

Governor's Committee on Employment  
of People with Disabilities



Welcoming Motivated Workers!

# ABILITIES

*Promoting the employment of Vermont citizens of all abilities*

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**Dear Friends ~**

Welcome to the latest edition of "Abilities".

This month our first article talks about the **5<sup>th</sup> Governor's Summit on the Employment of People with Disabilities: *From the Armed Forces to the WorkForce: Supporting Veterans with Disabilities and Employers.***

The Vermont Business Leadership Network is a proud sponsor of the Summit. The BLN relies on a fundamental principle - *Success Breeds Success*. The Summit is an opportunity for business leaders, state leaders, service providers, Veterans and their families to come together and discuss the issues our returning Veterans face. At the end of the Summit, recommendations will be given to Governor Douglas around the issues of Veterans with disabilities and employment. This day is an opportunity for employers to share their experiences, as well as learn from other businesses in Vermont. For more information, you can call 1-800-639-2909. To register online, go to [www.vabir.com](http://www.vabir.com).

I urge all Vermont employers to consider attending the Governor's Summit on the Employment of People with Disabilities. You will be inspired by the stories you will hear.

Best regards,

**Susan Chicoine,**  
on behalf of the Vermont Business Leadership Network

and

**Fred Jones, Chair,**  
Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities

## **In This Issue**

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## **The Governor's Summit on the Employment of People with Disabilities: From the Armed Forces to the Workforce: Supporting Veterans with Disabilities and Employers**

The 5th Governor's Summit on the Employment of People with Disabilities will be held on June 9th, 2008 at the Sheraton Hotel in Burlington. This year, the Summit will focus on returning Veterans with disabilities who may face challenges finding employment.

The Summit will host a morning workgroup session comprised of leaders from business, government, veterans groups, returning veterans with disabilities, and other service providers. The workgroups will address the challenges returning Veterans face and will provide a list of recommendations for Governor Douglas.

A luncheon program, open to the public, will follow. Governor Jim Douglas will address the group on the topic of returning veterans. Governor Douglas stated, "*I'm very pleased to be hosting this year's Summit, a valuable tool in fostering strong relationships between employees and their employers. This year's Summit focuses on how we can best serve veterans with disabilities as they re-enter the workforce and how to support our state's business.*" Governor Douglas will also present awards from the Governor's Committee on the Employment of People with Disabilities.

Keynote speakers at the Summit will be Lee Woodruff and Jack Jacobs.

Lee Woodruff is the wife of ABC News Correspondent Bob Woodruff. Bob and Lee are authors of the book *In an Instant: A Family's Journey of Love and Healing*. This New York Times best-selling book chronicles their family's difficult journey during Bob's critical injury in Iraq while anchoring a broadcast for ABC News and his subsequent reintegration into his chosen career.

Jack Jacobs is a Military Analyst and retired U.S. Army Colonel. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for exceptional heroism on the battlefields of Vietnam and was also awarded three Bronze and two Silver Stars.

Each year the Summit attracts approximately 400 participants. The topic for this year's Summit is extremely important and timely. For more information or to register for the Summit, go online to [www.vabir.com](http://www.vabir.com), or call 1-800-639-2909.

### **Employing Veterans With Disabilities**

Each year across the country, thousands of military personnel leave active duty and seek to return to the civilian workforce. Between October 2001 and February 2008, more than 30,000 veterans returned home with service-connected disabilities. Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have experienced a higher proportion of both traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In Vermont, the veteran population numbers over 62,000. According to the Office of Veterans Affairs, there are almost 4,900 service-connected disabled veterans in Vermont. Over 30% are disabled at a 50% or higher degree of disability.

Veterans returning from service can face a variety of challenges as they reintegrate into civilian life. This is complicated if they have acquired a service-connected disability. What can Vermont employers do to help our returning veterans, especially those who have been injured in combat?

Employers can start by taking some specific steps to recruit and hire veterans with service-connected disabilities. Tips from the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission include:

- State on a job advertisement or vacancy announcement that your company is an equal opportunity employer and that individuals with disabilities, including disabled veterans or veterans with service-connected disabilities, are encouraged to apply.
- Ensure that on-line job announcements, recruiting information and application processes are accessible to individuals with disabilities, including applicants who have service-connected disabilities.
- Make written recruiting materials, such as application forms and brochures, available in alternate formats (e.g., Braille, large print, etc.), or assist veterans with disabilities in completing application materials when necessary.
- Send vacancy announcements to, and ask for referrals from, government, community, military organizations and One Stop Career Centers that train and/or support veterans with service-connected disabilities.
- Post advertisements and vacancy announcements in publications for veterans.
- Attend job fairs and use online resume databases that connect job-seeking veterans with civilian employers.

### **Additional Resources for Employers:**

#### **Recruiting**

Veterans With Service Connected Disabilities and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA): A Guide for Employers.

<http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/veterans-disabilities-employers.html>

**President's National Hire Veterans Committee - Hire Vets First**

[www.hirevetsfirst.gov](http://www.hirevetsfirst.gov)

This comprehensive career website is designed to help employers find qualified veterans, as well as help veterans to make the most of a national network of employment resources.

### **Employer Assistance and Recruiting Network (EARN)**

[www.earnworks.com](http://www.earnworks.com), 1-866-EARN NOW (327-6669)

Funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), EARN is a national toll-free and electronic information referral service to assist employers in locating and recruiting qualified individuals with disabilities who are seeking jobs.

### **Occupational Information Network (O\*NET) Online**

[www.online.onetcenter.org](http://www.online.onetcenter.org)

Through the Department of Labor, employers may access a comprehensive database that helps align military skills, knowledge, and training with workplace needs. Information on reasonable accommodation also is available.

### **Office of Veterans Affairs - Vermont**

[www.va.state.vt.us](http://www.va.state.vt.us)

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs supports a nationwide employment training program for veterans with service-related injuries. The Vermont Office is located in Montpelier.

## **Employment Services**

**VocRehab Vermont**    [www.vocrehabvermont.gov](http://www.vocrehabvermont.gov)

**VABIR**    [www.vabir.com](http://www.vabir.com)

**Vermont Department of Labor**    <http://www.labor.vermont.gov/>

## **Reasonable Accommodations**

### **EEOC Enforcement Guidance: Reasonable Accommodation and Undue Hardship Under the ADA (2002)**

[www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/accommodation.html](http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/accommodation.html)

This extensive guidance clarifies the rights and responsibilities of employers and individuals with disabilities regarding reasonable accommodation and undue hardship and provides practical examples of the types of accommodations that may be needed to enable a person with a disability to be considered for a position, perform the essential functions of a job, or enjoy the equal benefits and privileges of employment.

### **Job Accommodation Network (JAN)**

[www.jan.wvu.edu](http://www.jan.wvu.edu)

JAN provides a variety of resources for employers seeking to hire employees with disabilities. JAN also provides lists of possible accommodations based on specific disabilities as well as links to various other accommodation providers.

## **About Traumatic Brain Injury**

In the United States, 1.4 million people sustain a Traumatic Brain Injury each year. Of those, 50,000 die; 235,000 are hospitalized; and 1.1 million are treated and released from an emergency department.

So what is a traumatic brain injury (TBI)? A TBI is defined as a blow or jolt to the

head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain. Not all blows or jolts to the head result in a TBI. The severity of such an injury may range from "mild," i.e., a brief change in mental status or consciousness to "severe," i.e., an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury. A TBI can result in short or long-term problems with independent function.

The leading causes of TBI are: falls (28%); motor vehicle crashes (20%); struck by/against events (19%); and assaults (11%).

Service members injured in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom are bringing increased attention to the issue of TBIs. In prior conflicts, TBIs accounted for 14-20% of surviving combat casualties. Unfortunately, preliminary information from the current conflicts suggests that number is now higher. The increased use of improved explosive devices (IEDs) in current warfare has led to higher numbers of blast injuries in our soldiers. Blast injuries are a rapidly growing cause of TBI in current combat. Additionally, certain military assignments carry an increased risk for exposure to TBI. These include, among others, airborne operations and policing in combat areas.

At Walter Reed Hospital, more than 4500 patients with TBI were treated between January 2003 and February 2005. All admitted patients who have been exposed to a blast are routinely evaluated for brain injury; 59 percent of them have been given a diagnosis of TBI. Of these injuries, 56 percent are considered moderate or severe, and 44 percent are mild.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that at least 5.3 million Americans currently have a long-term or lifelong need for help to perform activities of daily living as a result of a TBI. According to one study, about 40% of those hospitalized with a TBI had at least one unmet need for services one year after their injury. The most frequent unmet needs were:

- Improving memory and problem solving;
- Managing stress and emotional upsets;
- Controlling one's temper; and
- Improving one's job skills

TBI can cause a wide range of functional changes affecting thinking, language, learning, emotions, behavior, and/or sensation. It can also cause epilepsy and increase the risk for conditions such as Alzheimer's

According to the Vermont Department of Health, there are over 4,600 Vermonters living with a brain injury. In 1991, the Vermont Department of Aging and Disabilities and the Department of Social Welfare started a three-year pilot project that offered community based rehabilitative services to Vermonters with traumatic brain injuries. The goal of the program was to divert Vermonters with a moderate to severe traumatic brain injury from hospitals and facilities and/or return them to a community based setting. The program is intended to support Vermonters achieve independence and help them return to work.

Funded by State and Federal agencies since October 1994, the short-term community-based TBI Waiver Rehabilitation Program serves individuals under the administration of VocRehab Vermont. Services available through the TBI Waiver Rehabilitation Program include case management,

rehabilitation services, community supports, respite, employment supports and environmental/assistive supports.

To be eligible for the Traumatic Brain Injury Waiver Program, a person must:

- Be a Vermont Resident;
- Be age 16 or older and diagnosed with a moderate-to-severe brain injury;
- Be a recipient of traditional and/or long term Vermont Medicaid;
- Have a documented, recent moderate-to-severe brain injury resulting in residual deficits and disability;
- Demonstrate the ability to benefit from rehabilitation and a potential for independent living;
- Require one-to-one instruction focusing on independent living;
- Demonstrate a possibility for returning to vocational activities.

For more information on the Vermont Traumatic Brain Injury Waiver Program, call (802)241-1456 or visit:

<http://www.ddas.vermont.gov/ddas-programs/programs-tbi-default-page>

## **About Post Traumatic Stress Disorder**

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder that can occur after a traumatic event. A traumatic event is something horrible and scary that a person sees or that happens to them. During this type of event, a person feels that their life or others' lives are in danger. Anyone who has gone through a life-threatening event can develop PTSD. These events can include:

- Combat or military exposure
- Child sexual or physical abuse
- Terrorist attacks
- Sexual or physical assault
- Serious accidents, such as a car wreck.
- Natural disasters, such as a fire, tornado, hurricane, flood, or earthquake.

All people with PTSD have lived through a traumatic event that caused them to fear for their lives, see horrible things, and feel helpless. Strong emotions caused by the event create changes in the brain that may result in PTSD.

How likely someone is to get PTSD depends on many things. These include:

- How intense the trauma was or how long it lasted
- If someone was hurt or killed in the event
- How close a person is to the event
- How strong the reaction was
- How much help and support a person receives after the event

A high proportion of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan experience symptoms of PTSD. Other factors in a combat situation can add more stress to

an already stressful situation and may contribute to PTSD and other mental health problems. These factors include military assignment in the war, the politics around the war, and where it's fought. According to the 2004 Report of the Special Committee on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, 40% of service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan to Walter Reed Army Medical Center reported symptoms consistent with PTSD.

PTSD symptoms usually start soon after the traumatic event, but they may not happen until months or years later. They also may come and go over many years. There are four types of symptoms: 1) reliving the event; 2) avoidance; 3) numbing; and 4) feeling keyed up.

**Reliving the event (also called re-experiencing symptoms):**

Bad memories of the traumatic event can come back at any time. A person may feel the same fear and horror as when the event took place. A person can experience nightmares or feel like they going through the event again. Sometimes there is a trigger: a sound or sight that causes a person to relive the event.

**Avoiding situations that remind you of the event:**

A person may try to avoid situations or people that trigger memories of the traumatic event. They may even avoid talking or thinking about the event.

**Feeling numb:**

A person may find it hard to express their feelings. This is another way to avoid memories.

**Feeling keyed up (also called hyperarousal):**

A person may be jittery, or always alert and on the lookout for danger. This is known as hyperarousal. It can cause people to: suddenly become angry or irritable; have a hard time sleeping; have trouble concentrating; or feel always on guard.

People with PTSD may also have other problems. These include: drinking or drug problems; feelings of hopelessness, shame, or despair; employment problems; relationship problems including divorce and violence; or physical symptoms

There are good treatments available for PTSD. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is one type of counseling. It appears to be the most effective type of counseling for PTSD. There are different types of cognitive behavioral therapies such as cognitive therapy and exposure therapy. A similar kind of therapy called EMDR, or eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, is also used for PTSD. Medications can be effective, too. A type of drug known as a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI), which is also used for depression, is effective for PTSD.

**Quick Links**

[The Governor's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities](#)

[Vermont Business Leadership Network](#)

[Department of Labor Disability Program Navigators](#)

[Vocational Rehabilitation](#)

[Vermont Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation](#)

[Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired](#)

[Job Accommodation Network](#)

[Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council](#)

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## **News from the VT BLN and GCEPD**

- The Vermont Business Leadership Network has been busy working with local Business Advisory Councils around the state to outreach to businesses and promote our mission of the hiring of people with disabilities. In both Burlington and Rutland, the local BAC's have recently hosted Employer Recognition Breakfasts. Over 300 Vermont employers were recognized for their hiring practices. The local BACs are a business-based group of employers who work with VABIR and VocRehab Vermont to provide access to training and jobs that are compatible with the skills and abilities of people with disabilities. For more information on joining your local BAC, please call 1-800-639-2909.

- The Vermont Business Leadership Network will be sponsoring a workshop at the VT APSE Conference on May 7th, 2008 at Killington. The topic of the workshop is what employers want from service providers and their clients when they come looking for jobs. The workshop will include a panel of local employers speaking about their experiences.

- The GCEPD is pleased to announce the addition of three new members to the Committee. Linda Carbino, Julie Noel of VABIR, and Elizabeth Kafer of the Human Resources department of Middlebury College were all recently appointed to the committee by Governor Jim Douglas.

- Member News: Linda Carbino was recently awarded the 2008 Jack Barry Communications Award in a ceremony at the statehouse in Montpelier as part of Advocacy in Action - Recovery Day 2008. Governor Douglas also made a proclamation of Vermont's Day of Recovery. Linda entered the Turning Point Club eleven years ago to address addiction and mental health issues and her recovery has made her a passionate advocate for others struggling with similar issues. She now hosts a show on White River Junction's Community Access Channel called "Walking Through Life" that provides a forum for her advocacy and for individuals to share stories.

- GCEPD member Rene Pellerin was recently on Linda's Walking Through Life show, talking about his experiences and his work as the Northern Coordinator for the Vermont Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

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