. All veterans resource and referral specialists are veterans of Iraq and/or Afghanistan. These specialists are essential in addressing the needs of other returning veterans, including employment, training, medical, and other various needs. The veterans resource and referral specialists work closely with the local workforce development boards and workforce solutions offices, government agencies, community organizations, faith-based organizations, and veterans service organizations.

Wagner-Peyser Employment Service Program

The Wagner-Peyser Employment Service Program provides universal access and a variety of employment-related services for job-seekers through either self-service or staff assistance. Services for job-seekers include the following:

- Job search assistance;
- Job referrals;

- Job placement;
- Assessments of skills, abilities, and aptitudes;
- Career guidance;
- Referrals to training; and
- Reemployment services for unemployment insurance claimants.

The Employment Service Program also provides a variety of employment-related services for employers, including:

- Referral of job seekers to available job openings;
- Assistance in developing employer job postings;
- Matching job seekers with job requirements;
- Assisting employers with special recruitment needs;
- Organizing job fairs;
- Assisting employers with job restructuring; and
- Helping employers with layoffs.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

WIOA is designed to help job seekers access employment, education, and training in order to achieve success in the workforce by providing integrated services and seamless pathways for job seekers. WIOA is also designed to improve services to employers by emphasizing the use of career pathways and promoting work-based training and employment focused on in-demand occupations.

As identified in 20 CFR §678.430, there are three types of career services that are available: basic career services, individualized career services, and follow-up services.

Basic career services include:

- Eligibility;
- Job search;
- Job referrals and placement;
- Career counseling;
- Assessment of literacy, numeracy, and English language proficiency;
- Assessment of abilities;
- Orientation to the availability of support services and other programs available within the workforce service delivery system; and
- Assistance in establishing eligibility for programs of financial aid assistance for training and education programs not provided under WIOA.

Individualized career services include:

- Comprehensive and specialized assessments of skill levels and service needs, including:
 - Diagnostic testing and other assessments; or
 - In-depth interviewing and evaluation to identify employment barriers and appropriate employment goals;
- Development of an individual employment plan;
- Group counseling;
- Individual counseling;
- Career planning;
- Short-term pre-vocational services that include communication skills, interview skills, and professional conduct services to prepare job-seekers for employment;

- Internships and work experiences;
- Workforce preparation activities; and
- English language acquisition and integrated education and training programs.

Follow-up services must be provided for up to 12 months to provide counseling related to the workplace.

Under WIOA, the following training services may be provided:

- Occupational skills training;
- On-the-job training;
- Skill upgrading and retraining;
- Entrepreneurial training;
- Job readiness training;
- Customized training;
- Adult education and literacy skills.

Texas Veterans Portal

The Texas Veterans Portal provides a gateway to valuable resources for veterans and their families. The portal, located at <https://veterans.portal.texas.gov/>, highlights important topics for veterans and their families such as:

- Health and wellness;
- Education and training;
- Employment and career;
- Housing and loans;
- Licenses and permits;
- Records and medals;
- Dependents and caregivers;
- Legal and financial matters;
- Disabilities and claims; and
- Women veterans' services.

Originally introduced in 2010, the Texas Veterans Portal was updated in 2016. Texas veterans played a large role in redesigning the project by providing insight into how veterans wanted to interact with the portal. The updated portal was relaunched, connecting veterans and their families to the resources and assistance they need.

Jobs for Veterans State Grant

The U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Services provides funding to states through the Jobs for Veterans State Grant, which is allocated to disabled veterans outreach program specialist and local veterans employment representative positions.

Disabled veterans outreach program specialists provide services to veterans with significant barriers to employment, including veterans who are disabled, economically disadvantaged, and homeless. Services offered include comprehensive assessments, development of employment plans, career planning, and prevocational services to prepare for employment.

Local veterans employment representatives provide employer outreach and encourage the hiring of veterans in order to increase opportunities for veterans. Services include connecting veterans with employers, job search workshops, job training, and job placement services.

State workforce agencies' funding allocations for the Jobs for Veterans State Grant are determined by a ratio that reflects the total number of veterans seeking employment in a given state to the total number of veterans seeking employment in all states. Several states receive a minimum amount of funding to ensure that a certain level of staff can be maintained.

Providers

There are many state providers who offer services to veterans to help them achieve successful employment outcomes. Providers are essential and share a common goal: assisting veterans. Below is a sample of state providers and the services offered at each one.

Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations

The Texas Department of Licensing and Regulations Military Outreach department provides information, application and renewal forms, and examination and education requirement waivers for military personnel, veterans, and spouses.

Texas Military Department

The Texas Military Department offers programs and service partnerships that are available to Texas service members, veterans, and their families that include transition and employment assistance, mental health and counseling services, resilience and suicide prevention, and family programs and retreats.

Texas Veterans Commission

The Texas Veterans Commission works to ensure that veterans and their families understand and receive all the benefits, support, care, and recognition for their service. The agency also administers the Jobs for Veterans State Grant.

Texas Workforce Commission

The Texas Workforce Commission offers individuals, including veterans, career development information, job search resources, and job training programs. The Texas Workforce Commission is able to assist veterans in maximizing their employment opportunities as they transition into civilian life. WorkInTexas.com is an online job seeking tool that includes veterans-only job listings.

Statewide Initiatives

College Credit for Heroes

SB 1736, passed by the 82nd Texas Legislature, created College Credit for Heroes, which is a partnership between the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The program is designed to develop, identify, and support methods to maximize college credit that is awarded to veterans and service members for their military experience, education, and training. The program's objective is to eliminate barriers to attaining licensing, industry-based certifications, and postsecondary credentials in order for veterans to transition more quickly to the workforce. The College Credit for

Heroes program provides three options for veterans and service members to maximize their number of college credits: an online portal, a large network of partner schools, and an accelerated curriculum.

The online portal allows veterans or service members to register, request an evaluation of their military education, and ask for their official transcripts to be sent to a participating Texas college to determine the number of credits that will be accepted toward their college program. According to the report entitled *College Credit for Heroes Report to the Texas Legislature and Governor Greg Abbott (2017)*, as of August 1, 2017, the website portal received over 187,000 visits, with over 94,500 veterans and service members requesting more than 32,900 evaluations for college credit. The report also noted that for the first five years of the program, the average number of credits recommended per evaluation was 25 credit hours.

The College Credit for Heroes program includes a large network of partner schools. To participate in the program, schools sign a memorandum of understanding in which a college commits to evaluate veterans' transcripts and experiences, and award as many credit hours as appropriate. Currently, there are 57 partner schools participating in the program.

Additionally, an accelerated curriculum is offered at selected schools and has been developed for in-demand occupations such as:

- Advanced manufacturing
- Cyber security
- Emergency medical services
- Firefighting
- Health information technology
- Information technology
- Logistics
- Nursing
- Oil field technology
- Respiratory therapy
- Surgical technology
- Wind Engineering

Hiring Red, White, and You!

Developed in collaboration with the 28 local workforce development board areas, Hiring Red, White, and You! (HRWY) is a statewide job fair that was developed and designed to connect employers with veterans and their families who are seeking employment opportunities. The Texas Workforce Commission helps veterans prepare for the job fair by assisting them with applications, resumes, and interviewing techniques.

According to the Texas Workforce Commission, “over 12,700 job seekers and over 1,800 employers attended the statewide HRWY job fairs in 2017. In the first six years, HRWY has connected more than 71,800 job seekers, including 36,200 active duty military and transitioning service members, veterans, and spouses, to 10,300 employers, with over 1,700 same-day hires” (2018a). Below is a condensed list of major employers who participated in the job fair:

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Aflac | Central Freight Lines, Inc. |
| Allied Universal | Charles Schwab |
| Amarillo Police Department | Coca Cola |
| Amazon | Colorado Department of Corrections |
| AT&T Communications | Dallas Police Department |
| Austin Police Department | El Paso Police Department |
| Baytown Police Department | Emerson |
| BBVA Compass Bank | Federal Bureau of Investigation |
| Borden Dairy Company | Federal Express |
| Caterpillar Inc. | Haliburton |

HOLT CAT
JPMorgan Chase
Lockheed Martin
McLane Company
New York Life
PepsiCo
San Angelo Police Department
Sanderson Farms
Spectrum
Sunoco Logistics
Swift Transportation
Sysco

Temple Police Department
The Dow Chemical Company
Toyota Motor Manufacturing Texas
Tyson Foods
United States Customs and Border Protection
United States Marshals
Union Pacific Railroad
United Parcel Service
USAA
Valero
Verizon Wireless
Wells Fargo

Skills for Veterans

The Skills for Veterans initiative was designed to support the challenges and training needs of post-9/11 veterans pursuing employment. Employers who hire post-9/11 era veterans may also be eligible to participate in and benefit from the Skills for Veterans initiative. The Texas Workforce Commission has set aside \$1 million to fund this special initiative.

“Individuals who are post-9/11 era veterans, especially those who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn or Operation Enduring Freedom, and are newly hired are eligible to participate in the program to enhance their professional skills” (Texas Workforce Commission, 2018b). Private employers including nonprofit hospitals are eligible to participate if all of the following requirements are met:

- Must be a private, for-profit business, or private nonprofit hospital;
- Must employ at least one full-time, permanent individual;
- Must be financially stable;
- Must be liable to pay unemployment insurance contributions to the state, and be in compliance with the reporting and payment requirements; and
- Must be in compliance with the state’s business and commerce code.

The initiative pays up to \$1,800 to be used in a 12-month period for an eligible post-9/11 era veteran. The training is received through a local public community or technical college that works closely with an employer to identify the training courses needed to enhance the skills of the veteran.

Texas Operation Welcome Home – Skills for Transition Program

Texas Operation Welcome Home helps service members who are transitioning out of the military and into civilian employment. The Skills for Transition program is a training component of Texas Operation Welcome Home that is designed for service members who are planning to “separate from the military within 180 days or who have been discharged within 180 days, and plan to remain in Texas” (Texas Workforce Commission, 2018c).

The training program was developed to focus on training for high-demand and in-demand occupations with no cost to the service member.

Concluding Comments

Veterans are valuable members of the workforce, contribute critical skills to the economy, and are a vital resource for Texas employers. There is an array of workforce services available to ensure that veterans have the supports and opportunities they need in order to transition from military life to civilian life. Services include assistance with obtaining employment, training, and completing postsecondary education in order to compete in the job market. Additionally, Texas has a number of initiatives that are designed to assess and provide veterans with assistance translating the valuable skills and training acquired during military service into opportunities for a highly paid, high-skilled job.

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Texas Workforce Investment Council

System Partners

Economic Development and Tourism
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Texas Education Agency
Texas Health and Human Services Commission


Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Texas Juvenile Justice Department
Texas Veterans Commission
Texas Workforce Commission

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