



**Arkansas  
Yellow Ribbon Task Force  
2010 Final Report to  
Governor Mike Beebe  
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# **Arkansas Yellow Ribbon Task Force Members**

## **Chair**

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## **Co-Chairs**

Major Gen William Wofford - *Adjutant General, Arkansas Army National Guard*

Mr. David Fletcher - *Director, Arkansas Department of Veteran Affairs*

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- ❖ David Bisbee - *Benton County Judge*
- ❖ Bob Burns - *CEO, Farmer Bank and Trust*
- ❖ Dr. Josette Cline - *Associate Director, Counseling and Psychological Services, University of Arkansas*
- ❖ Rep. David Cook - *State Representative, District 80*
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- ❖ Dr. G. David Gearhart - *Chancellor, University of Arkansas (ex-officio)*
- ❖ Dr. Paul Halverson - *Director, AR Health Department(ex-officio)*
- ❖ Janet Huckabee - *Manager, Service to Military Families for Arkansas, American Red Cross*
- ❖ Dr. Tom Kimbrell - *Commission, AR Department of Education (ex-officio)*
- ❖ Rev. Theotis King - *Assistant Minister, McAlmont Church of Christ*
- ❖ Dr. JoAnn Kirchner - *Director VA Mental Health*
- ❖ Col. (R) Nathaniel McGee - *Deputy Chief of Staff Logistics, Arkansas Army National Guard*
- ❖ MG (R) Don C. Morrow - *Arkansas Chairman, Employer Support for the Guard & Reserve*
- ❖ Dr. Becky Paneitz - *Chancellor, Northwest Arkansas Community College, (ex-officio)*
- ❖ Col. Winford Phillips - *Director, State Police (ex-officio)*
- ❖ Rep. Bobby Pierce - *State Representative, District 19*
- ❖ Dr. Robert Potts, *Chancellor, Arkansas State University (ex-officio)*
- ❖ Dr. Jim Purcell - *Director, AR Department of Higher Education (ex-officio)*
- ❖ Cheryl Rawls - *Director, Little Rock VA Regional Office*
- ❖ Andrea Rockefeller-Hobbs - *AR Chapter President, Operation Homefront*
- ❖ Dr. John Selig - *Director, AR Dept. of Human Services (ex-officio)*
- ❖ Paige Smith - *Associate Director, Support the Troops*
- ❖ Rep. Randy Stewart - *State Representative, District 23*
- ❖ Chris Sultemeier - *SVP of Transportation, Walmart Stores, Inc.*
- ❖ Susan Tonymon - *Director, Beck PRIDE Center*
- ❖ Artee Williams - *Director, AR Department of Workforce Services (ex-officio)*
- ❖ Dr. Michael Winn - *Director, VA Medical Center*



**Arkansas  
Yellow Ribbon Task Force  
2010 Final Report to  
Governor Mike Beebe**



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**Report To**  
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**Arkansas**  
**Yellow Ribbon Task Force**  
**Subcommittee Chairs & Members**

**Health & Disability**

**Chair Dr. Laurence Miller,**

*Medical Director, Division of Behavioral  
Health Services, Dept. of Human Services*

**Members:**

Ms. Sue Tonymon, LMSW  
Dr. JoAnn Kirchner,  
*Director VA Mental Health QUERI*  
Dr. James Phillips--  
*(for Dr. Paul Halverson)*  
Rep. Randy Stewart  
Mr. Michael Winn,  
*VA Medical Center Director*  
Dr. Mike Kirk--  
*(for Dr. Becky Paneitz)*

**Family, Community Awareness/Connections,**

**Faith-community outreach**

**Chair Ms. Andrea Rockefeller**

**Members:**

Mrs. Janet Huckabee  
Dr. JoAnn Kirchner  
Col. Dian Terry, AR NG  
CPT. James Nolley, AR NG FRG  
LTC Brenda Cluck, AR NG FRG  
Sgt. Alex Finger -  
*(for Col. Phillips, Arkansas State Police)*  
Rep. Bobby Pierce  
Ms. Paige Smith  
Mr. Paul Hill  
Ms. Connie Morgan

**Employment/Education**

**Chair MG(R) Don C. Morrow,**

*Employer Support for the Guard & Reserve*

**Members:**

Mr. Ken James  
Dr. Robert Potts  
Mr. Marshall McCall--  
*(for Dr. Becky Paneitz)*  
Mr. Ed Rogers -  
*(for Dr. Becky Paneitz)*  
Mr. Artee Williams  
Dr. Craig Rennie  
Sgt. Alex Finger  
Dr. Jim Purcell  
Rep. David Cook  
Rep. Bobby Pierce  
Dr. Gearhart

Ms. Cheryl T. J. Rawls,  
*Director, Little Rock*

*VA Regional Office*

Mr. Nathaniel McGee,  
*DHS Energy Director*

Dr. Josette Cline

Dr. Jan McCormick

**Housing**

**Chair Mac Dodson**

**Members:**

Mr. Murray Harding-  
*(for Mac Dodson)*

Mr. John Bennett

Mr. Craig Rennie

Mr. Mike Roberts

**Benefits/Legal/Legislation**

**Chair Rep. Randy Stewart**

**Members:**

Dr. Mike Kirk

Mr. Jim Hall -

*(for Dr. Becky Paneitz)*

Mr. Ron Snead

Rep. David Cook

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Sen. Bisbee

Ms. Cheryl T.J. Rawls

**Public/Private Partnerships**

**Mr. Chris Sultemeier,**

*Senior Vice President, Transportation,  
Wal Mart*

**Members:**

Janet Huckabee

Dr. JoAnn Kirchner

Dr. Susan Holmes--

*(for Dr. Becky Paneitz)*

Bob Burns

Stephen Finnegan,

*President & CEO*

*Finnegan & Company, Inc.*

Herb Lawrence,

*Center Director, ASU SBA*

**Resource Connections/Website/Hotline**

**Chair Bill Oliver**

**Members:**

Dr. Craig Rennie

Eric McNulty, ARNG

Mr. Mike Winn

**Arkansas**  
**Yellow Ribbon Task Force**  
**Report To**  
**Governor Mike Beebe**  
**2010**

**SECTION**  
**TWO**

**Executive Summary**  
**The Way Forward**

**Arkansas Governor**  
**Mike Beebe's**  
**Yellow Ribbon Task Force**  
**Final Report**  
**December 2010**

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Final Report

1. Appointed by Governor Mike Beebe, the Arkansas Yellow Ribbon Task Force (YRTF) is charged with the preservation and protection of our former and current military service men and women and their families, through efficient and effective state and community based programs and initiatives that work to improve their quality of life during and after the reintegration process.
2. The Task Force was created with the express purpose of developing guidelines which will help Arkansas military members of any service who are not represented by an active component establishment—whether Active, Guard, or Reserve—receive every support, benefit, protection, and opportunity necessary during the reintegration process. Specifically, the Task Force was tasked to:
  - a. Assess the reintegration needs of Arkansas military members and their families.
  - b. Assess the capabilities of the state to meet these needs.
    - (1) Develop a set of recommendations for:
      - (a) How best to use existing state services.
      - (b) The implementation of new programs to fill current gaps.
    - (2) Help to develop community outreach programs through which local communities, private citizens, and businesses can get involved in assisting military members and their families, and coordinate their services most efficiently.
  - c. Formulate a roadmap by which Arkansas state agencies, local communities, private citizens, and businesses can coordinate efforts to ensure that Arkansas military members receive all the services and assistance necessary for a successful reintegration process. The roadmap shall address but is not limited to the following areas of need:
    - (1) Health—the physical and mental well being of our military members.
    - (2) Family—support of military families during deployment and the emotional health of spouse and parent-children relationships.
    - (3) Benefits—the various benefits available to military members through the Veterans Administration or specific to Arkansas.
    - (4) Employment—job -training and -procurement assistance to aid our military members in gaining meaningful employment.
    - (5) Education—educational benefits and opportunities available to qualifying veterans and their children.

- (6) Disabilities—helping newly wounded and disabled military members and their families cope with life changes and overcome the difficulties caused by disabilities.
- (7) Housing—assisting Arkansas military members and their families in procuring and retaining housing during and after mobilization.
- (8) Legal—changes in the law since deployment and the various legal and judicial assistances available.
- (9) Community Awareness/Connections—helping make communities aware of the needs of their local veterans and their families and find ways to offer what assistance they can provide where it is most needed.
- (10) Public-Private Partnerships—exploring ways in which businesses and other private interests can start, connect with, and/or fund programs which offer assistance to military members and their families.
- (11) Resource Connections—a website and/or call-center where veterans can find information which is meaningful to them and their families and connect them with organizations that can provide valuable assistance.

3. The Arkansas Yellow Ribbon Task Force, organized into subcommittees to address the above areas of need, have summarized their findings, identified issues, made recommendations and suggestions:

### **Health & Disability Subcommittee**

#### **Summary:**

Members of this subcommittee met monthly with representatives of the Veterans Healthcare Administration (VHA) and included other non-VHA providers to develop a seamless system of care. These included representatives from the Mental Health Council of Arkansas, Office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, and Community Health Centers of Arkansas as well as veterans and their family members. Focus was on “Family Readiness and Reintegration.”

#### **Issues:**

1. Prior to deployment, there is a great deal of anticipatory anxiety on the part of the individual service members, his/her spouse/partner and children
2. During deployment, the family members left behind continue to display anxiety and depression and are fearful of the death of their loved one. Dependent children exhibit problems associated with deployment of a parent.
3. Post-deployment, readjustment to civilian life can be problematic.

#### **Recommendations:**

1. Enhance the infrastructure of each County Veteran Service Officers by adding a fulltime administrative / case manager to triage local issues. This office would work collaboratively with key community stakeholders (e.g., college veteran officers, court systems, clergy, veteran service organizations) as well as with the Department of Human Services County Offices and the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) County Health Units.



2. Develop a new position of Integrative Care Manager for each catchment area and housed in the respective Community Mental Health Centers (CMHC), who, in collaboration with the Department of Veteran Affairs, will integrate the needs of veterans, their spouses/ partners and children across the catchment area mental health, substance abuse, and federally qualified and rural health centers.
3. Replicate the model of the Beck Pride Center for wounded warriors and their families in each region of the state partnering with local colleges / universities.
4. Enhance efforts towards family readiness and reintegration by providing financial support to programs focused on these activities (e.g. Operation Renewal, Operation Military Kids, AR Women Veterans Council).
5. Develop public service announcements, training opportunities and educational resources for employers and other community organizations highlighting the issues facing returning veterans and their families and directing them to the County Veteran Service Officer and /or to the Integrative Care Manager in their area.
6. Support the ADH to add the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) supported veterans' module to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Data (BRFSS) to expand our capacity to gather health status and risk factors data in our veteran population.
7. Continue to administer and evaluate the National Guard Survey (including an expansion to other service branches), designating a person or organization to administer the survey, support analysis, disseminate findings and maintain the database.

**Strategy:**

The subcommittee developed a model, "Pathways to Health" which follows a servicemember/veteran through their community (including early responders, employers, family) to care/treatment either in the VHA or community. *(see subcommittee report for paradigm.)*

In addition, since the subcommittee's recommendations encompass several areas, there needs to be an overarching agency with non-profit capability to ensure appropriate care is provided and to monitor outcomes for effectiveness.

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**Community and Faith-Based Outreach Subcommittee.**

**Summary:**

The Family and Community Subcommittee focused on several objectives: 1. the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) 60-90 day events; 2. Community Connections (formally known as Lunch and Learn); 3. a database of faith based organizations to help veterans in need. Through the efforts of the task force several initiatives and programs have been started; Veteran Awareness to Arkansas State Police Department and Access VA/Clergy partnership.

**Issues:**

1. Troops desire follow-up events past the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) 90 day events - to include a 180 post deployment and one year post deployment.
2. Financial problems; relating to lack of or low paying employment and financial management.
3. High stress environment (for both the Service Member and their families) – particularly for those who face multiple deployments, leading to relationship issues, and high divorce rates,
4. Education resources (understanding and utilizing benefits both state and federal).
5. Medical/mental health problems.
6. Lack of awareness of many programs, military, state and community, to assist.
7. Lack of assistance and resources to those in the more rural areas of the state.

**Recommendations:**

1. Develop Arkansas Veteran website to collect points of contact for all organizations desiring to assist veterans and their Families and how the organization can assist.
2. Joint services support branch host a minimum of fifteen Community Connections events across Arkansas on an annual basis.
3. Continue to produce and distribute the Arkansas Military Family Resource Guide.
4. Continue ACCESS VA/Clergy Partnership and conduct further research to identify gaps and other services requirements.

**Strategy:**

The organizations represented by this YRTF subcommittee and partnering organizations would continue to partner with the Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee (ISFAC). Their purpose is to provide assistance to families regardless of service component with a goal of strengthening existing family assistance delivery systems in the event of mobilization, deployment, or natural disaster through the interaction of committee members.

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**Education/Employment Subcommittee**

**1. Education ~ Summary:**

The American Council on Education (ACE) notes that institutions of higher education both large and small, public and private, are putting programs and services into place to ease the transition from soldier to student for our nation’s veterans and servicemembers. As the number of men and women who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan now exceeds 2 million individuals; Student Veterans of America (SVA), a coalition of student veterans groups from college and university campuses across the United States, reports that more than 330,000 student veterans will be using G.I. Bill benefits on campuses across the country during the 2010/2011 academic year.

**Issues:**

In a survey of 353 members of the Arkansas National Guard conducted between May 15, 2010 and September 14, 2010, the following information regarding higher education and training was reported *by servicemembers*:

1. 65% of the 353 respondents were either currently participating in an education or training program (25%) or were planning to start or re-start their education in the future (40%).
2. 56% of survey respondents had received some type of education or training assistance or benefit.
3. Of this 56%, 69% had received GI Bill benefits while 24% had received state benefits such as GTIP.
4. Of the 56% who had received benefits, 72% had used those benefits to take college or university coursework leading to a bachelor's or graduate degree.
5. Of the 56% who had received benefits, 84% reported that the benefits were very or extremely important in helping them meet their educational goals.
6. When asked what type of assistance would be helpful to support their education/training, 27% requested a "single point of contact" for veterans on campus to serve as a referral source for various needs, 39% requested assistance with benefits paperwork, 14% requested a mentoring program, 11% requested a student veterans group, and 15% requested childcare assistance.
7. For those respondents who had not used educational or training benefits, their reasons for not utilizing benefits included lack of awareness of benefits or the perception that they were not eligible for benefits (13%), lack of information regarding application for benefits (10%), the belief that there was "too much red tape" involved in applying for benefits (16%), and "timing out" on benefits eligibility (6%).

In June, 2009, the Yellow Ribbon Task Force hosted a 2-day workshop entitled, "Boots 2 Books: Serving Veterans on Campus, A Best Practices Symposium." Attendees included representatives from 29 institutions of higher education in Arkansas, and the following information regarding higher education and training was reported *by institutions assisting servicemembers*:

1. 14 institutions noted that services to veterans were limited to those of a VA Certifying Official, but 8 institutions noted that they had already established a centralized, single-point-of-contact for veterans on their campuses.
2. For institutions with services beyond those of a VA Certifying Official, services may be provided by a wide range of campus programs or offices including

Financial Aid, Admissions, Registrar, Disability Services, Mental Health Services, Career Services, student veteran groups, and Housing.

3. The majority of institutions do not provide training or information regarding the military, student veterans, or veteran transition issues to their faculty, staff, or students.
4. The majority of institutions do not provide scholarship monies specifically for student veterans.
5. The majority of institutions do not provide services for the families of student veterans.
6. The majority of institutions are partnering with external agencies or programs to provide services for their student veterans.
7. When asked to assess the level of readiness or preparedness for serving student veterans on their campuses the majority of institutions (22 of 29) indicated they felt “somewhat prepared”, while only 5 institutions felt they were “very prepared”.
8. When asked to provide the “primary needs and top priorities” of student veterans at their institutions attendees indicated a range of needs including financial needs (including assistance in navigating federal and state benefits to their best advantage), health care services (including mental health services), employment assistance, housing assistance, mentoring programs, academic advising, academic readiness assistance, and flexible scheduling including on-line course offerings.
9. When asked to identify resources needed to better serve student veterans, attendees indicated a need for additional personnel and funding, centralized services (single-point-of-contact such as a campus-based veteran’s center), student veterans groups, greater coordination with VA offices and programs, and targeted recruitment of veterans.

**Recommendations:**

1. Create a comprehensive listing of services for student veterans available at institutions of higher education and training across the state of Arkansas; web-based listing would be ideal.
2. Ask all institutions of higher education in Arkansas to follow the guidelines authored by Student Veterans of America (SVA) as part of their “Veterans Center Handbook,” found at [www.studentveterans.org](http://www.studentveterans.org).
3. Propose and work for passage of legislation to appropriate funds for a Coordinator of Veterans Services/Resources on all campuses of higher education in the state of Arkansas. These coordinators could be assisted by federally funded VA work-study positions.

4. Include representation from institutions of higher education as part of any continuing forum to carry on and implement the work initiated by this Yellow Ribbon Task Force.
5. Encourage all institutions of higher education to participate in a state-wide listserv to encourage communication among and assist institutions in their efforts to serve Arkansas' student veterans. The University of Arkansas, Fayetteville currently sponsors such a listserv and additional participants are welcome.

**Strategy:**

The Employment and Education Subcommittee of the Yellow Ribbon Task Force supports the creation of a continuing forum to carry on and further implement the work initiated by all subcommittees of the Yellow Ribbon Task Force. Several states across the nation have implemented similar follow-on strategies to see that the work initiated by a veterans' task force is supported following the termination of said task force. States such as California and Texas, among others, have implemented strategies and structures which can serve as examples for the creation of similar entities in the state of Arkansas.

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**2. Employment ~ Summary:**

America's newest veterans face serious employment challenges. The process of returning to civilian life is complicated by the most severe economic recession in decades. Furthermore, many Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, leaving the active-duty military, find civilian employers who do not understand the value of their skills and military experience. As a result, unemployment rates for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are staggering. Additionally, the National Guardsmen and Reservists who leave behind their civilian lives to serve alongside active-duty troops are inadequately protected against job discrimination.

In Arkansas and nationally, many of the unemployed are members of the National Guard and reserves who have deployed multiple times. Unemployment rates for new Iraq and Afghanistan-era veterans for the first six months of 2010 averaged 12.5 percent, up from 10.2 the previous year.

**Issues:**

1. Current national and state economic climate
  - o Number of jobs available
  - o Types of jobs available
  - o Types and numbers of future jobs available
  - o USERRA issues or jobs no longer existing
2. Failure of veterans to translate military skills to the civilian job experience when writing resumes and interviewing
3. Employer attitudes impacting hiring veterans\*
  - o Concerned for difficulty transitioning from the structure and hierarchy in the military culture to the civilian workplace

- Concern for the possibility of post-traumatic stress issues or other mental health issues
  - Concern for combat-related physical disabilities
  - Concern for future deployments and length of deployment
  - Concern for work lost-time due to VA appointments
4. Issues reported by servicemember and veterans
- Finding and maintaining a job\*\*
  - Not qualified for jobs available (lack of education)
  - Need help with resume and job search
  - Employer not understanding of time off needed for VA appointments
  - Lack of credit for military training or years of experience for state job applications
  - Unfamiliar with Local Veterans Employment Representative program
  - Unfamiliar with Disabled Veterans' Outreach Veterans' program
  - Unfamiliar with VA Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment program
  - Unfamiliar with Veteran's Preference and Veterans Priority of Service program
  - Homelessness or transportation
  - Disability-related issues
  - Lack of employment network or mentors
5. Lack of employer familiarity with support services or programs, including
- Department of Labor resources, e.g., CareerOneStop, DVET
  - Local Veterans Employment Representative program
  - Disabled Veterans' Outreach Veterans' program
  - Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)
  - ESGR (Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve)
  - Veteran's Preference
  - Work Opportunity Tax Credits and similar programs

**Recommendations:**

**For Veterans:** The Subcommittee recommends:

1. Enhancements to programs in the following areas:
  - a. Enhance current veteran job readiness programs to specifically address employer concerns for veterans transitioning to civilian employment.
  - b. Further develop specific training modules to assist servicemembers in translating military to civilian skills, and also provide "mock interview" opportunities to practice communicating military experience in an interview setting.
  - c. Improve current resume and job search support to veterans;

- d. Extend job services to veteran spouses.
2. Expand on current veteran OJT options to create a school-to-work or military-to-work internship program model that networks veterans with employers.
3. Create a process to track a random sample of veterans for up to 2 years after they have landed a job to identify best practices and potential issues for others.
4. Clarify state statute covering veteran hiring preference as it applies to all state jobs irrespective of the merit system; within state government, each agency should be able to demonstrate compliance with the statute.
5. Re-evaluate state employment qualifications for veterans to recognize the transferability of formal military training and/or years of experience.
6. Change state employment benefit (HR 1254) to allow treatment at other than VA facilities.

**For Employers:** The Subcommittee recommends:

1. Develop a formal strategy be put in place to ensure both employers and veterans that workforce reintegration training needs is supported by the state.

**Strategy:**

Identify one person to be made responsible for overseeing follow up of issues/needs in order to prevent bottlenecks in service delivery and effectiveness. Make every effort to ensure this person has an open and direct communication with state agency directors, as needed, to provide relevant and timely feedback to all stakeholders.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Legislative & Benefits Subcommittee**

**Summary:**

The committee focused on developing strategies to communicate information regarding the federal and state benefits available to veterans of all wars. Briefings on benefits included updates on the new Post-9/11 GI Bill and other benefits available to veterans in Arkansas.

During the 2009 legislative session, the committee focused on drafting and supporting legislation to improve benefits for Arkansas veterans, to include: obtaining retirement system benefit parity; providing consistency for veterans between state and federal law; addressing issues facing elected officials who are members of the Arkansas National Guard; addressing issues regarding military leave for teachers and school administrators; making needed changes to the Arkansas National Guard Tuition Incentive Program; redesigning the special license plates issued to honor military service and veterans; and adding the Gold Star Family special license plates for spouses or parents of members of the armed forces killed in a conflict; and proposing to increase the Arkansas military tax exemption from \$6,000 to \$10,000.

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Plans are currently being made to expand on these efforts in the next legislative session by supporting passage of those bills that did not pass in 2009, as well as drafting other legislation that has been identified by the YRTF as essential for assisting Arkansas veterans.

Arkansas has over 18,000 women veterans in the state, many of who do not identify themselves as veterans, which is a big issue. The first Women Veterans Summit was held this year to try to overcome this and provide better understanding to our women veterans.

**Issues:**

1. Providing easily accessible information regarding the federal and state benefits available to veterans continues to be a challenge, particularly for those in the rural areas of the state.
2. Collaborating with the state and federal veterans affairs departments is ongoing, but the network must be widened.
3. Assisting with the coordination of a legislative package for the 2011 Regular Session of the Arkansas General Assembly, which the YRTF has approved.

**Recommendations:**

1. Continue to broaden the network and communication among veteran service providers.
2. Hold an annual women veterans summit in each quadrant of the state and schedule the summit to coincide with Women's History Month.
3. Address the following legislative issues during the 2011 Regular Session:
  - A. Veterans Court: Clarify the authority of a court to consider a defendant's current or prior military service and any related mental health issues for presentencing investigations and reports so that courts have adequate information to make sentencing decisions. [Draft Attached]
  - B. License Plates: Authorize the Office of Motor Vehicles to redesign and simplify the special license plates for retired members of the armed forces in conformity with the legislation passed in the 2009 Regular Session. [Draft Attached – Sec. 4]
  - C. Military Leaves of Absence: Address issues relating to leaves of absence and reemployment of military personnel called to active duty. [Draft Attached – Sec. 4]
  - D. Retirement Pay Tax Exemption: Phase-in a limited military retirement income tax exemption. [Draft Attached – Sec. 4]
  - E. Explore legislative options and assist the Education Subcommittee with obtaining funding, specifically, appropriations from the General Assembly, if needed, so that a coordinator of veterans services/resources is at each institution of higher education in the state.
  - F. Explore legislative options and assist the Employment Subcommittee with the employment of veterans by state agencies by examining the need for greater accountability and compliance with state laws on the hiring and promotion of veterans.
  - G. Explore legislative options and assist the Employment Subcommittee with helping veteran-owned businesses by continuing to work with the Office of



Procurement on whether changes can be made to allow for some type of veterans' preference in awarding state contracts.

F. Explore legislative options to have parity among all of the state retirement systems to allow members of active military service, the National Guard, and the Reserve components to buy up to five (5) years of time in each of the state retirement systems.

**Strategy:**

Use every information medium, paper and electronic to get the word out to veterans regarding their benefits. Develop stronger networks incorporating the local, state, and federal resources to reach the diverse population of the 260,000 veterans residing in Arkansas. Garner support from legislators and the governor for the legislative proposals.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Housing Subcommittee**

**Summary:**

Housing continues to be an issue for veterans in Arkansas as well as nationally; foreclosures can affect military members both directly – in loss of a home they own, or with the loss of their rental home due to the landlord's default on a mortgage. "Veterans and Servicemembers, like all other Americans, face serious economic difficulties. VA and its partners in the mortgage industry employ a number of servicing options to help struggling Veterans and Servicemembers. These efforts have been very successful in keeping Veterans' and Servicemembers' home loans from going into foreclosure, as demonstrated by industry data."\*

Homelessness among veterans continues to be a problem; "VA estimates that **107,000** veterans are homeless on any given night; over the course of a year, approximately twice that many experience homelessness. About 1.5 million other veterans, meanwhile, are considered at risk of homelessness.\*\*

**Issues:**

1. The financial crisis of the past few years has brought more pressure on military families to buy homes or be able to afford decent housing.
2. Rising unemployment and under-employment have led to lost wages and rapid depreciation of home values, making it difficult for homeowners to relocate for work or sell a home they can no longer afford.
3. Veterans comprise the largest percentage of the homeless – nearly one-fifth. The VA's specialized homeless programs served more than 92,000 veterans in 2009; but this leaves well over 100,000 more veterans, however, who experience homelessness annually.
4. Assistance for these 100,000 homeless veterans has to come from local government agencies and community and faith based service organizations, due

to currently limited government money and available services that are often at capacity.

5. Due to the aging of the homeless population, health issues will likely create a much higher demand in the coming decades for assistance.
6. The VA homeless programs that are online are not accessible to the homeless.

**Recommendations:**

1. The VA needs to continue its stepped up activity with its loan guaranty programs.
2. The Arkansas Development Finance Authority needs to continue to offer programs for first time home buyers and money management.
3. The most effective programs for homeless and at-risk veterans are community-based, nonprofit, “veterans helping veterans” groups; programs that seem to work best feature transitional housing with the camaraderie of living in structured, substance-free environments with fellow veterans who are succeeding at bettering themselves. These programs and shelters in Arkansas need to be supported, with an eye to an increased need for support.
4. Increased awareness of the groundswell of support that will likely accompany the already advancing age of the homeless veteran population will be needed. Many health issues that accompany aging will begin to present themselves in the next decades and with that will come an even larger population of those needing and seeking help, many of whom are not in the VA system presently. Helping get these veterans in the system and accessing the needed services will be a huge challenge for our VA systems, both federal and state; consciousness of those challenges and preparation to meet them will be needed. This demand is going to further strain an already overwhelmed VA system.
5. The Arkansas Department of Veteran Affairs has a portion of its website dedicated to homeless veterans, with lists and links to many resources where assistance can be obtained, some of which offer help specifically to veterans. However, homeless veterans don’t usually have access to the Internet, so viable means of communicating the availability of this help will be a challenge. Both the US VA and the ADVA may need to research other means of communicating the availability of services.

*\*HOUSE COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS/SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY/MAY 20, 2010  
STATEMENT OF THOMAS J. PAMPERIN, ASSOCIATE DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR POLICY AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT,  
VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS*

*\*\*National Coalition for Homeless Veterans <http://www.nchv.org/background.cfm>*

**Strategy:**

The current loan guaranty program is working extremely well; the US VA, the ADVA and ADFA programs offer homebuyers assistance and instruction in both money management and

home buying, which saw a huge increase in the past few years, due to the financial crisis, and met it extremely well. The demand for more VA guaranteed loans has grown substantially in the past few years, due to the financial downturn. At the same time, foreclosures on these loans are extremely low. The VA and ADFA are meeting the demands on their programs extremely well; these need to continue, as that demand is not forecast to let up for the next few years.

For homeless veterans, a non-profit program that can allocate a portion of its focus to encompass the needs of the burgeoning number of homeless is needed. This would assist the VA system dramatically, as has been found nationally. The process of communicating to the homeless the existence of services offered, identifying those who are eligible and then assisting those veterans in getting into the VA system would have a huge positive impact. Research by the Rand Group and others has shown overwhelmingly that the advantage of non profits is in the trust shown them by veterans and families. It has allowed for a more seamless transition for the veterans, provided a more “case management” approach to meet the multi-faceted needs that are usually demonstrated, and has helped the VA with an overburdened system that is trying to do the same thing. It has been demonstrated that it is not so much duplicative in nature as an assistance that helps the VA by reducing the level of demand.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Public/Private Partnership Subcommittee**

#### **Summary:**

We established a website as a clearing house of information for our service personnel; we enlisted the help of Arkansas State University (ASU) and UALR to assist with their small business administration departments and federal funding to build an Arkansas Veterans website [www.arkansasveteran.com](http://www.arkansasveteran.com). This was accomplished in 2008-2009 and is currently in use. The website is titled ArkansasVeteran.com and is subtitled "Resources for your life and small business." The website is very user friendly and is designed to be the updated information source or “one-stop shop” for our veterans needs. Key categories of information are:

Benefits	Disabilities
Education	Housing
Employment	Family
Small Business	Legal
Health	

The site also has an assistance locator driven off of the user’s zip code as well as links to many other sites that offer veterans assistance.

#### **Issues:**

1. The service members and their families need information concerning the different support groups and agencies and what kind of assistance they offer.
2. Many organizations offer assistance but organizing and presenting the information is difficult from a cost and “up to date” perspective.

**Recommendations:**

1. The Arkansas National Guard continue to update and publish the current “pocket size” Arkansas National Guard laminated quick reference booklet entitled “Roadmap to Reintegration.”
2. The Arkansas Department of Veteran Affairs (ADVA) has a website which should continue to serve as the primary source of veterans information for Arkansas Veterans and families.

**Strategy:**

Recommend ongoing monitoring of available veterans programs and resources in order to update and keep the ADVA website current.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Memorandum

To: Governor Mike Beebe

From: Executive Committee for the Yellow Ribbon Task Force

Date: May 1, 2009

Re: Governor's Report – Arkansas Yellow Ribbon Task Force

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### Progress Report

1. Appointed by Governor Mike Beebe, the Arkansas Yellow Ribbon Task Force is charged with the preservation and protection of our former and current military service men and women and their families, through efficient and effective state- and community- based programs and initiatives that work to improve their quality of life during and after the reintegration process.
2. The Taskforce was created with the express purpose of developing guidelines which will help Arkansas military members of any branch who are not represented by an active component establishment—whether Active, Guard, or Reserve—receive every support, benefit, protection, and opportunity necessary during the reintegration process. Specifically, the Taskforce was tasked to:
  - a. Assess the reintegration needs of Arkansas military members and their families.
  - b. Assess the capabilities of the state to meet these needs.
    - (1) Develop a set of recommendations for:
      - (a) How best to use existing state services.
      - (b) The implementation of new programs to fill current gaps.
    - (2) Help to develop community outreach programs through which local communities, private citizens, and businesses can get involved in assisting military members and their families, and coordinate their offerings most efficiently.
  - c. Formulate a roadmap by which Arkansas state agencies, local communities, private citizens, and businesses can coordinate efforts to ensure that Arkansas military members receive all the services and assistance necessary for a successful reintegration process. The roadmap shall address but is not limited to the following areas of need:
    - (1) Health—the physical and mental well being of our military members.
    - (2) Family—support of military families during deployment and the emotional health of spouse and parent-children relationships.

- (3) Benefits—the various benefits available to military members through the Veterans Administration or specific to Arkansas.
- (4) Employment—job -training and -procurement assistance to aid our military members in gaining meaningful employment.
- (5) Education—educational benefits and opportunities available to qualifying veterans and their children.
- (6) Disabilities—helping newly wounded and disabled military members and their families cope with life changes and overcome the difficulties caused by disabilities.
- (7) Housing—assisting Arkansas military members and their families in procuring and retaining housing during and after mobilization.
- (8) Legal—changes in the law since deployment and the various legal and judicial assistances available.
- (9) Community Awareness/Connections—helping make communities aware of the needs of their local veterans and their families and find ways to offer what assistance they can provide where it is most needed.
- (10) Public-Private Partnerships—exploring ways in which businesses and other private interests can start, connect with, and/or fund programs which offer assistance to military members and their families.
- (11) Resource Connections—a website and/or call-center where veterans can find information which is meaningful to them and their families and connect them with organizations that can provide valuable assistance.

### 3. Task force members:

Mr. George Westmoreland, Chair	Mr. David Fletcher, Co-Chair
Major General William Wofford, Co-Chair	Judge David Bisbee
Robert Burns	Dr. Josette Cline, ex-officio
Rep. David Cook	Mac Dodson, ex-officio
G. David Gearhart, ex-officio	Dr. Paul Halverson, ex-officio
Janet Huckabee	Dr. Kenneth James, ex-officio
Mr. Theotis King	Dr. Joann Kirchner
Col. Nathaniel McGee	Major General Don Morrow
Dr. Becky Paneitz, ex-officio	Dr. Jim Purcell, ex-officio
Col. Winford Phillips, ex-officio	Susan Tonyman
Rep. Bobby Pierce	Rep. Randy Stewart
Dr. Robert Potts, ex-officio	Cheryl Rawls
Andrea Rockefeller-Hobbs	John Selig, ex-officio
Paige Smith	Chris Sultemeier
Artee Williams, ex-officio	Michael Winn

4. The Arkansas Yellow Ribbon Task Force, organized into subcommittees to address the above areas of need, conducted monthly meetings. The following is a summary of the initiatives that have been developed.

**a. Education/Employment Subcommittee**

(1) Provide "in state tuition" benefits at Arkansas colleges and universities for veterans who are living in Arkansas, or may come to Arkansas for their education but may not be current residents of Arkansas. Arkansas currently provides "in state tuition" rates for active duty military members who are stationed in Arkansas but are not Arkansas residents. This initiative recommends extending the same 'in state tuition' rates for military veterans as well as active duty military personnel.

(a) Modeled after the current AR code 6-60-205 that allows active duty military members classification as "in-state," the following wording is proposed: "If a veteran of the armed forces moves to the State of Arkansas and wishes to attend an accredited college or university in the state of Arkansas, he or she and his or her unemancipated dependents shall be entitled to classification as 'in-state' for the purpose of paying tuition at state-supported college and universities".

(b) Although a final recommendation has not been made, the subcommittee considered including veteran's "spouses" in this potential legislation.

(2) The subcommittee introduced the idea of setting aside a portion of the lottery proceeds and other unused scholarship monies to be "earmarked" for veteran's scholarships, possibly injured or severely wounded veterans. Additional research indicates that there is no support for utilizing any of the lottery proceeds for such an effort due to the risk that it would open the funds to requests from other groups for similar treatment, thus diluting the proceeds available for general academic and needs based scholarships. There was also no support for taking funds from the existing state scholarship programs to support veteran's scholarships.

(3) Additional research and discussion continues concerning Veterans Preference Law and military job-skills transfer.

(4) There was considerable discussion about sponsoring a one-day statewide conference to explore current practices and identify "best practices" regarding veterans and higher education.

**b. Community and Faith-Based Outreach Subcommittee.**

(1) Obtain a list of recently discharged military veterans that currently live in Arkansas in order to send them information about Reintegration activities.

(2) Work through the reserve component Inter-Service Family Assistance Center (ISFAC) and the Arkansas Chapter of the American Red Cross to develop an information

quick reference for military families. A red Cross grant will provide the funding to complete this project that will benefit the families of active duty, Guard and Reserve military veterans.

(3) Coordinate with Military One Source to have posters with veteran support information placed in each of the State Revenue Offices.

**c. Public/Private Subcommittee.**

The Committee's focus has been centered on what the Public/Private sector can do to assist the returning veterans. The effort has been prioritized into three areas:

- (a) Communication vehicles to both organize and inform veterans of their services and benefits (Web based)
- (b) Employment opportunities
- (c) Housing opportunities

(1) Communication. The team worked with the Small Business Administration - ASU as they received a grant to develop a Web based information clearing house to pool all of the information on the many agencies that are available to support the veterans. This site, [www.arkansasveteran.com](http://www.arkansasveteran.com), is up and running. The next step for this activity is promoting the site, insuring the information is populated by the different agencies and securing permanent funding to maintain the site long term.

(2) Employment Opportunities. The focus of the team with the different education institutions, has been first to understand what are the workforce education support agencies that are already operating and what additional resources are needed. We will continue to work with the education group on this.

From a legislative need standpoint, two things need to be addressed. First, we discussed a level of state tax credit for employing returning veterans. The Federal Program for the Hurricane Katrina impacted area, was a great motivator to hire local residents. This program provided federal tax credit for each individual hired. The Second piece of legislation we discussed was a prioritization of Veteran Owned Businesses with state contracts. This bill should be patterned after the federal bill.

The only other discussion point was insuring that state agencies were properly giving preferential status to hiring veterans. Our understanding is this is not enforced and followed in all state agencies.

(3) Housing Opportunities - The greatest need is in communication. There are many opportunities veterans have with Home Loans that are not used. We saw this as a communication and education issue that the website should assist.



d. **Legislative Subcommittee**. Summary of legislative initiatives:

**(1) HOUSE BILL 1207**

By: Representative Stewart

**For An Act To Be Entitled**

AN ACT TO ALLOW PARITY OF BENEFITS AMONG STATE SUPPORTED RETIREMENT SYSTEMS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES, ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD, AND ARMED FORCES RESERVE; TO PROVIDE CONSISTENCY WITH FEDERAL LAW; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

**Subtitle:** THE MILITARY APPRECIATION ACT OF 2009.

**(2) HOUSE BILL 1211**

By: Representative Stewart

**For An Act To Be Entitled**

AN ACT TO AMEND ARKANSAS CODE TITLE 24, CHAPTERS 10-12 TO ENHANCE BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARKANSAS LOCAL POLICE AND FIRE RETIREMENT SYSTEM WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES, ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD, AND ARMED FORCES RESERVE; TO PROVIDE CONSISTENCY WITH FEDERAL LAW; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

**Subtitle**

TO ENHANCE BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARKANSAS LOCAL POLICE AND FIRE RETIREMENT SYSTEM WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES, ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD, AND ARMED FORCES RESERVE AND TO PROVIDE CONSISTENCY WITH FEDERAL LAW.

**(3) HOUSE BILL 1206**

By: Representative Stewart

**For An Act To Be Entitled**

AN ACT TO AMEND ARKANSAS CODE TITLE 24, CHAPTER 7, TO ENHANCE BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARKANSAS TEACHER RETIREMENT SYSTEM WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES, ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD, AND ARMED FORCES RESERVE; TO PROVIDE CONSISTENCY WITH FEDERAL LAW; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

**Subtitle**

TO ENHANCE BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARKANSAS TEACHER RETIREMENT SYSTEM WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES, ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD, AND ARMED FORCES RESERVE AND TO PROVIDE CONSISTENCY WITH FEDERAL LAW.

**(4) HOUSE BILL 1205**

By: Representative Stewart

**For An Act To Be Entitled**

AN ACT TO AMEND ARKANSAS CODE TITLE 24, CHAPTER 4 TO ENHANCE BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARKANSAS PUBLIC EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES, ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD, AND ARMED

FORCES RESERVE; TO PROVIDE CONSISTENCY WITH FEDERAL LAW;  
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

**Subtitle**

TO ENHANCE BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARKANSAS PUBLIC  
EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE  
ARMED FORCES, ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD, AND ARMED  
FORCES RESERVE AND TO PROVIDE CONSISTENCY WITH FEDERAL  
LAW.

**(5) HOUSE BILL 1210**

By: Representative Stewart

**For An Act To Be Entitled**

AN ACT TO AMEND ARKANSAS CODE TITLE 24, CHAPTERS 1-3 TO  
ENHANCE BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES'  
RETIREMENT PLANS GENERALLY, WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE  
ARMED FORCES, ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD, AND ARMED  
FORCES RESERVE; TO PROVIDE CONSISTENCY WITH FEDERAL LAW;  
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

**Subtitle**

TO ENHANCE BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES'  
RETIREMENT PLANS GENERALLY, WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE  
ARMED FORCES, ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD, AND ARMED  
FORCES RESERVE AND TO PROVIDE CONSISTENCY WITH FEDERAL  
LAW.

**(6) HOUSE BILL 1212**

By: Representative Stewart

**For An Act To Be Entitled**

AN ACT TO AMEND ARKANSAS CODE TITLE 24, CHAPTER 5 TO  
ENHANCE BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARKANSAS STATE  
HIGHWAY EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM WHO ARE MEMBERS  
OF THE ARMED FORCES, ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD, AND  
ARMED FORCES RESERVE; TO PROVIDE CONSISTENCY WITH  
FEDERAL LAW; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

**Subtitle**

TO ENHANCE BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS OF THE ARKANSAS STATE  
HIGHWAY EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM WHO ARE MEMBERS  
OF THE ARMED FORCES, ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD, AND  
ARMED FORCES RESERVE AND TO PROVIDE CONSISTENCY WITH  
FEDERAL LAW.

**(7) HOUSE BILL 1249** By: Representatives Hyde, Stewart, Pierce, House,  
Pennartz, Lindsey

**For An Act To Be Entitled**

AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTED OFFICIALS WHO ARE CALLED TO  
ACTIVE MILITARY DUTY; TO ENSURE THAT THE ELECTED OFFICIAL  
RETAINS HIS OR HER OFFICE UPON RETURN FROM ACTIVE  
MILITARY DUTY; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

**Subtitle:** AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTED OFFICIALS WHO ARE CALLED TO ACTIVE MILITARY DUTY.

**(8) HOUSE BILL 1164**

By: Representative Stewart

**For An Act To Be Entitled**

AN ACT TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF THE RETIREMENT OR DISABILITY BENEFITS INCOME TAX EXEMPTION; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

**Subtitle:** AN ACT TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF THE RETIREMENT OR DISABILITY BENEFITS INCOME TAX EXEMPTION (from \$6,000 to \$10,000)

**(9) HOUSE BILL 1165**

By: Representative Stewart

**For An Act To Be Entitled**

AN ACT TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF THE RETIREMENT OR DISABILITY BENEFITS INCOME TAX EXEMPTION; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

**Subtitle**

AN ACT TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF THE RETIREMENT OR DISABILITY BENEFITS INCOME TAX EXEMPTION. (from \$6,000 to \$8,000)

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**(10) SENATE BILL 268**

By: Senator G. Baker By: Representatives

Stewart, Pennartz

**For An Act To Be Entitled**

AN ACT TO AMEND THE ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD TUITION INCENTIVE PROGRAM; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

**Subtitle**

TO AMEND THE ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD TUITION INCENTIVE PROGRAM.

**(11) SENATE BILL 128**

By: Senators Faris, Wilkinson, By:

Representative Stewart

**For An Act To Be Entitled**

AN ACT TO ALLOW MEMBERS OF STATE-SUPPORTED RETIREMENT SYSTEMS WHO ARE RECEIVING FEDERAL MILITARY SERVICE RETIREMENT TO PURCHASE CREDITED SERVICE FOR SERVICE RENDERED BY THE MEMBERS IN THE ARMED FORCES; TO ALLOW MEMBERS OF THE ARKANSAS PUBLIC EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM TO PURCHASE UP TO FIVE (5) YEARS OF COMPENSATED SERVICE IN THE ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD OR ARMED FORCES RESERVE; TO ALLOW MEMBERS OF THE ARKANSAS PUBLIC EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM TO PURCHASE ONE (1) YEAR OF SERVICE CREDIT FOR ONE (1) YEAR OF COMPENSATED SERVICE IN THE ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD OR THE ARMED FORCES

RESERVE; TO PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION TO ACTIVE-DUTY MILITARY PERSONNEL; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

**Subtitle**

TO ALLOW FEDERAL MILITARY RETIREMENT MEMBERS TO PURCHASE CREDITED SERVICE, ENHANCE THE PURCHASE OF COMPENSATED SERVICES BY ARKANSAS NATIONAL GUARD AND ARMED FORCES RESERVE MEMBERS, AND PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION.

**(12) SENATE BILL 157**

By: Senator B. Pritchard By: Representative

Stewart

**For An Act To Be Entitled**

AN ACT TO ALLOW AN INCOME TAX EXEMPTION FOR MILITARY RETIREMENT BENEFITS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

**Subtitle**

AN ACT TO ALLOW AN INCOME TAX EXEMPTION FOR MILITARY RETIREMENT BENEFITS.

5. **Current Projects**

The Arkansas Yellow Ribbon Task Force will hold an **Educational Conference** on June 24 -25, **Boots to Books**. This conference will focus on veterans transitioning into the education sector. The conference will be open to all Arkansas colleges and universities. The Arkansas Yellow Ribbon Task Force also has submitted an application for a SAMHSA Grant for a jail diversion program to be implemented in our state for our veterans. They are currently waiting on a response to determine if we received the grant.

## Way Forward – Proposal:

### ARVets ~ Allies for Arkansas

#### What it is

ARVets – a collaborative effort of provider organizations serving Arkansas military, veterans, families and friends in the areas of education, employment, health and wellness, and other support services, to include:

- ◄ Arkansas Department of Veteran Affairs
- ◄ United States Department of Veteran Affairs, Arkansas Regional Office
- ◄ Arkansas Veterans Commission
- ◄ Arkansas Veterans Coalition
- ◄ Arkansas American Legion
- ◄ Arkansas Veterans of Foreign Wars
- ◄ Disabled American Veterans
- ◄ Wounded Warrior Project
- ◄ Arkansas Department of Human Services
- ◄ Arkansas Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee (ISFAC)
- ◄ American Red Cross
- ◄ Little Rock VA Medical Center
- ◄ North Little Rock VA Medical Center
- ◄ US Department of Veteran Affairs, Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC)
- ◄ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- ◄ Arkansas Department of Education
- ◄ University of Arkansas
- ◄ Arkansas State University
- ◄ BECK Pride Center
- ◄ Northwest Arkansas Community College
- ◄ Arkansas State Military Department
- ◄ Arkansas Department of Workforce Services
- ◄ Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve
- ◄ Arkansas Development and Finance Authority
- ◄ Arkansas 2-1-1
- ◄ Wal Mart
- ◄ Small Business Administration – ArkansasVeteran.com

ARVets focus: making it easier for military members and their families to find help. The resources identified through ARVets are meant for anyone who is serving or has served in any branch of the military, as well as the family members and others who care about a service member.

ARVets forum to provide collaboration between government agencies and private organizations and businesses that are serving and supporting the military and their families and their communities; service providers, military, and veterans-related groups.

## **Primary Tasks**

### **Providing Information**

Make available comprehensive information on topics of importance to military members and their families and to community organizations, churches and providers of services to the military and their families. Offering providers a network to identify existing services, avoid duplication of services thereby offering a broader more seamless assistance to those seeking help, while focusing monies by better circumventing replication.

### **Reaching Those With Needs**

Implementation of a broad supportive and aggressive strategy for outreach to all military personnel, veterans, and their loved ones at all phases of their service and avoiding any stigma associated with the need for services.

### **Finding Resources**

Vet service providers who apply to join the ARVets program to assure efficacy; maintain current, updated information about, and direct referral to, all public and private community resources available to the military and their families.

### **Building a Team**

Crear ongoing community partnerships between an effective team of public, private, and academic organizations that serve and support military personnel, veterans, and their families.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of ARVets is to promote the health of military personnel, veterans and their loved ones by enhancing access to health care and social services and strengthening support systems through all phases of the military life cycle (pre-active duty, active duty, reserve, all deployment phases, medically disabled/injured or ill, loss of soldier, medical or service retirement, and post-active duty/veteran).

Through the collaborative efforts of the State and Federal Governments, Military Forces, United States Army Reserve (USAR), the Educational community, and private enterprise, ARVets will integrate, facilitate and coordinate contact information, referral resources and evidenced-based research on behalf of the Texas military community and their beneficiaries.

The trauma of combat creates a variety of consequences that are manifested over time in families, jobs, and communities. As Arkansans return from war, emerging clinical evidence and information from prior wars provide an increasingly clear picture of the needs of veterans and their families. The trauma of combat often resulting from multiple injuries creates a variety of primary and secondary consequences for veterans. The consequences of trauma are manifested in a developmental social context over time in families, jobs and communities. While federal resources are dedicated to pay for the care and rehabilitation of injured warriors, the consequences of untreated combat trauma have long been shown to create significant costs for state and local government through secondary impacts of increased incarceration, unemployment, homelessness, substance abuse, and family violence.

Physical injuries generally represent obvious trauma, but even physical injuries such as Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) can be extremely difficult to diagnose, and trauma that impairs mental/behavioral health, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), may never be fully identified. Military personnel must find health care and social services within a complex environment of federal, state, and local private and public agencies and advocacy groups. These independent agencies often serve only a portion of the military population and often provide a limited range of services. Consequently military personnel, veterans, and their families must seek care in a fragmented and chaotic system of care with no single source of reliable, current scientific information about the treatment of veterans suffering from trauma, or about how families, employers, and the community might best support returning veterans.

At present, data suggest that relatively few eligible OIE/OEF veterans are utilizing VA medical facilities. Over the period from FY05 and FY06, VA medical centers saw an increase in OEF veterans seeking care at their facilities.

Many new OIF/OEF veterans are living in Arkansas. Data from VHA sources, based on individual post-deployment interviews, are consistent with low VA utilization among OIF/ OEF veterans, despite substantial reports of individual and familial distress.

It is notable that while relatively few OIF/ OEF veterans are utilizing VA medical facilities, data from VHA sources (VHA National Data Extract/ Clinical Reports/ Mental Health Co-Morbidity\*) indicate that in FY06, 36% of OIF/OEF veterans in utilized VISN 17 medical facilities had at least one of the following mental health diagnoses: anxiety depression, PTSD, substance abuse, bipolar disorder, mental health disorder due to brain damage, schizophrenia, or dementia. The question then becomes how to effectively outreach to OIF/OEF veterans and their families, and provide sufficient community awareness and education to identify community reintegration challenges before they become chronic, debilitating conditions.

\*<http://www.virec.research.va.gov/DataSourcesName/DSS/DSSintro.htm>

### **ARVets will**

- ◀ Primarily serve military personnel, veterans and their loved ones within the state of Arkansas.
- ◀ Serve a secondary audience including service providers, employers, researchers, as well as civic organizations and other interested parties.
- ◀ Act as a statewide resource, easily accessible to all Arkansans.
- ◀ Contains accurate and complete information about services available in Arkansas communities from federal, state, or local sources, either public or private.
- ◀ Seek to support and strengthen local veterans organizations.
- ◀ Contains a wide variety of information of interest to service members and to organizations that serve veterans. Such information will include scientific research, medical and health care information, calendars of events information from/about local veterans organizations and other information consistent with the objectives of ARVets.
- ◀ Is overseen and directed through a governing structure composed of key stakeholders including appropriate Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, and State of Arkansas officials.
- ◀ Seek a wide range of partners.
- ◀ Work collaboratively to avoid duplicating existing information and referral services.

**Arkansas**  
**Yellow Ribbon Task Force**  
**Report To**  
**Governor Mike Beebe**  
**2010**

# **SECTION THREE**

**Subcommittee Reports**

- # 1. Health & Disability**
- # 2. Family, Community Awareness, Faith**
- # 3. Education\* & Employment\***
- # 4. Housing**
- # 5. Legislative and Benefits**
- # 6. Private-Public**



**YELLOW RIBBON TASK FORCE  
HEALTH/DISABILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE**

**I. Executive Summary**

During the past 2 ½ years, the members of this subcommittee met monthly to assess gaps in resources and to determine needs of our returning veterans and their families. We met with representatives of the Veterans Healthcare Administration (VHA) and included other non-VHA providers to develop a seamless system of care. These included representatives from the Mental Health Council of Arkansas, Office of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention, and Community Health Centers of Arkansas as well as veterans and their family members. Our focus has been on “Family Readiness and Reintegration.” VHA personnel have provided training for the leadership of the non-VHA providers and they have developed liaison relationships.

**II. Issues Facing Troops, Veterans and Families**

Prior to deployment, there is a great deal of anticipatory anxiety on the part of the individual servicemember, his/her spouse/partner and children. Each person involved wants to ensure that the other individual will be safe. The servicemember, in particular, has much concern for the well being of his/her family while he/she is deployed.

During deployment, the family members left behind continue to display anxiety and depression and are fearful of the death of their loved one. Dependent children develop scholastic and behavioral difficulties at school and nightmares at home.

Post-deployment, readjustment to civilian life can be problematic. Family roles and dynamics have shifted and the servicemember might develop Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), substance abuse problems and depression. Suicide has become a significant risk factor.

**III. Lessons Learned**

We reviewed results from the Department of Defense Post Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA) Data Summary (2005-2009) and found that of the 4,404 Arkansas National Guardsmembers Screened, 2,087 (47.4%) were referred to the VA.

Fifty-nine percent of these referrals were for physical symptoms and 41% of referrals were for mental health or substance abuse treatment. Of the 41%, 35% were for behavioral care (anxiety, depression), 5% were for mental health specialty care and 1% was for substance abuse treatment.

On the summary of the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Data (2005-2009), there were 25,480 respondents of which 3,757 (15%) were veterans. Arkansas veterans are 1.28 times (28%) more likely to report 14 or more physically unhealthy days/month and 1.56 times (56%) more likely to report 14 or more mentally unhealthy days/months.

We learned that the manifestation of symptoms in our troops returning from present day conflicts may be delayed beyond the mandatory 90 day PDHRA review and that care needs to be provided locally and be easily accessible and confidential.

A presentation from Operation Renewal in Fayetteville provided us with details about how to prepare for family reintegration, much of which focused on providing education to the family members.

#### **IV. Recommendations**

- 1. Enhance the infrastructure of each County Veteran Service Officers by adding a fulltime administrative / case manager to triage local issues. This office would work collaboratively with key community stakeholders (e.g. college veteran officers, court systems, clergy, Veteran Service Organizations) as with the Department of Human Services County Offices and the Arkansas Department of Health County Health Units.**
- 2. Develop a new position of Integrative Care Manager for each catchment area housed in the respective CMHC, who, in collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs, will integrate the needs of veterans, their spouses/partners and children across the catchment area mental health, substance abuse, and federally qualified and rural health centers.**
- 3. Replicate the model of the Beck Pride Center for wounded warriors and their families in each region of the state partnering with local colleges / universities (see Appendix).**

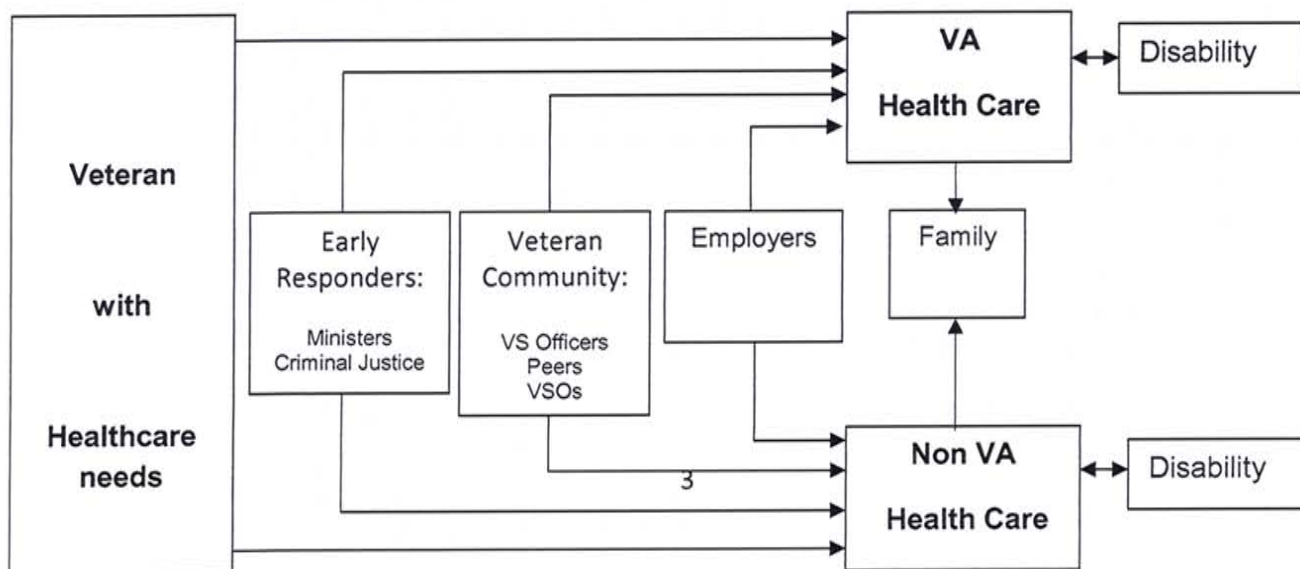
4. Enhance efforts towards family readiness and reintegration by providing financial support to programs focused on these activities (e.g. Operation Renewal, Operation Military Kids, AR Women Veteran’s Council).
5. Develop, in coordination with the Veterans Healthcare Administration, public service announcements, training opportunities and educational resources for employers and other community organizations highlighting the issues facing returning veterans and their families and directing them to the County Veteran Service Officer and /or to the Integrative Care Manager in their area.
6. Support the ADH to add the CDC supported veterans’ module to the BRFSS to expand our ability to gather health status and risk factors data in our veteran population.
7. Continue to administer and evaluate the National Guard Survey (including an extension to other service branches), designating a person or organization to administer the survey, support analysis, disseminate findings and maintain the database.

V. Strategy

We developed a model, Pathways to Health, which follows a servicemember/veteran through their community (including early responders, employers, family) to care/treatment either in the VHA or community.

In addition, since our recommendations encompass several areas, there needs to be an overarching agency with non-profit capability to ensure appropriate care is provided and to monitor outcomes for effectiveness.

### Pathways to Health



## **VI. Conclusion**

**Deployment is disruptive especially for national guard members who usually drill one weekend every month or so and have no experience being removed from everyday life.**

**Deployment disrupts the family unit as well and upon return, there are often dynamic shifts and role changes within the family. Our troops and their families are vulnerable and we need to develop a system of care which includes treatment, education and resource availability if we are to keep our troops and their families intact and healthy.**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Laurence H. Miller, M.D.  
Chair**

### **Committee Members:**

**JoAnn Kirchner, M.D.  
James Phillips, M.D.  
Susan Tonymon , LMSW  
Shane Sharp  
Nakia Williams, LMSW  
Pam Christie  
Garland Ferguson  
Barbie Davis, Ph.D.  
Raymond Ortega, Ed.D**

## **YRTF Committee Report Format**

**Subcommittee:** Family, Community Awareness, Community Connections, Faith-community outreach

**Members:** Chair Andrea Rockefeller-Hobbs – attended a couple of meetings beginning of 2008

Janet Huckabee – Moved in Apr/May 2009

Joann Kirchner – worked on another committee

Col. Diana Terry – Retired

Lt. Trina Norris – Replaced by CPT James Nolley

Alex Finger for Col. Phillips

### **I. Executive summary** (*focus of committee*)

The Family and Community Subcommittee focuses on four objectives; the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) 60-90 day events; Community Connections (formally known as Lunch and Learn) and a database of faith based organizations to help veterans in need. Through the efforts of the task force several initiatives and programs have been started; Veteran Awareness to Arkansas State Police Department and Access VA/Clergy partnership. Each objective/initiative is addressed below.

The Department of Defense (DOD) Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program began in 2008, with post-deployment required 30, 60, and 90 day events for returning Service Members. The subcommittee discussed development of a web site and 1-800 numbers to aid the Guard in finding facilities for the reintegration sessions to be held around the state. The team uses Family Assistance Centers throughout the state to assist with venue locations and develop relationships with faith based organizations to hold events. As the program matured, the National Guard Bureau created a website for Service Members and their families to register for the events online which also provide agendas, points of contact, and other important information for Service Members and their families. The intent of reaching out to churches and other groups will involve the communities to assist in hosting and feeding the Service Members and their families during an event. Churches are used during the initial program to alleviate cost and involve the community as part of the process. Since the initial phases, additional requirements from DOD have increased funding for offsite location and in turn increased the number of events along with an increase in attendees that require an overnight room. The DOD requirements have increased number of events to include pre, during, and post deployment; amounting to a minimum of five (5) events to seven (7) for a deploying unit. It is imperative to continue to partner with the Faith-Based community for DOD YRRP events to strengthen community support and continue cost effective actions as funding begins to decline. The Subcommittee also discussed contacting different companies that are proactive in hiring veterans. Requiring attendance by the Service Member at YRRP events leads them to job fairs at the 30 day reintegration session. During the last two years the Transition Assistance Advisor (TAA) has partnered with over 50 point of contacts as part of the TAA coalition for veteran, family and community resources. The TAA supports the YRRP pre, during, and post deployment events by coordinating and providing coalition resources and all departments of VA and Veteran benefits representatives to brief and have display tables at the events. Survey results show at all events the number one concern is employment. The TAA's ability to partner with several employers has made each event a place for Service Members to potentially find employment. TAA has also added the Small

Business Administration (SBA) to the coalition and assists in publishing a mobilization guide for Soldiers/Airman who own their own businesses and deploy. The guide assists with keeping the business open, closing it, or having someone else manage the business while the Service Member is deployed. This guide is passed out at pre-deployment events to all business owners and the SBA is available to offer free counseling.

The second objective of the subcommittee help guide was completed and approved in March 2009 (See Annex 1). The purpose of the Arkansas Military Family Resource Guide was to create a quick reference source directory for the military spouse providing information in an easy to understand and quick to reference format. The guide was created to be small, portable, and durable, with easy tab references based on the most commonly utilized resources in Arkansas. Areas of the guide include community resources, crisis intervention, employment, education, medical benefits, veterans' benefits, financial matters, family programs, and youth activity opportunities. The information was conveyed in an easy to understand easy to locate format so even a spouse new to the military would have minimal difficulty locating services to assist.

This booklet was a collaborative effort by the InterService Family Assistance Committee (ISFAC). Part of the ISFAC team served on the Governor's Yellow Ribbon Task Force. This committee was comprised of agencies devoted to assisting military families and included: the American Red Cross, the Arkansas National Guard, Pine Bluff Arsenal, Little Rock Air Force Base, Navy and Marine Reserve, ESGR, Transition Assistance Advisor, Military and Family Life Consultants, Military One Source, Arkansas Small Business, and many other partners and organizations.

Arkansas Joint Family Support Assistance Program (JFSAP) developed a community outreach plan originally named Lunch and Learn, now known as Community Connections which is the third objective for the subcommittee. This outreach plan began as an attempt to educate civilian community partners on the needs of geographically dispersed military families and provide a toolkit for the community to respond to those needs as they arose. The Community Connections have been a very successful part of the Arkansas Joint Family Support Assistance Program (JFSAP) outreach effort since October 2008. The outreach team working with these service members, families, and community partners has been comprised of: Military OneSource representative, the Transition Assistance Advisor (TAA), Military and Family Life Consultants, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, the American Red Cross and the Family Assistance Center Coordinator (FACC). JFSAP is part of the ISFAC. The project started initially with a scatter plot map identifying the Home of Record for all Arkansas National Guardsmen. This map was retrieved and is updated annually by the Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention office. Based on the population density of the scatter plot, the JFSAP team originally selected four locations as test sites for the Community Connections. The locations selected were based on the density of military families in the area and the most recent units to return from deployment. The Community Connections outreach event now serves as an opportunity to educate military leadership in geo-isolated areas on resources available through the joint services support branch and their community partners. It furthermore provides an opportunity to network with community partners and resources

across Arkansas to collect and disseminate a host of services to support Military Families in all geographic areas across the state.

The fourth objective was to develop a database of faith based organizations. A collaboration between the Arkansas National Guard, the VA Clergy, and Steve Sullivan, VA Chaplain formed ACCESS VA/Clergy Partnership which offers post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) training to clergy/churches around the state. The mission of the group is to engage ministers and people of faith in rural communities to provide understanding of veteran/reintegration issues and to be able to support and accurately refer returning veterans and family members. Research shows rural veterans are considerably more likely to seek help from their pastor than they are from a mental health provider. (See Annex 2 for summary of ACCESS VA/Clergy Partnership)

Alex Fingers, member of the Task Force, coordinated with the Transition Assistance Advisor (TAA), the Director of Psychological Health (DPH), and the VA to begin a training program on Veteran Awareness to the Arkansas State Police Department. All three programs are charged to provide Veteran Awareness to state law enforcement and first responders. The DVD "The Walking Wounded" was used to provide awareness of soldiers' actions and demeanor when they return home from a deployment. The first training took place on 5 May 2010 at the Little Rock Arkansas State Police Department with 12 in attendance. Four are scheduled for 2011.

## **II. Issues Facing troops, veterans and families** *(w/in committee's specific area)*

The Governor's Yellow Ribbon Task Force Survey given to National Guard leadership in September 2009, showed troops desire for follow-up events past the YRRP 90 day event to include a 180 post deployment and one year post deployment event (See Annex 3). Research shows post deployment issues may not arise until a year after returning home. One of the top issues facing Service Members is financial problems; relating to lack of or low paying employment. During all DOD YRRP events, a "mini job fair" through the TAA efforts is present to assist Service Members. The VA has had several job fairs to assist veterans and offered classes on resume writing and interview skills. With financial issues being at the top of the list some Service Members are strained when attending a DOD Yellow Ribbon event due to the fact that the Service Member is responsible for paying for room, travel, and food upfront, then being reimbursed at a later date. The issues our Service Members are facing are widespread; to cope with a high stress environment (for both the Service Member and their families), relationship issues (couples), financial management (basic money management tools), and education resources (understanding and utilizing benefits both state and federal). Soldiers, Airman, and family members face multiple deployments, high divorce rates, medical/mental health problems, and employment and financial issues. They are unaware of the National Guard's full-time Family Program resources and benefits personnel; they have little to no knowledge of Veteran/VA/ TRICARE/State Benefits or local community resources.

ACCESS VA/Clergy Partnership reaches out to the communities with little or no support of mental health professionals through the clergy in the rural areas assisting veterans with problems associated with combat. Returning Service Members and Family Members face numerous issues; therefore, clergy organizations must recognize the stress factors that these issues create. Unemployment, financial responsibilities, reintegration into their families and into society after living in a chaotic and traumatic environment is concerns that faith-based organization must address. Faith-based organizations must have a clear understanding of how these issues impact veterans and their families. Veterans still associate stigma with mental health issues and are reluctant to visit a mental health professional. The Governor's Yellow Ribbon Task Force Survey (Annex 3) showed what hinders a Servicemember from seeking behavioral health services where the fear of stereotype, pride, shame, peers, and professional concerns. This was 65% of the Servicemembers who were surveyed. This makes the ACCESS VA/Clergy Partnership more vital.

### **III. Lessons Learned** *(from presentations, research, collaboration)*

The DOD YRRP events are needed after the 90 day event. Research and surveys show the need and want for follow-up events at 180 days and 365 days post-deployment. After the events it is beneficial for the unit to follow-up with each Service Member to see how they are adjusting.

The Community Connections event has progressed into a traveling education effort to inform Unit Command, Service Members, and community partners on resources available to support our troops. Too often families are negatively reactive to issues they face. This approach attempts to deliver a proactive effort to educate military families on available resources before the need for them arises.

Arkansas Military Family Resource Guide took almost one year from conceptualization to actual delivery of product. The committee met monthly, gathering resources for inclusion, deciding on priority of those resources, voting on number of pages, priority of information, and numerous other obstacles. While a highly effective product, it is a product with a shelf life of no more than two years.

Mobilizing faith-based organizations is no small task. The first question that clergy ask is how to identify Service and Family Members in communities. Networking and communicating with community partners is key to developing strong bonds with families in crisis. Teaming with community business leaders, civic organizations, schools, state assistance agencies, local veterans' organizations, and military leaders determines the success of faith-based outreach.

A comprehensive data base for multi Faith Based and community organizations would greatly assist veterans and their Families and the organizations themselves in networking and growing resources.



#### **IV. Recommendations** *(to better meet needs, fill gaps, provide new/needed services)*

Recommend a Arkansas Veteran website to collect points of contact for all organizations desiring to assist veterans and their Families and how the organization can assist. The website would require constant monitoring to ensure current information is listed. The website could be divided into categories of different organizations for easy location.

To better educate military families, recommend the joint services support branch host a minimum of fifteen Community Connections events across Arkansas on an annual basis, focusing on the areas of the state most impacted by deployment or other outstanding issues. Developing more efficient and timely communication systems within faith-based communities will enhance the organizations effectiveness. Combining efforts between unit leadership (at the lowest level), chaplains, local clergy/faith-based organizations, Director of Psychological Health, and local mental health providers would increase outreach success. The Community Connections outreach event now serves as an opportunity to educate military leadership in geo-isolated areas on resources available through the joint services support branch and their community partners. It furthermore provides an opportunity to network with community partners and resources across Arkansas to collect and disseminate a host of services to support Military Families in all geographic areas across the state.

Recommend continuing to produce and distribute the Arkansas Military Family Resource Guide, with bi-annual review and revision as needed. The method used to continue the task force initiative would need a one stop Arkansas Veteran website to update material in a timely and cost effective method.

The ACCESS VA/Clergy Partnership needs to continue and more research to determine the benefits to the Veterans due to its beginning in FY2010. The continue research will identify gaps and other services requirements as the program matures. Collaboration within the community/Faith Based network and Arkansas National Guard may assist in sharing resources decreasing some of the requirement for funding.

#### **V. Strategy** *(model or possible vehicle that could carry forward improvements/changes)*

With the initiatives started by the Governor's Yellow Ribbon Task Force, this subcommittee and their partnering organizations would continue the Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee (ISFAC). It is a voluntary military cooperative partnership organized to provide multi-service networking for training and assistance to ensure Total Force Family Readiness. Their purpose is to provide assistance to families regardless of service component. The goal of the ISFAC is to strengthen exiting family assistance delivery systems in the event of mobilization, deployment, or natural disaster through the interaction of committee members. The ISFAC provides an opportunity and place for Family Programs Directors and Coordinators to network and identify care and service providers to eliminate a duplication of efforts. The ISFAC establishes pre-planner delivery systems in the event of mobilization or contingency through committee member interactions. ISFACs have been organized to cover

different geographical areas: sub-state levels, state levels, and multi-state levels. (See Annex 4)

## **VI. Conclusion**

These programs are still in a growing phase. Small changes and adjustments have made for better resources to provide to our Service Members and their families. The YRRP events (pre, during, and post deployment) present us with the opportunity to reach each deploying Service Member and those closely affected by their deployment. The Community Connections have morphed into an encouraging guide tool for unit commanders, Service Members, and leaders in each community. Those surrounding our deploying Service Members are more aware of the issues they face on a daily basis. With the support of TAA, MOS, ESGR, etc. the Task Force only gains strength and resources to better provide to those serving.

## Yellow Ribbon Task Force Employment and Education Subcommittee

### I. Executive Summary – Higher Education

As we begin another academic year in the fall of 2010, the American Council on Education (ACE) notes that institutions of higher education both large and small, public and private, are putting programs and services into place to ease the transition from soldier to student for our nations' veterans and servicemembers. As the number of men and women who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan now exceeds 2 million individuals, and as federal and state benefits continue to improve, we are likely to see an increase in the number of student veterans on our campuses nationwide. Students Veterans of America (SVA), a coalition of student veterans groups from college and university campuses across the United States, reports that more than 330,000 student veterans will be using G.I. Bill benefits on campuses across the country during the 2010/2011 academic year.

This current report authored by the Employment and Education Subcommittee of Governor Beebe's Yellow Ribbon Task Force focuses on higher education and the educational needs of Arkansas' veterans. The task force sought to identify and understand the issues, challenges, difficulties, and barriers faced by Arkansas' veterans as they seek to initiate or resume higher education. We seek to improve access to services and reduce barriers to inclusion and full participation in campus life. It has been our goal to identify policies, procedures, and best practices which will allow for the creation of a "veteran-friendly" environment on campuses across the state of Arkansas.

### II. Issues Facing Troops, Veterans, and their Families – Higher Education

#### Survey of Arkansas National Guard, 2010

In a survey of 353 members of the Arkansas National Guard conducted between May 15, 2010 and September 14, 2010, the following information regarding higher education and training was reported:

- ◆ 65% of the 353 respondents were either currently participating in an education or training program (25%) or were planning to start or re-start their education in the future (40%).
- ◆ 56% of survey respondents had received some type of education or training assistance or benefit.
- ◆ Of this 56%, 69% had received GI Bill benefits while 24% had received state benefits such as GTIP.
- ◆ Of the 56% who had received benefits, 72% had used those benefits to take college or university coursework leading to a bachelor's or graduate degree.
- ◆ Of the 56% who had received benefits, 84% reported that the benefits were very or extremely important in helping them meet their educational goals.

- ◆ For those respondents who had not used educational or training benefits, their reasons for not utilizing benefits included lack of awareness of benefits or the perception that they were not eligible for benefits (13%), lack of information regarding application for benefits (10%), the belief that there was “too much red tape” involved in applying for benefits (16%), and “timing out” on benefits eligibility (6%).
- ◆ When asked what type of assistance would be helpful to support their education/training, 27% requested a “single point of contact” for veterans on campus to serve as a referral source for various needs, 39% requested assistance with benefits paperwork, 14% requested a mentoring program, 11% requested a student veterans group, and 15% requested childcare assistance.

### **III. Lessons Learned – Higher Education**

#### Boots 2 Books Workshop

In June, 2009, the Yellow Ribbon Task Force hosted a 2-day workshop entitled, “Boots 2 Books: Serving Veterans on Campus, A Best Practices Symposium.” The purpose of this workshop was to assess the readiness of campuses across the state to meet the current and future needs of Arkansas’ student veterans. Attendees received information regarding the needs of veterans as they transition from soldier to student, the current status of educational benefits and the administration of those benefits, necessary steps to take in building a “veteran friendly” campus, and a discussion of several “best practices” for serving student veterans on campuses across Arkansas. A survey completed by all attendees provided a snapshot of the current state of campus-based services to student veterans in Arkansas, and a summary of those results is noted below:

- ◆ Attendees included representatives from 29 institutions of higher education in Arkansas including 3 private institutions, 10 4-year public institutions, and 16 community or technical institutions.
- ◆ 14 institutions noted that services to veterans were limited to those of a VA Certifying Official, but 8 institutions noted that they had already established a centralized, single-point-of-contact for veterans on their campuses.
- ◆ For institutions with services beyond those of a VA Certifying Official, services may be provided by a wide range of campus programs or offices including Financial Aid, Admissions, Registrar, Disability Services, Mental Health Services, Career Services, student veteran groups, and Housing.
- ◆ The majority of institutions do not provide training or information regarding the military, student veterans, or veteran transition issues to their faculty, staff, or students.
- ◆ The majority of institutions do not provide scholarship monies specifically for student veterans.
- ◆ The majority of institutions do not provide services for the families of student veterans.
- ◆ The majority of institutions are partnering with external agencies or programs to provide services for their student veterans.

- ◆ When asked to assess the level of readiness or preparedness for serving student veterans on their campuses the majority of institutions (22 of 29) indicated they felt “somewhat prepared”, while only 5 institutions felt they were “very prepared”.
- ◆ When asked to provide the “primary needs and top priorities” of student veterans at their institutions attendees indicated a range of needs including financial needs (including assistance in navigating federal and state benefits to their best advantage), health care services (including mental health services), employment assistance, housing assistance, mentoring programs, academic advising, academic readiness assistance, and flexible scheduling including on-line course offerings.
- ◆ When asked to identify resources needed to better serve student veterans, attendees indicated a need for additional personnel and funding, centralized services (single-point-of-contact such as a campus-based veteran’s center), student veterans groups, greater coordination with VA offices and programs, and targeted recruitment of veterans.

### Student Veterans of America

Within the past few years we have seen an exponential increase in the number of resources available to institutions of higher education seeking assistance in creating a “veteran-friendly” campus. As noted above, Students Veterans of America (SVA) is a coalition of student veterans groups from college and university campuses across the United States. This organization has taken a lead role in providing support and guidance to institutions as they seek to initiate or expand services to student veterans. Several helpful publications are available via their website – [www.studentveterans.org](http://www.studentveterans.org). One such publication available as part of the “resources” section of their website is entitled, “Veterans Center Handbook”, updated in August, 2010. This handbook includes a detailed plan for developing services for veterans on campus:

- ◆ Step 1: Develop a Veterans Task Force to assess specific needs on your campus, remembering to include current student veterans in the process. A survey of your current student veterans is a key step in the process.
- ◆ Step 2: Support the creation of a Student Veterans Organization.
- ◆ Step 3: Create a Veteran’s Services Office, a single-point-of-contact for veterans on campus.
- ◆ Step 4: Provide a space for a Veteran’s Service Office and ideally a meeting space for student veterans.
- ◆ Step 5: Develop on-line and print resources for veterans describing campus as well as regional, state, and federally based services for veterans.
- ◆ Step 6: Establish partnerships with programs and services both campus-based as well as community based including, but not limited to, VA services, Vet Center services, state-based veteran’s services (Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs), and others.
- ◆ Step 7: Educate administration, faculty, staff, and students regarding both the unique needs and unique assets of student veterans.
- ◆ Step 8: Converge all resources in one place, ideally incorporating a Veteran’s Services Office as well as other support services in one location on campus.

- ◆ Step 9: Evaluate organizational success including a plan to monitor and track key indicators of student veteran enrollment and success.

### Center for Deployment Psychology

The Center for Deployment Psychology (CDP, [www.deploymentpsych.org](http://www.deploymentpsych.org)) based in Washington, D.C. identifies several campus challenges regarding the creation of a veteran-friendly campus including the following:

- ◆ Administrative challenges including registration procedures, housing contracts, payment of tuition and fees, and the need to be flexible when a service member is deployed while attending school. Further administrative challenges include the desire of service members to receive credit for military service and training or education received in the military.
- ◆ Financial challenges including the administration of federal and state benefits which are complex and dynamic.
- ◆ Social challenges including the difference in age and experience between most student veterans and other members of the student body, and the loss of community and identity experienced by those leaving the military.

The CDP also recommends that campuses conduct a needs assessment with an emphasis on identifying appropriate mental health and disability resources to treat the “signature” wounds of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan including Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and traumatic brain injury (TBI). Programs focused on the transition needs of student veterans can be very helpful and can include information regarding financial assistance, academic assistance, signs and symptoms of a range of health and mental health issues and resources to address these issues, benefits of social support (including a student veterans group), as well as a range of other services available to student veterans. The CDP also offers a wide range of training workshops for colleges and universities which are grant-funded and offered at very minimal cost to institutions.

### American Council on Education

The American Council on Education (ACE) is clearly committed to the creation of veteran-friendly higher education and the most visible commitment to this effort is a program entitled, “Serving Those Who Serve” ([www.acenet.edu/stws](http://www.acenet.edu/stws)). A wide range of information is available via this website. In November, 2008, ACE published an Issue Brief entitled, “Serving Those Who Serve: Higher Education and America’s Veterans” which included a listing of “Ten Ways to Become More Veteran Friendly”:

- ◆ Step 1: Listen to your veterans via roundtables and focus groups, seeking to understand their diverse and unique needs.
- ◆ Step 2: Assess your institutions’ strengths and weaknesses and consider programs, services, and policies that could be initiated or improved.
- ◆ Step 3: Start a student veterans group for support as well as advocacy.
- ◆ Step 4: Design a place for veterans to gather which encourages socialization and can benefit retention.

- ◆ Step 5: Have a point of contact, whether this is a dedicated Veterans Support Center or point of contact in different departments across your institution.
- ◆ Step 6: Re-orient student orientation and consider orientation activities focused on veterans and their specific needs.
- ◆ Step 7: Build programs that access veterans' strengths, including entrepreneurship programs.
- ◆ Step 8: Educate faculty, staff, and students, providing them with information to facilitate a successful college experience for student veterans.
- ◆ Step 9: Partner with other organizations to provide a wide range of needed services for veterans, reducing the need for institutions of higher education to replicate services already available from other sources.
- ◆ Step 10: Engage your community by involving campus as well as community members in efforts to support student veterans.

In July, 2009, ACE and several additional supporting organizations published the results of a survey entitled, "From Soldier to Student: Easing the Transition of Service Members on Campus". The report offered a, "first-of-its-kind national snapshot of the programs, services, and policies that campuses have in place to serve veterans and military personnel", with the hope that colleges and universities across the country would assess their own programs and services. It is a detailed and informative document which surveyed 723 institutions on a range of topics regarding serving student veterans, and will prove a valuable resource to institutions of higher education across the state of Arkansas. The entire report is available at [www.acenet.edu](http://www.acenet.edu).

In early May, 2010, ACE hosted a national online dialogue entitled, "The Veteran Success Jam: Ensuring Success for Returning Veterans". This recent event brought together "thousands of veterans and their families, service members, campus leaders, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies in a conversation about the challenges and opportunities facing veterans in higher education." Participants discussed a range of issues including promising practices on college campuses, educational benefits, transfer of credits, navigating a path to college, as well as other issues. A summary of this event is available at [www.acenet.edu/stws](http://www.acenet.edu/stws).

### Veterans Upward Bound

Veterans Upward Bound (VUB) is a free U.S. Department of Education TRIO program designed to help eligible U.S. military veterans enter and succeed in the postsecondary school of their choosing. Currently, there are 48 VUB programs nationwide, with 3 programs in the state of Arkansas including the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Pulaski Technical College, and Henderson State University. The services provided by VUB include:

#### Academic Preparation

Assessment of academic skills

Academic Refresher Courses:

Math  
Laboratory Science  
Composition  
Reading  
Literature  
Foreign Language  
Computer Skills

Other services may include:

Assistance completing college admission forms  
Personal academic advising and career counseling  
Help with GI Bill applications  
Assistance completing financial aid applications and finding scholarships  
Career guidance and planning  
Cultural field trips and campus visits  
Tutoring and mentoring  
Referrals to other community agencies serving veterans  
Eligibility for services

To benefit from the free educational services offered by VUB, veterans must meet a few simple eligibility requirements including:

Have at least 180 days of active duty service, or if less than 180 days, must be discharged or released because of a service connected disability, or be member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces called to active duty for a period of more than 30 days, or be a member of a reserve component of the Armed Forces who served on active duty in support of a contingency operation on or after September 11, 2001.

All discharges qualify except dishonorable.

All participants must be either low-income (based on family income and number of dependants) or potential first generation college students (neither parent earned a 4-year degree).

#### Institutions of Higher Education in the State of Arkansas

##### **Beck P.R.I.D.E Center for America's Wounded Veterans, at Arkansas State University**

The Beck P.R.I.D.E. Center opened in October, 2007 at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, Arkansas. P.R.I.D.E. stands for "Personal Rehabilitation Individual Development Education". The mission of the Beck P.R.I.D.E. Center is "To provide combat wounded veterans with resources for personal rehabilitation, counseling, advocacy, financial assistance, access to the higher education experience, and socialization", and, "To provide first class educational programs and



services at Arkansas State University; supporting these individuals to achieve their post military service goals.”

### **Veterans Resource and Information Center (VRIC), University of Arkansas, Fayetteville**

The Veterans Resource and Information Center (VRIC) at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, is the “single point of contact” for veterans on the Fayetteville campus. The establishment of the VRIC is the direct result of the work of the university’s Veterans Task Force which completed its work in March, 2009. The task force worked to identify and understand the needs of student veterans and to improve their access to services and to reduce barriers to their inclusion and full participation in campus life. The VRIC provides a seamless collaboration between student veterans and an array of campus-based as well as off-campus services and partners who are committed to serving veterans.

Of the 19 recommendations from the UA Veterans' Task Force, sixteen (16) have been accomplished, and the remaining three (3) are underway. The active, collaborative partnerships among eight departments ensured the timely completion of those sixteen accomplished recommendations. Additional departments and community agencies are involved in implementing the remaining three recommendations. The sixteen accomplished recommendations are listed below.

1. Create a veterans resource "hub" - The Division of Student Affairs created the Veterans' Resource & Information Center (VRIC) in July 2009. VRIC has served as the catalyst for the development of numerous programs and collaborations to serve student veterans.
2. Accept military courses for academic credit per ACE Guidelines.
3. Accept DD-214 for academic credit.
4. Create Veteran Scholarships
5. Increase tuition discount for National Guard members.
6. Create an official website for student veterans.
7. Train staff in veterans' issues.
8. Establish allies, advocates, and mentors for student veterans.
9. Establish a speaker's bureau to present veteran-related information to campus entities.
10. Increase mental health and disability services for veterans.
11. Create transitional services including remedial courses for student veterans.
12. Establish an NWACC partnership.
13. Recruit veterans.
14. Identify incoming student veterans.
15. Track student veterans and their progress toward graduation.
16. Establish a Veterans Support Committee.

The three recommendations still in process include:

1. Establish funding for permanent scholarships.

2. Increase military competency among faculty and staff.
3. Increase retention and graduation rates of veterans.

Student veterans are a tremendous asset to higher education, and any efforts to provide a successful transition from military to campus life are a very real way we can say "thank you" to the men and women who have honored us beyond all measure with their devotion and sacrifice in uniform.

### **Westmoreland Veterans Center, Northwest Arkansas Community College**

In January, 2010, NWACC named a full-time Veterans Coordinator to serve student veterans on campus. This fall (2010), NWACC saw its enrollment of veterans increase by one-third with a total of 393 veterans who are registered through the Westmoreland Veterans Center. This represents an increase from 50 veterans registered during the fall semester of 2008, and they attribute this increase to the development of a veterans center under the direction of a full time coordinator who is able to serve as a single point of contact for veterans on campus.

### **Other Arkansas institutions of Higher Education/Training**

There are many institutions of higher education across the state of Arkansas who are providing a range of services to their student veterans. While a comprehensive listing of services has yet to be authored, this does not mean that services are only being provided to student veterans at the institutions listed above – nothing could be further from the truth! To address this lack of knowledge regarding the range of services available to student veterans across Arkansas, this subcommittee on employment and education recommends the creation of a comprehensive listing of services to assist our veterans in starting or re-starting their education or training activities in order to meet their long term goals. See section IV of this report for further details.

### Department of Veterans Affairs

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides a wide range of information and education for institutions of higher education as these institutions seek to assist their student veterans. Information regarding the G.I. Bill Benefit Program is available at [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov). Information and training regarding student veterans and mental health is available at [www.mentalhealth.va.gov/College/](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/College/). Additional information regarding mental health concerns for veterans is available at [www.ptsd.va.gov](http://www.ptsd.va.gov) via the website for the National Center for PTSD (NCPTSD).

### Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs

The Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs ([www.veterans.arkansas.gov](http://www.veterans.arkansas.gov)) also provides a wide range of information and education for institutions of higher education as these institutions seek to assist their student veterans. This state-based program provides “up-to-date and useful information for veterans and their families on their rights and benefits, including information on the Arkansas veterans’ homes, the state cemetery system, county offices, and links to other federal and state resources.”

#### **IV. Recommendations – Higher Education**

1. Create a comprehensive listing of services for student veterans available at institutions of higher education and training across the state of Arkansas. A web-based listing would be ideal.
2. Ask all institutions of higher education in the state of Arkansas to follow the guidelines authored by Student Veterans of America (SVA) as part of their “Veterans Center Handbook”, updated in August, 2010, [www.studentveterans.org](http://www.studentveterans.org). These guidelines provide step-by-step assistance for institutions of higher education as they seek to provide a more “veteran friendly” environment for Arkansas’ student veterans.
3. Propose and work for passage of legislation to appropriate funds for a Coordinator of Veterans Services/Resources on all campuses of higher education in the state of Arkansas. These coordinators could be assisted by federally funded VA work-study positions.
4. Include representation from institutions of higher education as part of any continuing forum to carry on and implement the work initiated by this Yellow Ribbon Task Force.
5. Encourage all institutions of higher education to participate in a state-wide listserv to encourage communication among and assist institutions in their efforts to serve Arkansas’ student veterans. The University of Arkansas, Fayetteville currently sponsors such a listserv and additional participants are welcome.

#### **V. Strategy – Higher Education**

The Employment and Education Subcommittee of the Yellow Ribbon Task Force supports the creation of a continuing forum to carry on and further implement the work initiated by all subcommittees of the Yellow Ribbon Task Force. Several states across the nation have implemented similar follow-on strategies to see that the work initiated by a veterans’ task force is supported following the termination of said task force. States such as California and Texas, among others, have implemented strategies and structures which can serve as examples for the creation of similar entities in the state of Arkansas.

#### **VI. Conclusion – Higher Education**

In July, 2008, the Veterans Administration reported that there were 262,000 veterans living in the state of Arkansas, representing 9.4 % of the state’s population. Arkansas is also home to a large number of National Guard troops. Arkansas ranks in the top 10-15% of states when we consider the proportion of individuals serving in the National Guard. (<http://www1.va.gov/opa/fact/statesum/ARss.asp>). As the number of men and women who have served their country continues to rise, and as guaranteed educational and training benefits for these individuals have improved significantly, it is safe to assume that we will experience an increase in enrollment of student veterans in institutions of higher education and training here in the state of Arkansas.

As noted above, Governor Beebe convened the Yellow Ribbon Task Force to identify the scope of needs of Arkansas’ veterans. The Employment and Education subcommittee of the Yellow

Ribbon Task Force focused on the employment and educational needs of Arkansas' veterans. The education section of the subcommittee sought to identify and understand the needs of student veterans, to improve their access to services, and to reduce barriers to their inclusion and full participation in higher education and training in the state of Arkansas. The recommendations included in this report represent a coordinated state-wide initiative to provide resources and support for this new generation of returning veterans.

Dedicating precious resources to veteran's education and training is an "investment" rather than an "expenditure." Investing in the education of our veterans pays dividends as well. A 1988 Congressional study showed that every dollar spent on educational benefits under the original GI Bill added seven dollars to the national economy in terms of productivity, consumer spending, and tax revenue. ([www.gibill2008.org/about.html](http://www.gibill2008.org/about.html)). Military training and experience are positive assets for our educational institutions, our state, and our nation as a whole.

In the spirit of continued service to our veterans in the state of Arkansas, the education section of the Employment and Education Subcommittee of the Yellow Ribbon Task Force respectfully submits this final report.

#### Web Based Resources

Serving Those Who Serve: Making Your Institution Veteran-Friendly (American Council on Education, [www.acenet.edu/stws](http://www.acenet.edu/stws))

Serving Those Who Serve: Higher Education and America's Veterans (American Council on Education, [www.acenet.edu/stws](http://www.acenet.edu/stws))

Center for Deployment Psychology, [www.deploymentpsych.org](http://www.deploymentpsych.org)

From Soldier to Student: Easing the Transition of Service Members on Campus (American Council on Education, [www.acenet.edu](http://www.acenet.edu))

Military Service Members and Veterans in Higher Education: What the New GI Bill May Mean for Postsecondary Institutions (American Council on Education, [www.acenet.edu](http://www.acenet.edu))

Student Veterans of America ([www.studentveterans.org](http://www.studentveterans.org))

#### Electronic Resources Included with this Report

Arkansas State University Beck P.R.I.D.E. Model, June, 2010 (pdf)

Boots 2 Books Virtual Resource Guide, June, 2009

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Veterans Task Force Final Report, March, 2009



## **I. Executive Summary: Employment**

America's newest veterans face serious employment challenges. The process of returning to civilian life is complicated by the most severe economic recession in decades. Furthermore, many Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, leaving the active-duty military, find civilian employers who do not understand the value of their skills and military experience. As a result, unemployment rates for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are staggering. Additionally, the National Guardsmen and Reservists who leave behind their civilian lives to serve alongside active-duty troops, are inadequately protected against job discrimination. The experience of previous generations of veterans who faced similar situations suggest that today's veterans may continue to struggle for years to come.

In keeping with our efforts on the academic front, the Employment and Education Committee took steps to review the employment outlook for veterans to once again identify and better understand the issues, challenges, difficulties and barriers of securing jobs. In Arkansas and nationally, many of the unemployed are members of the National Guard and reserves who have deployed multiple times. The national 21.1 percent unemployment rate is well above the 16.6 percent jobless rate for non-veterans of the same ages, 18 to 24. Unemployment rates for new Iraq and Afghanistan-era veterans for the first six months of 2010 averaged 12.5 percent, up from 10.2 the previous year reflecting the tough transition home from war. This report focused on the barriers faced by servicemembers seeking to return to prior employment or seeking new employment, with the goal of identifying policies, procedures, and best practices which will allow servicemembers to improve their quality of life by successfully reintegrating into the civilian workforce.

## **II. Issues Facing Troops, Veterans, and Families**

Issues facing returning Arkansas servicemembers and their families include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ◆ Current national and state economic climate
  - Number of jobs available
  - Types of jobs available
  - Types and numbers of future jobs available
  - USERRA issues or jobs no longer existing
  
- ◆ Employer attitudes impacting hiring veterans\*
  - Failure of veterans to translate military skills to the civilian job experience such as writing resumes and interviewing
  - Concerned for difficulty transitioning from the structure and hierarchy in the military culture to the civilian workplace
  - Concern for the possibility of post-traumatic stress issues or other mental health issues
  - Concern for combat-related physical disabilities

- Concern for future deployments and length of deployment
- Concern for work lost-time due to VA appointments
  
- ◆ Issues reported by servicemember and veterans
  - Finding and maintaining a job\*\*
  - Not qualified for jobs available (lack of education)
  - Need help with resume and job search
  - Employer not understanding of time off needed for VA appointments
  - Lack of credit for military training or years of experience for state job applications
  - Unfamiliar with Local Veterans Employment Representative program
  - Unfamiliar with Disabled Veterans' Outreach Veterans' program
  - Unfamiliar with VA Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment program
  - Unfamiliar with Veteran's Preference and Veterans Priority of Service program
  - Homelessness or transportation
  - Disability-related issues
  - Lack of employment network or mentors
  
- ◆ Lack of employer familiarity with support services or programs, including
  - Department of Labor resources, e.g., CareerOneStop, DVET
  - Local Veterans Employment Representative program
  - Disabled Veterans' Outreach Veterans' program
  - Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)
  - ESGR (Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve)
  - Veteran's Preference
  - Work Opportunity Tax Credits and similar programs

### **III. Lessons Learned**

As shown in the previous section, viewpoints on employment issues stemming from both the veterans' perspective and the employers' help us to better understand the complexities of preparing returning servicemembers for civilian jobs. In the following section, information is provided as further evidence of employment assistance needed and the ongoing efforts made at both national and state home fronts to serve troops, veterans, and families.

#### **AR National Guard Servicemember Survey Results**

In a summary of 353 members of the Arkansas National Guard between May 15, 2010 and September 14, 2010, the following information regarding "employment" was reported:

- ◆ 90% of the respondents (n=314) were currently employed in a job working 40+ hours (93%), with 7% working part-time or ≤39 hours.
- ◆ 10% of the respondents (n=35) were currently unemployed of which 4 reported not previously working due to a permanent disability.
- ◆ Of the 90% employed, 23% categorized their current or previous employer as a private company, business or individual (including self-employment) entity versus 75% of the

respondents reporting Federal Government (non-military), National Guard, DOD (military), State, and local (county or city) employment.

- ◆ Of those unemployed veterans, the main reason cited for not working in the past 4 weeks was “going to school or job training” (44%), and “unable to find work” (41%).
- ◆ 87 respondents (27%) reported looked for full time work in the past 4 weeks even if currently employed.
- ◆ When asked what services, re: employment, would help their situation 21% identified “help with job search” and 19% cited “help with resume” (n=74).
- ◆ Of the 31 respondents not working, 40% reported “very willing” to move in order to find a job, 31% “somewhat willing” and 29% “not willing”.
- ◆ Although not consistent in response numbers, it remains noteworthy that servicemembers were more likely than not (≥50%) to be unaware of employment assistance programs including Arkansas Job Link, LVER, DVOP, WOTC, Priority Service, Veteran’s Preference, VA Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment, and “other” including Arkansas Adult Education, FTA.

The unemployment rate of servicemembers in this survey remains consistent with the BRFSS (Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System) data of Arkansas veterans (n=3854) from 2005-2009 reporting, “There is no statistical difference between veterans and non-veterans in self-employment, unemployment, homemaker, or student status.” Current unemployment rate in Arkansas is 7.7% (BLS, Sept. 2010).

### **Employer Perspective on Hiring Veterans**

A poll from the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) shows the [greatest challenge military veterans face in the civilian job market](#) is how they translate and describe their military experience. On the hiring side, HR professionals (n=429) are largely unaware of Department of Labor programs that help them to identify military veterans seeking civilian jobs.

Well over half, 60 percent, of HR professionals polled said translating military skills to the civilian job experience is a challenge when it comes to writing resumes, interviewing, and other related job-hunt communications.

Another 48 percent said difficulty transitioning from the structure and hierarchy in the military culture to the civilian workplace presented a hiring challenge. Similarly, 36 percent of respondents said a challenge to hiring is the amount of time it takes military veterans to adapt to civilian workplace culture overall.

The poll, "Employing Military Personnel and Recruiting Veterans—Attitudes and Practices," is part of a SHRM initiative to find solutions to address the high unemployment rate among military veterans.

While the poll shows that 50 percent of organizations that hired veterans made a specific effort to recruit these candidates, greater awareness of military veterans as job candidates overall is needed.

The poll also shows that while 46 percent of HR professionals think post-traumatic stress issues or other mental health issues may present a challenge to hiring, and 22 percent think the same of combat-related physical disabilities, the assumptions are unfounded. Only 13 percent of HR professionals

experienced in working with employees returning to civilian work from active duty reported issues in transitioning them back into the workforce.

## **Current Programs in Place for Veterans**

### **Job Training**

**TAP & DTAP:** Servicemembers approaching separation can take advantage of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) or Disabled Transition Assistance Programs (DTAP), which provides employment and training information as well as a variety of counseling programs. The Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Transportation, and Labor partner to conduct the three-day workshops where servicemembers learn interview skills, tips for job searches, and how to prepare civilian resumes and cover letters. The program has shown some effectiveness; servicemembers who participate in TAP find their first post-military job three weeks faster, according to DOL. Regrettably, utilization of TAP is low.

**CareerOneStop:** With funding from the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Development provides services to Arkansas veterans. Through the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP), and the Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) Program, Workforce Development Offices throughout the State are equipped to assist veterans with their transition from the service to civilian life. The DVOPs specialize in tailored training and job placement opportunities for veterans with service-connected disabilities. LVERs coordinate services provided veterans including counseling, testing, and identifying training and employment opportunities. One-Stop Career Centers offer a wide variety of career-planning and job search resources, including:

- Matching military skills to civilian occupations
- General skills and interests assessments
- Career guidance
- Job search assistance including resume writing and interview skills
- Skills training for high-demand jobs in local communities
- Child care
- Transportation
- Relocation assistance

**Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services (Voc-Rehab):** The Voc-Rehab program offers individual rehabilitation programs for disabled veterans with an emphasis on employment counseling and services, as well as assistance finding a job. For severely disabled veterans, unable to return to work, the program gives them the tools to live as independently as possible. Participants who complete the rehabilitation earn on average six times what they did before the program. Over 110,000 veterans participated in FY2009; double the number of veterans who participated in FY2003. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of veterans who enroll in Voc-Rehab successfully complete the program.



**Private Funding Support and Services:** Wal Mart (Green Jobs) and Microsoft (Elevate America) have both launched initiatives through partnering non-profits to help prepare veterans and their spouses with the skills and resources needed to be successful in today's workplace.

### **Job Protection**

**USERRA:** Although National Guardsmen and Reservists are legally protected under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), many troops still experience employment discrimination because of their military service. Among National Guardsmen and Reservists who have served since September 11, 2001, nearly 11,000 were denied prompt reemployment; more than 22,000 lost seniority and thus pay and other benefits; nearly 20,000 saw their pensions cut; and nearly 11,000 didn't get their health insurance back.

A common reason veterans are not seeking help is the lack of familiarity with USERRA protections and obligations. Twenty-eight percent of reservists report not receiving information on USERRA/reemployment rights during activation or deactivation. More than a third of employers surveyed by Military.com were unaware that USERRA regulations required them to give a returning veteran the same or an equivalent job.

### **Tax Credits**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized a two year tax credit for employers who hire unemployed Iraq and Afghanistan-era veterans. This tax credit of up to \$2,400 per unemployed veteran was created to incentivize employers to hire veterans who were taking the brunt of the unemployment blight.

The unemployed veteran tax credit is accompanied by a permanent tax credit for the hiring of disabled veterans, worth up to \$4,800 per disabled veteran.

Low-income, homeless, or disabled veterans can turn to the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS). The VETS program provides grants to state and local agencies to provide services, such as training, licensing and certification, one-on-one employment counseling, and support services.

### **Federal Hiring: Veterans Preference**

The Federal Government hires three times the percentage of veterans as the private sector and therefore plays a critical role in combating veterans' unemployment. Last November President Obama issued an executive order outlining the Veterans Employment Initiative. This order required enhanced recruitment and promotion of employment opportunities for veteran within the Federal government and established a Council on Veterans Employment. The Federal government has already stood up a website, [www.fedshirevets.gov](http://www.fedshirevets.gov) and released a strategic plan to implement this goal of increasing the number of veterans working in the Federal government.

## **Small Business Help**

Many veterans have chosen self-employment over unemployment by starting their own small business ventures. Veterans represent 14.5% of small business owners nationally. For reservist and veteran business owners looking for technical or financial assistance, support is available through the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition, the SBA has teamed up with the VA and the International Franchise Association to create the Veterans Transition Franchise Initiative, which offers 30 percent off franchising fees for veterans.

## **Other**

Clearly this overview does not address all programs available to veterans; however, we would be remiss to omit several other veterans' jobs programs that exist such as [www.vetsuccess.gov](http://www.vetsuccess.gov), [www.warriorgateway.org](http://www.warriorgateway.org), and Helmets to Hardhats. The VA developed the [vetsuccess.gov](http://vetsuccess.gov) website for veterans and more specifically disabled veterans. Warrior Gateway was created by the Business Executives for National Security at the request of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen to assist OIF and OEF veterans navigate the government agencies and non-profits serving veterans. Helmets to Hardhats is a Department of Defense funded initiative to place separating servicemembers in skilled labor positions.

Specific to Arkansas, [ArkansasVeteran.com](http://ArkansasVeteran.com) is a portal to bring together in one place veterans-related resources, news, information, and agency contacts for active-duty, Reserve, Guard, and retired Arkansas veterans and their families.

On Capitol Hill, efforts by Representatives Walz (MN-1) and Boozman (AR-3) and Senators Baucus and Grassley, have recently introduced bipartisan legislation to incentivize employers to hire veterans. And Senator Murray and Representative Adam Smith (WA-9) have introduced a comprehensive veterans' employment bill.

## **IV. Recommendations**

When asked what tools and resources "would help a lot" the civilian HR effort to recruit and hire military veterans, three key solutions emerged from the SHRM poll:

- ◆ 39 percent of HR professionals said programs to train veterans with additional skills for the civilian workplace
- ◆ Nearly one in four, or 36 percent, said programs to help veterans transition their existing skills to the civilian workplace
- ◆ 32 percent said assistance in identifying and reaching out to qualified veterans would help them to recruit and hire military veterans.

This key employer insight along with research and survey feedback presented over the past year to the Yellow Ribbon Task Force, mirrors both national and state attitudes on hiring practices, as well as, the need for additional services, programs and actions in support of veterans gaining and maintaining civilian employment. The Employment and Education Committee submits the following recommendations as considerations for meeting gaps in services for veterans and employer support of veterans in Arkansas.

**For Veterans:**

**Recommendation 1)** The committee recommends that veteran job readiness programs be enhanced to specifically address employer concerns for veterans transitioning to civilian employment. As indicated and with further research, the program would include, training up the veterans ability to 1) meet employer workplace expectations, 2) translate and communicate clearly military to civilian skills, and 3) provide “safe practice” opportunities to communicate military experience in an interview setting. The job readiness program could be provided as a combination web-based and hands-on training option utilizing ArkansasVeteran.com and program facilitators within the Department of Workforce Services, VA service arms, and/or local non-profits supporting veteran services. Follow up resume and job search support would be included. Given the critical nature of this need and the economic climate, extending these services to veteran spouses is also a consideration.

- LVERs and DVOPs could be instrumental in both reaching veterans with employer-focused training but also serve as employer liaisons of state and federal employment assistance programs.

**Recommendation 2)** In view of employer concerns regarding transition from military to civilian employment, the committee recommends expanding on current veteran OJT options to create a school-to-work or military-to-work internship program model that networks veterans with employers to promote workplace readiness skills practice, and to help build the relationships needed to dispel employer worries of potential PTSD or mental health issues. Both DWS and campus organizations are positioned to establish service partnerships that ensure veterans are provided the opportunity to successfully intern in community business settings.

**Recommendation 3)** To better understand what it takes to help vets stay in their jobs, the committee is recommending that a process be designed to track a random number of veterans for up to 2 years after they have landed a job. The objective is to provide motivation, information, support and intervention to overcome obstacles that could result in loss of employment and personal stability. A random sample of veterans supported by various agency programs, including but not limited to, Voc-Rehab & Employment (disabled veterans), HVRP (homeless veterans), Post 9/11 GI Bill (college-bound veterans), Women veterans, CareerOneStop sites (community DWS), would provide the feedback needed for review of current practices, as well as, recommendations for improvement from program beneficiaries.

**Recommendation 4)** In view of State Veterans Preference, the committee recommends that the existing statute be clarified as it applies to all state jobs irrespective of the merit system. Options could include, 1) a statement to that effect from the Attorney General, and 2) provide a 'Direct Hiring Authority' section in an update to the current law (modeled on Federal practices). The Governor could re-issue the Executive Order from Governor Clinton to provide for an annual proclamation to celebrate veterans in state government, as well as, commit to making the Appeal Board viable and visible (given this would be very time consuming because it is chaired by Dept Heads and has only been used once that state legal staff knows of going back over a decade). Within state government, each Agency should then be able to demonstrate to the Governor compliance with the statute. This entails:

- Knowing how many veterans work in each Agency
- Monitoring over time the hiring process
- Require an Affirmative Action Plan for each Agency to monitor, i.e. Federal Govt.
- Emphasize to OPM the importance of making veterans visible within AASIS
- Make the results transparent within/out state government

**Recommendation 5)** Re-evaluate State Employment Qualifications for veterans to recognize the transferability of formal military training and/or years of experience. Other states are already doing this particularly for the trade skills and police by identifying a state-wide standard to evaluate veterans that equates to credit for experience or lack of a formal academic credential.

**Recommendation 6)** Change the State Employment Benefit (HR 1254) which reads "AN ACT CONCERNING LEAVES OF ABSENCE FOR TREATMENT OF MILITARY SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES" to allow treatment at other than VA facilities:

- Military retirees in state government have the option of using the VA or TRICARE for medical treatment
- However, most use TRICARE and therefore do not get the leave benefit
- Additionally, allowing treatment anywhere for a service connected disability will free up much needed VA appointment and hospital space/time.

#### **For Employers:**

**Recommendation 1)** It was reported in the September issue of "Workforce Readiness in Arkansas" that SHRM has signed a formal agreement with the ESGR to support the men and women who have served in the National Guard and Reserve. The agreement says that they will pledge support to help the mission of the ESGR: that is, to help these men and women return to their job or find a new job as they return from their military duty. The committee recommends that a formal strategy is put in place to ensure both employers and veterans that workforce reintegration training needs continue to be reviewed and supported by the state.

## V. Strategy

Given the opportunity to improve employment support to veterans and families within the existing structures this committee has reviewed, each recommendation made above identifies a roadmap for initial development and implementation to the best of our knowledge. Thus, it is our recommendation that the best strategy moving forward as services are adopted and/or funded is for one person to be identified and made responsible for overseeing follow up of issues/needs in order to prevent bottlenecks in service delivery and effectiveness. Every effort must be made to ensure this person to have open and direct communication with state agency directors, as needed, to provide relevant and timely feedback to all stakeholders. Worst case scenario is for the work done up to this point by the committee to be marginalized or ignored.

## VI. Conclusion

Employment is the bedrock of personal and family self-sufficiency. In today's labor market, the private sector is struggling with high unemployment, as more and more companies are shedding jobs instead of hiring. While unemployment fell to 9.7 percent in February, many veterans remain unemployed.

The military offers high-quality talent pools with excellent potential for public and private organizations, including military spouses, military reservists, veterans and active military personnel transitioning to the civilian sector. But it's not always easy for this valuable group of employees to find civilian work. Past barriers have ranged from the lack of an effective process for connecting veterans to employment that suited their skills, to getting veterans the right information about open positions in the public sector.

About 20,000 people leave the military on average every month, while more than 300,000 military spouses relocate each year, with many seeking employment options in their new locations. It's estimated that about 38 percent of military personnel who separate from the services each year will need a credential -- whether a license or certificate, issued by a third party -- to qualify their military training before working in civilian jobs.

According to the [Partnership for Public Service](#), opportunity abounds in the public sector, which is looking to hire veterans to fill many jobs -- totaling almost 300,000 new employees in the near future -- to offset an impending talent shortage when baby boomers retire. The government hopes to engage veterans to take over most of these positions, since former service members have the ideal skill sets to replace federal workers. Just a few categories of the expected job openings include:

- **Medical / public health:** [Doctors](#), [nurses](#), [nursing assistants](#), [pharmacists](#) and other wellness professionals.
- **Security / protection:** [Police officers](#), [transportation officers](#), border patrol agents and [customs](#) officers.
- **Compliance / enforcement:** [Attorneys](#), [paralegals](#) and [administrative](#) and [program management](#) professionals.

- **Financial:** [Accountants](#), [tax examiners](#), [auditors](#), [budget](#) and [financial analysts](#).
- **Various agencies:** [Engineers](#), [information technology](#) and [biological science experts](#), as well as [human resource](#) professionals across various federal agencies.

Studies also estimate that during Obama's term, new hiring for all types of federal government positions will reach nearly 600,000 employees -- almost one-third of the current work force.

Military installations are spread across the United States, with 77 percent of personnel located in 13 states.

One of our primary goals as the sub-committee on employment is to do everything possible to ensure that our returning servicemembers can retain suitable employment wherever he/she chooses to live in Arkansas. A strong commitment must be made to veterans of the armed services that Arkansas will address employment needs, and then provide the appropriate services to ensure that this commitment is honored.

In other words, what most employers are not successful at is effectively recruiting, hiring and promoting veterans as a whole, particularly following mission deployments abroad. Historically, this is because there has not been a well-established and coordinated plan to meet this objective. The key to our success is information and ensuring citizens who have tirelessly and selflessly devoted service to their country don't go unnoticed. It would be a shame on us as leaders if we forget about our veterans when they come home after the suffering they encounter in war.

## Report of the Employment and Education Subcommittee Employment Section

### I. Executive Summary: Employment Outlook for Veterans

America's newest veterans face serious employment challenges. The process of returning to civilian life is complicated by the most severe economic recession in decades. Furthermore, many Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, leaving the active-duty military, find civilian employers who do not understand the value of their skills and military experience. As a result, unemployment rates for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are staggering. Additionally, the National Guardsmen and Reservists who leave behind their civilian lives to serve alongside active-duty troops, are inadequately protected against job discrimination. The experience of previous generations of veterans who faced similar situations suggest that today's veterans may continue to struggle for years to come.

In keeping with our efforts on the academic front, the Employment and Education Committee took steps to review the employment outlook for veterans to once again identify and better understand the issues, challenges, difficulties and barriers of securing jobs. In Arkansas and nationally, many of the unemployed are members of the National Guard and reserves who have deployed multiple times. The national 21.1 percent unemployment rate is well above the 16.6 percent jobless rate for non-veterans of the same ages, 18 to 24. Unemployment rates for new Iraq and Afghanistan-era veterans for the first six months of 2010 averaged 12.5 percent, up from 10.2 the previous year reflecting the tough transition home from war. This report focused on the barriers faced by servicemembers seeking to return to prior employment or seeking new employment, with the goal of identifying policies, procedures, and best practices which will allow servicemembers to improve their quality of life by successfully reintegrating into the civilian workforce.

### II. Issues Facing Troops, Veterans, and Families

Issues facing returning Arkansas servicemembers and their families include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ◆ Current national and state economic climate
  - Number of jobs available
  - Types of jobs available
  - Types and numbers of future jobs available
  - USERRA issues or jobs no longer existing
  
- ◆ Employer attitudes impacting hiring veterans\*
  - Failure of veterans to translate military skills to the civilian job experience such as writing resumes and interviewing
  - Concerned for difficulty transitioning from the structure and hierarchy in the military culture to the civilian workplace
  - Concern for the possibility of post-traumatic stress issues or other mental health issues
  - Concern for combat-related physical disabilities
  - Concern for future deployments and length of deployment

\*Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) poll, "Employing Military Personnel and Recruiting Veterans—Attitudes and Practices" released June, 2010

\*\*Summary of VA Data on OEF/OIF Mental Health Problems (2002-2009); third most reported problem (n=1,094,501)

- Concern for work lost-time due to VA appointments
- ◆ Issues reported by servicemember and veterans
  - Finding and maintaining a job\*\*
  - Not qualified for jobs available (lack of education)
  - Need help with resume and job search
  - Employer not understanding of time off needed for VA appointments
  - Lack of credit for military training or years of experience for state job applications
  - Unfamiliar with Local Veterans Employment Representative program
  - Unfamiliar with Disabled Veterans' Outreach Veterans' program
  - Unfamiliar with VA Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment program
  - Unfamiliar with Veteran's Preference and Veterans Priority of Service program
  - Homelessness or transportation
  - Disability-related issues
  - Lack of employment network or mentors
- ◆ Lack of employer familiarity with support services or programs, including
  - Department of Labor resources, e.g., CareerOneStop, DVET
  - Local Veterans Employment Representative program
  - Disabled Veterans' Outreach Veterans' program
  - Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA)
  - ESGR (Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve)
  - Veteran's Preference
  - Work Opportunity Tax Credits and similar programs

### III. Lessons Learned

As shown in the previous section, viewpoints on employment issues stemming from both the veterans' perspective and the employers' help us to better understand the complexities of preparing returning servicemembers for civilian jobs. In the following section, information is provided as further evidence of employment assistance needed and the ongoing efforts made at both national and state home fronts to serve troops, veterans, and families.

#### AR National Guard Servicemember Survey Results

In a summary of 353 members of the Arkansas National Guard between May 15, 2010 and September 14, 2010, the following information regarding "employment" was reported:

- ◆ 90% of the respondents (n=314) were currently employed in a job working 40+ hours (93%), with 7% working part-time or ≤39 hours.
- ◆ 10% of the respondents (n=35) were currently unemployed of which 4 reported not previously working due to a permanent disability.
- ◆ Of the 90% employed, 23% categorized their current or previous employer as a private company, business or individual (including self-employment) entity versus 75% of the respondents reporting Federal Government (non-military), National Guard, DOD (military), State, and local (county or city) employment.

\*Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) poll, "Employing Military Personnel and Recruiting Veterans—Attitudes and Practices" released June, 2010

\*\*Summary of VA Data on OEF/OIF Mental Health Problems (2002-2009); third most reported problem (n=1,094,501)



- ◆ Of those unemployed veterans, the main reason cited for not working in the past 4 weeks was “going to school or job training” (44%), and “unable to find work” (41%).
- ◆ 87 respondents (27%) reported looked for full time work in the past 4 weeks even if currently employed.
- ◆ When asked what services, re: employment, would help their situation 21% identified “help with job search” and 19% cited “help with resume” (n=74).
- ◆ Of the 31 respondents not working, 40% reported “very willing” to move in order to find a job, 31% “somewhat willing” and 29% “not willing”.
- ◆ Although not consistent in response numbers, it remains noteworthy that servicemembers were more likely than not (≥50%) to be unaware of employment assistance programs including Arkansas Job Link, LVER, DVOP, WOTC, Priority Service, Veteran’s Preference, VA Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment, and “other” including Arkansas Adult Education, FTA.

The unemployment rate of servicemembers in this survey remains consistent with the BRFSS (Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System) data of Arkansas veterans (n=3854) from 2005-2009 reporting, “There is no statistical difference between veterans and non-veterans in self-employment, unemployment, homemaker, or student status.” Current unemployment rate in Arkansas is 7.7% (BLS, Sept. 2010).

### **Employer Perspective on Hiring Veterans**

A poll from the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) shows the greatest challenge military veterans face in the civilian job market is how they translate and describe their military experience. On the hiring side, HR professionals (n=429) are largely unaware of Department of Labor programs that help them to identify military veterans seeking civilian jobs.

Well over half, 60 percent, of HR professionals polled said translating military skills to the civilian job experience is a challenge when it comes to writing resumes, interviewing, and other related job-hunt communications.

Another 48 percent said difficulty transitioning from the structure and hierarchy in the military culture to the civilian workplace presented a hiring challenge. Similarly, 36 percent of respondents said a challenge to hiring is the amount of time it takes military veterans to adapt to civilian workplace culture overall.

The poll, "Employing Military Personnel and Recruiting Veterans—Attitudes and Practices," is part of a SHRM initiative to find solutions to address the high unemployment rate among military veterans.

While the poll shows that 50 percent of organizations that hired veterans made a specific effort to recruit these candidates, greater awareness of military veterans as job candidates overall is needed.

The poll also shows that while 46 percent of HR professionals think post-traumatic stress issues or other mental health issues may present a challenge to hiring, and 22 percent think the same of combat-related physical disabilities, the assumptions are unfounded. Only 13 percent of HR

\*Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) poll, "Employing Military Personnel and Recruiting Veterans—Attitudes and Practices" released June, 2010

\*\*Summary of VA Data on OEF/OIF Mental Health Problems (2002-2009); third most reported problem (n=1,094,501)

professionals experienced in working with employees returning to civilian work from active duty reported issues in transitioning them back into the workforce.

## **Current Programs in Place for Veterans**

### **Job Training**

**TAP & DTAP:** Servicemembers approaching separation can take advantage of the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) or Disabled Transition Assistance Programs (DTAP), which provides employment and training information as well as a variety of counseling programs. The Departments of Defense, Veterans Affairs, Transportation, and Labor partner to conduct the three-day workshops where servicemembers learn interview skills, tips for job searches, and how to prepare civilian resumes and cover letters. The program has shown some effectiveness; servicemembers who participate in TAP find their first post-military job three weeks faster, according to DOL. Regrettably, utilization of TAP is low.

**CareerOneStop:** With funding from the U.S. Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service, the Arkansas Department of Workforce Development provides services to Arkansas veterans. Through the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP), and the Local Veterans' Employment Representative (LVER) Program, Workforce Development Offices throughout the State are equipped to assist veterans with their transition from the service to civilian life. The DVOPs specialize in tailored training and job placement opportunities for veterans with service-connected disabilities. LVERs coordinate services provided veterans including counseling, testing, and identifying training and employment opportunities. One-Stop Career Centers offer a wide variety of career-planning and job search resources, including:

- Matching military skills to civilian occupations
- General skills and interests assessments
- Career guidance
- Job search assistance including resume writing and interview skills
- Skills training for high-demand jobs in local communities
- Child care
- Transportation
- Relocation assistance

**Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Services (Voc-Rehab):** The Voc-Rehab program offers individual rehabilitation programs for disabled veterans with an emphasis on employment counseling and services, as well as assistance finding a job. For severely disabled veterans, unable to return to work, the program gives them the tools to live as independently as possible. Participants who complete the rehabilitation earn on average six times what they did before the program. Over 110,000 veterans participated in FY2009; double the number of veterans who participated in FY2003. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of veterans who enroll in Voc-Rehab successfully complete the program.

\*Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) poll, "Employing Military Personnel and Recruiting Veterans—Attitudes and Practices" released June, 2010

\*\*Summary of VA Data on OEF/OIF Mental Health Problems (2002-2009); third most reported problem (n=1,094,501)

**Private Funding Support and Services:** Wal Mart (Green Jobs) and Microsoft (Elevate America) have both launched initiatives through partnering non-profits to help prepare veterans and their spouses with the skills and resources needed to be successful in today's workplace.

### **Job Protection**

**USERRA:** Although National Guardsmen and Reservists are legally protected under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), many troops still experience employment discrimination because of their military service. Among National Guardsmen and Reservists who have served since September 11, 2001, nearly 11,000 were denied prompt reemployment; more than 22,000 lost seniority and thus pay and other benefits; nearly 20,000 saw their pensions cut; and nearly 11,000 didn't get their health insurance back.

A common reason veterans are not seeking help is the lack of familiarity with USERRA protections and obligations. Twenty-eight percent of reservists report not receiving information on USERRA/reemployment rights during activation or deactivation. More than a third of employers surveyed by Military.com were unaware that USERRA regulations required them to give a returning veteran the same or an equivalent job.

### **Tax Credits**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act authorized a two year tax credit for employers who hire unemployed Iraq and Afghanistan-era veterans. This tax credit of up to \$2,400 per unemployed veteran was created to incentivize employers to hire veterans who were taking the brunt of the unemployment blight.

The unemployed veteran tax credit is accompanied by a permanent tax credit for the hiring of disabled veterans, worth up to \$4,800 per disabled veteran.

Low-income, homeless, or disabled veterans can turn to the Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS). The VETS program provides grants to state and local agencies to provide services, such as training, licensing and certification, one-on-one employment counseling, and support services.

### **Federal Hiring: Veterans Preference**

The Federal Government hires three times the percentage of veterans as the private sector and therefore plays a critical role in combating veterans' unemployment. Last November President Obama issued an executive order outlining the Veterans Employment Initiative. This order required enhanced recruitment and promotion of employment opportunities for veteran within the Federal government and established a Council on Veterans Employment. The Federal

\*Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) poll, "Employing Military Personnel and Recruiting Veterans—Attitudes and Practices" released June, 2010

\*\*Summary of VA Data on OEF/OIF Mental Health Problems (2002-2009); third most reported problem (n=1,094,501)

government has already stood up a website, [www.fedshirevets.gov](http://www.fedshirevets.gov) and released a strategic plan to implement this goal of increasing the number of veterans working in the Federal government.

### **Small Business Help**

Many veterans have chosen self-employment over unemployment by starting their own small business ventures. Veterans represent 14.5% of small business owners nationally. For reservist and veteran business owners looking for technical or financial assistance, support is available through the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition, the SBA has teamed up with the VA and the International Franchise Association to create the Veterans Transition Franchise Initiative, which offers 30 percent off franchising fees for veterans.

### **Other**

Clearly this overview does not address all programs available to veterans; however, we would be remiss to omit several other veterans' jobs programs that exist such as [www.vetsuccess.gov](http://www.vetsuccess.gov), [www.warriorgateway.org](http://www.warriorgateway.org), and Helmets to Hardhats. The VA developed the [vetsuccess.gov](http://vetsuccess.gov) website for veterans and more specifically disabled veterans. Warrior Gateway was created by the Business Executives for National Security at the request of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen to assist OIF and OEF veterans navigate the government agencies and non-profits serving veterans. Helmets to Hardhats is a Department of Defense funded initiative to place separating servicemembers in skilled labor positions.

Specific to Arkansas, [ArkansasVeteran.com](http://ArkansasVeteran.com) is a portal to bring together in one place veterans-related resources, news, information, and agency contacts for active-duty, Reserve, Guard, and retired Arkansas veterans and their families.

On Capitol Hill, efforts by Representatives Walz (MN-1) and Boozman (AR-3) and Senators Baucus and Grassley, have recently introduced bipartisan legislation to incentivize employers to hire veterans. And Senator Murray and Representative Adam Smith (WA-9) have introduced a comprehensive veterans' employment bill.

## **IV. Recommendations**

When asked what tools and resources "would help a lot" the civilian HR effort to recruit and hire military veterans, three key solutions emerged from the SHRM poll:

- ◆ 39 percent of HR professionals said programs to train veterans with additional skills for the civilian workplace

\*Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) poll, "Employing Military Personnel and Recruiting Veterans—Attitudes and Practices" released June, 2010

\*\*Summary of VA Data on OEF/OIF Mental Health Problems (2002-2009); third most reported problem (n=1,094,501)

- ◆ Nearly one in four, or 36 percent, said programs to help veterans transition their existing skills to the civilian workplace
- ◆ 32 percent said assistance in identifying and reaching out to qualified veterans would help them to recruit and hire military veterans.

This key employer insight along with research and survey feedback presented over the past year to the Yellow Ribbon Task Force, mirrors both national and state attitudes on hiring practices, as well as, the need for additional services, programs and actions in support of veterans gaining and maintaining civilian employment. The Employment and Education Committee submits the following recommendations as considerations for meeting gaps in services for veterans and employer support of veterans in Arkansas.

#### **For Veterans:**

**Recommendation 1)** The committee recommends that a veteran job readiness program be created that specifically addresses employer concerns for veterans transitioning to civilian employment. As indicated and with further research, the program would include, training up the veterans ability to 1) meet employer workplace expectations, 2) translate and communicate clearly military to civilian skills, and 3) provide “safe practice” opportunities to communicate military experience in an interview setting. The job readiness program could be provided as a combination web-based and hands-on training option utilizing ArkansasVeteran.com and program facilitators within the Department of Workforce Services, VA service arms, and/or local non-profits supporting veteran services. Follow up resume and job search support would be included. Given the critical nature of this need and the economic climate, extending these services to veteran spouses is also a consideration.

- LVERs and DVOPs could be instrumental in both reaching veterans with employer-focused training but also serve as employer liaisons of state and federal employment assistance programs.

**Recommendation 2)** In view of employer concerns regarding transition from military to civilian employment, the committee recommends expanding on current veteran OJT options to create a school-to-work or military-to-work internship program model that networks veterans with employers to promote workplace readiness skills practice, and to help build the relationships needed to dispel employer worries of potential PTSD or mental health issues. Both DWS and campus organizations are positioned to establish service partnerships that ensure veterans are provided the opportunity to successfully intern in community business settings.

**Recommendation 3)** To better understand what it takes to help vets stay in their jobs, the committee is recommending that a process be designed to track veterans for up to 2 years after they have landed a job. The objective is to provide motivation, information, support and

\*Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) poll, "Employing Military Personnel and Recruiting Veterans—Attitudes and Practices" released June, 2010

\*\*Summary of VA Data on OEF/OIF Mental Health Problems (2002-2009); third most reported problem (n=1,094,501)

intervention to overcome obstacles that could result in loss of employment and personal stability. A random sample of veterans supported by various agency programs, including but not limited to, Voc-Rehab & Employment (disabled veterans), HVRP (homeless veterans), Post 9/11 GI Bill (college-bound veterans), Women veterans, CareerOneStop sites (community DWS), would provide the feedback needed for review of current practices, as well as, recommendations for improvement from program beneficiaries.

**Recommendation 4)** In view of State Veterans Preference, the committee recommends that the existing statute be clarified as it applies to all state jobs irrespective of the merit system. Options could include, 1) a statement to that effect from the Attorney General, and 2) provide a 'Direct Hiring Authority' section in an update to the current law (modeled on Federal practices). The Governor could re-issue the Executive Order from Governor Clinton to provide for an annual proclamation to celebrate veterans in state government, as well as, commit to making the Appeal Board viable and visible (given this would be very time consuming because it is chaired by Dept Heads and has only been used once that state legal staff knows of going back over a decade). Within state government, each Agency should then be able to demonstrate to the Governor compliance with the statute. This entails:

- o Knowing how many veterans work in each Agency
- o Monitoring over time the hiring process
- o Require an Affirmative Action Plan for each Agency to monitor, i.e. Federal Govt.
- o Emphasize to OPM the importance of making veterans visible within AASIS
- o Make the results transparent within/out state government

**Recommendation 5)** Re-evaluate State Employment Qualifications for veterans to recognize the transferability of formal military training and/or years of experience. Other states are already doing this particularly for the trade skills and police by identifying a state-wide standard to evaluate veterans that equates to credit for experience or lack of a formal academic credential.

**Recommendation 6)** Change the State Employment Benefit (HR 1254) which reads "AN ACT CONCERNING LEAVES OF ABSENCE FOR TREATMENT OF MILITARY SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITIES" to allow treatment at other than VA facilities:

- o Military retirees in state government have the option of using the VA or TRICARE for medical treatment
- o However, most use TRICARE and therefore do not get the leave benefit
- o Additionally, allowing treatment anywhere for a service connected disability will free up much needed VA appointment and hospital space/time.

#### **For Employers:**

**Recommendation 1)** It was reported in the September issue of "Workforce Readiness in Arkansas" that SHRM has signed a formal agreement with the ESGR to support the men and women who have served in the National Guard and Reserve. The agreement says that they will

\*Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) poll, "Employing Military Personnel and Recruiting Veterans—Attitudes and Practices" released June, 2010

\*\*Summary of VA Data on OEF/OIF Mental Health Problems (2002-2009); third most reported problem (n=1,094,501)

pledge support to help the mission of the ESGR: that is, to help these men and women return to their job or find a new job as they return from their military duty. The committee recommends that a formal strategy is put in place to ensure both employers and veterans that workforce reintegration training needs continue to be reviewed and supported by the state.

## **V. Strategy**

Given the opportunity to improve employment support to veterans and families within the existing structures this committee has reviewed, each recommendation made above identifies a roadmap for initial development and implementation to the best of our knowledge. Thus, it is our recommendation that the best strategy moving forward as services are adopted and/or funded is for one person to be identified and made responsible for overseeing follow up of issues/needs in order to prevent bottlenecks in service delivery and effectiveness. Every effort must be made to ensure this person to have open and direct communication with state agency directors, as needed, to provide relevant and timely feedback to all stakeholders. Worst case scenario is for the work done up to this point by the committee to be marginalized or ignored.

## **VI. Conclusion**

Employment is the bedrock of personal and family self-sufficiency. In today's labor market, the private sector is struggling with high unemployment, as more and more companies are shedding jobs instead of hiring. While unemployment fell to 9.7 percent in February, many veterans remain unemployed.

The military offers high-quality talent pools with excellent potential for public and private organizations, including military spouses, military reservists, veterans and active military personnel transitioning to the civilian sector. But it's not always easy for this valuable group of employees to find civilian work. Past barriers have ranged from the lack of an effective process for connecting veterans to employment that suited their skills, to getting veterans the right information about open positions in the public sector.

About 20,000 people leave the military on average every month, while more than 300,000 military spouses relocate each year, with many seeking employment options in their new locations. It's estimated that about 38 percent of military personnel who separate from the services each year will need a credential -- whether a license or certificate, issued by a third party -- to qualify their military training before working in civilian jobs.

According to the Partnership for Public Service, opportunity abounds in the public sector, which is looking to hire veterans to fill many jobs -- totaling almost 300,000 new employees in the near future -- to offset an impending talent shortage when baby boomers retire. The government hopes to engage veterans to take over most of these positions, since former service members have the ideal skill sets to replace federal workers. Just a few categories of the expected job openings include:

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\*\*Summary of VA Data on OEF/OIF Mental Health Problems (2002-2009); third most reported problem (n=1,094,501)

- **Medical / public health:** Doctors, nurses, nursing assistants, pharmacists and other wellness professionals.
- **Security / protection:** Police officers, transportation officers, border patrol agents and customs officers.
- **Compliance / enforcement:** Attorneys, paralegals and administrative and program management professionals.
- **Financial:** Accountants, tax examiners, auditors, budget and financial analysts.
- **Various agencies:** Engineers, information technology and biological science experts, as well as human resource professionals across various federal agencies.

Studies also estimate that during Obama's term, new hiring for all types of federal government positions will reach nearly 600,000 employees -- almost one-third of the current work force. Military installations are spread across the United States, with 77 percent of personnel located in 13 states.

One of our primary goals as the sub-committee on employment is to do everything possible to ensure that our returning servicemembers can retain suitable employment wherever he/she chooses to live in Arkansas. A strong commitment must be made to veterans of the armed services that Arkansas will address employment needs, and then provide the appropriate services to ensure that this commitment is honored.

In other words, what most employers are not successful at is effectively recruiting, hiring and promoting veterans as a whole, particularly following mission deployments abroad. Historically, this is because there has not been a well-established and coordinated plan to meet this objective. The key to our success is information and ensuring citizens who have tirelessly and selflessly devoted service to their country don't go unnoticed. It would be a shame on us as leaders if we forget about our veterans when they come home after the suffering they encounter in war.

\*Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) poll, "Employing Military Personnel and Recruiting Veterans—Attitudes and Practices" released June, 2010

\*\*Summary of VA Data on OEF/OIF Mental Health Problems (2002-2009); third most reported problem (n=1,094,501)



## YRTF Committee Report

### Housing Committee

- I. Primary resources for **veteran housing assistance in Arkansas** – purchasing, finance, credit counseling, loan information, rental and foreclosure information can be found at:

**Arkansas Development Finance Authority** (Oct. 8, 2008):

<http://www.arkansas.gov/adfa/> Program for first-time homebuyers with 28 partners across Arkansas (non-profits) that do counseling: first-time homebuyer, credit (repair – get ready to purchase), pre-purchase, financial and now foreclosure. – have access to these across the state – also on site: <http://www.arkansas.gov/adfa/> first-time home buyer with VA – offer first mortgage at 100% funding and also has 2 types down-payment assistance with closing costs and prepays. Veteran can get into home virtually no out-of pocket expense. Recent legislation exempts vet from some requirements for first-time homebuyers.

*See Sources for list of ADFA programs and links.*

- II. **Homeless veteran** resources, programs and assistance:

**Arkansas Department of Veterans Affairs – Homeless Veteran Resources**

<http://www.veterans.arkansas.gov/homeless.html>

The VA offers special programs and initiatives specifically designed to help homeless veterans live as independently as possible. VA's treatment programs offer:

- i. outreach to veterans living on streets and in shelters
- ii. clinical assessment and referral to medical treatment
- iii. domiciliary care, case management, and rehabilitation
- iv. employment and income assistance
- v. supported permanent housing

*See Sources for list of ADVA programs and links.*

- III. VA Loan Guaranty Service

**United States Department of Veterans Affairs**

<http://www.benefits.va.gov/homeloans/veteran.asp>

The VA Loan Guaranty Service is the organization within the Veterans Benefits Administration charged with the responsibility of administering the home loan program.

*See Sources for list of ADFA programs and links.*

## **Legislative & Benefits Subcommittee**

### **Summary:**

The committee focused on developing strategies to communicate information regarding the federal and state benefits available to veterans of all wars. Briefings on benefits included updates on the new Post-9/11 GI Bill and other benefits available to veterans in Arkansas.

During the 2009 legislative session, the committee focused on drafting and supporting legislation to improve benefits for Arkansas veterans, to include: obtaining retirement system benefit parity; providing consistency for veterans between state and federal law; addressing issues facing elected officials who are members of the Arkansas National Guard; addressing issues regarding military leave for teachers and school administrators; making needed changes to the Arkansas National Guard Tuition Incentive Program; redesigning the special license plates issued to honor military service and veterans; and adding the Gold Star Family special license plates for spouses or parents of members of the armed forces killed in a conflict; and proposing to increase the Arkansas military tax exemption from \$6,000 to \$10,000.

Plans are currently being made to expand on these efforts in the next legislative session by supporting passage of those bills that did not pass in 2009, as well as drafting other legislation that has been identified by the YRTF as essential for assisting Arkansas veterans.

Arkansas has over 18,000 women veterans in the state, many of who do not identify themselves as veterans, which is a big issue. The first Women Veterans Summit was held this year to try to overcome this and provide better understanding to our women veterans.

### **Issues:**

1. Providing easily accessible information regarding the federal and state benefits available to veterans continues to be a challenge, particularly for those in the rural areas of the state.
2. Collaborating with the state and federal veterans affairs departments is ongoing, but the network must be widened.
3. Assisting with the coordination of a legislative package for the 2011 Regular Session of the Arkansas General Assembly, which the YRTF has approved.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Continue to broaden the network and communication among veteran service providers.
2. Hold an annual women veterans summit in each quadrant of the state and schedule the summit to coincide with Women's History Month.
3. Address the following legislative issues during the 2011 Regular Session:
  - A. Veterans Court: Clarify the authority of a court to consider a defendant's current or prior military service and any related mental health issues for presentencing investigations and reports so that courts have adequate information to make sentencing decisions. [Draft Attached]

B. License Plates: Authorize the Office of Motor Vehicle to redesign and simplify the special license plates for retired members of the armed forces in conformity with the legislation passed in the 2009 Regular Session. [Draft Attached]

C. Military Leaves of Absence: Address issues relating to leaves of absence and reemployment of military personnel called to active duty. [Draft Attached]

D. Retirement Pay Tax Exemption: Phase-in a limited military retirement income tax exemption. [Draft Attached]

E. Explore legislative options and assist the Education Subcommittee with obtaining funding, specifically, appropriations from the General Assembly, if needed, so that a coordinator of veterans services/resources is at each institution of higher education in the state.

F. Explore legislative options and assist the Employment Subcommittee with the employment of veterans by state agencies by examining the need for greater accountability and compliance with state laws on the hiring and promotion of veterans.

G. Explore legislative options and assist the Employment Subcommittee with helping veteran-owned businesses by continuing to work with the Office of Procurement on whether changes can be made to allow for some type of veterans' preference in awarding state contracts.

F. Explore legislative options to have parity among all of the state retirement systems to allow members of active military service, the National Guard, and the Reserve components to buy up to five (5) years of time in each of the state retirement systems.

**Strategy:**

Every information medium, paper and electronic, needs to be used to get the word out to veterans regarding their benefits. Stronger networks incorporating the local, state, and federal resources are needed to reach the diverse population of the 260,000 veterans residing in Arkansas. Support from legislators and the Governor will be necessary for the legislative proposals.

# SUMMARY OF ALL MILITARY AND VETERANS LEGISLATION FROM THE 2009 REGULAR SESSION

## MILITARY CODE

### ***Sexual Misconduct And Sexual Harassment Offenses***

Act 207 (HB1374) - The act amends the Military Code of Arkansas to make sexual misconduct and sexual harassment offenses punishable by court martial.

## MILITARY HONORS

Act 30 (HB1129) - The act requires the lowering of state flags on public buildings to honor and pay tribute to a member of the armed services who is killed in action.

## MILITARY LEAVE

### ***Teachers And Administrators***

Act 944 (HB2004) - The act eliminates the requirement that members of the National Guard or Reserve who are teachers or school administrators pay for the cost of a substitute employee when the member is on military leave.

## NATIONAL GUARD TUITION INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Act 214 (SB268) - The act amends the Arkansas National Guard tuition incentive program by increasing the annual tuition incentive award to up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000) per eligible service member payable at two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500) per semester. The act became effective on February 23, 2009.

## ORGANIZED MILITIA, ROLE IN EMERGENCIES OR DISASTERS

Act 232 (HB1376) - The act clarifies the Governor's power to order the organized militia into active service for the purpose of working with state agencies in the planning and training for emergencies or disasters and to respond to emergencies or disasters.

## SPECIAL LICENSE PLATES

### ***Cold War Veterans***

Act 651 (SB3) - The act authorizes the issuance of a special license plate for Cold War veterans.

### ***Gold Star Family Special License Plates - YELLOW RIBBON TASK FORCE***

Act 685 (HB1842) - The act allows the Department of Finance and Administration to issue Gold Star Family special license plates to spouses or parents of members of the armed forces killed in a conflict.

### ***Redesign Of Plates Issued To Honor Military Service And Veterans - YELLOW RIBBON TASK FORCE***

Act 784 (HB1845) - The act allows the Department of Finance and Administration to redesign and simplify the special license plates issued to honor military service and veterans.

### ***Retired Members Of The Armed Forces***

Act 632 (HB1843) - The act amends the Special License Plate Act of 2005 to allow retired members of the armed forces of the United States to obtain special license plates for nominal fees.

**2011 PROPOSED LEGISLATION TO BE RECOMMENDED  
BY THE ARKANSAS YELLOW RIBBON TASK FORCE**

**1. Veterans' Court:** To clarify the authority of a court to consider a defendant's current or prior military service and any related mental health issues for presentencing investigations and reports so that courts have adequate information to make sentencing decisions. [Bill Draft No. JSE010]

**2. License Plates:** To authorize the Office of Motor Vehicle to redesign and simplify the special license plates for retired members of the armed forces in conformity to the legislation passed in the 2009 Regular Session. [Bill Draft No. JSE020]

# Memo

To: Tiffany Lee

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From: Chris Sultemeier

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Date: October 18, 2010

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RE: **PUBLIC - PRIVATE SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATE**

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Members:

Chris Sultemeier	Walmart	Timothy Lee	AR Small Business & Tech Center (resource)
Stephen Finnegan	Finnegan & CO	Herb Lawrence	SBA, Arkansas State (resource)
Murray Harding	Arkansas Dept of Finance	Susan Holmes	NWACC
Bob Burns	FBT	Kathy Cox	Walmart Foundation (resource)
Janet Huckabee	Red Cross		

Executive Summary:

Establish a clearing house of information (website called Arkansas Veterans.com) for our service personnel.

Issues facing troops, veterans, and families:

The service members and their families need information concerning the different support groups and agencies and what kind of assistance they offer. Many organizations offer assistance but organizing and presenting the information is difficult from a cost and "up to date" perspective.

Lessons learned:

The veterans administration has a website listing services available for the service men and their families but has struggled to keep it updated.

Recommendations:

We currently have a very good "pocket size" Arkansas National Guard, laminated, quick reference booklet entitled "Roadmap to Reintegration". The challenge with this document is cost and keeping a printed piece updated. We have introduced the website to fill this need as well as meet the need of a more "tech-savvy" soldier of today.

Strategy:

We enlisted the help of Arkansas State and UALR to assist with their small business administration departments and federal funding to build an Arkansas Veterans website [www.arkansasveteran.com](http://www.arkansasveteran.com). This was accomplished in 2008-2009 and is currently in use. The website is titled ArkansasVeteran.com and is subtitled "Resources for your life and small business". The website is very user friendly and is designed to be the updated information source or "one-stop shop" for our veterans needs. Key categories of information are:

Benefits	Disabilities
Education	Housing
Employment	Family
Small Business	Legal
Health	

The site also has an assistance locator driven off of the user's zip code as well as links to many other sites that offer veterans assistance.

Conclusion:

The public-private partnership team supported the Arkansas Veterans Welcome Home event at War Memorial Stadium in the fall of 2009. This event was very well attended and was a success.

During 2009 Walmart did announce the "Ace Grants". These were \$100,000 grants across the country to "veteran friendly" schools for the advancement of their programs. One of the recipients was Arkansas State University and the BECK Pride Center.

# **SECTION FOUR**

## **References / Sources**

# **Health & Disability**



**SUMMARY REPORT  
YELLOW RIBBON TASK FORCE  
PDHRA Data**

**DoD PDHRA DATA SUMMARY (2005-2009)**

The Post-Deployment Health Reassessment (PDHRA) Program is a program mandated by the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs in March 2005 and designed to identify and address health concerns, with specific emphasis on mental health, that have emerged over time since deployment. The PDHRA provides for a health assessment during the three- to six-month time period after return from deployment, ideally at the three to four month mark. The following is a summary of the PDHRA program responses administered to the Arkansas National Guard from 2005-2009.

- DoD screened 4,404 in Arkansas and 2,087 (47.4%) Arkansas National Guard Members were referred to the VA
  - 59% of referrals were for physical treatment
    - 56% to primary care
    - 0.3% to a dentist
    - 4% to specialty care (orthopedics, audiology, dermatology, ENT, GI, internal medicine, neurology, ophthalmology, health education)
  - 41% of referrals were for mental health or substance abuse treatment
    - 39% for behavioral health care
    - 5% for mental health specialty care
    - 1% for substance abuse treatment

**SUMMARY REPORT  
YELLOW RIBBON TASK FORCE  
BRFSS Data**

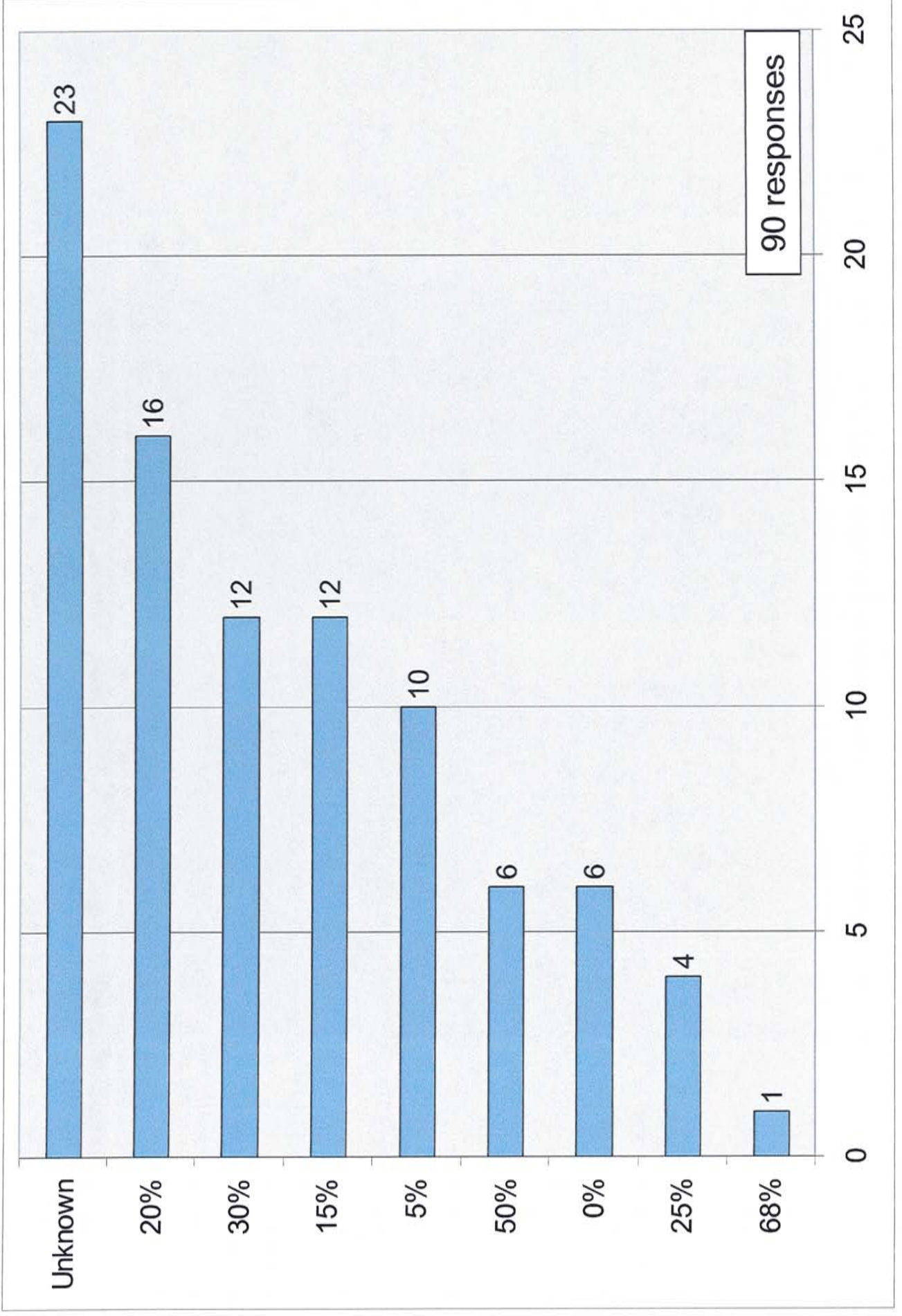
**SUMMARY OF THE BEHAVIORAL RISK FACTOR SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM  
DATA (2005-2009)**

*BRFSS* is a random digit dial telephone survey that collects health information from adults on behaviors that put health at risk for premature death and disease. This survey is administered nationally, and in Arkansas by the Arkansas Health Department. Data has been collected continuously since 1993 with annual sample size ranges from 1,764 – 5,732. A question asking about veteran status has been included in the survey since 2005.

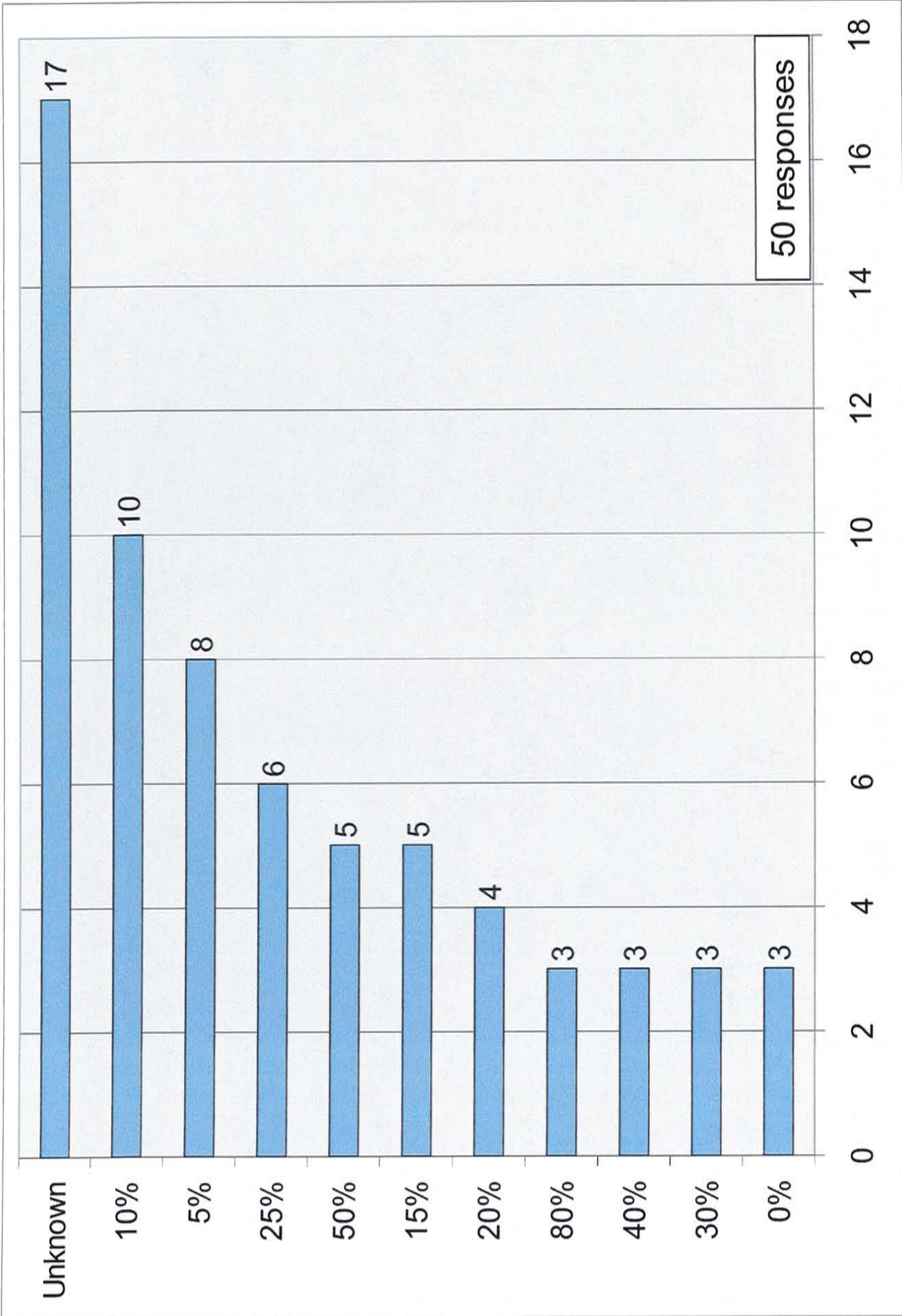
- Of the 25,480 respondents 3,757 (15%) noted that they were veterans
- Arkansas Veteran respondents were 93% male and 7% female
- Compared to non-Veterans, Arkansas Veterans are
  - 2.75 times more likely to have a high school diploma
  - 2.5 times more likely to have some college or more
  - 1.22 (22%) more likely to be married
  - 1.74 (74%) more likely to be retired
  - There is no statistical difference between Veterans and non-Veterans in self-employment, unemployment, homemaker or student status
- After adjusting for age, sex, race/ethnicity, education, marital and employment status, Arkansas Veterans are
  - 1.28 times (28%) more likely to report 14 or more physically unhealthy days per month
  - 1.56 (56%) more likely to report 14 or more mentally unhealthy days per month
  - 1.31 (31%) more likely to report disability
  - 1.24 (24%) more likely to report sometimes/rarely/never receiving social and/or emotional support
  - 1.45 (45%) more likely to smoke cigarettes
  - 1.25 (25%) more likely to have had a heart attack
  - 1.32 (32%) more likely to have coronary artery disease
  - 0.60 times more likely **not** to have had a PAP test (40% more likely to have had a PAP)
  - 0.23 times more likely **not** to have had an HIV test (77% more likely to have had an HIV test)

# Governor's Yellow Ribbon Task Force Survey Results

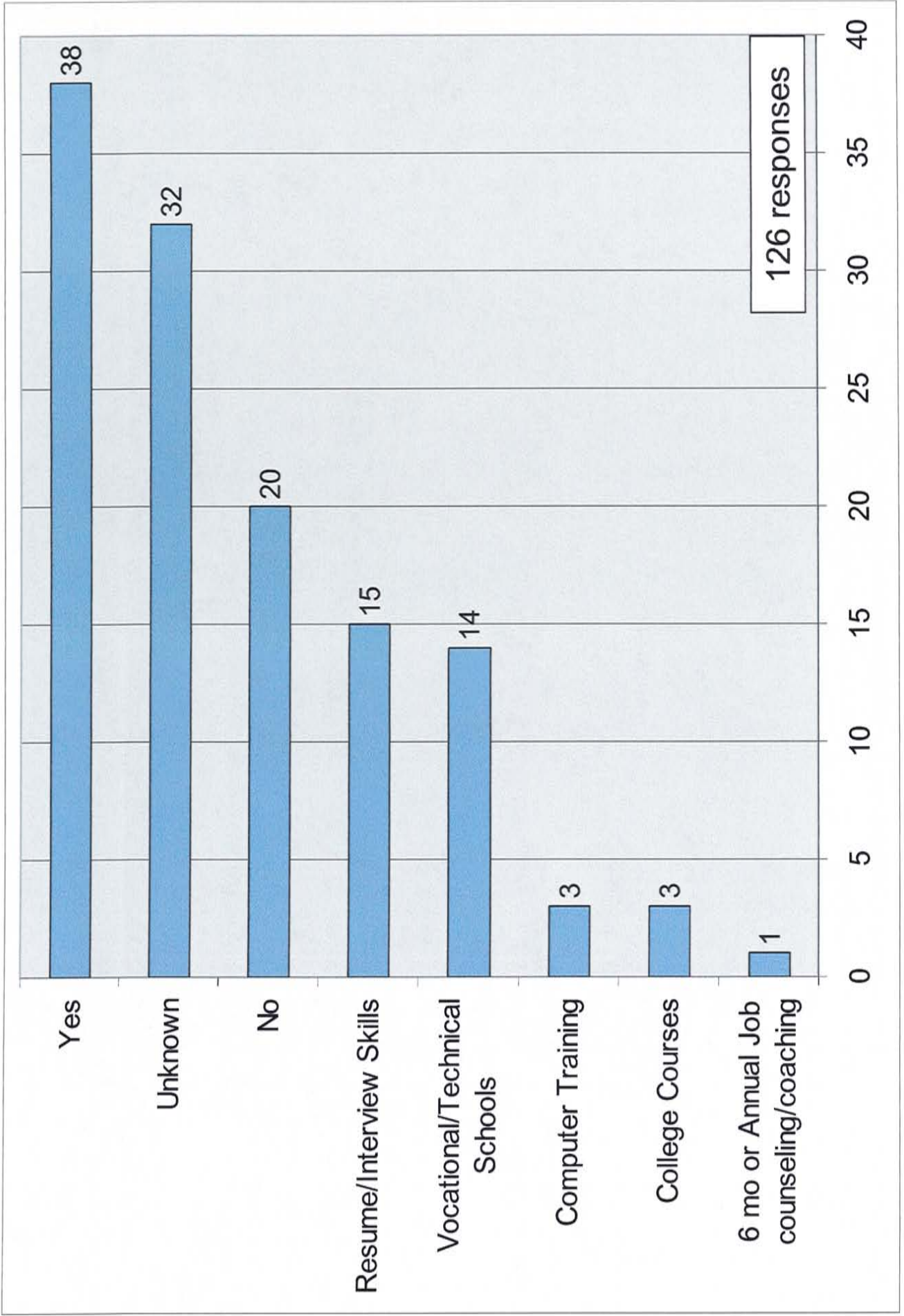
What is the percentage of unemployed service members in your unit?



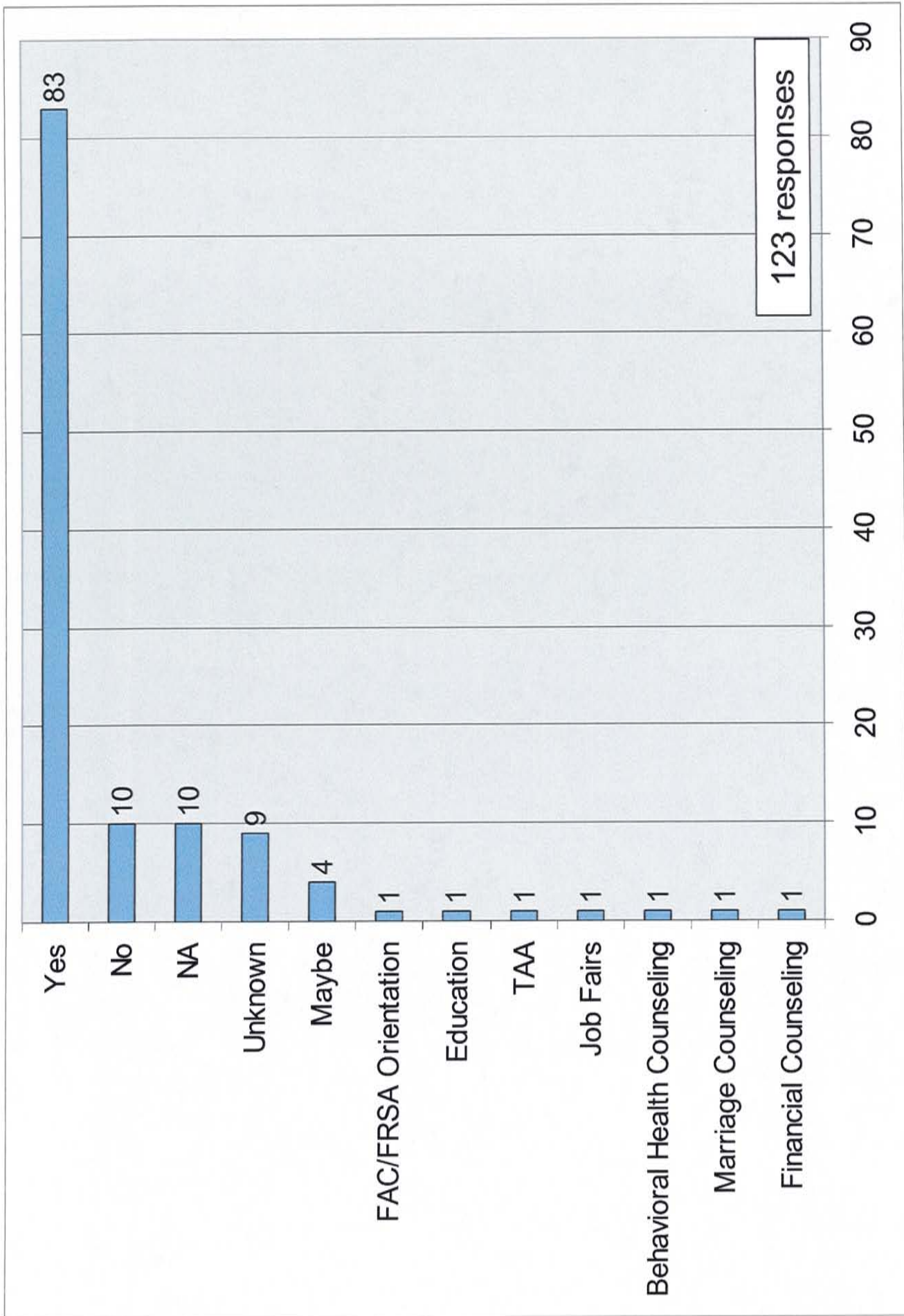
Of those unemployed service members in your unit, what percentage is looking for work?



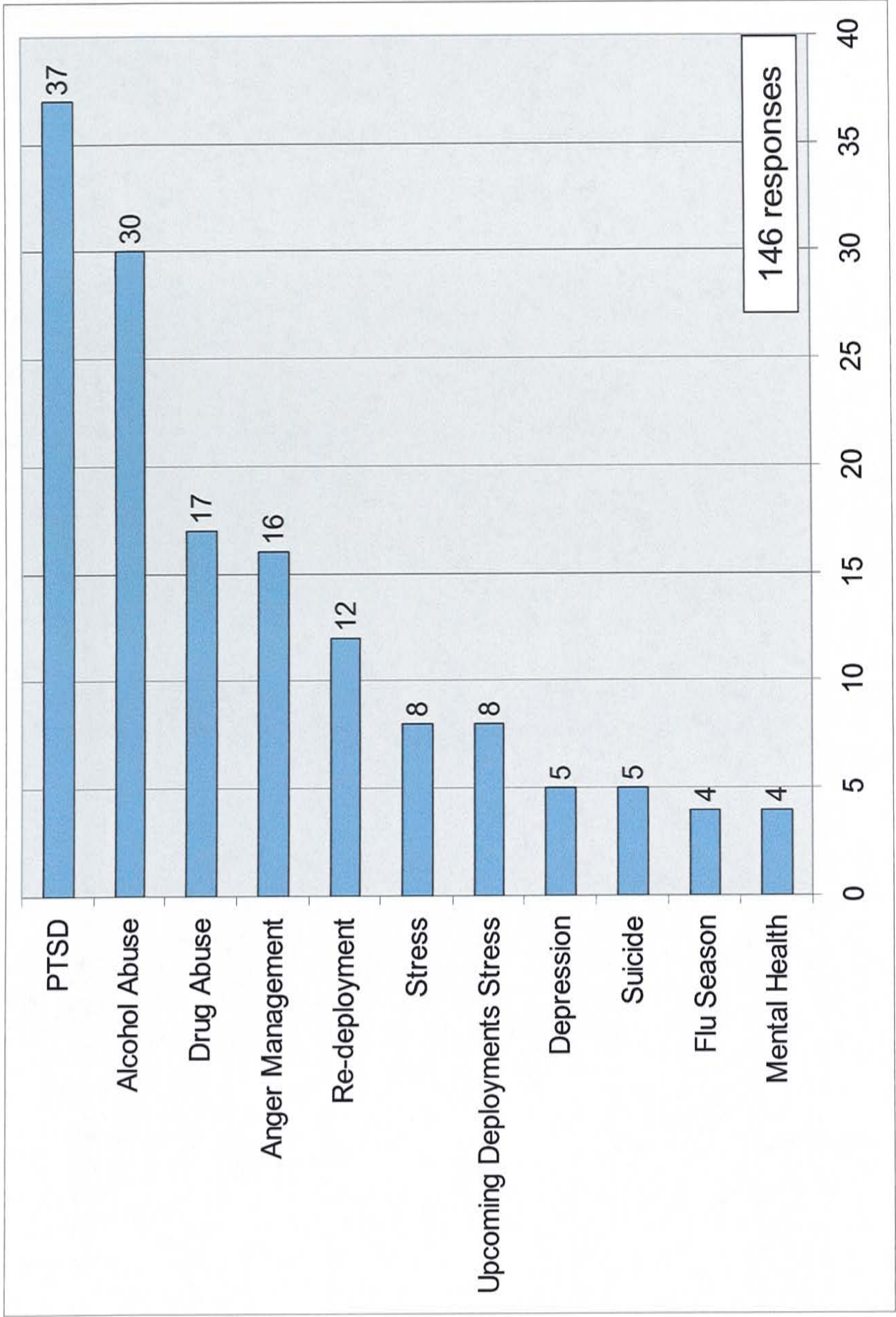
# Do they need additional training to become more marketable?



# Would your service members like additional resource/benefits counseling?

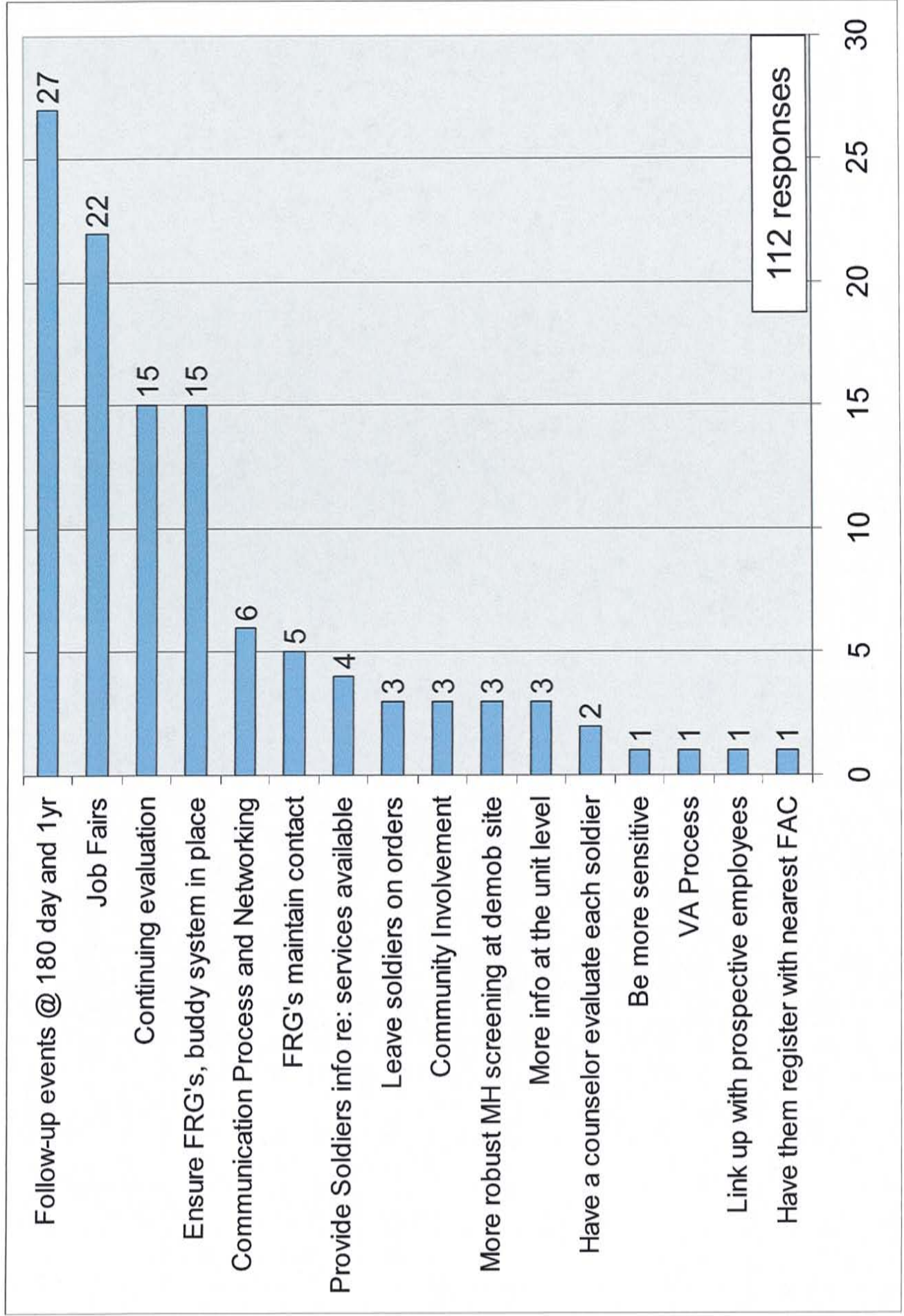


What are the primary behavioral health concerns of your service members/spouses?

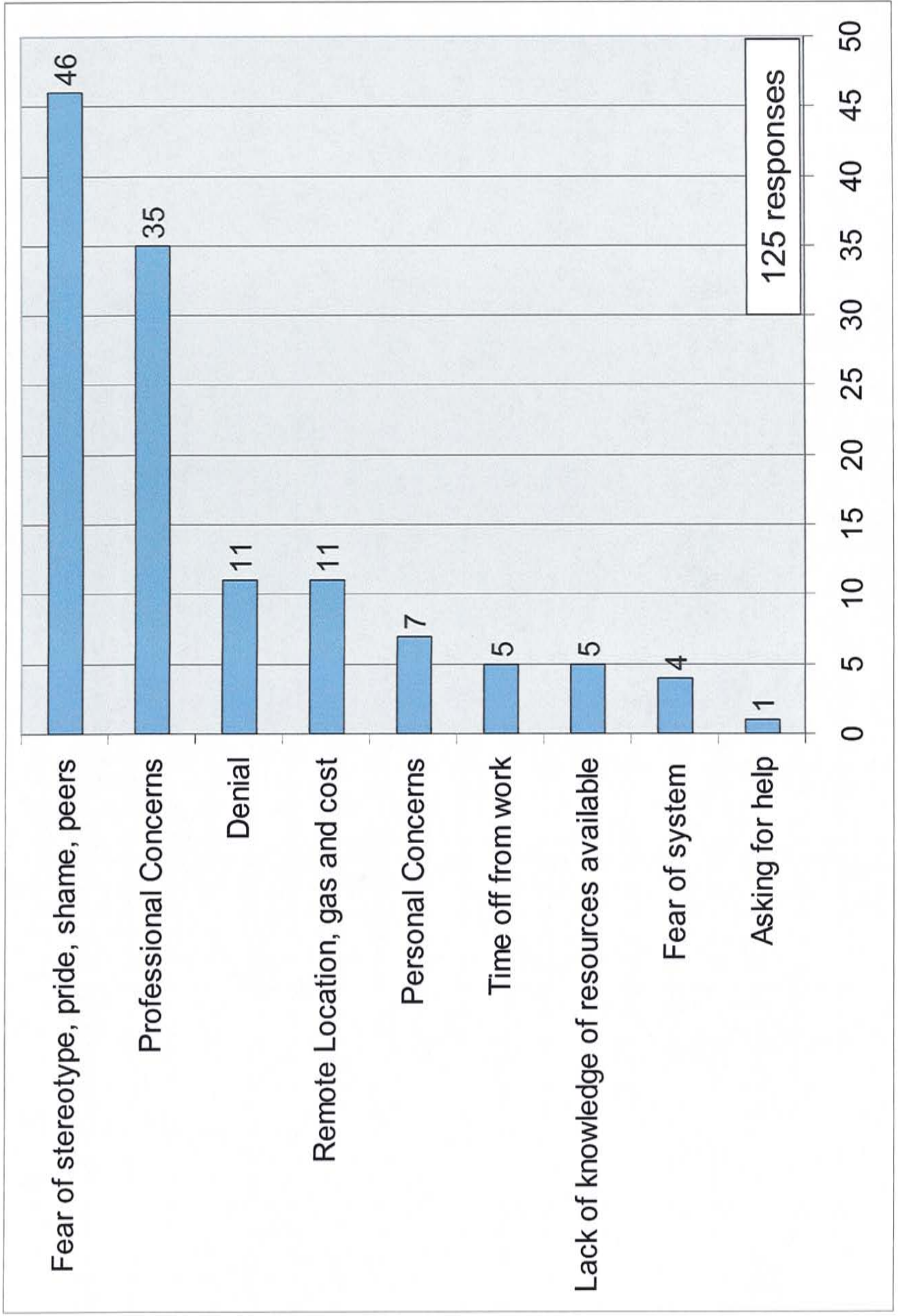




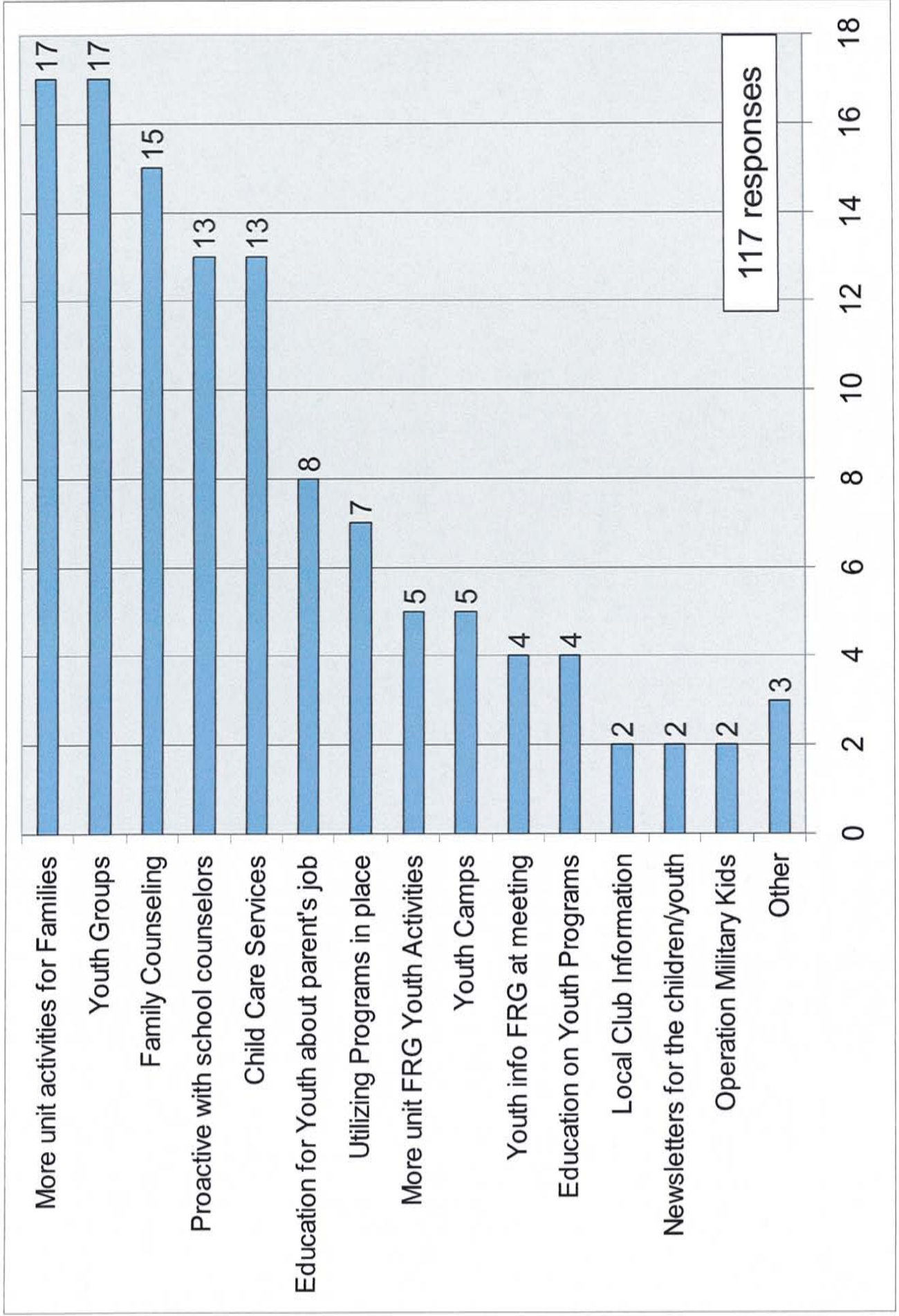
# How can we equip service members to better transition after the 90 day event?



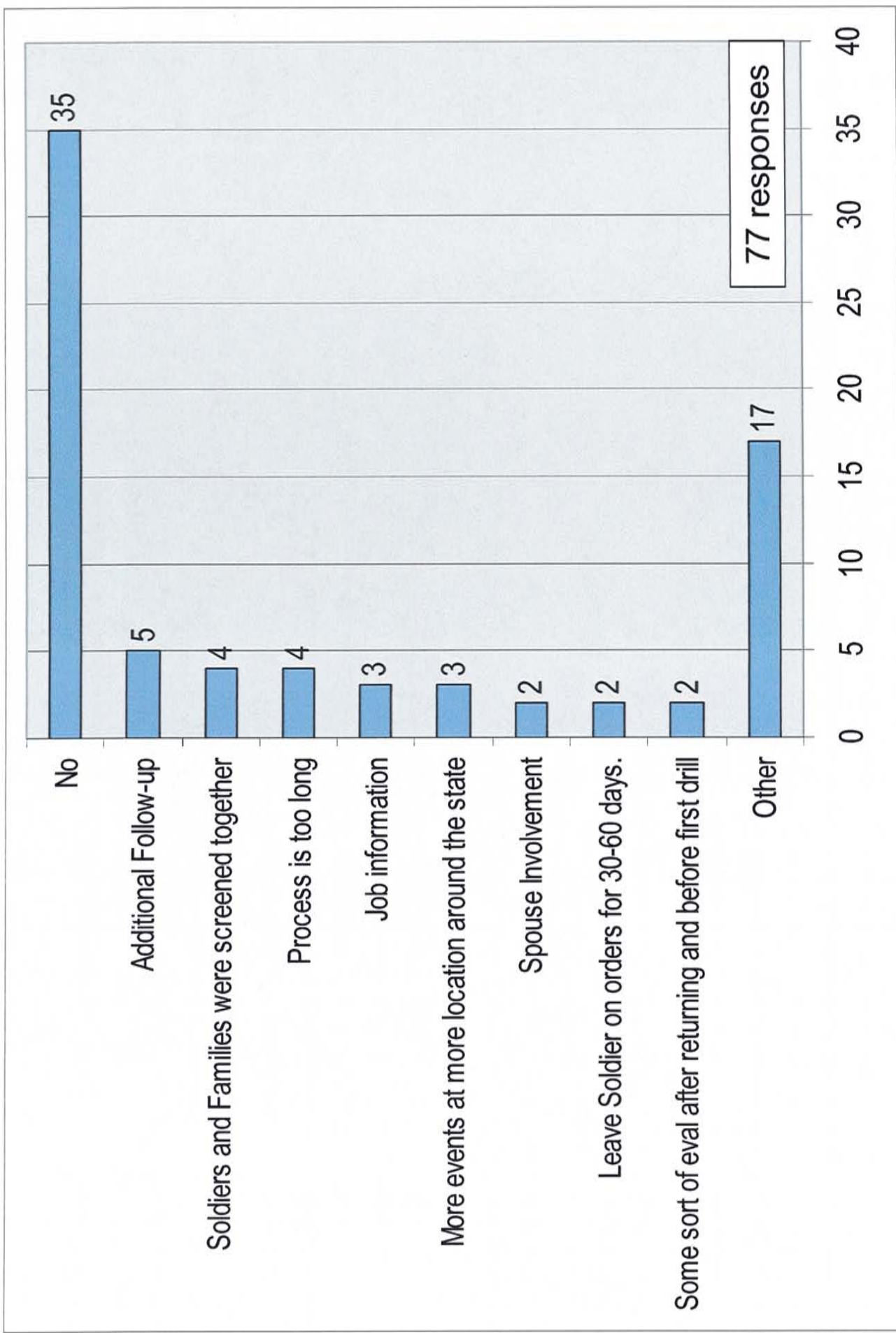
# What would hinder a service member from seeking behavioral health services?



What type of support should be provided for service members children in regards to deployment?



Is there anything missing from the reintegration process you feel should be addressed?



# Yellow Ribbon Task Force Survey of Arkansas National Guard

Conducted from 5/15/2010 to 9/14/2010 at Searcy and Camp Robinson

353 respondents

## *Sociodemographics*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
Male	312	89%
Female	40	11%

<b>Age</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
18-25	72	20%
26-35	124	36%
36-45	107	30%
46-55	40	11%
55 or older	12	3%

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>percent</b>
Married and currently living with spouse	64%
Married and not living with spouse	3%
Living with someone as though married	3%
Separated or not living with their spouse	2%
Divorced	12%
Single and never married	16%

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
African American/Black	52	15%
Caucasian/White	294	84%
Native American	10	3%
Asian	2	1%
Spanish/Hispanic/Latino	9	3%

<b>Education</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
Some high school	2	1%
High school diploma	56	16%
GED	20	6%
Technical or Occupational Certif.	11	3%
Some college	141	40%
Associate Degree (2-yr)	41	12%
Bachelors Degree (4-yr)	57	16%
Masters Degree	20	6%
MD, JD, PhD, etc.	5	1%

<b>Residence</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
Urban	76	22%
Suburban	131	37%
Rural	144	41%

<b>Length in Military Service</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
Less than 1 year	1	0%
1 year – less than 5 years	54	15%
5 years- less than 11 years	113	32%
11 years – less than 21 years	92	26%
21 years – less than 31 years	73	21%
31 years or more	19	5%

<b>Rank in Military</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
E1 – E4	84	24%
E5 – E6	146	41%
E7 – E9	59	17%
O1 – O3	23	7%
O4- O9	29	8%
W01 – W05	12	3%

<b>Deployments</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
0	34	10%
1	160	46%
2	94	27%
3	51	15%
4	3	1%
5 or more	3	1%

<b>Return from last deployment</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
1995 – 2000	3	1%
2001 – 2005	61	18%
2006 – 2010	248	72%
No deployments	32	9%

<b>Total income</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
\$10,000 or less	13	4%
\$10,001 to \$20,000	27	8%
\$20,001 to \$30,000	57	17%
\$30,001 to \$40,000	52	15%
\$40,001 to \$50,000	49	14%
Over \$50,000	146	42%

How many people does income support?	n	percent
0	4	1%
1	55	16%
2	94	27%
3	66	19%
4	67	19%
5	40	11%
6	13	4%
7 or more	11	3%

How many children depend on your support?	n	percent
0	124	35%
1	84	24%
2	88	25%
3	33	9%
4	14	4%
5 or more	8	2%

Did you/ your partner give birth during the most recent deployment?	n	percent
0	312	90%
1	36	10%

How many children do you have?	n	percent
0	156	45%
1	84	24%
2	69	20%
3	28	8%
4 or more	13	4%

How many step-children under 18?	n	percent
0	307	88%
1	20	6%
2	16	5%
3 or more	7	2%

***Types of special needs in children:***

- ADHD with Aspergers disease
- ADHD
- Autism
- Born addicted to Meth
- Hearing Impaired
- Severely handicapped children in wheelchairs
- Seizures
- Phavamelia of left arm
- Speech/ physical therapy



## Work Status

Are you currently working?	n	percent
No	35	10%
Yes	314	90%

*For those 314 who reported working for pay:*

In past 4 weeks, how many weeks have you worked?	n	percent
0 to 1 week	2	1%
2 weeks	7	2%
3 weeks	10	3%
4 weeks	291	94%

How many hours do you work?	n	percent
0 to 39 hours	24	7%
40 to 49 hours	209	68%
Over 50 hours	76	25%

How many employers did you work for in past 4 weeks?	n	percent
0 to 1	265	85%
2 to 3	42	14%
4 or more	4	1%

What year did you begin work?	n	percent
1974 – 1988	19	6%
1989 – 1999	37	11%
2000 – 2005	48	14%
2006 – 2008	45	19%
2009 – 2010	134	39%
Don't know	39	11%

**For those who did not report working:**

<b>What year did you last work for pay?</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
2000 to 2006	1	4%
2007 to 2008	6	24%
2008 to 2010	19	72%

<b>How long did you work for this employer?</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
Between 1 day and less than 6 months	10	38%
Between 6 months and less than 12 months	7	27%
Between 1 year and less than 2 years	4	15%
2 years or more	5	19%

<b>Thinking about the last time you worked, how many hours per week did you work?</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
1 to 39 hours	5	1%
40 to 49 hours	13	4%
Over 50 hours	321	95%

<b>Thinking about the last time you worked, how many employers did you work for?</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
0 to 1	17	68%
2 to 3	8	32%

<b>What is the main reason you left your last job?</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
Deployment	8	32%
Retirement	1	4%
Terminated	0	0%
Laid off	4	16%
Own (temporary) physical or mental illness or injury	1	4%
Own (permanent) disability	1	4%
Childcare problems/ other family/ personal obligations	0	0%
Return to school/ training	4	16%
Temporary, seasonal or intermittent job completed	3	12%
Unsatisfactory work arrangements	2	8%
Other reasons: ETS, Better pay, Restaurant closed	1	4%

<b>Are you currently receiving unemployment benefits?</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
No	24	63%
Yes	14	37%

<b>Have you exhausted your unemployment</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
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<b>benefits?</b>		
No	29	76%
Yes	9	24%

<b>Is the main reason you did not work due to permanent disability?</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
No	31	89%
Yes (Neurocardiogenic syncope, PTSD)	4	11%

***For those 31 who did not report not working due to disability:***

<b>Is the main reason you did not work in the past 4 weeks because you are retired?</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
No	30	100%
Yes	0	0%

<b>What is the main reason you did not work in the past 4 weeks?</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
Unable to find work	11	41%
Temporarily unable to work due to injury	1	4%
Temporarily unable to work due to illness	0	0%
Pregnancy/ childbirth	1	4%
Taking care of children/ other person	0	0%
Going to school or job training	12	44%
On layoff (temporary or indefinite)	0	0%
Transportation issues	0	0%
Not interested in working at a job	1	4%
Other reason: Currently working	1	4%

<b>How willing are you to move in order to find a job?</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
Very willing	14	40%
Somewhat willing	11	31%
Not willing	10	29%

<b>During the past 4 weeks, have you looked for full time work even if you are currently working?</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>percent</b>
No	235	73%
Yes	87	27%