

# DRAFT—NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

## INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Kent Carlson and Michael Wishnie, Co-Chairs, Task Force to Study the Use of  
MOS Specialty Training as a Substitute for State Licensing Requirements  
FROM: Law Student Interns, Veterans Legal Services Clinic, Yale Law School  
DATE: November 18, 2013  
RE: Information Dissemination and Outreach

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### I. OVERVIEW

Even the best run and most generous programs cannot reduce veteran unemployment unless information about them is properly distributed to veterans. This memorandum examines information dissemination by Connecticut agencies and institutions, and makes recommendations to maximize publicity and access based on some of the most effective practices utilized around the country. Section II describes best practices. Section III examines measures in place in Connecticut and makes recommendations for reforms that could increase publicity and outreach. Recommendations include:

- Legislation should be enacted that mandates that each agency and institution publish on its website a page dedicated purely to veterans issues.
  - The page should detail in plain English the steps necessary to take advantage of each veterans program offered. It should also list points of contact within the agency for each program.
  - The page should be updated any time there is a material change to a program or process. It should be user-friendly and easy to navigate.
- Legislation should be enacted that mandates that each agency and institution submit to the Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs all information relevant to veterans' licensing, employment, or education, updated on at least a semi-annual basis.
  - This information should include descriptions of the programs available and all steps necessary to take advantage of each program. The information should be in plain English and formatted for easy and accessible online posting. The information should be updated any time there is a material change to a program or process.
  - The legislation should also mandate that the Department of Veterans Affairs maintain a user-friendly website that makes all this information easily available.
- Legislation should be enacted that mandates that each agency or institution designate staff member(s) to act as Veterans Representatives at each CTWorks Career Center.
  - Any application or inquiry by a veteran should be flagged and directed to these staff members. These staff should then be responsible for shepherding the veteran through the relevant process in order to ensure that each veteran maximizes his or her benefit from the pertinent veterans program.
  - These staff should regularly coordinate with U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Vet Centers and veterans organizations to ensure that these organizations have the most up-to-date information on each Connecticut veterans program or benefit.

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- An Executive Order should be promulgated that mandates that the Connecticut Department of Veterans' Affairs reach out to each military service branch's Transition Assistance Program to ensure that separating veterans planning to live or work in Connecticut are aware of the opportunities available to them.
- A Resolution should be enacted calling for the Department of Defense to notify state agencies about separating veterans coming to their state so that they can contact them once they return in order to coordinate their reentry into the civilian workforce.

## II. MODEL INITIATIVES

In 2013, Maryland passed the Veterans' Full Employment Act,<sup>1</sup> which streamlines licensing requirements for over 70 civilian occupations. The Veterans' Full Employment Act also requires each state agency to publish information about how its licensing process works for veterans on its website.<sup>2</sup> The Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR) centrally locates information about employment opportunities on its website.<sup>3</sup> It prominently features links to information about programs ranging from the Veterans No-Interest Loan Program, to the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, to the Maryland Higher Education Commission. Perhaps most importantly, it features an accessible link to a webpage that explains the opportunities created by the Veterans' Full Employment Act.<sup>4</sup> It clearly explains eligibility rules, required documentation, and even contains direct links to the applications for both permanent and temporary licenses in more than 26 professions.<sup>5</sup> The Maryland DLLR has also integrated Veteran Representatives into its more than 27 One-Stop Career Centers.<sup>6</sup>

New York's "Experience Counts" program has enacted a similarly comprehensive reform through regulation and executive order rather than new legislation. In November 2011, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo initiated a series of reforms to ensure that state agencies recognize military experience when veterans transfer to the civilian workforce and higher education.

Governor Cuomo directed the State University of New York (SUNY) and the City University of New York (CUNY) to improve their procedures for awarding academic credit for military training. Under the Experience Counts program, each school now flags applications received from veterans and active duty service members. SUNY and CUNY also provide centralized guidance to students who are veterans in order to award the maximum amount of credit for their prior military experience and training.<sup>7</sup>

The New York Department of Labor (DOL) has appointed veterans employment specialists at most of its 91 career centers around the state, and all Career Centers have been engaged to seek out veterans and match them to appropriate jobs.<sup>8</sup> Its Veterans Services page lists 77 local Veterans' Employment Representatives by location throughout the state. It includes their contact information, along with a Google Map showing their locations, and a central email helpline.<sup>9</sup> It also includes links relevant to obtaining information about academic credits, navigating educational and training benefits, credentialing, and education, training, and apprenticeship opportunities.<sup>10</sup> The New York state DOL has specifically targeted veterans to fill more than 8,200 security guard jobs in the state.<sup>11</sup> In order to accomplish this goal, it runs free training program on-site at its Career Centers, and matches newly qualified veterans with jobs as security guards throughout New York.<sup>12</sup> It has also reached out to the military to "get the word out" to veterans who may be interested in the program, and manages each veteran's case through

the New York State Employment Services System.<sup>13</sup> It also sponsors periodic “Be A Hero – Hire A Hero” Job Fairs throughout the state.<sup>14</sup>

### III. CONNECTICUT PROGRAMS & POTENTIAL REFORMS

Connecticut’s outreach efforts appear to be somewhat uneven and largely uncoordinated. The Connecticut Department of Veterans Affairs’ (DVA) website is fairly confusing and contains little information directly relevant to veterans employment.<sup>15</sup> Although it contains a link for “Job Opportunities,” the link leads only to a webpage that contains six generic job search links. The only link that is dedicated specifically to Connecticut veterans leads to the Connecticut Department of Labor’s (DOL) Veterans website. Apart from the “Job Opportunities” page, the DVA website offers only one other page that has information about employment or educational opportunities. This page contains a list of private organizations dedicated to helping veterans, and a handful of federal programs aimed at addressing veteran unemployment.<sup>16</sup> It contains no links to any state programs to assist veterans, and contains no information about either veterans’ licensing or educational benefits.

The Connecticut DOL’s main page for veterans contains no link to any specific information regarding Connecticut programs for veterans’ employment, licensing, or education.<sup>17</sup> The information it does present is arranged in a somewhat confusing manner. The Connecticut DOL’s website does contain a prominent link to contact information for DOL Veterans Representatives. Connecticut Veterans Representatives are liaisons integrated into local offices within the DOL’s system of seventeen “CTWorks” Career Centers.<sup>18</sup>

However, Veterans Representatives are located at only six locations; fewer than a dozen full-time Veterans Representatives serve the entire state.<sup>19</sup> Just to request an appointment, a veteran must fill out a long and cumbersome online form on which the veteran must divulge his or her social security number, character of discharge, and a host of other information.<sup>20</sup> Not only is there no central telephone or email helpline, but the form warns: “After your Veterans Employment Representative receives your appointment request, you will be contacted by them to arrange an appointment to meet with you. You do not have a confirmed appointment until you receive your scheduled date and time.”<sup>21</sup> Overall, the form is intimidating, inaccessible, and seems unnecessary. Accessing Veterans Representatives should be easy, user-friendly, and should not require an appointment. There should be central telephone and email hotlines where Connecticut veterans can have their questions answered quickly, and without having to travel. Furthermore, staff at each CTWorks Center should be designated as Veterans Representatives, and given the training necessary to act as effective counselors to lead veterans through the programs relevant to their licensing, education, or employment.

The Governor’s “Veterans Cabinet” has created a website (VETERANS.CT.GOV) that seems intended to act as a dashboard for veterans seeking information about employment, education, and benefits.<sup>22</sup> While the website is attractive and well organized, it contains little independent substantive content. Primarily, it links back to existing agency websites. There is relatively little content anywhere on the site dedicated specifically to veterans programs regarding the crediting of military experience toward licensing or education.<sup>23</sup> However, the site’s Education tab does link to the Board of Regents’ Veteran Services website, which should be a model for an effective, clear, and attractive website. If further developed with the necessary content—including information about specific licenses, educational programs, and employment benefits—VETERANS.CT.GOV could become a useful centralized platform for outreach to veterans.<sup>24</sup>

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In addition to website design and a more robust system of Veterans Representatives, the Connecticut DOL could emulate New York by reaching out directly to the military to ensure that information about its programs makes into each service's Transition Assistance Program for military personnel who plan to reside or work in Connecticut after their separation. Additionally, a resolution should be enacted calling for the Department of Defense to notify state agencies about separating veterans coming to their state so that they can contact them once they return in order to coordinate their reentry into the civilian workforce. Additionally, it could hold additional jobs fairs like the Heroes 4-Hire Career Fair that the DOL and DVA sponsored at Rentschler Field on April 27, 2012.<sup>25</sup> Finally, CTWorks Career Centers should coordinate with U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs Vet Centers to ensure that Vet Centers have all the information necessary to advise veterans on taking advantage of opportunities available to them in licensing, employment, and education in Connecticut.

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Veterans Full Employment Act of 2013, S.B. 273, [http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2013RS/chapters\\_noln/Ch\\_154\\_sb0273T.pdf](http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2013RS/chapters_noln/Ch_154_sb0273T.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* § 2.5-107.

<sup>3</sup> See DLLR'S DIVISION OF WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND ADULT LEARNING: VETERAN SERVICES, <http://www.dllr.state.md.us/employment/veteranservices.shtml>.

<sup>4</sup> MARYLAND DLLR: ATTENTION MILITARY VETERANS AND FAMILIES – LEARN ABOUT EXPEDITED LICENSES, <http://www.dllr.state.md.us/license/opvetlic.shtml>

<sup>5</sup> See *id.*

<sup>6</sup> MARYLAND'S ONE-STOP CAREER CENTERS: VETERAN REPRESENTATIVES, <http://dllr.state.md.us/employment/onestopsvets.shtml>.

<sup>7</sup> Press Release, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor Cuomo Launches "Experience Counts" Campaign to Help Veterans Qualify for Jobs Upon Their Return to New York (Nov. 10, 2011).

<sup>8</sup> Press Release, N.Y. Dep't of Labor, State Labor Department Announces New 'Experience Counts' Initiative Grants Veterans Credit for their Military Experience (July 2, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> N.Y. DEP'T OF LABOR: FIND A LOCAL VETERAN'S EMPLOYMENT REPRESENTATIVE, <http://www.labor.ny.gov/vets/employspec/veteranemployspec.shtm>.

<sup>10</sup> N.Y. DEP'T OF LABOR: TRAINING & EDUCATION FOR VETERANS, <http://www.labor.ny.gov/vets/vetseducation.shtm>.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> *Id.*

<sup>15</sup> See CONNECTICUT DEP'T OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS, <http://www.ct.gov/ctva/site/default.asp>.

<sup>16</sup> See CONNECTICUT DEP'T OF VETERANS' AFFAIRS: ORGANIZATIONS, <http://www.ct.gov/ctva/taxonomy/taxonomy.asp?DLN=45342&ctvaNav=45342>.

<sup>17</sup> CONNECTICUT DOL: OFFICE FOR VETERANS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/veterans/default.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> DOL VETERANS REPRESENTATIVES, <http://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/veterans/vetreps.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> *Id.*

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., HARTFORD APPOINTMENT REQUEST FORM, <https://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/veterans/VetApptRequests/HartfordVetAppt.htm>.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

<sup>22</sup> VETERANS.CT.GOV, <http://www.veterans.ct.gov/veterans/site/default.asp>.

<sup>23</sup> Some exceptions include information regarding veteran's opportunities in state jobs and motor vehicle services. The Motor Vehicle Services tab has a link to "DMV Easy Answers for Military Personnel," a webpage on the Department of Motor Vehicles website that details how veterans and military personnel can take advantage of programs like the Commercial Driver's License Skills Test Exemption. The State Jobs tab notifies veterans that they are guaranteed a face-to-face interview for all Connecticut state job applications. However, it does not contain any links to information about specific jobs.

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<sup>24</sup> See VETERAN SERVICES, <http://www.ct.edu/admission/veterans#contact>.

<sup>25</sup> Letter from Governor Dannel P. Malloy to Executive Branch Agency Heads, Apr. 26, 2012.

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