



Welcoming Motivated Workers!

# ABILITIES

*Promoting the employment of Vermont citizens of all abilities*

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## Dear Friends ~ In honor of our veterans



On behalf of the Governor's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities, I would like to welcome you to the latest issue of "Abilities"

This month, in observance of Veterans Day, we honor our returning veterans by sharing with you the programs and resources available to support them in returning to the workplace.

We also recognize the 1,500 members of the Vermont National Guard who were recently deployed to Afghanistan.

May we all show our support and appreciation of these men and women by doing all we can to help them - especially those with physical and mental challenges - to transition back into successful employment.

Best regards,

**Fred Jones, Chair**

Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities  
and

**Susan Chicoine**

on behalf of the Vermont Business Leadership Network

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Congratulations to our Winner!

## **Employment Programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs** - *Story Synopsis*



The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has a number of programs that support veterans as they look to return to the workforce. Two notable examples are the Compensated Work Therapy Program (CWT) and the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program (VR&E).

**Compensated Work Therapy** or CWT is a national vocational rehabilitation program that is administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Its goal is to match and support work ready veterans with competitive jobs.

According to the CWT website, its programs "strive to maintain highly responsive long term quality relationships with business and industry promoting employment opportunities for veterans with physical and mental disabilities."

**The Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program**, sometimes referred to as the Chapter 31 program, supports veterans with service related disabilities in finding, preparing for, and keeping employment. In instances where their disabilities are so severe that work is not an immediate option, the VR&E program provides services to support independent living.

[click here to read more](#)

## **The U.S. Department of Labor Veterans Employment & Training Services (VETS)** - *Story Synopsis*

According to its website, "the mission statement for VETS is to provide veterans and transitioning service members with the resources and services to succeed in the 21st century workforce by maximizing their employment opportunities, protecting their employment rights and meeting labor-market demands with qualified veterans today."



The VETS program offers eligible veterans valuable employment assistance and training services through the "Jobs for Veterans State Grants Program". This is a noncompetitive program which allocates funds to state workforce

agencies. In Vermont, this grant funds two principal staff positions:

1. the Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs)
2. the Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER)

[click here to read more](#)

### **Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) - *Story Synopsis***



In 1994 the U.S. Congress enacted the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act. This Federal law guarantees an employee who is returning from military service or training the right to be reemployed at his or her former job with the same benefits. The individual must be returned to the original job or a job as nearly comparable as possible.

USERRA rights are extended to any person who has been absent from employment because of "service in the uniformed services". This is defined as the performance of duty on a voluntary or involuntary basis in a uniformed service, including:

- Active duty
- Active duty for training
- Initial active duty for training
- Inactive duty training
- Full-time National Guard duty
- Absence from work to be examined to determine fitness for duty
- Funeral honors duty performed by National Guard or reserve members.

All public and private employers in the United States - including federal, state, and local governments - are covered by this law, regardless of size. USERRA requires employers to:

- Allow employees to participate in military service
- Promptly reinstate the individual back into his or her job following military service
- Ensure the accumulation of the service member's seniority and pension benefits
- Reinstate health insurance
- Train or retrain the individual in job skills, including accommodations as needed for individuals with disabilities
- Protect against discrimination.

[click here to read more](#)

## Helpful Resources and Links



### **The Military, Family & Community Network**

*This organization maintains a "multi group community network between community, government, and private sectors" to create awareness programs and provide services to all returning service members and their family.*

1-888-607-8773

### **Veterans Employment Coordination Service (VECS)**

#### **Severely Injured Veterans Employment Initiative**

*A regional veterans employment coordinator works with local veterans employment coordinators (vecs) on behalf of severely injured and other veterans.*

Information on the Region 8 coordinator responsible for Vermont can be found [here](#).

### **Department of Labor Veterans' Employment & Training Service**

Click [here](#) for more information.

### **U.S. Office of Personnel Information**

#### **Veterans Employment Information**

Click [here](#) for more information.

### **Veterans and Families Outreach Program**

1-888-607-8773

### **Veterans Administration Medical Center**

White River Junction, Vermont

1-802-295-9393

### **Vermont Vet to Vet**

1-877-485-4534

### **Veterans and Government Job Bank Information**

Click [here](#) for links to several valuable resources.

### **University of Vermont Support for Veterans**

Click [here](#) for more information.

### **Vermont Vet to Vet**

*Peer to peer support for veterans of all eras.*

Click [here](#) for more information.

1-877-485-4534

### **State of Vermont Office of Veterans Affairs**

Click [here](#) for more information.

1-802-828-3379

## **MORE ON the Employment Programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs**

### **Compensated Work Therapy Program:**

Veterans and employers utilizing the CWT program will benefit from state of the art vocational rehabilitation services. These include:

- Job matching and employment supports
- Vocational case management
- Worksite and job analysis
- Consultations regarding assistive technology
- Advice and assistance with reasonable accommodations
- Guidance in addressing ADA regulation compliance.

The director of the CWT program in Vermont is Susan Gettie, who works in the Veterans Administration Medical Center in White River Junction. She can be reached at 802-295-9363, ext. 6725. An alternative phone is 1-866-OURVETS.

For further information on the CWT program, go to <http://www.cwt.va.gov/>.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Program:**

The VR&E program offers a variety of services including:

- Comprehensive evaluation to determine abilities, skills, interests & needs
- Vocational counseling and rehabilitation planning
- Employment services such as job-seeking skills, resume development, and other work readiness assistance
- Assistance finding and keeping a job (including the use of special employer incentives)
- On the Job Training (OJT), apprenticeships, and non-paid work experiences
- Post-secondary training at a college, vocational, technical or business school
- Supportive rehabilitation services including case management, counseling, and referral
- Independent living services

VR&E services are available to veterans who have been discharged with anything other than a dishonorable discharge, who have a service-related

disability rating of at least 10%, and who have submitted an application for services. The eligibility period for services is 12 years from the latter of: a) the date of separation from active military service; or b) the date notified by the VA of a service-related disability rating.

For more information on the VR&E program, go to: <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/vre/>.

For more information and contact information for both the VR&E program and the State of Vermont vocational rehabilitation program, go to: <http://veterans.vermont.gov/transitions/vocational>

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### **MORE ON Veterans Employment & Training Services (VETS)**

The Jobs for Veterans State Grant Program administered through VETS provides funding that is designed to directly and exclusively serve the following groups:

- Veterans
- Transitioning service members
- Their spouses under certain circumstances
- Other eligible persons.

These funds also indirectly support employers. The state of Vermont has flexibility to decide the most effective and efficient manner to distribute its staff resources based upon the roles and responsibilities of the DVOP and LVER positions.

The Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialists (DVOPs) and the Local Veterans' Employment Representatives (LVER) focus their efforts on outreach and on providing or facilitating direct client services to those veterans most in need of their intensive employment and training assistance.

Direct client services include:

- Career guidance
- Personalized job search assistance
- Job referrals
- Labor market information
- Referrals to training programs
- Resume preparation assistance
- The teaching of interview skills
- Electronic job banks, and computer access
- Support referrals
- Financial aid information

In their outreach function, the DVOPs and LVERs strive to raise awareness of the availability and benefits of hiring veterans and thus increase local hiring opportunities.

The DVOPs and LVERs provide distinct services:

**Disability Veterans Outreach Program** specialists provide intensive services to disabled veterans and other eligible veterans. Specific emphasis is given in support of veterans who are economically or educationally disadvantaged, homeless, or with barriers to employment. Their outreach efforts are designed to bring those veterans with the greatest barriers to employment into the VETS program for support and assistance.

**Local Veterans' Employment Representatives** focus their outreach efforts on the employer side, advocating to hiring managers to encourage the hiring of disabled and other veterans. They also conduct seminars for employers and job search workshops for veterans.

When referring individuals for jobs, and in accordance with the criteria of the Jobs for Veterans program, the Vermont Department of Labor gives priority to qualified veterans over non-veterans. Within its JobLink system, veterans' resumes are notated with an American Flag symbol.

To learn more about program eligibility and veterans priority in Vermont, contact the Vermont Department of Labor Resource Center in your area. A list of the DVOP and LVER staff members and specialists within the Vermont Department of Labor for veterans services can be found [here](#).

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## MORE ON USERRA

A service member seeking reinstatement under USERRA must meet the following criteria:

- The service member must provide the employer with advance notice of their service
- The service member must return to work in accordance with USERRA guidelines and timetables based on the number of days of service
- The service member must have been honorably discharged from military service.

If a service member incurs or aggravates a disability while in military service, a three-part reemployment scheme must be followed:

1. The employer must make a reasonable effort to accommodate the individual and his or her disability so that the individual may return to their original position;
2. If the nature of the disability precludes the successful implementation of a reasonable accommodation, the individual must be employed in "a position of equivalent seniority, status, and pay, so long as the employee is qualified to perform the duties of the position, or could become qualified to perform them with reasonable efforts by the employer."

3. If the employee does not become qualified through a reasonable accommodation or other reasonable efforts, then the employee "must be employed in a position that, consistent with the circumstances of that person's case, most nearly approximates the position in (2 above) in terms of seniority, status, and pay."

The Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) provides service members and their civilian employers with information and education regarding USERRA rights and responsibilities. It is a neutral and free resource for service members and employers. It can also provide mediation of USERRA compliance issues via its trained ombudsmen.

Enforcement for violations of USERRA falls within the purview of the U.S. Department of Labor and the Department of Justice.

Contact information for local Vermont representatives of ESGR can be found [here](#).

ESGR ombudsmen who are trained to answer USERRA questions or respond to employment disputes may be found by calling 1-800-336-4590 or visiting <http://www.esgr.mil>.

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## **Congratulations to our Winner!**

Many thanks to everyone who stopped by to visit us at the recent VHRA / SHRM conference at Stoweflake Spa and Resort. Congratulations to Emily Welch of Vermont Gas Systems, Inc., winner of our gift basket provided compliments of Green Mountain Coffee Roasters!

Thanks for reading this issue of "Abilities". We welcome your comments, feedback, and suggestions for future issues. Copies of past issues may be found on our website - [www.hireus.org](http://www.hireus.org), or in the [Constant Contact archives](#).

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