

# Chapter 1 – Introduction to the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) for Members of the National Guard and Reserves

After serving 180 or more days of continuous active duty, and prior to your release from active duty, you are required to receive transition counseling (same as Preseparation Counseling for Active Component Service members) from a member of a military installation Transition Assistance Staff, Command Career Counselor (Navy), or the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) staff. During the transition counseling session you will be provided an overview of all the topics contained on DD Form 2648-1, *"Preseparation Counseling Checklist for Reserve Component Service Members Released From Active Duty."* Once you are released from active duty and return home, you are entitled to receive transition assistance up to six months following your release from active duty. To access this help, you need to contact the nearest military installation or Command Career Counselor where you live. Personnel office staff, relocation specialists, education counselors, and many others can help, but only you and your family can make the critical decisions that must be made. So, where should you start?

Start by going to the transition assistance website that was created to help you. You can access that website at: <http://www.TurboTAP.org>. This site is available to you for the rest of your life. Once there, review the *Transition Guide for Guard and Reserve*.

The Individual Transition Plan (ITP) is your game plan for a successful transition back to civilian life. It is the framework you can use to fulfill realistic career goals based on your unique skills, knowledge, desires, experience, and abilities. It is not a Department of Defense form; it is something you create by yourself, for yourself with assistance from a Transition Counselor. Those who do not reside in close proximity to a military installation can get assistance by telephone, e-mail, CD ROM, etc.

## **REMEMBER – HELP IS AVAILABLE TO YOU!**

The ITP will help you identify the actions and activities associated with your transition. Consulting with a Transition Assistance Counselor and using the DD Form 2648-1, *"Preseparation Counseling Checklist for Reserve Component Service Members Released From Active Duty"* will help you determine your options. The Transition Guide will help you work through the major headings listed on the DD Form 2648, checklist. The checklist will allow you to identify the benefits and services that will help you prepare your ITP. If you require further assistance with any of the topics covered on the Transitioning Counseling Checklist, please refer to the appropriate chapter of the "Transition Guide for Guard and Reserve" or TurboTAP resources at located online at <http://www.TurboTAP.org>. If you still need assistance, contact Military One Source.

If you are uncertain about your future plans, now is the time to obtain all the assistance and information you need. Professional guidance and counseling is available at a Transition Assistance Office, as are workshops, publications, information resources, automated resources, and government programs. Take advantage of each one that pertains to your unique situation. It is your Individual Transition Plan: It is your responsibility and your life.

Independent research has found that on average, Service members participating in the Transition Assistance Program find their first post-military job three weeks sooner than those who do not participate in TAP. Once you return home, you may want to make a career change or need to look for a job. Use the Transition Assistance Program to help you accomplish your goals.

## A. Preseparation Counseling: Your Best Beginning

During your demobilization/deactivation out-processing, you will receive information on the benefits and services available to you by a Transition Assistance, Army Career and Alumni Program, or Navy Command Career counselor. This counselor will guide you through the DD Form 2648-1, "Preseparation Counseling Checklist for Reserve Component Service Members Released From Active Duty," and will assist you in completing form, give you a copy, and ensure that the original copy with your signature is placed in your military personnel file.

Listed below is the name of each Military Service's Transition Assistance Programs:

- **Army:** Army Career and Alumni Program - The Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) is a military personnel function and the Centers are found under the Director of Human Resources (DHR) or the Military Personnel Office (MILPO).  
<http://www.acap.army.mil/>
- **Air Force:** Airman and Family Readiness Center. You can find the nearest office using the military installation finder at: [www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil](http://www.militaryinstallations.dod.mil)
- **Navy:** Fleet and Family Support Center. Navy personnel should make an appointment with their Command Career Counselor for a preseparation counseling interview at least 180 days prior to separation. <http://www.fssp.org>
- **Marines:** Career Resource Management Center (CRMC)/Transition & Employment Assistance Program Center. <http://www.usmc-mccs.org/tamp/index.cfm>
- **Coast Guard:** Worklife Division – Transition Assistance. Coast Guard Worklife staffs can be found at your nearest Integrated Support Command. [http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-w/g-wk/wkw/work-life\\_programs/transition\\_assistance.htm](http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-w/g-wk/wkw/work-life_programs/transition_assistance.htm)
- **National Guard Transition Assistance Advisor (TAA):** The National Guard has placed a TAA at each of the State Joint Forces Headquarters to serve as the statewide point of contact and coordinator for easy access to Department of Veterans Affairs benefits and to provide assistance in access to entitlements through the Military Health System (TRICARE). For more information review Chapter Seven of the National Guard Transition Assistance Guide.

### Some Terminology and Notes on Your New Status

**Discharge:** Complete separation from all military status gained by the enlistment or induction concerned.

**Separation:** A general term that includes discharge, release from active duty, release from custody and control of the Armed Forces, transfer to the Individual Ready Reserve, and similar changes in active or reserve status.

**Transition Benefits:** Benefits provided to assist Service members during the transition process. Eligibility for certain types of transition benefits will depend on the nature and characterization discharge.

**Transition Services:** For Active Component Service members this includes mandatory Preseparation Counseling, voluntary attendance to a Department of Labor Employment Workshop, voluntary attendance to a VA Benefits Briefings and a VA Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) Briefing. Active Component Service members are eligible begin the transition process one year prior to separation and retirees can begin the transition process two years prior to retirement. Eligibility for services is not affected by length or character or service.

For eligible demobilizing National Guard and Reserves, transition services include mandatory Preseparation Counseling, a Uniformed Services Employment Rights and Reemployment Act (USERRA) Briefing, and a VA Benefits Briefing, which normally includes information on DTAP.

**Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP):** DTAP provides separating and retiring Service members – including eligible National Guard and Reserve Service members being released from active duty – with specialized information about the Department of Veterans (VA) Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Program, eligibility, and how to apply for benefits. Active duty Service members who believe they have a service-connected disability are strongly encouraged to request admission to the DTAP class through their Transition/ACAP/Command Career Counselor (or nit commander. For National Guard and Reserves, DTAP is available on a DTAP CD and on-line at [www.vetsuccess.gov](http://www.vetsuccess.gov). Eligible Service members (Active, National Guard and Reserves) who are pending a medical separation or medical retirement and who have an **employment handicap** may begin to receive VR&E services prior to separation or release from active duty if they meet the following criteria:

- Must be on active duty
- Have a need for rehabilitative services
- Must have applied for and received a VA Memorandum Rating of at least 20%

### Step 1. Transition Counseling Session

Your transition counseling appointment/session will take place during your demobilization/deactivation out-processing at the installation or unit where that occurs.

The Transition Counselor or Command Career Counselor will:

- Inform you about developing and individual needs assessment
- The Transition Counselor will brief you on all of the items listed on the DD Form 2648-1
- Identify helpful relocation resources
- Inform you about Department of Labor Career One-Stop Centers
- Tell you on how to access the Department of Veterans Affairs system for assistance
- Refer you to the transition website at <http://www.TurboTAP.org>

- Inform you about other service providers for any additional assistance you may require
- Advise you on how to get assistance from the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR)

## **Step 2. Review the Transition Counseling Checklist**

When you have completed the checklist, review it for accuracy. Make sure you have checked the “YES” block if you would like more information on a given topic. You can use this guide to find the additional information you need.

Once home, sit down and review the checklist again, preferably with your spouse or a family member. Many of topics have a website that can provide more information. If you require assistance from a subject matter expert, you have the following options:

- Contact Military One Source at 1-800- 342-9647 or at <http://www.militaryonesource.mil>
- Log onto <http://www.TurboTAP.org> and review the information in the Transition Guide on the website based on the topic and question(s) you have.
- Contact the nearest military installation Transition Office or Command Career Counselor (Navy) for assistance for up to 180 days after demobilization.
- Contact your State Transition Assistance Advisor – located at the State Joint Forces Headquarters.

Your Transition Counselor or Command Career Counselor (Navy) will walk you through the Transition Counseling Checklist, which helps ensure that you will receive the necessary assistance and advice to benefit fully from the wide range of services and entitlements available to you. The DD Form 2648-1, "Preseparation Counseling Checklist for Reserve Component Service Members Released from Active Duty," is required by law to be filed in your official military personnel record.

## **Step 3. Draft Your Individual Transition Plan**

Information on developing your ITP is available through the Transition Assistance Office and on-line at <http://www.TurboTAP.org>. You may choose to use your Transition Counseling Checklist as a guide for developing your own unique ITP. Once you have created your ITP, show it to your spouse or another adult family member and get their feedback. It is recommended that you consult with a VA counselor and a DOL Career One Stop staff member to review our ITP. They will provide you further assistance or refer you to a subject matter expert to assist you. Full participation in this process by you and your spouse or family member is encouraged.

### **B. Phases of Individual Transition Planning**

All military personnel transitioning out of the service go through the same fundamental stages. These stages can be divided into the following seven different phases: Self-Assessment, Exploration, Skills Development, Intern Programs, Job Search, Job Selection, and Support.

#### **Phase One: Self-Assessment**

*Ask yourself: Who am I? What are my talents and experiences? Why would someone want to hire me?*

In this phase, document your portfolio of knowledge, experience, skills, talents, and abilities. For starters, create a list using your personal Verification of Military Experience and Training (VMET) document, DD Form 2586. Your VMET outlines the training and experience you received during your military career. It is designed to help you, but it is not a resume.

To get your verification document, go to the VMET website at <http://www.dmdc.osd.mil/vmet>. All demobilizing/deactivating members of the Guard and Reserves can electronically download and print their VMET document and personal cover letter from your military service from the VMET website. Simply click the "Request Document" and "Request Cover Letter," tabs and print each of these documents after they are downloaded.

You can get your verification document online as long as you have a current DoD Common Access Card (CAC) or have a current Defense Finance, Accounting Service (DFAS) myPay Personal Identification Number (PIN). However, you should retrieve it within 30 days after your release from active duty. If you have problems getting your VMET and need assistance, check with the National Guard Transition Assistance Advisor or contact the closest military installations and ask to speak with a Transition or Command Career Counselor.

Add anything else you can think of to this list. In essence, you are now creating an "asset bank" from which you can draw later when called upon to write a resume or attend a job interview. If you need help, use the professional guidance available through your nearest local installation Transition Assistance Office or Education Center or your unit Education Officer. If none of these resources are available check with the self-help section of your local library or bookstore for useful career planning books. You can also review information on the TurboTAP website. Finally, you can always contact Military One Source for assistance at 1-800- 342-9647.

In addition you can get an official transcript of your education and training credits from your service branch. Each branch has their own system for recording your military (and civilian) education and experience. The following explains how to:

### **Army**

- The **Army's AARTS** (Army/American Council on Education Registry Transcript System) automatically captures your military training, your Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) and college level examinations scores with the college credit recommended. AARTS Home Page: <http://aarts.army.mil/>

### **Navy and Marines**

- The **Navy and Marine Corps use the SMART system**. This system automatically captures your training, experience and standardized test scores. SMART Homepage: <https://www.navycollege.navy.mil/transcript.html>

### **Air Force**

- The **Community College of the Air Force (CCAF)** automatically captures your training, experience and standardized test scores. Transcript information may be viewed at the CCAF website: <http://www.au.af.mil/au/ccaf/>

### **Coast Guard**

- The **Coast Guard Institute (CGI)** requires each Service member to submit documentation of all training (except correspondence course records), along with an enrollment form, to receive a transcript. Transcript information can be found at the Coast Guard Institute Home Page: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cgi/index.html>

## Veterans

- Under most circumstances, Veterans are eligible to use their former service branches transcript program. However if you are not eligible for AARTS, SMART, CCAF, or CGI systems, you will need to fill out form DD-295 and provide your DD-214 Discharge Document to receive credit for your experience.

The investment you make now in conducting your assessment is crucial. It will bring the "professional you" into clearer focus, and it will have a major impact on your career decisions.

The key to a smooth transition is to be prepared well before you separate from the military. Start early. Make connections and build networks that will help you transition into the civilian world.

## Phase Two: Exploration

*Ask Yourself: What are the current and emerging occupational areas that are attractive to me? Do these jobs coincide with my values and aptitudes? How do I find these jobs?*

With your assessment in hand, you probably have some ideas about what you want to do. Now is not the time to limit your opportunities. Expand the list of job titles and career paths that appeal to you. Broaden your geographic horizons to include several places where you might like to pursue your career. Many resources are available to help you explore your expanded set of options.

The Employment Assistance Hub of the TurboTAP website can help you focus on jobs that employers need to fill today and will need to fill in the near future. Career One-Stop Center staff can help you identify the geographic areas that have opportunities in your fields of interest.

Your state employment office is another good resource during this phase, offering such services as job interviewing; selection and referral to openings; job development; employment counseling; career evaluation; referral to training or other support services; and testing. Your state office can also lead you to information on related jobs nearby and introduce you to their State job banks, which have listings of jobs in your State. To look for jobs across the nation, you should check the job banks available on the TurboTAP website under the Employment Assistance Hub.

And don't forget your local library's reference section. Most of them are full of helpful publications relating to job searches.

## Phase Three: Skills Development

*Ask Yourself: How do I prepare myself to be an attractive candidate in the occupational areas that I have chosen? Do I need additional education or training?*

As you continue through the exploration phase, you may find some interesting opportunities for which you feel only partially qualified. Your local Transition Assistance Office and Education Center can help you determine the academic credentials or vocational training programs you will need and how to get them.

## Phase Four: Intern Programs

*Ask Yourself: Do I have the aptitude and experience needed to pursue my occupational interests? Are there internships, volunteer jobs, temporary services, or part-time jobs where I might try out the work that interests me?*

To learn about intern programs, inquire at a Transition Assistance Office, local government civilian personnel office, or the state employment office. Some government-sponsored programs, such as obtaining teaching credentials, can provide income and training in exchange for guaranteed employment. Check local and base libraries and the education office for books containing intern program information. Temporary agencies are also a great way to become familiar with a company or industry. Explore internship possibilities with private employers: Many companies have such programs but do not advertise them. Don't necessarily turn down an interesting volunteer position. Volunteering increases your professional skills and can sometimes turn into a paid position.

### **Phase Five: The Job Search**

*Ask Yourself: How do I identify job requirements and prospective companies, find networks and placement agencies, and generally increase my knowledge and experience in the job market? How do I write a resume, develop leads, conduct an interview, and complete a job application?*

Once you have selected your future career, you must now begin the challenge of finding work. Millions of people are hired all across the country every year. Employee turnover opens up existing positions, and entirely new jobs are created every day. Nevertheless, the job market is competitive. The best way to improve your odds is to play your best hand: Seek the opportunities for which you are best prepared.

Work hard at finding a job. Network! The vast majority of jobs are filled by referrals, not the want ads. Use your network of friends, colleagues, and family; as well as the job listings provided by your installation's Transition Assistance Office, the local personnel office, or even the nearest community college. Take advantage of job-hunting seminars, resume-writing workshops, and interviewing techniques classes too. Attend job fairs and talk to as many company representatives as possible.

### **Phase Six: Job Selection**

*Ask Yourself: How do I select the right job?*

Although it might be tempting, you don't have to take the first job that comes along. Consider the type of work, location, salary and benefits, climate, and how the opportunity will enhance your future career growth. Even if you take the first job offer, you are not necessarily locked into it. Some experts say employers are biased against hiring the unemployed. A shrewd move might be to look for a job from a job. Take a suitable position-and then quickly move on to a better one.

### **Phase Seven: Support**

*Ask Yourself: How do I make a smooth transition to a new career?*

For your transition to be truly successful, you should manage the personal affairs side of your career change with the same professionalism and care as your job search. Things like out-processing, relocation, financial management, taking care of your family, and coping with the inevitable stress are important too.

Your Transition Assistance Office can offer support as you go through this process. In addition your ITP provides an opportunity to integrate these issues with the career-oriented activities that are the central focus of your transition effort.

**Note:** You are eligible for continued transition assistance from counselors for up to 180 days after release from active duty and you can access [www.TurboTAP.org](http://www.TurboTAP.org) for life.

## A Journey

*Think of your transition as a journey. The Individual Transition Plan is your map. Use it to chart your course and set your destination. You choose the best route; select the landmarks that will be important to you. This document, the Transition Guide, serves as your roadmap, offering insight and information as you travel along your route. Use the Career One-Stop Centers, VA Counselors and where available, Transition Assistance Office as a trusty compass to guide you in the right direction. Throughout your journey, **you** remain in charge of where you are going and how you will get there.*